

Emblematics, Agriculture, and Mythography in The Origin of the Milky Way by Jacopo Tintoretto

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There is no doubt that the painting by Jacopo Tintoretto I am going to discuss in this paper is very unusual from the point of view of its iconography. Only a handful of other works representing the origin of the Milky Way are known—which makes the issue of sources the artist or his "iconographic" adviser used the critical one. I will therefore first survey those literary and visual sources that were associated with the painting in previous literature. Then I suggest that more texts and images, most of them taken here into consideration for the first time, may bear upon our understanding of the picture's inception, genesis, and meaning.¹

Tintoretto's painting in the National Gallery in London is about the Milky Way (fig. 1),² or—in technical terms—about the pale strip of light consisting of many stars that one can see stretching across the sky at night.³ Those who prefer art to nature can see the Milky Way depicted high left in a painting of ca. 1610 by the German artist Adam Elsheimer representing the Flight into Egypt (Alte Pinakothek, Munich).⁴ Since Tintoretto's work is generally thought to have originated ca. 1577-82, the two paintings, though quite close in date, display two totally different attitudes towards representation of celestial phenomena. While Elsheimer aimed at a straightforward, if not scientifically correct, depiction of them, Tintoretto followed the venerable tradition of poetic astronomy, according to which celestial phenomena were understood as dependent on mythological events.

According to Ovid (*Metamorphoses*, I, 168-74), the Milky Way was the road along which the gods proceeded to the Olympic council called by Jupiter. The story of how this celestial highway consisting of countless stars came into being was narrated, in the same mythological vein, by several classical writers. Thus, for example Manilius in his *Astronomica* (II, 43) remembers:

[...] an ancient legend [...] that from the snow-white breast of heaven's queen [*scil.* Juno] there flowed a stream of milk which left its color upon the skies; wherefore it is called the Milky Way, and the name derives from its actual origin.⁵

While this account is quite general, other writers, like Pseudo-Eratosthenes in his *Catasterismi* (44) or Diodorus of Sicily in *The Library of History* (IV, ix, 2), were more specific—furnishing poetic embellishments and sometimes even differing details.⁶ But let me quote a second-century text that can be understood as a summary of classical speculations about the Milky Way's origin. In one of the myths or *Fabulae* recounted by Hyginus (II, 43), we can read what follows:

There is a certain circular figur among the constellations, white in color, which some have called the Milky Way. Eratosthenes says that Juno, without realizing it, gave milk to the infant Mercury, but when she learned that he was the son of Maia, she thrust him away, and the whiteness of the flowing milk appears among the constellations. Others have said that Hercules was given to Juno to nurse when she slept. When she awoke, it happened as described above.

Others, again, say that Hercules was so greedy that he couldn't hold in his mouth all the milk he sucked, and the Milky Way spilled over from his mouth.⁷

Without dwelling too much on details, it can be stated that in Classical Antiquity the story of the origin of the Milky Way was closely and inextricably related to the myth of Hercules. Having been born not by Jupiter's legitimate spouse Juno, but by the mortal Alkmene, Hercules the illegitimate became divine (or semi-divine) by being placed secretly at the breast of Juno. By this occasion, the milk not sucked out by the child spilled into the sky, creating the galaxy called the Milky Way.

Now, despite the generally agreed fact that Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way* ranks among the most important mythological paintings created in Venice during the last quarter of the sixteenth century, research on the work has until now remained where it was left more than sixty years ago.⁸ Then, in 1938, Erna Mandowsky published a succinct article that brought forward a brief but complex interpretation of the painting in question.⁹ First of all, the German emigré scholar suggested that Tintoretto's canvass had been cut down at its bottom sometime in the past—which, according to her, is confirmed by two late sixteenth-century drawings made after it, one ascribed to Jacob Hoefnagel (fig. 2), the other to Domenico Tintoretto, Jacopo's son.¹⁰ The two drawings show that the composition, in its pristine state, featured in its lower part a reclining female figure, probably the personification of Earth, and a bunch of white lilies. Pondering over this, Mandowsky suggested that the subject of the painting as conceived by the artist had originated in a Byzantine text on botany and agriculture known as the *Geoponica* or *De re rustica* (XI, 20), in the sixteenth century attributed to the Emperor Constantine the Great. Firstly published in Venice, Tintoretto's hometown, most probably in 1538, the treatise contained a chapter entitled "De lilio historia", or "Historia del giglio", where the legend of the Milky Way was associated not only with the myth of Hercules, but also with the white color of lily. As translated from Greek into Italian by Pietro Lauro and printed in Venice in 1542, the story reads as follows:

Havendo Giove generato Hercole d'Alcomena, et essendo percio Hercole mortale, studiava Giove farlo d'immortalita partecipe, la onde sottopose egli il fanciullo alle pope di Giunone, che dormiva. Ma il fanciullo di latte sacio, lascio la popa, ma tuttavia il latte anchora tolto via il [recte: dal] fanciullo, in gran copia stillava, et tutto cio che nel cielo si sparse, fece il lateo cerchio, che greci galaxia chiamano, ma quello che cadendo in terra la bagno, produsse il giglio, che di colore s'assomiglia al latte.¹¹

Further on, Mandowsky suggested that there must have originally existed a link between Tintoretto's picture and Tommaso Rangoni, respected Venetian doctor and esteemed philologist (1493-1577). Rangoni's medal of 1562 shows the creation of the Milky Way on its reverse (fig. 3)—with Jupiter in the guise of an eagle bringing the infant Hercules to Juno sleeping within the milky galaxy, lilies growing below.¹² The choice of this subject, Mandowsky also pointed out, could have been prompted, first, by Rangoni's coat-of-arms which showed eagles and lilies, and, second, by the fact that Rangoni's himself, born as Giannotti or Giannozzi in 1493, was later adopted by the Count Guido Rangoni. And finally, Tommaso Rangoni is remembered today mainly as a patron of arts and artists, Jacopo Tintoretto prominent among them.¹³

This tightly-knit fabric of arguments resulted in establishing a firm link between the story told in the *Geoponica*, Rangoni and his medal, and Tintoretto's painting—this, according to Mandowsky, being supported "by the fact that in Rangoni's medal alone do we find an iconographical parallel to Tintoretto's conception".¹⁴ It would then seem that Tintoretto's *Origin of the Milky Way* can be classified as a truly humanistic painting based on a very recondite literary source, and associated with a learned patron. This seemingly water-proof fabrication can however be objected on more than one account. First, being translated into Latin and Italian, and many times reprinted, the *Geoponica* were quite easily accessible to all interested readers, even to those who mastered only Italian. Second, and more important, the story about the origin of the white color of the lily could have been found by Tintoretto in all major mythographical handbooks that were published before he set out to work on the London canvass. The story can be read already in Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's brief treatise about Hercules, written in 1515 but published only in 1539—suggesting that the astute mythographer must have used the *Geoponica* in manuscript.¹⁵ Extensive versions, based on all important classical texts, were included by Natale Conti in his 1551 work on mythology,¹⁶ and, in 1555, by

Vincenzo Cartari in his *Immagini*.¹⁷ In 1615, the great antiquarian and philologist Lorenzo Pignoria published a new, revised and enlarged, edition of Cartari's bestseller, for which he wrote very learned "Annotazioni". There, commenting on Cartari's account of the Milky Way, Pignoria informs the reader that this very fable inspired Rangoni to have it represented on two of his medals, one of them having been subsequently imitated by a woodcut reproduced in Cartari's handbook (fig. 4). We see Jupiter giving the small Hercules to Juno to nurse, plus the Milky Way (*circulus lacteus*), and two lilies. The same "poetic invention", Pignoria adds, is gracefully depicted in a small painting (*quadretto*) belonging to a Genovese gentleman, named Andrea Spinola.¹⁸ Unfortunately, the whereabouts of this work is not known today, let alone its authorship and dating. Whatever they however might have been, it becomes obvious that, in the sixteenth century, this iconography was not so unusual as thought before.

The most decisive support to this statement is provided by one of the eighty-six new items which were added by Andrea Alciato to the 1546 edition of his emblems, published—*mirabile dictu*—in the very city where Jacopo Tintoretto painted his *Origin of the Milky Way* (fig. 5). Alciato's emblem, "In nothos" (On bastards / On Illegitimate Offspring), has the following epigram:

Herculeos spurii semper celebretis honores:

Nam vestri princeps ordinis ille fuit.

Nec prius esse Deus potuit, quam sugeret infans

Lac, sibi quod fraudis nescia Iuno dabat.

[You, the bastards, should forever celebrate the honours of Hercules,
for he was the prince of your class.

Nor was he able to become a god until, as an infant, he sucked
the milk which Juno, ignorant of the deception, gave him.]¹⁹

As in a symbolic contraction, this emblem's *pictura* shows Juno nursing the infant Hercules, as well as the circle of stars known as the Milky Way. Two other ways of picturing the same concept were employed in other sixteenth-century editions of Alciato's book. In some of them, the nursing of Hercules forms the backdrop, while the mature semi-god with his club is depicted left in the foreground (fig. 6).²⁰ And finally, in the 1621 *editio optima*, and in several printings preceeding it, "Jupiter, accompanied by his eagle, is proffering the infant to the right breast of a sleeping Juno" (fig. 7).²¹ (This illustration, being reversed, can be easily compared with the basic design of Tintoretto's composition.) Needless to say, there are no lilies either mentioned in Alciato's epigram or represented in the corresponding emblematic *picturae*. The emblem is about Hercules nursed by Juno; and the Milky Way is only implied by the mythological context.

In 1990, the emblem was analyzed in detail by Virginia Callahan, and related by her to the sometimes neglected fact that Alciato was jurist by profession:

Laying a child at the breast of a woman signified an act of adoption; once the milk had been consumed the adoption was consummated. For Alciati, a professor of jurisprudence, the subject of illegitimacy as it related to adoption was of special interest. In his *Parerga iuris* [of 1547] he recalled the legend of how Hercules the illegitimate acquired the right of divinity by being placed secretly at the breast of Juno by Jupiter, and he quoted in toto the epigram of this emblem.²²

This explanation given, the emblem in question would seem to fit a man who was adopted. And this is almost certainly why the motif was selected by Tommaso Rangoni for the reverse of two of his medals. With Tintoretto's painting, the case appears to be different. In his "Life of Tintoretto", the seventeenth-century biographer Carlo Ridolfi says that the artist painted four mythologies for the rooms of the Emperor Rudolf II, all of them representing various episodes from the life of Hercules:

For the rooms of the Emperor Rudolf II he painted four mythologies. In one there is a *Musical Concert*, with the Muses in the garden playing various instruments. In another *Jupiter Brings to Juno's Breast the Infant Bacchus*, born of Semele. The third is of *Silenus*, who comes in the dark to the bed of Hercules thinking to possess Iole; and in the fourth of these is *Hercules*, adorned with female lasciviousness by the same Iole, looking at himself in a mirror.²³

Notwithstanding the iconographic misidentification, the picture described by Ridolfi as representing Jupiter, Juno and Bacchus is almost certainly identical with *The Origin of the Milky Way* in the National Gallery in London. In 1967, the "Hercules series" which Tintoretto painted for Rudolf II was tentatively reconstructed by Claire Garas who also suggested that its program harks back to Lilio Gregorio Giraldi's *Herculis vita*.²⁴ In the case that the London picture was indeed painted for Rudolf II, it must have originated only after 1582, when the Emperor moved from Vienna to Prague, launching there a building campaign that should have changed the old Castle of Hradčany into the imperial residence.

Taking all these circumstances into account, it is possible, but as I hope to have shown by no means necessary, that Tintoretto's painting had originally been destined for Rangoni, but after 1577, when he died, it was used as a part of the cycle for Rudolf who became the Emperor only one year ago.²⁵ The X-rays recently taken at the National Gallery in London discovered "the startling difference between underpaint and top painting" in Tintoretto's picture. Under the visible layer of paint, made up by regular work of brush, there are hidden excitingly impetuous brush strokes which suggests the change of the painting's destination, so to say, at some point in its early history. It could also mean that Tintoretto considered a higher degree of finish more fitting for the Emperor than a Venetian doctor. Moreover, I am inclined to propose that the canvass has been cut down at the bottom on this occasion—which would imply that the two drawings adduced above were either made after some preparatory works, or document how the painting looked before it was dispatched to Prague.²⁶ The "new", reduced, composition, in its present-day state, represents only the legend of the origin of the Milky Way without its agricultural appendix dealing with the whitening of the lily.

Commentaries on Alciato's emblem "In nothos", written by Claude Mignault and Joannes Thuilius, interpret the Milky-Way-myth and the emblem as referring to "the illegitimate offsprings" not only in a literal, that is strictly legal way.²⁷ According to these commentaries, the message of the emblem can be metaphorically applied to those who—like Aeneas, Romulus, Alexander the Great and some others—were born to mortal parents but became godlike by their heroic deeds. There seems to be no doubt that such a reading would flatter the Emperor Rudolf, in whose personal self-fashioning and imperial propaganda the myth of Hercules is documented as having played an extremely important role.²⁸

1. My sincere thanks for help of various kinds go to Alison Adams and Stephen Rawles (University of Glasgow), Gabriele Finaldi (National Gallery, London), Vladimír Juřen (CNRS, Paris), Thea Vignau-Wilberg (Graphische Sammlung, Munich), and Jürgen Zimmer (Kunstbibliothek, Berlin). Participation in the Munich emblem conference was facilitated by the financial support provided by Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst. Last but not least, my approach to Tintoretto's iconography is indebted to Charles Hope and his work on Paolo Veronese, as presented in his "Veronese and the Venetian Tradition of Allegory". In: *Proceedings of the British Academy* 71 (1985), pp. 389-428.

2. The National Gallery, London, inv. no. 1313, 148 x 165 cm. For basic information and bibliography, see Cecil Gould, *The Sixteenth Century Venetian School (National Gallery Catalogues)*. London 1959, pp. 88-91 (also in *The Sixteenth-Century Italian School [National Gallery Catalogues]*, London 1975, pp. 259-261); Christopher Baker / Tom Henry, *The National Gallery: Complete Catalogue*. London 1995, p. 665. For more bibliography see notes 8, 9, 10, 12, 23, and 25 below.

3. The Milky Way as an astronomical phenomenon was exhaustively discussed by Stanley L. Jaki, *The Milky Way: An Elusive Road for Science*. New York 1972. Its artistic representations are briefly listed in Albert Fournier, "La légende de la Voie Lactée". In: *Aesculape* 8 (1930), pp. 96-97; and Andor Pigler, *Barockthemen: Eine Auswahl von Verzeichnissen zur Ikonographie des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts*. 2nd ed., Budapest 1974, p. 182.

4. Keith Andrews, *Adam Elsheimer*. Oxford 1977, pp. 37-38, cat. no. 26. Anna Ottani Cavina, "On the theme of landscape, II: Elsheimer and Galileo". In: *The Burlington Magazine* 118 (1976), pp. 139-144, proposed that Elsheimer's representation of the night sky had been inspired by Galileo's *Sidereus Nuncius*, but this was contested by Keith Andrews, *ibid.*, p. 595. See also Deborah Howard, "Elsheimer's Flight into Egypt and the Night Sky in the Renaissance". In: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 55 (1992), pp. 212-224; and Eileen Reeves, *Painting the Heavens: Art and Science in the Age of Galileo*. Princeton 1997, pp. 19 and 231f. (with further bibliography).

5. Manilius, *Astronomica* (Loeb Classical Library). Transl. by G. P. Gould. Cambridge, Mass. – London 1977, pp. 64f.

6. See Pseudo-Eratosthenus, *Catasterismi*. Ed. by Alexander Olivieri. Leipzig 1897, p. 52 ("Circulus lacteus"); Diodorus of Sicily, *The Library of History* (Loeb Classical Library). Transl. by C. H. Oldfather. Cambridge, Mass. – London 1967, vol. II, pp. 369ff. In addition to these two, several others, albeit minor, classical texts related to the story of the Milky Way were known in the Renaissance: (a) anonymous epigram "On a Statue of Hera Suckling Heracles", no. 589 in *The Greek Anthology* (Loeb Classical Library). Transl. by W. R. Paton. Cambridge, Mass. – London 1968, vol. III, p. 32; (b) Pausanias, *Description of Greece* (Loeb Classical Library). Transl. by W. H. S. Jones. London – Cambridge, Mass. 1925, p. 277 (IX, xxv, 2); (c) Lycophron, *Alexandra*. Transl. Carl von Holzinger. Leipzig 1895, p. 157 (v. 1328).

7. *The Myths of Hyginus*. Transl. and ed. Mary Grant. Lawrence 1960, pp. 228-229. For Latin text, see *Hygini De Astronomica*. Ed. Ghislain Viré. Stuttgart – Leipzig 1992, p. 94.

8. Cf. for example Eric Newton, *Tintoretto*. London – New York – Toronto 1952, pp. 168f.; Carlo Bernari / Piero De Vecchi, *L'opera completa del Tintoretto*. Milan 1970,

pp. 125f., cat. no. 255; Rodolfo Pallucchini / Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto: Le opere sacre e profane*. Milan 1982, vol. I, pp. 89, 92 and 212f., cat. no. 390; Terisio Pignatti / Francesco Valcanover, *Tintoretto*. Milan 1985, pp. 49 and 140.

9. Erna Mandowsky, "The Origin of the Milky Way in the National Gallery". In: *The Burlington Magazine* 72 (1938), pp. 88-93.

10. See *ibid.*, figs. E (Venice, Galleria dell'Accademia) and D (Berlin, Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. no. KdZ 17.321). For more on the latter drawing, signed "Ja Hoefnagl" (Jacob Hoefnagel, 1575 – ca. 1630), see Elfriede Bock, *Die Zeichnungen alter Meister im Kupferstichkabinett: Die deutschen Meister*. Berlin 1921, p. 49 and pl. 59; and Thea Vignau-Wilberg, "'Qualche disegni d'importancia': Joris Hoefnagel als Zeichnungssammler". In: *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst* 38 (1987), pp. 185-214, here pp. 204 and 213, n. 125. The two drawings were also reproduced by Claire Garas, "Le tableau de Tintoret du Musée de Budapest et le cycle peint pour l'empereur Rodolphe II". In: *Bulletin du Musée Hongrois des Beaux-Arts* 30 (1967), pp. 29-48, here pp. 36 and 37, figs. 28 and 29. Also cf. note 26 below.

11. *Constantino Cesare De notevoli e utilissimi ammaestramenti dell'agricoltura, di Greco in volgare nuovamente tradotto, per Pietro Lauro*. Venice 1542, fols. 110r-v. Another Italian translation was published in the same year: *Constantino Cesare de li scelti et utilissimi documenti de l'Agricoltura, nuovamente tradotto per M. Nicolo Vitelli*. Venice 1542, fol. 130v. I have also consulted Giovanni Cornario's Latin translation: *Constantini Caesaris selectarum praeceptionum, de Agricultura Libri viginti, Iano Cornario medico physico interprete*. Venice 1538, fol. 111r; and there appears to be another Latin translation published in the same year in Basle (National Library, Prague, 5 J 3). For an English summary based on *Geoponica: De re rustica selectorum libri XX, Constantino quidem Caesari nuncupati*. Venice 1538, see Mandowsky (note 9), p. 88. For more information, see W. Gemoll, *Untersuchungen über die Quellen, den Verfasser und die Abfassungszeit der Geoponica*. Berlin 1884; E. Fehrle, *Richtlinien zur Textgestaltung der griechischen Geoponica* (Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-historische Klasse 11). Heidelberg 1920; *idem*, *Studien zu den griechischen Geoponikern*. Heidelberg 1920; Stella Georgoudi, *Des Chevaux et Des Boeufs dans Le Monde Grec: Réalités et représentations animalières à partir des livres XVI et XVII des Géoponiques*. Paris – Athens 1990. In spite of the fact that our knowledge of the sixteenth-century reception of the *Geoponica* is still rather misty, Tintoretto, needless to say, might have read either or both of its Italian translations referred to above.

12. Mandowsky (note 9), p. 88 and fig. B. The medal is known to exist in two versions which were previously attributed to Alessandro Vittoria or Jacopo Sansovino, but recently to Mattheus Paganus a Fide (active 1543-55). See G. F. Hill, *Renaissance Medals from the Samuel H. Kress Collection at the National Gallery of Art*. Revised and enlarged by Graham Pollard. London 1967, pp. 78f., cat. no. 417b (with previous literature); Ulrich Middeldorf / Dagmar Stiebral, *Renaissance Medals and Plaquettes*. Florence 1983, p. LXI; Lore Börner, *Bestandkataloge des Münzkabinetts Berlin: Die italienische Medaillen der Renaissance und des Barock (1450 bis 1750)*. Berlin 1997, pp. 191f. (cat. no. 835 and 836). For these two medals, in particular regarding their relationship with Tintoretto's *Milky Way*, see Romano Pasi, "Le medaglie del Ravennate Tommaso Rangoni detto il Filologo". In: *Medaglia* 3. 6 (Dicembre 1973), pp. 7-24, here pp. 17-22, cat. nos. 6 and 7; and Erasmus Weddingen, "Thomas Philologus Ravennas. Gelehrter, Wohltäter und Mäzen". In: *Saggi e Memorie di Storia*

dell'Arte 9 (1974), pp. 7-76, here pp. 49f. and pl. 160, figs. 32 c & d. According to some scholars, the scene on the revers represents Juno giving birth to Hebe, "Dea delle gioventù"—given that the inscription "A IOVE ET SORORE GENITA" is grammatically correct (Middeldorf / Stiebral). See especially Pasi, p. 18, who summarizes earlier opinions but does not find the Hebe identification justified. Also cf. Weddingen, p. 50.

13. It is well known how important was the role played by Rangoni in commissioning by Tintoretto the cycle of paintings for the Scuola Grande di San Marco in Venice, where he was portrayed by the artist. See Weddingen (note 12), pp. 51-53 and 55-58; Roland Kirschel, *Jacopo Tintoretto: Das Sklavenwunder. Bildwelt und Weltbild*. Frankfurt a. M. 1994; idem, *Tintoretto*. Hamburg 1994, pp. 80ff. Probably the best known independent portrait of Rangoni is that by Jacopo Sansovino placed in the lunette above the main portal of the church of San Giuliano in Venice, for which see Weddingen, pp. 64-67, Deborah Howard, *Jacopo Sansovino: Architecture and Patronage in Renaissance Venice*. New Haven – London 1975, pp. 81f. and 84-87; and Bruce Boucher, *The Sculpture of Jacopo Sansovino*. New Haven – London 1991, vol. II, pp. 338f., cat. no. 31.

14. Mandowsky (note 9), p. 93. The only other representation of the same subject I know about is a painting of 1636 by Peter Paul Rubens in the Prado (and a preparatory sketch for it in Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts). See Matías Díaz Padrón, *Museo del Prado: Catálogo de pinturas, I: Escuela flamenca, siglo XVII*. Madrid 1975, pp. 253f., inv. no. 1668; Svetlana Alpers, *The Decoration of the Torre de la Parada* (Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard IX). Brussels 1971, pp. 239f., cat. no. 42; Julius S. Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens: A Critical Catalogue*. Princeton N.J. 1980, pp. 284f. Alpers states that "Rubens has not taken inspiration" from Tintoretto's, and I completely agree with her—especially when we take into account the pedigree of the latter painting, as well as the fact that the first and only engraving after it has been made only ca. 1780, by Robert de Launay the Younger (see Anna Laura Lepschy, *Tintoretto observed: A documentary survey of critical reactions from the 16th to the 20th century*. Ravenna 1983, p. 85 and fig. 72).

15. Here quoted after Giraldi's *Operum quae extant omnium [...] tomi duo*. Basle 1580, vol. I, pp. 545-570, here p. 547:

Natus est ergo Hercules spurio femine, unde & Athenienses in eius honorem gymnasium Cynosarges, nothorum & spuriorum esse conventum voluerunt, quod ad Themistoclis usque tempora inviolatum permansit. Sunt & qui Herculem Cynosargen cognominatum tradunt. Mox ubi infantem mater peperit, exposuisse dicitur, unde & loco nomen Herculeus campus. Ablactatum vero à Iunone dormientem, vel, ut alij tradunt, Minervae suasu: cuius Iunonis cum papillam avidius puer exugeret, Deam molestia affecit, quare est ab ea abiectas. Dein à Minerva susceptus matri est redditus. Aiunt quidam & lac exuctum infantem evomuisse, ex quo sit in coelo conficta, quam Graeci galaxiam, nos tum viam, tum orbem, & lacteum circulum noncupamus. [...] Alij eo lacte terram respersam perhibent, atque inde liliū exortum, quod propterea Iunonia rosa ab aliquibus dictum videri potest.

This passage was referred to in Giraldi's *De deis gentium varia et multiplex historia*. Basle 1548, p. 158: "Iunonis enim flos liliū. & rosa Iunonis vocabatur: id quo à fabula infantis Herculis, ab Iunone ablacti deductum, in nostro Hercule scripsimus." Recently, the mythographer was quoted in full by Pasi (note 12), p. 24, n. 29. For another suggestion connecting Giraldi and Tintoretto, see bellow.

16. Natale Conti, *Mythologiae, sive explacationis fabularum libri decem*. Venice 1567, fols. 202r-212r (bk. VII, chap. i: "De Hercule") and, in particular, fols. 41v - 44v (bk. II, chap. iv: "De Iunone"), here fol. 42r:

Ferunt Iunonem lac Herculi infanti praebuisse, quo immortalitatem
assequeretur, cum illum idcirco Pallas ad illam attulisset, quod innuit

Lycophron in eo versu: Gratumque cultori Tropaea uber Deae. Nam fabulantur
Iovem aliquando dormientis Iunonis uberibus Herculem infantem admovisse,
quo ab excitata reiecto, pars lactis, quae in coelum cecidit, viam inde vocatam
lacteam fecit: at quae cecidit in terram, fecit candida lilia, cum prius essent

crocea. Conti's classical sources—Diodorus Siculus and Lycophron (see note 6 above)—were carefully identified and dutifully quoted by Rosa María Iglesia Montiel and María Consuelo Álvarez Morán in their recent edition of his *Mitología*. Murcia 1988, pp. 482 and especially 130. Held (note 14), p. 284, was the first to suggest that Late Renaissance and Baroque artists (in this case Rubens) could have used Conti's handbook when conceiving the Milky Way iconography.

17. Here quoted after *editio optima*: Vincenzo Cartari, *Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi*. Venice 1647, pp. 104f.:

A Giunone fecero gli antichi ghirlande di bianchi gigli, liquali chiamavano le
rose di Giunone, perche tinti del suo latte diventatono bianchi, come raccontano
le favole, dicendo, che Giove, mentre che ella dormiva, le attaccò Hercole ancor
fanciullino alle mammelle, accioche nodrendolo del suo latte non l'havesse in
odio poi. Ma quello poppando troppo avidamente fece sì, che la Dea si destò; &
riconosciutolo da se lo ributtò subito in modo, che il latte, che ancora usciva,
per lo più si sparse per il Cielo, & quivi fece quella certa lista bianca, che vi si
vede ancora, quale chiamano gli Astrologi la via lattea, & il restante caddè giù
in terra sopra i gigli, onde rimasero così tinti di bianco, che poi nati sono sempre
bianchi.

18. Cartari (note 17), pp. 291-342: "Annotazioni di Lorenzo Pignoria, al libro Delle
Imagini del Cartari", here pp. 305f.:

Questa favola di Giunone hebbe in core Tomaso Filologo Ravignano Medico
eccellente all'età de'nostri padri, che in molte sue Medaglie la fece segnare; & ad
imitazione di lui s'è rappresentato qui sotto [fig. on p. 310]. Et la medesima
Inventione della favola principale tiene dipinta in un Quadretto vagamente il S.
Andrea Spinola del già Franc. Gentil'huomo Genovese, degno dell'amore di
tutti i galant'huomini. Et questa inventione poetica quanto al colorimento
de'Gigli, è molto simile a quella, che delle Rose si legge in Costantino Cesare al
lib. 11. c. 18. che [...]. Altri l'attribuiscono alla puntata d'una spina nel piede di
Venere come si legge appresso'l medesimo.

The woodcut was later used in the 1637 edition of Conti's book, published in Padua, p. 68. For the story of the coloring of the rose—the scene depicted in Franceco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, as well as by Titian, and Giulio Romano—see Walter Friedländer, "La tintura delle rose (the Sacred and Profane Love) by Titian". In: *The Art Bulletin* 20 (1938), pp. 322-324; and Ernst H. Gombrich, "Hypnerotomachiana, III: Giulio Romano and Sebastiano del Piombo". In: *Symbolic Images*. Chicago 1985, pp. 102-108, here p. 108. As pointed out by Pignoria in the passage quoted above, the story can be read in the *Geoponica*, XI, 19, and not only in Aphthonius's *Progymnasmata*, as assumed by Gombrich, pp. 108 and 222, n. 38).

19. Andrea Alciato, *Emblematum libellus*. Venice 1546, fol. 15v. The English translation comes from *Andreas Alciatus*, vol. II: *Emblems in Translation*. Ed. by Peter M. Daly assisted by Simon Cuttler. Toronto – Buffalo – London 1985, no. 139;

another can be found in Alciato, *Emblemata*, Lyons, 1550. Transl. and annot. by Betty I. Knott, intr. by John Manning. Aldershot – Brookfield 1996, p. 151. The 1546 edition has been most recently discussed by Monika Grünberg-Dröge, "The 1546 Venice Edition of Andrea Alciato's *Emblemata*". In: Peter M. Daly / John Manning / Marc van Vaeck (eds.), *Emblems from Alciato to the Tattoo* (Imago Figurata Studies 1C). Turnhout 1999, pp. X-XX. It should be acknowledged that Alciato was first brought into connection with the London canvass by Mandowsky (note 9), p. 88, n. 6; and, following the lead, mentioned by Garas 1967 (note 10), p. 40, n. 34. Later on, when discussing the painting by Rubens in the Prado, Held 1980 (note 14), p. 284, fig. 8, reproduced the 1546 emblem and pointed out that "a very motherly Juno is depicted nursing Hercules, even though [...] the text alludes to her ignorance of the fraud committed against her".

20. Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata*. Lyon 1550, p. 151. See also Arthur Henkel / Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*. Stuttgart 1967, col. 1642.

21. Andrea Alciato, *Emblemata cum commentariis*. Padua 1621, p. 600, no. 139 (with "celebretur" in the first line).

22. Virginia W. Callahan, "The Erasmus-Hercules Equation in the Emblems of Alciati". In: Karl-Ludwig Selig / Elizabeth Sears (eds.), *The Verbal and the Visual: Essays in Honor of William Sebastian Heckscher*. New York 1990, pp. 41-57, here pp. 52f. The author pointed out the connection between the "In nothos" emblem and Erasmus's adage *Ad Cynosarges* (III, i, 70): *Collected Works*, vol. 34: *Adages II vii 1 to III iii 100*. Trans. & annot. by R.A.B. Mynors. Toronto – Buffalo – London 1992, pp. 209f. and 384. Already Mandowsky 1938 (note 9), p. 88, n. 6, called attention to the fact that "the myth of the adoption of Heracles appears in Alciati's book on emblems of Justice (*Parergon Juris*, Lib. IV, Cap. III)", that is: *Parergon iuris libri VII posteriores*. Lyon 1547, pp. 6-7. For Alciato's further thoughts on this subject, cf. his *De singulari certamine liber*. Venice 1544, chap. 19, pp. 35-36: "Quod si sit spurius".

23. Carlo Ridolfi, *The Life of Tintoretto and of his Children Domenico and Mariotta*. Trans. & with intr. by Catherine Engass and Robert Engass. University Park – London 1974, p. 56. For the original Italian wording, see idem, *Le meraviglie dell'arte, Venezia, 1648*. Ed. by Detlev Freiherr von Hadeln. Berlin 1924, vol. II, p. 50.

24. Garas (note 10), pp. 37-40. The four paintings identified by Garas as belonging to the series have both different formats and measurements, but this could be explained as dependend on the specific qualities of the room for which they were commissioned and that is unknown to us today. Also see Vilmós Tatrai, in: George Keyes – István Barkóczi – Jane Satkowski (eds.), *Treasures of Venice: Paintings from the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest* (exh. cat.). Minneapolis 1995, pp. 150-152, cat. no. 31, as well as the bibliography listed in notes 2 and 8 above. In her article (p. 40, n. 32), Garas indirectly proposed that the program for the Tintoretto series could be ascribed to Ottavio Strada, the Emperor's antiquarian since 1581. Ottavio, it is true, was portrayed by Tintoretto in a painting of 1569, now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (see *Tintoretto: Ritratti* [exh. cat.]. Milan 1994, p. 136, no. 29), but the suggestion does not lean on any documentary evidence.

25. See Cecil Gould, "An X-ray of Tintoretto's 'Milky Way'". In: *Arte Veneta* 32 (1978), pp. 211-213, from which the rest of this paragraph has been derived.

26. Concerning the issue of when the painting was cut down opinions of various scholars radically differ. Moreover, both the status and dating of the drawings ascribed to Domenico Tintoretto and Jacob Hoefnagel (see note 10 above) are problematic. If the latter attribution is correct, then—given the artist's birth in 1575—the drawing could hardly be dated to before 1582. However, things appear quite different if the drawing in Berlin records not the painting itself but a preparatory work for it. On the other hand, according to Garas (note 10), p. 38, the change of the painting's format occurred in 1648 when the Prague Castle was looted by Swedish troops.

27. See Andrea Alciato, *Omnia emblemata cum commentariis per Claudium Minoem*. Antwerp 1577, pp. 468f.; idem, *Emblemata*. Padua 1618, pp. 249f.; idem 1621 (note 21), pp. 600-603. In modern scholarly literature, Alciato's sources can be found listed in Henkel / Schöne (note 20); Alciato, *Emblemata*. Ed. by Santiago Sebastián. Madrid 1985, p. 180; Callahan (note 22); Alciato 1550 (note 19). For the most instructive analysis of emblem 139, summed up on the basis of previous commentaries, see the 1621 *editio optima* of Alciato's book. There, in addition to the texts quoted above in notes 7 (Hyginus), 11 (*Geoponica*), 22 (Erasmus of Rotterdam and Alciato), Thuilius informed the reader that (p. 601) "Haec historia bis reperitur in Isacii Tzetis commentario ad Lycophronis Cassandram. Unde huic acceptum refert Emblematis characterem Minos." The author of this commentary on Pseudo-Lycophron's (?) *Alexandra* or *Cassandra* was Isaac Tzetzes (sometimes misidentified with the better known, twelfth-century Byzantine scholar Joannes Tzetzes): *Scholia eis Lykofrona*. Ed. Ch. G. Muller, Leipzig 1811. Cf. Don Cameron Allen, *Mysteriously Meant: The Rediscovery of Pagan Symbolism and Allegorical Interpretation in the Renaissance*. Baltimore – London 1970, p. 213, n. 58.

28. On this idea that looms large in the imperial propaganda of the early modern Habsburgs, including Rudolf II, see at least Guido Bruck, "Habsburger als 'Herkulier'". In: *Jahrbuch der kunsthistorischen Sammlungen in Wien* 53 (1953), pp. 191-199; William C. McDonald, "Maximilian I of Habsburg and the veneration of Hercules: on the survival of myth and the German Renaissance". In: *The Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976), pp. 139-154.