

THE POETRY OF METAMORPHOSIS
AND THE PROSE OF SAINTHOOD:
INTERPOLATED VERSE NARRATIVE IN
TIRSO DE MOLINA'S
DELEITAR APROVECHANDO

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One of the more tempting challenges for poets in early modern Europe might have been the mythological narrative, tales of gods' and mortals' erotic doings, most often based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Two of the better-known and frequently-studied of these poems in English were penned by authors whose modern reputations rest largely on their contributions to the theater: Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* and Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis*. Among those dramatists' Spanish counterparts, however, Tirso de Molina had much less success with his two Ovidian poems, the *Fábula de Mirra*, *Venus y Adonis* and the *Fábula de Píramo y Tisbe*, which have always received only scant attention from readers and scholars of Golden Age poetry. This neglect is due in large part to the fact that Tirso published both poems in his frequently maligned 1635 miscellany *Deleitar aprovechando*. In contrast to its predecessor, Tirso's 1624 collection of secular novellas and *comedias* entitled *Los cigarrales de Toledo*, *Deleitar aprovechando* instead contains saints' lives and *autos sacramentales*. *Deleitar's* greater piety and explicit moral seriousness offer what Margaret Wilson terms a "twist a lo divino of the familiar Boccaccian pattern" and the work represents "the prototype of the ascetic-novelistic collection, which makes its appearance in Spain as the spirit of *desengaño* begins to prevail" (20). In his study of Tirso's prose works, André Nougué asserts: "Ainsi, le *Deleitar aprovechando* aura un caractère résolument dévot et édifiant; vue sous cet angle, l'oeuvre de Tirso est nouvelle; les ouvrages des prédécesseurs se contentaient surtout de divertir; *Deleitar aprovechando* divertira, certes, mais en instruisant" (210). Perhaps owing to this difference, *Deleitar*—with the exception of the sometimes-excerpted novella *El bandolero*, a biography of San Pedro Armengol—has never won the popularity or the respect that Tirso's original audiences as well as subsequent generations have to some extent accorded the more lighthearted *Los cigarrales*. It is therefore hardly surprising that few scholars have sought out or examined the two mythological verse narratives Tirso interpolates into the collection.¹ Departing from the poems' tradition of neglect, this

study will examine the *Fábula de Mirra, Venus y Adonis*, focusing specifically on the first section of the poem—the account of Adonis’s conception—and the uses to which Tirso puts this Ovidian narrative within the context of *Deleitar aprovechando*.

As he did in *Los cigarrales de Toledo*, Tirso follows Boccaccio’s model and places *Deleitar aprovechando*’s constituent texts within a frame tale of noble friends in seclusion sharing stories—in the case of this collection, edifying narrations recounted while these pious aristocrats shun “las permisiones de las Carnestolendas” in Madrid (19). The *Fábula de Mirra, Venus y Adonis* appears in the collection’s first novella, a life of St. Thecla entitled *La patrona de las musas* which the “orador piadoso” Don Luis (188) recites to the assembled company on Sunday morning. Thecla, according to the apocryphal Acts of Paul and to Basil of Seleucia’s verse biography, was converted as a young woman to Christianity by Paul’s preaching. Thecla rejected marriage in favor of chastity in the service of God, a resolution sorely tested by the numerous foes and obstacles over which she invariably triumphed with the aid of miracles. Tirso, however, does not content himself with simply recounting Thecla’s biography, spectacular though some of its events are, nor even with his transformation of one lecherous villain from his sources into a *galán* smitten with the future saint. He instead begins *La patrona de las musas* with a detailed description of a pagan ceremony held in his Tecla’s native Iconio. This rite, we are told, is held annually in honor of Adonis: “Fue, pues, el caso que, convocándose un día festivo, todo lo más de lo noble y plebeyo de aquella comarca a las solemnes obsequias con que aquellas poblaciones celebraban al amante adúltero, elección de Venus y trofeo del jabalí de Marte” (32).² The heart of this ceremony is a lengthy recitation by “el más viejo sacerdote” (35): the *Fábula de Mirra, Venus y Adonis*, which recounts Adonis’s incestuous conception, resulting from his mother Mirra’s passion for her own father, and his ultimately fatal love affair with the goddess Venus. It is only after the priest concludes this narration that the text first refers to Tecla, creating a segue into her biography by describing how the *galán* Alejandro catches sight of her among his fellow listeners.

The ceremony in which *Mirra, Venus y Adonis* is recited thus constitutes a kind of prologue to the saint’s life presented in *La patrona de las musas*. The most immediately obvious function of this ceremony is to emphasize the non-Christian nature of the society against which Tecla will rebel by adopting by her new religious values. Tirso’s narrator Don Luis repeatedly criticizes the reverence of Adonis, whom he characterizes with negative terms as an “amante adúltero” (32) and as a “torpe mancebo” (33). He describes the people’s tribute to Adonis as “solemnidad supersticiosa” (33) and “religión profana” (34), also declaring, “Éste era el aparato con que aquellos idólatras veneraban engaños en las tinieblas

de la noche" (34). Don Luis likewise dwells on the celebrants' deliberate shedding of their own blood in their ritual mourning of Adonis, a "bárbara y necia, si religiosa, demostración del sentimiento que les causaba su muerte intempestiva" (35). Perhaps most telling of all is the annual ceremony's celebration of Adonis as a vegetation god who offers an unmistakable pagan parallel to Jesus: the worshippers, we are told, perform the rites "creyendo que, sin duda, cumplido el cabo de año y honras funerales, resucitaba al día tercero el malogrado joven y le trasladaba la enamorada estrella a las delicias de su luminosa esfera" (35).³ Don Luis's repeated condemnation of these rites leaves no doubt that Tirso here is drawing neither upon the common Renaissance adaptation of mythology into metaphoric parables nor upon the Neoplatonic syncretism that regarded classical myth as deliberately veiled, encoded accounts of Christian revelation (Heiple).⁴

At the same time, however, the *Fábula* serves functions beyond that of contributing to the text's backdrop of Iconian paganism, for which the lengthy prose description of the ceremony alone would have sufficed. The poem's functions likewise extend beyond the role ascribed to it by Nougé, that of establishing a proper mood for the love intrigues Tirso inserts into the narrative: "Ces amours incestueuses, cette passion ardente d'une déesse pour un mortel contribuent à créer une atmosphère érotique et sensuelle" (215). Far more important, the two Ovidian stories narrated in the *Fábula* offer distinct structural parallels to Tecla's spiritual journey from ignorance to apostleship. Indeed, that these tales derive from Ovid is of primary importance to our understanding of their relationship to Tecla's biography. Leonard Barkan's description of "the essential structure of an Ovidian story" is worth citing here in full:

It takes place in a context where individuals are assigned clear roles, so clear that they may be oppressive. The central figure in the story rebels, specifically attacking the clarity and discreteness of the surrounding categories. The essential metamorphosis comes as a direct result of this rebellion: it is not the hero's or heroine's change of physical shape (that will come too, but it is later and less important) but rather the discovery that what seemed like such rigid categories of family and society can dissolve, just as physical categories dissolve in metamorphosis. Once the categories are attacked, similar things are diversified into opposites and opposites are made identical. The central figure reaches a condition that transcends and contradicts all these categories. From that point it is a short step to literal metamorphosis, a condition that merely serves as the final punctuation mark for a narrative experience whose crucial metamorphosis has amounted to the dissolution of assumptions we live by. (58-59)

With this underlying structure in mind, we will be able to see how uniquely well the Roman poet's account of Myrrha's metamorphosis lends itself to counterpointing a hagiographic narrative such as Tirso's.

Following Ovid, Tirso precedes the story of Venus and Adonis with that of the latter's mother Mirra (Myrrha), who satisfied her illicit lust for her father, King Cinira of Chipre, by coming to his bed in darkness and there conceiving Adonis. Tirso would have been the last early modern Spanish writer to shy away from this potentially problematic, graphic depiction of incest, for, as Henry W. Sullivan notes in a discussion of the Mercedarian's theater, "Tirso is remarkable for the intensity and consistency with which, amid the portrayal of sundry sexual deviations, he pursued the dramatic implications of this central taboo" (180). Regarding the author's possible motivations for such intensity and consistency, Sullivan continues: "I would suggest, moreover, that Tirso did not toy with the incest motif merely for sensational effect (though this dimension cannot be denied), but rather that the deeper conflict in human society between desire and law (out of which the incest taboo arises) lies properly within the dramatist's realm of interest; indeed, it provides the very stuff of psychological conflict" (180). Tirso's depiction of Mirra, afflicted by Cupid with a *contagión sabrosa* (36), a lust so shameful she fears to utter it aloud, certainly emphasizes this inner conflict: "y tal de amores loca, / palabras apercibe y no halla boca, / que en tan ambigua guerra, / puertas abre el amor que el temor cierra" (37). The text's use here of the plural noun *amores* foregrounds Mirra's difficulties, as Barkan (63) and Mack (151-53) note with regard to similar linguistic ambiguities in Ovid: her society dictates that her love for Cinira should be that of a daughter rather than that of a would-be bedmate, yet she must confront within herself the breakdown of the barriers between two kinds of *amor*, filial affection and carnal desire, that cultural order (as she knows it and as it has shaped her subjectivity) demands remain separate. Barkan writes of the Ovidian Myrrha's dilemma: "The Cinyras who is her father cannot be separated from the Cinyras whom she would have as lover. Once this crucial distinction becomes difficult, then all systems of order, at least with respect to family relations, break down" (64). Incest, Barkan further notes, "is not only a perversion of [family] relationships: it is the quintessential confusion or inability to make moral definitions" (64). In Tirso's account, Mirra's desire eventually conquers her horror: she acknowledges and even embraces her incestuous passion, a decision that manifests itself in a confession and request for assistance from her Celestina-like nurse, "cuyos caducos años / ferieron su vejez a los engaños" (37). This fatal decision thus represents the initial act of rebellion against culturally-determined clear and discrete categories that Barkan identifies as the catalyst in Ovidian myths of transformation, as well as signalling the internal

metamorphosis that results from Mirra's discovery of the vulnerability of those categories to challenge.

A similar structure underpins Tirso's biography of Tecla, another tale of the conflicts that result when individual desire's imperatives defy collective law's strictures. Again we have a young woman of prominent family upon whom is visited a culturally transgressive longing and who asserts control of her sexuality in a fashion widely considered deviant. Cupid is not responsible in this instance, naturally, but Tirso's text explicitly attributes Tecla's religious conversion and embrace of chastity to another divine source: "Hablaba Pablo, y en él el Espíritu Paloma, con la superioridad que lo divino tiene sobre lo humano" (91). More important, this conversion brings with it not only Tecla's inner rejection of the Iconian divine pantheon, but also her active rebellion against the roles of submissive daughter and willing betrothed which Iconian society expects her to honor. After hearing San Pablo preach the spiritual superiority of virginity, Tecla can no longer consider herself subject to the will of her mother Teoclea:

Pudieron hasta allí respetos de madre indeterminar propósitos en nuestra santa, pero ya alentada la honesta parcialidad de sus deseos, si hasta entonces cobarde de puro obediente, con las amonestaciones del divino hebreo, dejando lo menos por lo más (a Teoclea, digo, por Cristo), se dispuso a cuantos riesgos de honra y vida se le atravesasen, antes que perder el interés precioso que la virginidad heroica la prometía. (90)

Discovering her daughter's fascination with Pablo's sermons, Teoclea wastes no time in informing her intended son-in-law, Tamírde, of Tecla's alteration: "Tu Tecla, ya no tuya, desmintió esperanzas concebidas de honestidad hipócrita; degeneró de los respetos con que su virtud encarecimos; su madre, me desprecia; su esposo, te desestima; a las espaldas arroja todo el caudal de su nobleza y sangre, cuando en ella esperaba nuestro engaño mejorar su lustre" (95). Here Teoclea specifically emphasizes Tecla's duty to her mother, her duty to Tamírde, and her duty to her family and social class, all of which she will betray in the name of her new faith. Just as in his Ovidian account of Mirra's fate, then, Tirso's hagiography depicts his protagonist's refusal to accept the social role assigned her and her repudiation of obedience to the cultural order, one composed of discrete yet ultimately arbitrary categories, from which that role derives.

Mirra's rebellion, of course, consists not only of her acknowledgment of incestuous passion for her father, but also of her deliberate pursuit of its consummation. It is worth noting here that Tirso eliminates an aspect of Ovid's narrative that creates sympathy for the Roman poet's Myrrha:

her suicide attempt. In the *Metamorphoses*, the despairing princess decides to end her dilemma by hanging herself. She is stopped in the act by her nurse, who in this way discovers Myrrha's secret and who offers to help the girl enter her father's bed only in order to prevent her from continuing to seek her own death, which the nurse considers a greater evil than incest (X.427-30). In obvious contrast, Tirso's Mirra confides in her *aya* hoping to find a very different remedy for her distress, while the nurse herself displays neither her Ovidian counterpart's horror nor her moral scruples before she agrees to act as Mirra's *tercera*. As a result, less moral ambiguity surrounds the Spanish Mirra's consummation of her incestuous passion, and the princess's attack on culturally-determined categories does indeed cause her to attain what Barkan terms "a condition that transcends and contradicts all these categories" (59). Mirra conceives and gives birth to her own half-brother, assuming simultaneous familial and biological positions—daughter and concubine, mother and sibling—that Tirso's text reminds us should be mutually exclusive: "El término cumplido, / Mirra ya hermana y madre" (40). Mirra's final physical metamorphosis now becomes inevitable. Pursued by her enraged father, who has himself become simultaneously "padre verdugo" and "desdeñoso amante" (42), Mirra begs the goddess Venus for a transformation corresponding to the liminal contradictions she has already come to exemplify:

.haz, desde aquí adelante,
 patrona compasiva,
 que, entre los vivos, ni me infamen viva,
 ni, entre los muertos muerta, honras espante,
 sino que mi remedio
 consista en ser de estos extremos medio
 porque, en angustia tanta,
 si sensitiva no, me estimen planta. (42)

Venus grants Mirra's plea and transforms her into a myrrh tree, the oozing resin of which will represent her eternal weeping.

Tecla likewise acts on her inner transformation and rejection of the authority attributed to culturally-imposed distinctions. At first she does so somewhat passively, repudiating the worldly pleasures privileged in her society that she once enjoyed; her mother Teoclea, for example, observes the "cuidadoso descuido con que, menospreciando galas, hasta allí apetecidas . . . , se satisfacía con las que, limpias y humildes, proporcionaba a sus deseos" (93). Tecla takes far more direct action, however, after Teoclea's denunciations lead to Pablo's arrest. Recalling Mirra's illicit nocturnal invasion of her father's bedchamber, Tecla sneaks out of her own house by night in order to join Pablo and the apostle's other

followers in their prison cell. Tecla's act represents a consummation of her love for Jesus, whom Pablo describes to the young woman as "tu esposo Christo" (121), while the text uses the same amorous trope to call particular attention to her daring: "¿a qué no se arrojara un pecho verdaderamente enamorado?" (115). This consummation realizes for Tecla the potential categorical conflicts she first confronted when she began listening to Pablo's sermons: she cannot simultaneously honor Jesus and the gods of Iconio, nor can she become a bride of Christ and preserve her virginity for His glory yet truly remain the daughter of Teoclea, much less Tamíride's betrothed, as her society defines those roles. Tecla's resulting condition validates Barkan's argument that "similar things are diversified into opposites and opposites are made identical" once socio-cultural categories are rejected in metamorphic tales (59). Teoclea herself employs the discourse of similarity and opposition when describing Tecla's spiritual transformation: "Sus mudanzas me mudaron de madre en enemiga. Borróse la similitud, que la llamó retrato mío" (128). At the same stage in the narrative, Pablo greets Tecla thus when she arrives in his prison cell: "Transformásete —decía— de mujer cobarde en varón invencible" (121). This figurative and spiritual transgending, symbolized by Tecla's shedding of her jewelry to bribe Teoclea's servants and the jailkeeper (116, 119),⁵ simultaneously results from and corresponds to Tecla's spiritual transformation from pagan to Christian and also her movement from Iconian privilege to Christian captivity. In short, Tecla has ceased to share her mother's defining characteristics and now shares those of Teoclea's diametric opposite, Pablo.

Again like Mirra, Tecla must next contend with the vengeful fury of the parent against whose will she has transgressed. Just as Cinira sought to kill his daughter after discovering her deception, it is Teoclea who pleads more fervently than anyone for Tecla's execution after the latter is discovered among Pablo's followers in prison. Teoclea demands that Iconio, represented by the proconsul judging the case, show Tecla's rebellion as little mercy as she, her mother, does: "No te compadezcas de quien a mis lágrimas diamante, desobediente a mis preceptos y cruel con la primera sangre que la dio vida . . . más debo al culto de mis dioses, que a una desatinada transgresora de sus leyes" (127-28). Like Cinira, however, Teoclea must also face the divine frustration of her vengeful desires. The flames to which Tecla is condemned miraculously refuse to burn her and Heaven sends "torbellinos, rayos y terremotos" to save Tecla and to punish those who sought her death (144). Tecla's newly-acquired invulnerability to violence confirms that she has indeed undergone a fundamental transformation. Indeed, after this divine protection saves Tecla a second time from her persecutors, Pablo recognizes the nature of her spiritual metamorphosis and acknowledges it, "dándola el blasón más célebre

que antes o después alcanzó mujer alguna. Pues la graduó de apóstola, con facultad y privilegio para predicar la palabra evangélica por todo el mundo" (171). Tecla has thus not only become a Christian, but a uniquely favored servant of Christ. Furthermore, the fresh emphasis which the text places on Tecla's singularity as a female apostle again associates transgenering, which Ovid repeatedly employs on the corporeal level as a radical alteration of the essential self, with Tecla's conversion. Metamorphosis thus may not manifest itself here in the corporeal, Ovidian fashion inflicted upon Mirra, but Tirso leaves little doubt that Tecla's spiritual transformation into an apostle of Jesus is its Christian analogue.

These numerous structural parallels between the accounts of Mirra and Tecla should not, however, lead us to the conclusion that their differences are of less significance than their similarities. I would argue instead that, as is so often the case in deliberate intertextualities, the parallels between the two narratives serve to foreground rather than minimize their divergences. Thomas M. Greene has labelled this process as practiced in the Renaissance "heuristic" imitation, the strategy at the heart of texts that "come to us advertising their derivation from the subtexts they carry with them, but having done that, they proceed to *distance themselves* from the subtexts and force us to recognize the poetic distance traversed" (40). This distance is inescapable in *La patrona de las musas*, a text which we have already seen to differentiate and judge between the Christian values that Tecla embraces and the pagan values of Adonis-worshipping Iconio. Mirra's Ovidian story is recited before Tecla's begins, with the result that the latter inevitably unfolds in contrast to the former, each parallel emerging in turn. As each parallel emerges, the differences between the two narratives likewise manifest themselves.

According to Barkan's structure of an Ovidian story, such a tale begins with the protagonist's rejection of cultural categories and distinctions—what Sullivan terms desire's rebellion against law. Both Mirra and Tecla, as previously noted, have their dissenting desires divinely visited upon them. However, Tecla's conversion by the "Espíritu Paloma" speaking through Pablo is radically different from Cupid's attack on Mirra. Even within the context of Hellenistic pantheism, Cupid is a deity known for the unruly and forbidden passions he maliciously inflicts on his victims, of whom Mirra is but one of many:

ese que, si arrogante
 imposibles no postra,
 ni dios se estima, ni permite fama,
 venenoso derrama
 su contagión sabrosa
 en el pecho de Mirra, cuanto hermosa

horrenda tanto, pues su nombre infama
quien su tragedia ha escrito. (35-6)

In Trinitarian Christianity, on the other hand, the Holy Spirit is a very different being, one that brings revelation to those whom it touches. Cupid confuses and obscures, while the "Espíritu Paloma" enlightens, as further consideration of the two women's respective rebellions will show. In the *Metamorphoses*, Myrrha's is one of several tales told by Orpheus of "maidens inflamed by unnatural love and paying the penalty of their lust" (X.153-54). Tirso's text replaces this Orphic narrative voice with that of the pagan priest as well as that of Don Luis at one remove, yet does not dilute Orpheus's emphasis on the perversity of passions such as Mirra's.⁶ The desire Cupid inflicts on Mirra is a physical lust that puts her into conflict with the prohibition against incest, a wide-spread cultural precept valid for her as well as for the listening Iconians and for Tirso's own early modern Spanish readers, whom the author's prefatory note presumes will be Catholic (17). These readers, though Christians rather than worshippers of Adonis, would nevertheless most likely have shared the narrating *sacerdote's* condemnation of Mirra's desire and of her act as *infamia* (39). The law against which Mirra rebels, then, manifests itself in a form which Tirso's intended audiences would have recognized as part of their own religious precepts and in which they almost certainly would have believed. Mirra's incestuous sexual rebellion could not help but be perceived as deviant and wrong, which might explain why the poem's account of her flight from Cinira recalls an honor-obsessed *comedia* husband in murderous pursuit of his unfaithful wife. Tecla's desire to serve Christ by maintaining her virginity, however, is a purely spiritual one that positions her only against prohibitions which Tirso's readers would have considered superstitious pagan beliefs in denial of Christian truth. According to the religious ideologies of Counter-Reformation Spain, then, Tecla's desire in fact conformed to God's true law—the ultimate "Law of the Father"—by rebelling against false doctrine, in the process making her assertion of sexual self-determination a holy rather than a deviant one as well.

Similarly, the significance of Tecla's metamorphosis can be more easily discerned in contrast to Mirra's transformation. Trapped among the mutually exclusive categories she has violated, Mirra begs Venus to be freed from her human form in order to take refuge in a middle ground between life and death. The goddess responds by transforming her into the tree that bears her name, but this metamorphosis is problematic. As Mary E. Barnard demonstrates, transformations of humans into plants—or, for that matter, into animals—frequently partook of the grotesque in Ovid as well as in early modern Spanish texts and paintings, offering

“vivid portrayals of a human being in the process of becoming something that is not human . . . a hybrid, incongruous vision of human dissolution and distortion, in violation not only of natural order but of standards of harmony and proportion as well” (Barnard 37). While Mirra might herself have chosen her arboreal metamorphosis, she did so only to avoid violent death at her enraged father’s hands; like her Ovidian counterpart Daphne (to whom Tirso’s *Fábula* explicitly compares her), Mirra “departs from her human form and descends forever into the world of mindless, unreflecting nature” (Barnard 39). Mirra’s transformation is a grotesque and debasing one, preserving her from paternal violence at the cost of her humanity and of eternally shedding resinous tears for her incestuous transgression. Tecla’s metamorphosis, on the other hand, is not “downward” but “upward”—that is to say, she is transformed from a pagan human being into a Christian apostle, her humanity touched and fundamentally altered by the higher divine forces that protect her from the violence of her persecutors. Furthermore, Mirra’s retreat into arboreal form leaves her categorical contradictions—as daughter and concubine to Cinira, as sister and mother to Adonis—forever unresolved; indeed, this hybrid existence symbolizes her inability to resolve them. In contrast, Tecla’s apostleship ultimately enables her to put an end to the contradictions she faced as Teoclea’s Iconian daughter and as a Christian virgin. She returns to her native city and preaches in the same house where she first heard Pablo’s sermons, succeeding in converting her mother and numerous other pagans to Christianity:

En pláticas divinas, coloquios celestiales, entretenimientos angélicos gastó Tecla con su huésped y muchos de sus condicípulos, algunos días, cabiéndole a la anciana Teoclea la mejor parte, pues reducida ya, y humilde a fuerza de tan sobrenaturales desengaños, catequizada por su hija (mejor madre en la generación de la gracia) y alistada después en la milicia de los predestinados, con el generoso carácter del bautismo, cobró, con infinitas mejoras, el ser de que tantas veces a Tecla había hecho cargo. Dejóla firme en la fe, y en su compañía copioso número de cristianos noveles. (172)

Unlike Mirra, Tecla’s metamorphosis thus enables her to actually dissolve the conflicts that her original transgressive desire had inflicted upon her: with the help of God’s grace she successfully preaches the Word and thereby reconciles her social and familial identities with her Christian calling.

In conclusion, this study has endeavored to illuminate the intertextual dialogue Tirso de Molina created between the discourses of pagan metamorphosis and Christian hagiography in *La patrona de las musas*, the first novella of his *Deleitar aprovechando*. Rejecting both metaphoric and syn-

cretic readings of classical mythology, Tirso instead uses myth as a counterpoint to his life of Tecla. Preceding his account of the apostle's hardships and spiritual rebirth with a retelling of the Myrrha story from Ovid, the Mercedarian offers a narrative pattern to which the hagiography's structure can be seen to correspond: a young woman's rebellion against cultural order which leads to the erosion of distinctions and to categorical crises, ultimately resulting in the rebellious protagonist's metamorphosis into a new state of being. These parallels between the two stories serve in turn to foreground ideologically fundamental distinctions between them, permitting Tirso to assert the superiority of sacred obligations to worldly ones, the superiority of the spirit to the flesh, and the superiority of Christianity to paganism.

Notes

¹Cossío offers a primarily stylistic overview of both poems, concerning himself with Tirso's *culteranismo* (612-21). Cebrián briefly notes Tirso's *Fábula de Mirra, Venus y Adonis* in his survey of the Adonis myth in Golden Age poetry (213-15), while Testa devotes a rare entire essay to the *Fábula de Píramo y Tisbe*.

²The Adonai, festivals honoring Adonis, were held in various locations throughout the Greek regions and Western Asia during the early centuries A.D. Hammond and Scullard note such ceremonies in Alexandria and fifth-century Athens (8), which Frazer describes in some detail (331-45).

³In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer's central—and often vigorously disputed—thesis leads him to speculate that Christian Easter celebrations may have derived from the Adonai (331-45). Although it is difficult to imagine Gabriel Téllez even conceiving, much less believing, this idea, it is nevertheless obvious that he discerns similarities between them.

⁴Heiple's essay studies these Renaissance approaches to mythology in two of Calderón's *autos*. See also Allen, Barkan, and Sez nec.

⁵See Aubin (264) on this detail within the context of a gender-centered reading of the original Acts of Paul. For a study of women's spiritual transgending in the early modern mystic tradition, consult Cruz.

⁶See Bate's essay for further discussion of "sexual perversity" in the Myrrha and the Venus and Adonis stories.

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