

A Playful Invention: Agostino Carracci's *Bacchus with Goat* in the Louvre

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AN INTRIGUING DRAWING PRESERVED in the Cabinet des arts graphiques of the Louvre Museum, executed in pen and ink, represents Bacchus holding a wine cup and accompanied by a goat (fig. 1). The drawing presents two lacunae, which appear to be the result of ink corrosion: one at the level of the god's genitalia, and a less important one in the goat's left leg. An etching by Count de Caylus (fig. 2) provides evidence not only that the drawing was of interest to this French antiquarian but, more critically, that it was in Paris by the first half of the eighteenth century and can be dated before 1728.¹ As indicated by an inscription at the bottom left of the etching, Caylus attributes the drawing to Annibale Carracci. To date, this drawing has been studied only by Catherine Loisel, who alludes to it in a brief notice in her major inventory of drawings by Ludovico, Agostino, and Annibale Carracci

Translated by Maude Vanhaelen and revised by Mary Vaccaro and Maude Vanhaelen, in memory of our dear friend. Special thanks to Francesca Alberti and Stéphane Gaillard for securing the permissions required to reproduce one of the images used within this article.

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1. See Catherine Loisel, *Ludovico, Agostino, Annibale Carracci*, Inventaire général des dessins italiens, vol. 7 (Paris, 2004), 252, no. 537; see also Loisel, "La collection de dessins italiens de Pierre Mignard," in *Pierre Mignard "le Romain,"* ed. Jean-Claude Boyer (Paris, 1997), 55–88. Caylus's engraving invites us to look more closely at the history of the collection the drawing belonged to and revisit some of the chronology. According to Loisel, it was part of a collection that was bequeathed to the King's Cabinet by Charles Antoine Coypel in 1752. However, this chronology is rendered implausible by the fact that Caylus's engraving was part of a set of engravings that he made from the drawings preserved in the King's Cabinet, as indicated by numerous documents; and we know that the *Bacchus and a Goat* appeared in a volume that Caylus gave as a gift to Jacques-Antoine Arlaud in 1728 (see Alexandra Blanc, *Collections et pratiques d'un amateur au XVIII^e siècle: Les recueils de dessins gravés du comte de Caylus, étude comparée du volume offert à Jacques-Antoine Arlaud* [Neuchâtel, 2013], 48, for the date of the Arlaud volume, and 215, for the reproduction of the *Bacchus*). Therefore, it appears that the drawing entered the King's Cabinet before 1752. On Caylus's life, see Danielle Rice, "Caylus, Comte de," in *Grove Art Online* (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T015040>.



Figure 1. Agostino Carracci (here attributed to), *Bacchus Standing, a Cup in His Hand, Next to a Goat*. Pen and ink; 19.1 × 11.4 cm. (Paris, Musée du Louvre, inv. 7182-recto © RMN-Grand Palais/Art Resource, New York.)



Figure 2. Anne Claude de Caylus, *Bacchus*, from the *Cabinet du Roi*, before 1728. Etching; 19.6 × 11.9 cm. (San Francisco, Fine Arts Museums, inv. 1963.30.32373 © Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

now in the Louvre Museum.² Loisel attributes it to the youngest and most famous of the three Carracci, Annibale.

In the first part of this essay, I will propose assigning the drawing not to Annibale but to his elder brother, Agostino. Agostino is mostly known for his printmaking, but he also collaborated for an extended period of time with his brother on painting projects in Bologna and Rome; like Annibale, he is also the author of a substantial and remarkably diverse corpus of drawings.³ In the second part, I will study the iconography of the drawing, which displays Agostino's playful and mischievous spirit. Through detailed analysis of other sheets by the Bolognese artist, I will show how drawing for Agostino was not only a means to disseminate motifs and enter into dialogue with other artists (Annibale in particular) but also an opportunity for genuine artistic invention, often independently from his paintings and prints.

A GOSTINO CARRACCI'S DRAWING

In the brief notice mentioned above, Catherine Loisel first underlines the many similarities between the Louvre drawing and a painting now in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples (fig. 3). This painting is first mentioned in the 1644 inventory of the Farnese Palace in Rome, where it is ascribed to Annibale Carracci, an attribution that is today generally accepted by modern scholars.⁴ To be sure, the two works present clear similarities, such as the god's leaning with his right arm on a support and the gesture he makes when presenting the cup. However, there are also clear differences (notably the absence of a horned goat), which raises the possibility that the drawing may not in fact be a preliminary study for the Naples painting. A detailed analysis of the formal and stylistic characteristics is therefore crucial to providing a correct attribution. In this context, Loisel states that "the violent and dynamic drawing, which is very lively, recalls Reni in some aspects, for instance in the depiction of the face. In contrast, the quasi-mannerist depiction of the joints

2. Loisel, *Ludovico*, 252, no. 537.

3. The only monographic study devoted to Agostino Carracci is the unpublished PhD thesis by Stephen E. Ostrow, "Agostino Carracci" (PhD diss., New York University, 1966). See also Diane DeGrazia Bohlin, *Prints and Related Drawings by the Carracci Family: A Catalogue Raisonné* (Washington, DC, 1979); Diane De Grazia, "L'altro Carracci della galleria Farnese: Agostino come inventore," in *Les Carrache et les décors profanes: Actes du colloque de Rome (2–4 octobre 1986)* (Rome, 1988), 97–111; Babette Bohn, "Commentary: Italian Masters of the Sixteenth Century: Agostino Carracci," in vol. 39, pt. 1 of *The Illustrated Bartsch*, ed. John Spike (New York, 1995); and for a recent reevaluation of Agostino's drawings, Mary Vaccaro, "Two Red Chalk Drawings in the Uffizi by Agostino (not Annibale) Carracci," *Master Drawings* 54 (2016): 225–34.

4. See the entry by Pierluigi Leone de Castris, in Nicola Spinosa, ed., *La Collezione Farnese: La Scuola emiliana: I dipinti, i disegni* (Naples, 1994), 126–27.

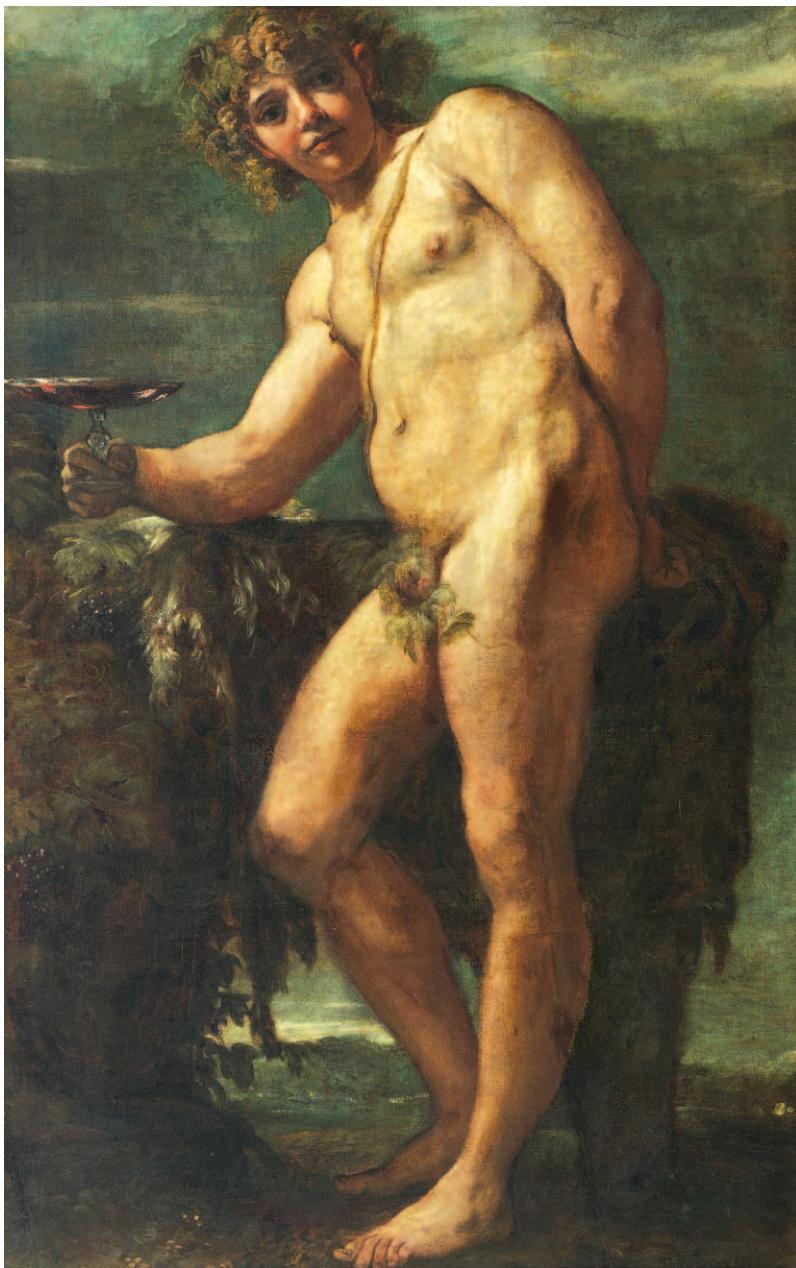


Figure 3. Annibale Carracci, *Bacchus*, ca. 1590–91. Oil on canvas; 160 × 100 cm. (Naples, Capodimonte Museum © Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali e del Turismo—Museo e Real Bosco di Capodimonte.)

is closer to Agostino's style. At the same time, however, the energetic handling of the pen seems to evoke Annibale's.⁵ A close comparison with some drawings by Agostino allows us to opt for Loisel's second hypothesis, as I hope to demonstrate.

Although the extent to which the Carracci brothers collaborated has long made attribution of their respective works notoriously difficult, I propose that the Louvre sheet belongs to the substantial corpus of pen and ink drawings that Agostino carried out during his long career. These drawings are primarily characterized by incisive hatching and crosshatching that recall the technique of engraving that Agostino, unlike Annibale, mastered. Incidentally, one of Agostino's teachers, Bartolomeo Passerotti, also a printmaker, made similar pen drawings.⁶

One drawing, now in the Albertina Museum in Vienna, bearing the inscription "Ag. C." and indeed attributable to Agostino on stylistic grounds (fig. 4),⁷ represents a putto leaning on a neutral support of rectangular shape placed on the left side of the figure, in a composition close to the one we find on the Louvre sheet. In both cases, the light comes from the right-hand side of the scene. Three-dimensionality is realized by sets of slightly curved strokes, the curving of which follows the forms of the different body parts. These strokes are also present on the faces of the two figures. In contrast, hair is rendered by more widely spaced lines, which are drawn with a freer stroke, without defining the outlines. Finally, in both figures the fold of the chin is represented through the use of a shadow. So, too, a drawing in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle (fig. 5) is, in the words of Clare Robertson and Catherine Whistler, "a very characteristic example of the figure studies in pen which Agostino regularly made."⁸ The attitude of the left-hand figure can be compared with that of Bacchus, and both figures are noticeably characterized by unnatural anatomical proportions. The legs appear overly elongated in relation to the torso, the right-hand contour of the left leg being particularly overdeveloped. The calf muscles appear massive, whereas the size of the feet is comparatively small. This idiosyncratic representation of the calves and feet is also to be

5. Loisel, *Ludovico*, 252, no. 537.

6. See in particular Ann Sutherland Harris, "Agostino Carracci's Inventions: Pen-and-Ink Studies, 1582–1602," *Master Drawings* 38 (2000): 393–423. Also see the examples of other pen drawings by Agostino, reproduced and analyzed in Clare Robertson and Catherine Whistler, *Drawings by the Carracci from British Collections*, exhibition catalog, Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, December 10, 1996–March 31, 1997, and Hazlitt, Gooden, and Fox, London, April 9–May 9, 1997 (Oxford, 1996), e.g., nos. 22–24, 26–28, 32, 36, 38, 39, 43, 44, 47–49.

7. Veronika Birke and Janine Kertész, *Die italienischen Zeichnungen der Albertina, II, Inv. 1201–2400* (Vienna, 1994), 1112, <https://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query5Inventarnummer5#/query/92ea0842-0328-4c07-b4eb-a675ddca8fde>.

8. Robertson and Whistler, *Drawings by the Carracci*, 62, no. 22.



Figure 4. Agostino Carracci, *Putto*. Pen and ink; 15.1 × 10.4 cm. (Vienna, Albertina Museum, inv. 2116 © The Albertina Museum, Vienna.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

found in a sheet of sketches, now in Frankfurt, that Agostino made in preparation for his last engraving, the Saint Jerome of 1602 (fig. 6).⁹

If the *Bacchus* shares technical and formal affinities with the three sheets by Agostino mentioned above, the analysis of their differences in turn allows us to get a clearer picture of Agostino's invention in the Louvre drawing. The three figures of

9. See <https://sammlung.staedelmuseum.de/en/work/studien-zu-einem-heiligen-hieronymus>. On the complex history of the elaboration of this engraving, with its different versions and copies, see Bohn, "Commentary," 369–85, with the recto and verso of the Frankfurt drawing at 370–71, and further bibliography.

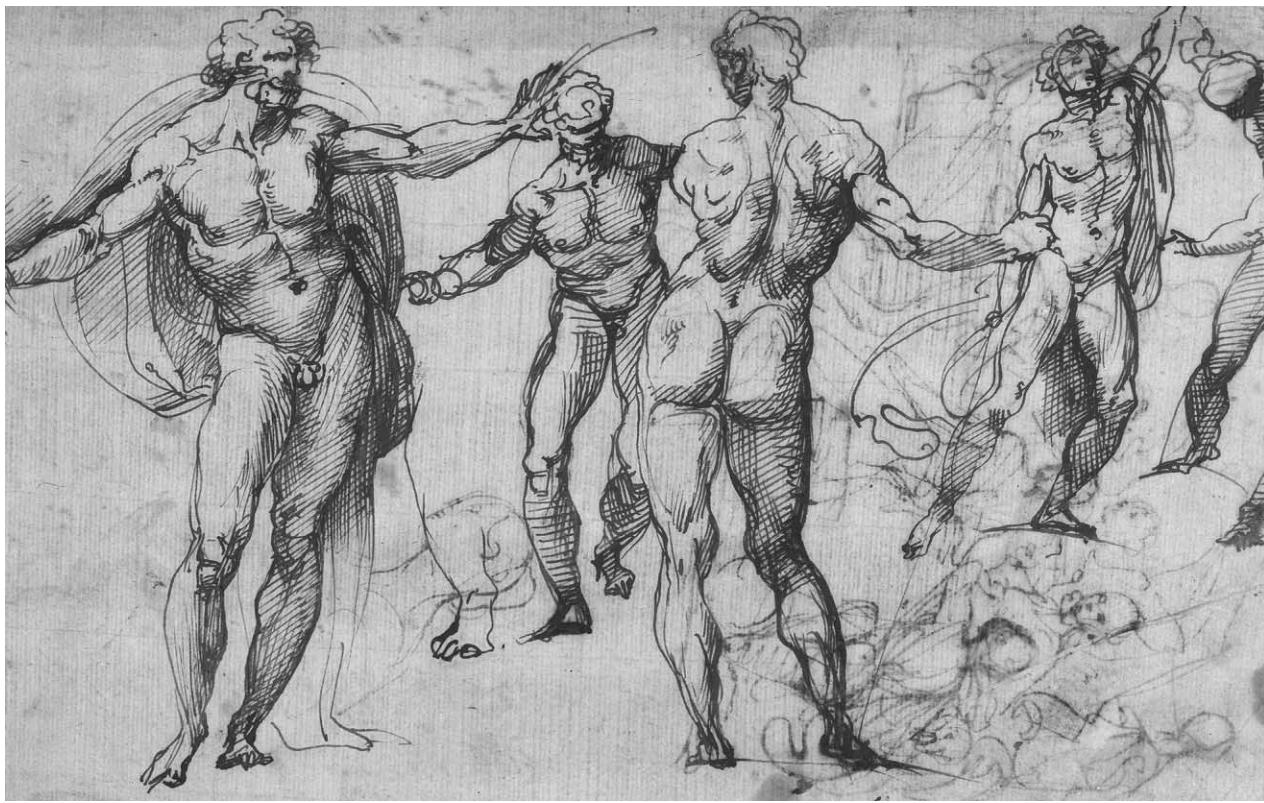


Figure 5. Agostino Carracci, *Study for Five Male Nudes*. Pen and ink; 16.3 × 25.9 cm. (Windsor Castle, Royal Collection Trust, inv. 901981, www.rct.uk/collection/901981 © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2019.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

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Figure 6. Agostino Carracci, *Three Studies for Saint Jerome*, 1601–2. Pen and ink; 17.3 × 27.1 cm. (Frankfurt, Städel Museum, inv. 5656 © Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

Saint Jerome in the Frankfurt sketch are characterized by a remarkable graphic freedom, with some marks recalling even doodles, as could be expected of preparatory sketches. The figures on the Windsor sheet, in contrast, were drawn in the context of Agostino's study of the anatomy and movements of the male nude, which was the subject par excellence of artistic practice in the workshops and academies of Renaissance Italy. The mannerist inflection is obvious, particularly in the man seen from the back, who presents a highly developed musculature and at the same time—as in the numerous figures created by Rosso or Parmigianino—an exaggeratedly small head. The Albertina sheet, rather than being a sketch or an exercise as in the previous examples, is an autonomous and more finished work. From its anatomy the figure can be identified as a putto, a conventional figure that properly belongs to the artistic realm rather than to a young model in a workshop. The putti have generally an ornamental and accessory function. And yet here Agostino has decided to isolate this putto from any context and to give it a sober expression and a meditative, even melancholic attitude, which is unusual for a putto. In other words, the Albertina drawing is a remarkable invention that merits appreciation in its own right.

The same holds true for the *Bacchus* of the Louvre Museum, if not even more so. The musculature of the wine-making god is defined in a particularly precise way, with a drier and less free technique than in the Albertina sheet. The artist's choice can perhaps be here explained by his wish to evoke the representation of ancient statues, whereas the presence of a double, visually neutral pedestal on which Bacchus leans also recalls the art of sculpture. Indeed, Agostino and his brother would have been keenly aware of the many antiquities, at least two examples of which depict Bacchus with a wine cup, that belonged to Cardinal Odoardo Farnese at the time the Carracci were working for him in Rome.¹⁰ And yet the drawing does not represent a petrified group, let alone copy a specific ancient prototype, but rather depicts the figure and an animal as if they were alive. One expects to meet the god and his goat in a natural context, even if the context in which it is presented is completely artificial. The sheet imparts life to the protagonist of ancient mythology at the same time as it refers to the prestigious statues that made Bacchus well known in the Renaissance. It signals the artist's wish to “make a work of art” and stimulate the viewer's attention.

10. See the statues of Bacchus and Antinous-Bacchus (Archaeological Museum of Naples, inv. 6314 and 6318). On these two marble statues and the Farnese collection, see Lucia Fornari Schianchi and Nicola Spinosa, eds., *I Farnese: Arte e collezionismo* (Milan, 1995), 123–31 and 389–418; and Carlo Gasparri, ed., *Le sculture Farnese: Storia e documenti* (Naples, 2007), nos. 41 and 175.

ENHANCING THE VIRILITY OF THE GOAT

Bacchus is wearing a sort of long cloak that he holds back with his left hand, in a gesture that reveals his nudity. The attitude of the goat at his side can be understood in relation to this gesture. The position of its front legs suggests a respite from movement: the animal appears to have paused in order to look at Bacchus's genitals. "A Bacchic symbol par excellence evoking the generative power of Nature,"¹¹ the goat since antiquity was long closely associated with fecundity and lustfulness before becoming the unequivocal symbol of lust in the Middle Ages. Lust is often depicted mounting a goat. In a chapter devoted to Bacchus in a sixteenth-century work that was well known to contemporary artists, Vincenzo Cartari writes:

When the Egyptians wanted to refer to that god [Priapus] in their sacred signs, they made a billy goat. For one reads of this animal that he is only seven days old when he starts to mount, and he is almost always ready to copulate. And so it's not surprising that he was used to stand for the member we use for generation, which they adored under the name of Priapus. The same animal was sometimes taken to stand for Bacchus, because we learn that Bacchus was changed into a billy goat when he and all the other gods fled into Egypt to escape Typhon's hands.¹²

Thus, it is not surprising that the goat drawn by Agostino should show some interest in Bacchus's penis. The goat presents particularly long horns, which are anatomically unusual since they are curved at the front. They seem, therefore, to have a life of their own, as if they were antennae that the animal can orientate at its will.

11. Philippe Morel, *Renaissance dionysiaque: Inspiration bachique, imaginaire du vin et de la vigne dans l'art européen, 1430–1630* (Paris, 2015), 89 and 124. One of the most suggestive images illustrating the link between goats, sexuality, and fecundity is a fresco by Giovanni Maria Falconetto (around 1520) in the Zodiac Room of Palazzo d'Arco in Mantua. Under the sign of Taurus, which corresponds to spring, the god Pan is represented surrounded by a billy goat and two female goats in the process of giving birth, a young Jupiter drinking Amalthea's milk, and a ram whose head is sprayed by water flowing from both the penis of a Priapus statue and a jug that the god holds above his penis. See Luisa Capodieci and Cristiana Ilari, "I segreti del tempo: Prime considerazioni sullo Zodiaco di Palazzo d'Arco a Mantova," *Storia dell'arte* 87 (1996): 141–67, at 148.

12. Vincenzo Cartari, *Le immagini de i Dei de gli Antichi*, ed. Giunetta Auzzas, Federica Martignano, Manlio Pastore Stocchi, and Paola Rigo (Vicenza, 1996), from the 1587 edition, 394: "In Egitto quando volevano mostrare questo dio ne' loro sacri segni facevano un becco perché si legge di questo animale che nato di sette dì solamente comincia a montare et è apparecchiato al coito quasi sempre, onde non è maraviglia che per lui fosse mostrato il membro che si adopra al generare, adorato da gli antichi sotto il nome di Priapo. E col medesimo animale fu ancora mostrato Bacco alle volte perché trovasi ch'egli si cangiò in questo quando con gli altri dei fuggi dalle mani di Tifone in Egitto." Similar ideas are expressed at 126–27. I use the translation by John Mulryan, *Vincenzo Cartari's Images of the Gods of the Ancients: The First Italian Mythography* (Tempe, AZ, 2012), 348–49. On Cartari's book as a possible source for Agostino, see below.



Figure 7. Detail from figure 1. Color version available as an online enhancement.

The median stroke that defines the left-hand horn is prolonged beyond the horn's extremity (fig. 7), which contributes to its animation. Such noticeable attributes invite us to investigate their significance further. The term *corno* (horn) is often used in Italian literature to signify the male sex organ. For instance, Boccaccio mentions in the *Decameron* a woman who, “the heat of the wine overpowering the cold counsels of modesty” (più calda di vino che d'onestà temperata), enters nude in a bed to lay with a man; the author explains that “she knew not till then what horn men butt” (non avendo mai saputo con che corno gli uomini cozzano).¹³

In an engraving produced in northern Italy at the end of the fifteenth century (fig. 8),¹⁴ Cupid is mounting a large goat surrounded by a satyress and a satyr, while a snake with clear sexual connotations is approaching the satyress' genitals.

13. Giovanni Boccaccio, *Decameron*, ed. Vittore Branca (Turin, 1956), 2.7, 146. I use the translation by James M. Rigg, *Boccaccio's Decameron* (London, 1903), 1:121–22. Other examples are mentioned in Valter Boggione and Giovanni Casalegno, *Dizionario storico del lessico erotico italiano: Metafore, eufemismi, oscenità, doppi sensi, parole dotte e parole basse in otto secoli di letteratura italiana* (Milan, 1996), 285.

14. Gisèle Lambert, *Les premières gravures italiennes: Quattrocento-début du cinquecento* (Paris, 1999), no. 487.



Figure 8. *Cupid Mounting a Goat and Accompanied by a Satyr and Satyress*, last quarter of the fifteenth century. Engraving: 14.9 × 14.6 cm. (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Ea 32 rés. © Bibliothèque Nationale de France.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

All three figures hold in their hands objects or elements that are phallic substitutes: the satyress holds the goat's beard and an animal leg transformed into a whip; the satyr holds a double flute and the goat's tail; Cupid holds the two horns of his mounting goat. The real protagonist of this engraving is thus given various sexualized appendages. Agostino Carracci too introduces a pun on the term *corno* in one of the engravings in his *Lascivie* series (fig. 9), by representing a ram's horns placed straight under a nude lady being whipped by a satyr.¹⁵ Does this constitute

15. On Agostino's erotic prints, collectively known as the *Lascivie*, probably executed in the years immediately before the artist joined his brother in Rome, see Marzia Faietti, "Carte lascive e disoneste di Agostino Carracci," in *L'arte erotica del Rinascimento*, ed. Michiaki Koshikawa (Tokyo, 2009), 81–99, with further bibliography.



Figure 9. Agostino Carracci, *Satyr Whipping a Nymph*, ca. 1592. Engraving; 15.1 × 11 cm. (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2012.136.319 courtesy of Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

a generic sexual allusion, or are we to understand that the lady is punished for having “fatto le corna” to her lover,¹⁶ that is, for having been unfaithful?¹⁷

Even more relevant to our investigation is a drawing now in the Museum Kunstpalast of Düsseldorf (fig. 10).¹⁸ The main figure can be identified as Pan. From his gesture and the sketched, only partially visible right forearm we can assume that he is holding something in his hand; the upward direction of his face and gaze in turn suggests that he is holding it toward someone above him. This composition recalls the story of Pan luring Diana by offering her a piece of white wool,¹⁹ a story that

16. “Fare le corna” is a common expression to denote marital infidelity. See, e.g., Boccaccio, *Decameron* 8.5, mentioned in the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca* (Venice, 1612), s.v. “corno.” The phallic symbolism of the horns also appears in the *gesto delle corna*, which is represented in a work that is particularly relevant to our study, the verso of the Martelli mirror now in the Victoria and Albert Museum and ascribed to the sculptor and goldsmith Caradosso from the end of the fifteenth century. As stated by Philippe Morel, “Silenus *fa le corna* with his left hand and holds the brim of a wineskin in his right hand. . . . The ‘horns’ probably have a traditional apotropaic function (to avert bad luck) as well as a sexual and phallic connotation, both of which are clearly related to Priapus [who appears at the top of the relief] and his power of granting protection, health and fecundity. The drinking recipient held by Silenus reminds us that he is always thirsty. The way he holds it could also have a sexual allusion. In its twofold variation, both vegetal and human, the theme of fertility and its Dionysian interpretation are, as a result, accompanied by a further dimension, which is simultaneously theatrical and comical, within a renewed interpretation of the two major functions of the god that presides over wine and theatre.” Morel, *Renaissance dionysiaque*, 18–20. On the horn gesture, see Mauro Zanchi, *Magismo del gesto: I segni delle corna nell’arte* (Bergamo, 2016).

17. See Patricia Simons, “Agostino Carracci’s Wit in Two Lascivious Prints,” *Studies in Iconography* 30 (2009): 211; in relation to Agostino’s engraving *Ogni cosa vince l’oro* she states that “Carracci’s upturned bow connotes the ram’s horns, the *corni* of a cuckold also seen at the foot of a tree where a women is being whipped in one of the engravings of the *Lascivie*.” In an anonymous engraving that imitates, with some variations, an invention of Agostino on the *Omnia vincit amor* theme, the artist places next to the god Pan two ram horns bound with a strap as in the engraving *Satyr Whipping a Lady* (Bohn, “Commentary,” 360).

18. See Eckhard Schaar, *Italienische Handzeichnungen des Barock* (Düsseldorf, 1964), 24, no. 22, with further bibliography; DeGrazia Bohlin, *Prints and Related Drawings*, 68 n. 94; and Bohn, “Commentary,” 328–29.

19. The story is mentioned in Virgil, *Georgics*, ed. and trans. Henry R. Fairclough and G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1999), 3.391–93, pp. 204–5: “Munere sic niveo lanae, si credere dignum est, / Pan deus Arcadiae captam te, Luna, febellit / in nemora alta vocans; nec tu aspernata vocantem.” According to Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: Vite de’ pittori bolognesi* (Bologna, 1678), 1, pt. 3:378, Agostino owned copies of Virgil and Tacitus, which he copiously annotated: “Agostino, che di medaglie si dilettava, e di libri (onde presso il Giangrandi a Faenza io vedessi talora un Virgilio, col compendio scrittovi in margine al principio d’ogni canto da lui stesso, e l’Onofrio fra suoi libri singolari facesse gran stima del Cornelio Tacito che fu dell’istesso postillato tutto di sua mano), s’uni anch’egli questa sua erudita suppellettile, se non a quella del Passerotti uguale, scielta però e sufficiente al loro intento, ch’era di erudire a bastanza e se stesso, e gli allievi” (Agostino, who loved medals and books [I have seen a copy of Virgil currently owned by Giangrandi in Faenza with summaries written by Agostino at the head of each book, and Onofrio, among his remarkable books, greatly prized a copy of Cornelius Tacitus that is filled with annotations in Agostino’s hands] contributed his erudite store of books and medals which, if not equal to Passerotti’s, was nonetheless well chosen and altogether met the need to extend both his own learning and that of the students). I use the translation by Anne Summerscale, *Malvasia’s Life of the Carracci: Commentary and Translation* (University Park, PA, 2000), 119. An inscription at the top of the Düsseldorf sheet (*Comandiamo / a qual si voglia g*) is difficult to interpret; another inscription next to the god, however, can be associated with the general theme of the drawing (*amando voi*, where the capital A, placed slightly below the rest of the inscription, can be considered a calligraphic experiment): “as a sign of love for you [I hereby present you with a piece of wool].” This interesting sheet, which also includes a childlike drawing of a man and horse, requires further study.



Figure 10. Agostino Carracci, *Pan and Other Studies*. Pen and ink; 34.2 × 23.6 cm. (Düsseldorf, Kunstmuseum, Collection of the Academy of Art [NRW], inv. KA [FP] 3814 © Kunstmuseum-Düsseldorf–Horst Kolberg–ARTOTHEK.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

was particularly popular in Renaissance Rome from the end of the sixteenth to the early seventeenth century.²⁰ Annibale depicted the scene in one of the spectacular ceiling frescoes for the Farnese Gallery (fig. 11); however, as shown by a related preliminary drawing, now in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth, he had initially intended to depict Pan sitting down.²¹ Could we suppose that, when Agostino was collaborating with Annibale on the invention of the Farnese frescoes,²² he suggested another way of representing the god of the shepherds in this important decorative scheme but, if so, only playfully—for can one imagine such a Pan under Diana's gaze? Or is it rather that he drew on his brother's invention but proposed his own figure of Pan, in the manner of the *Lascivie*? More relevant, perhaps, to our investigation is the male sex organ of the figure. Several ancient and Renaissance artists ascribed to Pan and the satyrs a pointy-shaped penis;²³ this nonhuman organ thus belonged to the animal part of the god. To a Renaissance Italian viewer, this unusually shaped sex organ could signify the two senses of the term *corno*. In the Düsseldorf drawing Pan's penis is oversized and sharply upturned and appears to be made of a hard, callus-like material. The same shape is used, with some variations, to represent the god's horns, the ear that is visible, and even the thumb on his left hand. In this way, various parts of his body evoke both his animal origins and his lustfulness. Similarly, in the Louvre drawing, the goat's horns have a shape akin to that of the half-goat, half-human god's sex organ. The two images elucidate one another.

20. See the frescoes of the Camera dell'Aurora and the Stanza dei Lanifici in the Farnese villa in Caprarola by Taddeo Zuccaro (between 1563 and 1565); a painting by Jacopo Zucchi for the Firenze Palace in Rome (ca. 1575; Uffizi), and by the same Zucchi, the decoration of the Gallery of the Rucellai Palace in Rome (ca. 1585); a panel by Jan Soens (ca. 1600; Naples, Capodimonte Museum); a painting by Sisto Badalocchio, pupil of Agostino and Annibale (ca. 1605; Angers, Beaux-Arts Museum); and a fresco by Domenichino in the Giustiniani Villa in Bassano Romano (1609).

21. Annibale Carracci, *Pan Presenting the Wool to Diana*, pen and ink. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, inv. 414. See Robertson and Whistler, *Drawings by the Carracci*, 133, no. 82.

22. Both Agostino and Annibale visited Rome at Cardinal Odoardo Farnese's invitation in the fall of 1594, and Annibale took up residence in the cardinal's palace the following year. Agostino is thought to have only joined his brother in 1598, at which time he helped with the fresco decorations in the Farnese Gallery. Constant quarrels between the two brothers allegedly prompted Agostino's permanent departure from the Eternal City a year later. For an overview of the Carracci brothers in the service of Cardinal Farnese, see Clare Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci* (Milan, 2008), 97–177, with further bibliography.

23. See in particular the ancient group representing Pan and Daphnis, which was considered one of the masterpieces of Odoardo Farnese's collection in his palace, and which both Agostino and Annibale would therefore have known. The statue, now in the Capodimonte Museum in Naples, is known under various titles; see the notice in Carlo Gasparrini, ed., *Le sculture Farnese 1: Le sculture ideali* (Naples, 2009), 139–41.



Figure 11. Annibale Carracci, *Pan Offering Diana the Wool of His Goats*, 1597–1602. Fresco. (Rome, Palazzo Farnese, Gallery. Photo: Mauro Magliani, 1997 © Alinari/Art Resource, New York.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

HARDLY A VIRILE GOD

Like Annibale's painting, Agostino's drawing represents a Bacchus holding a wine cup while looking at the viewer. The god's gesture, which can be found in several ancient sculptures that were well known in the Renaissance, including, as we have seen, in the Farnese collection, corresponds to an invitation to participate in the pleasures associated with wine. It also alludes to the fact that Bacchus taught men the culture of the vine and wine making: he gave them the gift of the drink he is holding in his cup. The choice of a sixteenth-century wine cup, made of probably Venetian glass, makes the figure somehow more modern, which fits well with the idea of an invitation or a gift offered to the viewer. Bacchus holds a similar glass wine cup in an engraving by Adrian Collaert from Martin de Vos, dated circa 1587.²⁴

However, another engraving could have influenced Agostino more directly. Vincenzo Cartari's *Le imagini de i Dei de gli Antichi* appeared for the first time in 1556. In the third edition of 1571, the author expanded the text to include eighty-eight engravings by the Venetian Bolognino Zaltieri, printed in full page.²⁵ Successive editions (e.g., 1577, 1580, 1581, 1587, 1592) also include these engravings. As mentioned above, Cartari's mythographic compilation, with a focus on the representation of pagan gods, was immensely popular with Renaissance artists, including the Carracci.²⁶ Agostino, who was well known for his scholarly interests and classical erudition,²⁷ was most certainly familiar with this work. His Louvre drawing might have been inspired by an engraving by Zaltieri representing Bacchus holding

24. See <https://www.rijksmuseum.nl/en/collection/RP-P-BI-6074>.

25. On this series of engravings, see Stefano Pierguidi, "Porta's Illustrations for Cartari," *Print Quarterly* 22 (2005): 431–34, with further bibliography. Pierguidi shows that the invention of the engravings can be attributed to Giuseppe Porta, a pupil of Francesco Salviati's mostly active in Venice.

26. Robertson, *Invention of Annibale*, 70, 80, 171.

27. See Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni*, ed. Evelina Borea (Turin, 2009), 115–17, at 116: "Non lasciava Agostino in queste occupazioni del disegno e dell'intaglio l'altre sue degnissime inclinazioni; poiché tutto il tempo gli avanzava da' lavori spendeva nell'erudizione delle lettere: arrivò da per sé solo ad intendere perfettamente la lingua latina, e dalla lettura de gli ottimi libri s'acquistò l'eleganza del vulgare idioma, non contentandosi solo dell'uso, ma facendosi eruditio ne' precti della lingua, della rettorica e della poesia" (Amid these occupations of drawing and engraving, Agostino did not abandon his other very worthy inclinations; for all the times that he had left from his labors he spent on literary erudition: by himself he attained a perfect understanding of the Latin language, and from reading the finest books he acquired elegance in the vernacular idiom, not being content merely with its usage but becoming erudite in the rules of language, rhetoric, and poetry). I use the translation by Alice Sedgwick Wohl, Hellmut Wohl, and Tomaso Montanari, *Giovan Pietro Bellori: The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects. A New Translation and Critical Edition* (Cambridge, 2005), 118. On the contrast between Agostino's scholarly interests and Annibale's lack of erudition, see also Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 1, pt. 3:361: "Non vi era scienza ch'a lui [Agostino] fosse nuova, rendendo buon conto delle massime della filosofia, de gli aforismi della medicina, discorrendo fondatamente delle dimostrazioni matematiche, delle osservazioni astrologiche, delle divisioni e siti della cosmografia; sapendo di politica, d'istoria, d'ortografia e di poesia; componendo sonetti, madrigali e sestine in modo che il Rinaldi suo grande amico avesse più volte a dire, comporre egli meglio di lui, e Monsignore Spinola,

a cup next to a goat looking in his direction (fig. 12). In this image the physiognomy ascribed to the god is most unusual. The shape of the thighs, hips, and pectorals, which look like breasts, as well as the posture of the legs, are somewhat effeminate, whereas his penis resembles that of a child. In the Louvre drawing, some of Agostino's choices contribute to making Bacchus appear like an affected and slightly effeminate figure, as suggested by the fact that he ostensibly strikes a pose and holds the wine cup between the thumb and the index finger, in a somewhat implausible manner. One further notes the sinuous contours of his body, and particularly of his left arm, the smallness of his mouth that evokes shyness, and a lock that moves away from the rest of his hair, as indicated by a stroke made of arched forms. One might perhaps see here an allusion to Ovid's description of Bacchus in the *Metamorphoses*, where the god is described as "an untried boy, whom neither arts of war assist nor spears nor horsemen, but whose weapons are scented locks, soft garlands, purple and gold inwoven in embroidered robes."²⁸ The ridiculous aspect of Bacchus is more explicit in the opening words of Lucian's *Dionysus*: "When Dionysus led his host against the men of Ind (surely there is nothing to prevent my telling you a tale of Bacchus!), he was held at first in such contempt, they say, by the people there, that they laughed at his advance. . . . As for the general himself . . . , he is quite beardless, without even the least bit of down on his cheeks, has horns, wears a garland of grape clusters, ties up his hair with a ribbon, and is in a purple gown and gilt slippers," the gown being associated a few lines later with Silenus's own "woman's gown."²⁹ Although Vincenzo Cartari does not provide much detail on Bacchus's effeminate character,

Vicelegato, a commendarlo per buon segretario non meno che buon pittore. Annibale, che imparato a pena di leggere e scrivere, era stato preso dal padre in bottega per aiuto" (There was no area of knowledge that was completely unknown to him [Agostino]; he could give a good account of the maxims of philosophy and the aphorisms of medicine, would discourse learnedly on mathematical proofs, astrological observations, or the regions and places of cosmography on a sound basis; he was knowledgeable about politics, history, orthography, and poetry; and composed sonnets, madrigals, and sestinas so well that Rinaldi, his great friend, often remarked that Agostino composed better than he did, and Monsignor Spinola, the vice-legate, praised him saying that he would be as good a secretary as he was a good painter. Annibale, having just learned to read and write, had been taken by his father into his shop as an assistant). I use the translation by Summerscale, *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci*, 88. On Agostino's interests in ancient literature and his annotations on copies of Virgil and Tacitus, see Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice*, 1, pt. 3:378, quoted at n. 19.

28. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. and trans. Frank Justus Miller and G. P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1916), 3.553–56, pp. 162–63: "at nunc puero Thebae capientur inermi, / quem neque bella iuvant nec tela nec usus equorum, / sed madidus murra crinis mollesque coronae / purpuraque et pictis intextum vestibus aurum."

29. Lucian, *Dionysus*, ed. and trans. Austin M. Harmon, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA, 1913), 1–2, pp. 48–51: "ὅτε ὁ Διόνυσος ἐτέλεσε τὸν στρατιῶν ἥλαστε—καὶ οὐδέν, οἷμα, καὶ μῆθον ὑμῖν διηγήσασθαι Βακχικόν—φασὶν οὕτω καταφρονῆσαι αὐτοῦ τὰ πρῶτα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους τοὺς ἐκεῖ, ὡστε καταγελᾶν ἐπιόντος, . . . καὶ τὸν στρατηλάτην αὐτὸν . . . ἀγένειον

he does have this in the *Imagini*: “As to the clothing that Bacchus wore, it was supposed to be women’s clothing, because excessive drinking weakens a man’s virility and makes him soft and weak like a woman.”³⁰

Bacchus’s expression is that of someone who is a little embarrassed, as if he played a role without being entirely convinced of his ability to do so. The goat has a surprised look and a somewhat mischievous, almost mocking expression. This can be related to the reduced size of Bacchus’s penis and testicles, visible despite the presence of a lacuna in the drawing. It is as if the goat, when considering the anatomy of the god of reproduction and fertility, is somewhat surprised by the size of the organs primarily associated with the god’s powers, when a simple animal like itself possesses well-endowed phallic horns. Moreover the wine, here offered by Bacchus, is generally thought to increase sexual prowess, as illustrated by the Boccaccio passage mentioned above, as well as the famous proverb “Sine Cerere et Baccho, Venus friget” (without Ceres and Bacchus, Venus freezes), or a famous saying from Jerome’s *Letter to Eustochius* quoted in Pier del Nero’s translation in the *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*: “Vino, e gioventù, doppio incendio di lussuria” (Wine and youth, a double source for lustfulness’s fire).³¹ Agostino’s Bacchus is a young man associated with wine but without any manifest sexual power. The invention was perhaps influenced by the artist’s observation of ancient Bacchus statues, where the god’s penis is ridiculously small and seemingly incompatible with Bacchus’s mythological profile, particularly when compared with ancient representations of Priapus’s oversized penis. In sum, the drawing displays a humorous dimension, albeit without obscenity or indecency. It is lewd with finesse and great erudition, as it plays on several literary and artistic references shared by the artists and intellectuals of the time.

ἀκριβῶς, οὐδέ ἐτ’ ὄλιγον τὴν παρειὰν χνοῶντα, κερασφόρον, βιτρύοις ἐστεφανωμένον, μίτρᾳ τὴν κόμην ἀναδέδεμένον, ἐν πορφυρὶδι καὶ χρυσῇ ἐμβάδι.” A few lines later Lucian says that, like Bacchus, Silenus is wearing a woman’s gown, which is saffron dyed (ἐν κροκωτῷ καὶ τοῦτον). On the reception of Lucian in Renaissance Italy, see Lorena De Faveri, *Le traduzioni di Luciano in Italia nel XV e XVI secolo* (Amsterdam, 2002); and Letizia Panizza, “Vernacular Lucian in Renaissance Italy: Translations and Transformations,” in *Lucian of Samosata vivus et redivivus*, ed. Christopher Ligota and Letizia Panizza, Warburg Institute Colloquia 10 (London, 2007), 71–114.

30. Cartari, *Le imagini*, 376: “Ma ritornando alla veste di Bacco, dicono ch’ella era di donna perché il troppo bere debilita le forze e fa l’uomo molle et enervato come femina.” I use the translation by Mulryan, *Vincenzo Cartari’s Images of the Gods of the Ancients*, 335 (modified).

31. *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*, s.v. “vino,” which derives from Jerome, *Epistle* 22.8 (“Vinum et adulescentia duplex incendum voluptatis”). See also Cartari, *Le imagini*, 127: “I Pani e i Satiri . . . erano creduti libidinosi fuor di modo, onde furono dati compagni a Bacco perché il vino riscalda la virtù naturale et accende l’uomo alla libidine” (Pans and satyrs . . . were supposed to be filled with excessive lust. That’s why they were supposed to be Bacchus’ companions, because wine heats up our natural power and fires men up with lust). I use the translation by Mulryan, *Vincenzo Cartari’s Images of the Gods of the Ancients*, 111).



Figure 12. Bolognino Zaltieri, *Bacchus*. From Vincenzo Cartari, *Le imagini de i Dei de gli Antichi* (Venice, 1571), 420.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, it is difficult to establish whether, and to what extent, Agostino was influenced by Annibale's *Bacchus* when he made the Louvre drawing. The gesture made by the god to present the wine, the model of the glass cup, the god's thick, curly hair, as well as the strap across his torso could be echoes of the painting. Is the drawing therefore a parodic re-elaboration of Annibale's invention? Or should one rather see it as a playful allusion to the ancient statues of Bacchus? Bolognino Zaltieri's engraving could also be an important source, but the differences between the two images are equally numerous. It remains that the god's posture, the composition, and the iconography make it a peculiar work, showing the artist's well-known predilection for playfulness and licentiousness.³²

The Louvre drawing fits perfectly well in the corpus of Renaissance images associating Bacchus with the pleasures of wine, laughter, and sexuality. Suffice it to mention Piero di Cosimo's *The Discovery of Honey by Bacchus*, Niccolò Frangipane's depictions of Bacchic legends, the *Allegory with Bacchus* ascribed to Bastianino,³³ the *Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne* conceived by Annibale for the ceiling of the Farnese Gallery, and Guido Reni's later *The Boy Bacchus*, now in Dresden. But Agostino's drawing shares a more specific affinity with another work: the *Bacchus* painted by Caravaggio around 1597 (fig. 13), where one finds a similar figure striking a pose, presenting the viewer with a glass cup filled with wine that he holds in an even more implausible and affected way than Agostino's Bacchus. One sees a languid young man with a rounded and full face that evokes a certain softness, with defined eyebrows and thick hair. The erotic dimension is also present here, as the young man is lying down on a contemporary bed (as indicated by the thick cloth of the pillow). He is probably wrapped in a bedsheets and is naked underneath, and he slides the index finger of his right hand in a ribbon's knot, in a gesture that

32. See, e.g., Simons, "Agostino Carracci's Wit," and "Fiction and Friction: Agostino Carracci's Engraved, Erotic Parody of the Toilette of Venus," *Source* 36 (2017): 88–98. In a drawing now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, Agostino parodies the theme of Aeneas and Anchises escaping Troy by showing a monkey on another monkey's shoulders within a vast landscape of ruins (Robertson and Whistler, *Drawings by the Carracci*, no. 42). Another, mysterious drawing showing a putto defecating on a classical altar with grotesques is attributed by many scholars to Agostino (British Museum, inv. P.p. 3.12; see Robertson and Whistler, *Drawings by the Carracci*, no. 38). Indeed, both Agostino and Annibale Carracci played a crucial role in the development of caricature: see Laurent Baridon and Martial Guédon, *L'art et l'histoire de la caricature* (Paris, 2015).

33. The painting, now in the Pinacoteca Nazionale di Ferrara (<https://www.gallerie-estensi.beniculturali.it/en/digital-archives/id/53105>) was for sale in 1999 with a questionable attribution to Annibale Carracci. The catalog's notice states, "Both Sir Denis Mahon and Dr. Stephen Pepper consider that this picture is a relatively early work, of the early 1580s, of Annibale Carracci" (*Old Master Pictures*, Christie's Sale Catalog, London, December 17, 1999, 84–85).



Figure 13. Caravaggio, *Bacchus*, ca. 1597. Oil on canvas; 95 × 85 cm. (Florence, Uffizi © Alinari/Art Resource, New York.) Color version available as an online enhancement.

evokes—given the context and the otherwise inexplicable presence of the ribbon—sexual penetration.³⁴ Caravaggio replaces Agostino’s good humor with a form of disenchanted fatigue. But the two works share the same taste for ambiguity and irreverent reinterpretation of the imaginary realm of ancient mythology.

34. Philippe Morel talks about a “codified gesture that is ostensibly phallic” (Morel, *Renaissance dionysiaque*, 352) that one finds for instance in the *Danae* by Titian. Morel rightly sees a sexual connotation in Venus’s gesture in the *Venus, Satyr and Cupido* by Annibale (ca. 1588; Uffizi). The satyr’s horn that Cupid holds and rejects, as well as the fabric pinched by Venus, substitute in this work for the penis of a hybrid, concupiscent, and grotesque creature (375–77).