The Confrontation with Horror and the Practice of Restraint: Jusepe de Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* in the Seventeenth-Century Spanish Court

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Table of Contents

Abstract

In 1632 the Neapolitan artist Jusepe de Ribera, created some of the most violently gruesome and vividly haunting paintings of his career. These were the over life-size and nightmarish paintings of *Ixion* and *Tityus* intended for the walls of King Philip IV's newly inaugurated Buen Retiro Palace on the outskirts of Madrid. The artist's lively depictions of bodily torture and physical pain were surely intended to shock and horrify beholders at the Spanish court. Although the sensorial and affective dimensions of Ribera's naturalism, particularly the artist's violent depictions of wounded flesh, have been recently taken up by art historians, this thesis focuses specifically on the experience of horror elicited by Ribera's works, an issue that has been largely overlooked. Early modern theories about the role of horror in the arts provide a useful means to examine the intended moral functions of Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus.* As such, this thesis takes up the question of the role of gruesome imagery designed to have a visceral impact on beholders and asks how *Ixion* and *Tityus* were intended to function in the courtly context of the Buen Retiro.

Résumé

C'est en 1632 que l'artiste napolitain José de Ribera a créé certaines des peintures les plus horriblement violentes et les plus clairement obsédantes de sa carrière. Il s'agit des peintures plus grandes que nature et cauchemardesques *Ixion* et *Tityus* destinées aux murs du palais Buen Retiro du roi Philip IV, alors récemment inauguré et situé à l'extérieur de Madrid. Les représentations que fait l'artiste des tortures et douleurs physiques visaient sûrement à choquer et à horrifier les nobles de la cour d'Espagne. Bien que les dimensions sensorielles et affectives du naturalisme de Ribera, en particulier la violente description que fait l'artiste des chairs meurtries, aient été récemment étudiées par les historiens d'art, la présente thèse vise spécifiquement

l'expérience de l'horreur qui ressort des travaux de Ribera, un aspect de son œuvre largement inexploré. Les premières théories modernes sur le rôle de l'horreur dans les arts est un outil utile si l'on veut examiner les fonctions morales voulues par Ribera des ses œuvres *Ixion* et *Tityus.* Cette thèse traite du rôle de l'imagerie de l'horreur destinée à avoir un effet viscéral sur les courtisans et de l'incidence intentionnelle des œuvres *Ixion* et *Tityus* dans le contexte de la cour du palais Buen Retiro.

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List of Figures

Introduction

In 1632 the Neapolitan artist Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652), called *lo spagnoletto* (the little Spaniard), created some of the most violently gruesome and vividly haunting paintings of his career. These were the over life-size and nightmarish paintings of *Ixion* and *Tityus* (figs. 1 & 2) intended for the walls of King Philip IV's newly inaugurated Buen Retiro Palace on the outskirts of Madrid.[1] Tightly enclosed within the picture plane and emerging from a darkened background, the monumental and highly illuminated nude figures of Ixion and Tityus twist, turn, and thrash in pain as their contorted bodies respond to the physical violence enacted upon their flesh. These incredibly lively depictions of bodily torture and physical pain were surely intended to shock and horrify beholders at the Spanish court. While paintings of Tantalus and Sisyphus were displayed alongside those of *Ixion* and *Tityus,* they are unfortunately now missing from the original collection of four.[2] Depictions of these four infamous transgressors from classical Greco-Roman mythology were a popular form of palace decoration in seventeenth-century Spain. Commonly referred to as "The Furies," these were mythological figures fated with eternal torment in Hades for having defied the authority of the Olympian gods. Ixion's body was broken on a perpetually rotating wheel as punishment for having seduced Zeus's wife Hera. Tityus, having committed a similar crime, had his eternally rejuvenating liver ripped out by a vulture as punishment for having enticed Zeus's lover Leto.[3] The myths held that acts of hubris be met with

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[1] Christopher R. Marshall, *Baroque Naples and the Industry of Painting: The World in the Workbench* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 223.

[2] Elizabeth du Gué Trapier, *Ribera* (New York: Order of Trustees, 1952), 82. According to the Prado Museum's website, nothing is known of the paintings of Tantalus and Sisyphus in Philip IV's collection ("*Tityus,* Ribera, José de," Prado Museum Madrid (website), updated 7 February, 2018, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/tityus/2876e1d6-cd02-487e-8635-f2b506af28f8).

[3] "*Ixion,* Ribera, José de" and "*Tityus,* Ribera, José de," Prado Museum Madrid (website), updated 7 February 2018, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/ixion/8d65d17f-1f2a-470b-8744-db931fb01c42 & https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/tityus/2876e1d6-cd02-487e-8635-f2b506af28f8.

torturous consequence, for not only had the "Furias" indulged their baser appetites, but they had also challenged and transgressed the divine hegemony of the gods.[4] Rather than retell the narrative, Ribera's paintings focus on the eternity of Ixion's and Tityus's punishment, effectively using the subject matter to craft strikingly innovative and vivid depictions of the experience of physical pain. The sensorial and affective dimensions of Ribera's naturalism, particularly in relation to the artist's violent depictions of wounded flesh, have recently been taken up by art historians such as Itay Sapir, Joris van Gastel, and Edward Payne, among others. My thesis adds to this scholarship by focussing specifically on the experience of horror elicited by Ribera's works, an area of investigation that has been largely overlooked. I assess a range of early modern theories about the role of horror in the arts, which provide a useful way into understanding the intended moral functions of Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus.* As such, this thesis takes up the question of the role of gruesome imagery designed to have a visceral impact on beholders and asks how the paintings of *Ixion* and *Tityus* were intended to function in the courtly context of the Buen Retiro.

To begin this examination of the role of horror, it is useful to assess how Ribera's works depart from previous depictions of similar subject matter. Ribera's reformulation of the depiction of pain is made particularly evident when comparing his *Tityus* to Titian's 1548 version of the same subject (fig. 3). The Venetian artist's painting had been hanging in the Royal Alcázar Palace of Madrid since 1558 and would have been familiar to Ribera through prints.[5] While

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[4] *Paintings for the Planet King Philip IV and the Buen Retiro Palace,* ed. Andrés Úbeda de los Cobos (Madrid: Museo Nacional del Prado, distributed by Paul Holberton Publishing, 2003), 236.

[5] Mary of Hungary bequeathed Titian's Ixion, Tityus, Tantalus, and Sisyphus to the Spanish monarch, Philip II, in 1558. Considered the first artist to have depicted the four great transgressors as a group, Titian set the iconographical precedent for future depictions of the Furies in the seventeenth century. Although Ribera would have never directly seen Titian's Furies, the Venetian artist's *Tityus* was known through an engraving by Cornelius Cort. Ribera may have also been influenced by the ancient Hellenistic sculpture group *Laocoön and his Sons* unearthed in Rome in 1506 for his portrayal of *Tityus.* (Edward Payne, "Sublime and Grotesque: Ribera and the Art of Painting",

certainly indebted to Titian's iconographical prototype, there are notable differences. Ribera's *Tityus* is not the strong and muscularly defined giant who fights against the vicious bird tearing at his liver as found in Titian's version but is instead a pale, scrawny, and helpless figure who succumbs to the violent torture inflicted upon his body as viscera slowly leak onto the boulders below from the gash inflicted on his left-hand side. Whereas torture in Titian's *Tityus* is localized and indicated by the sight of the wound in the giant's abdomen, the giant himself does not communicate the experience of pain in either face or body. Although the body of Titian's giant is indeed deformed, what registers is not pain but a struggle between Tityus and his assailant, the vulture. In Ribera's *Tityus,* by contrast, violent torture is revealed as pain as it is articulated in gesture and expression — limbs contort, thrash, and kick, and an open mouth howls as it unleashes a scream. In Ribera's depiction of physical violence, pain transcends the open wound as it is registered on the body as the subjective experience of felt sensation. In other words, the body of Ribera's *Tityus* signifies pain even without the visual signifier of the wound.

In this manner, Ribera, as Christopher Marshall observes, "radically redefined the depiction of pain." [6] Here the insights of English professor Elaine Scarry are relevant. "Physical pain," she maintains, "does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned."[7] According to Scarry, physical pain, as a sensation located in the body, cannot be verbalized. Ribera accordingly creates a visual vocabulary around a sensation

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YouTube video, 39:48, posted by Meadows Museum Dallas, April 25, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwEOaQZsdoo&t=559s; Aneta-Georgievska-Shine and Larry Silver, *Rubens, Velazquez, and the King of Spain* (Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 154; Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals: History Painting in Amsterdam, 1630-1650* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 45.)

[6] Marshall, *Baroque Naples,* 223.

[7] Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press*,* 1985), 4.

that cannot be verbally articulated. As most strikingly revealed in the artist's *Tityus,* physical pain is evoked through paint as the sensation of horror. Experienced in the body, pain has been made all too real in Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* — the visualization of pain has become excessively and horrifyingly human.

The horror of extreme sensation in Ribera's Furies would have thus elicited an empathic and visceral response from seventeenth-century beholders through the very shock of their confrontation with paintings that seek to "maximize the pain of pain."[8] Yet, it is precisely Ribera's engagement with an "aesthetics of horror" that has led to a serious lack of Ribera scholarship in art historical discussions of seventeenth-century Spanish painting.[9] As Damian Dombrowski and others have remarked, Ribera's images have been too often relegated to the category of gore and sadism — a pulp-fiction-like category of art which ostensibly seeks to elicit little more than a merely sensationalist response from viewers. [10] In other words, Ribera's violently brutal scenes of horror have not been taken seriously as they have traditionally been regarded as "low" and unworthy of intellectual pursuit. Similar sentiments were first voiced in 1675 by the German art historian Joachim von Sandrart who promulgated the idea that Ribera only delighted in the wicked and barbaric: "his genius did not bring forth any agreeable, pleasant, gay, or sweet saints but rather fearful, cruel scenes, old unclad bodies with wrinkled

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[8] The violently brutal Neapolitan society of the seventeenth-century bred an "aesthetics of horror" that sought to "maximize the pain of pain," argues Harald Hendrix. Living and working in Naples until his death in 1652, it is this atmosphere that greatly shaped and contributed to Ribera's artistic output. (Harald Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body: Images of Torture in seventeenth-century Naples," in *Bodily Extremities,* ed. Florike Egmond and Robert Zwijnenberg (Aldershot & Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 69, 81. See also Mark Adam Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera: Catharsis and Transformations," (PhD dissertation, State University of New York Binghamton, 2000), 33-34; Payne, "Sublime and Grotesque" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwEOaQZsdoo.)

[9] Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body," 71, 81.

[10] Damian Dombrowski, "Die Häutung des Malers. Stil und Identität in Jusepe de Riberas Schindung des Marsyas," in *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 72, no. 2 (2009): 216; Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body," 71; Nicola Spinosa, "Ribera and Neapolitan Painting," *Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652),* ed. Sánchez, Alfonso E. Pérez and Nicola Spinosa (New York City: The Metropolitan Museum of Art distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 20.

skin, fierce aged faces, all depicted in truly lifelike fashion."[11] Romantic artist and critic Théophile Gautier continued to perpetuate this notion in the nineteenth century when he wrote of Ribera the following: "as another seeks beauty, you seek to shock — martyrdom, executioners, gypsies, down-and-outs — displaying an open sore alongside some rags."[12] Directly addressing the Spaniard's *Tityus,* Gautier further wrote "You, cruel Ribera, harsher than Jupiter, from his hollow sides you make flow in streams of blood, by way of horrible cuts, cascades of intestines."[13] This dismissal of the artist's gruesome imagery has continued into the twentieth century: Elizabeth du Gué Trapier, in her 1952 monograph on Ribera, described the artist's *Ixion* and *Tityus* as "the most disagreeable pictures [Ribera] ever painted."[14]

These negative assessments of Ribera's works would seem to suggest that horror marks an end to discussion, shutting down the opportunity for further insight and investigation. Such claims imply that the horror of Ribera's works cannot move beyond the shock of the nightmarish and sensationalistic, the grotesque and the degraded. Rather than perpetuate a discourse that seeks to devalue a discussion of horror in relation to Ribera's paintings, however, I draw insight from art historian Maria Loh who insists that early modern horror can open us up to "a larger conversation about how images move us, change us, transform us, infect us, haunt us, and push us to think and feel beyond ourselves."[15] Horror is about confrontation; it is about eliciting a reaction. Depictions of horror are as much about the paintings themselves as they are about

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[11] Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Elden Bau-, Bild-, und Mahlerey-Künste* (Nürnberg: 1675), Book II, 191, http://ta.sandrart.net/-text-405.
[12] Théophile Guatier, cited and trans. in "Ribera, Jusepe de," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists,* updated October 2, 2012, http://www.oxfordartonline.com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/benezit/view/10.1093/benz/9780199773787.001.0001/acref-9780199773787-e-00151925.
[13] Théophile Gautier, *Voyages en Espagne* (Paris: Garnier Flammarion, 1981), cited and trans. in Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body," 71 & in Marshall, *Baroque Naples,* 225.
[14] Trapier, *Ribera,* 82.
[15] Maria Loh, "Introduction: Early Modern Horror," in "Early Modern Horror," ed. Maria Loh, special issue, *Oxford Art Journal* 34 no. 3 (2011): 326.

beholders' affective responses to terrifying imagery. Horror, in other words, demands that attention be paid to viewer reception and response.

By exploring early modern conceptions of and responses to horror, this thesis will examine the perceived impact of Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* on beholders. The first part will assess how the representation of horror was connected to notions of lifelikeness and *mimesis* as expressed in ancient rhetoric and early modern art theory. In so doing, we will see how Ribera's Furies affect beholders by dissolving the boundaries between art and life, fictional representation, and lived-experience. The second part of this thesis applies concepts drawn from seventeenth-century art theory as a means to explore the potential dangers associated with artworks like Ribera's, which were criticized for their excessive and naturalistic depictions of horror. The final section turns to the Buen Retiro where *Ixion* and *Tityus* were on display from 1634 onwards in order to examine the ways in which responses to horror were informed by the practical Neostoic philosophy espoused at this court. When the paintings are considered in relation to Neostoicism, it becomes clear that their aim was to cultivate reason by training viewers to actively repress their passions. The conclusion of the thesis is that the painted horror of *Ixion* and *Tityus* functioned at the court as a powerful cultural tool mobilized to shape behaviour.

The Power of Horror

Operating on the bodily, horror had the potential to affect the realm of the living. Initially expressed through ancient rhetoric, horror generated felt physiological sensations such as fear, shock, disgust, or dread. Since classical antiquity, the Latin term *horrore* was understood as that

which made one shudder or tremble and could even be used to describe hair that stood on end (much like our modern-day expression "hair-raising").[16] As an affective device closely linked to the senses, horror could bring about a bodily transformation, a conversion from one embodied or emotional state of being into another.[17] Since the effect of horror was meant to impart an experience of lived bodily sensation by triggering within the audience a physical or visceral reaction, the term, as employed in ancient rhetoric, was also closely associated with notions of lifelikeness or *mimesis.*[18] The Roman rhetorician Quintilian argued that "oratory fails of its full effect … if its appeal is merely to the hearing … and not displayed in [its] living truth to the eyes of the mind." [19] According to Quintilian, successful speech had the ability to dissolve into what it described by conjuring up an image of the described before the mind's eye. Animated oration thus operated visually, whereby words could transform themselves or materialize, in the audiences' imagination, into the living, breathing thing they attempted to define.[20] As such, affective speech had the potential to come alive, and the effect of horror was experienced as a real lived bodily sensation.

Notions pertaining to the persuasiveness of classical rhetoric were transferred to the realm of visual art in the early modern period.[21] Like the orator who used words to conjure up vivid imagery, the artist who created naturalistic and illusionistic visual representations could too

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[16] Xavier Aldana Reyes, *Horror a Literary History,* ed. Xavier Aldana Reyes (London: The British Library, 2016), 7.
[17] Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York & London: Routledge: 2005), 24.
[18] Caroline van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence from the Animated Image to the Excess Object* (Leiden: De Gruyter Leiden University Press, 2015), 18-19; Caroline van Eck, "Living Statues: Alfred Gell's *Art and Agency,* Living Presence Response and the Sublime," *Art History* 33, no. 4 (September 2010): 651; David Young Kim, "The Horror of Mimesis," in "Early Modern Horror," ed. Maria Loh, special issue, *Oxford Art Journal* 34, no. 3 (2011): 337.
[19] Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* VIII.iii.62, cited and trans. in van Eck, *Art, Agency, and Living Presence*, 19.
[20] Van Eck, *Art, Agency and Living Presence,* 19.
[21] Thijs Weststeijn, *Visible World: Samuel van Hoogstraten's Art Theory and the Legitimation of Painting in the Dutch Golden age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 134.

persuade beholders of the reality of his painted fictions. Experiencing an inanimate depiction as animate was itself horror-inducing as distinctions between reality and painted image seemed to dissolve.[22] Horror, as described by painter and art theorist Giorgio Vasari in his 1550 *Lives of the Most Excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects,* was an artistic device used to heighten the visceral impact of the depicted upon beholders.[23] Horror in art, much like horror in rhetoric, triggered a felt bodily sensation. The world of the painting, if realistically depicted, thus threatened to seep into the world of lived experience as the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction were no longer clearly delineated.[24] As David Young Kim argues "horror occurs not only in the domain of the monstrous and frightening but also in the arena in which the painter sets out to achieve naturalistic effects."[25] The convincing reality of a painting was inextricably tied to the horror of its naturalism — the more realistic, the more horrifying the painting's effect on beholders would be.

It became a common ekphrastic tradition to describe art as coming to life: according to many art theorists, the most successful painted imitation was one that confused the boundaries between art and life.[26] Drawing on the ancient writings of Quintilian, the Dutch art theorist, Franciscus Junius elaborated on these ideas in his 1638 *The Painting of the Ancients* when he wrote:

> that wee should not only goe with our eyes over the severall figures represented in the worke, but wee should likewise suffer our mind to enter into a lively consideration of

[22] Kim, "The Horror of Mimesis," 342-344.
[23] In a long ekphrastic passage, Vasari describes Piero di Cosimo's macabre *Car of Death* for the Sala del Papa as a "strange, horrible, and unexpected invention." Vasari further describes Cosimo's painting as one "that gave an appearance of the greatest reality, but [that] was horrible and also terrible to behold." According to the biographer, the effect of a painted image's naturalism could be horror inducing (Giorgio Vasari, "Pietro di Cosimo," in *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, Part III (1550), http://members.efn.org/~acd/vite/VasariPierodiCosimo.html).
[24] Kim, "The Horror of Mimesis": 324-344.
[25] Ibid., 341.
[26] Weststeijn, *The Visible World,* 139.

> what we see expressed; not otherwise than if wee were present, and saw not the counterfeited image but the reall performance of the thing.[27]

In order for the artwork to achieve this desired effect, whereby the painted surface merged with and moved into the realm of the living, the beholder was required to play a central role. Aided by the naturalism of the painted fiction, the beholder activated the image's agency through the mind, and the power of his/her imagination. Imagining oneself present at the scene depicted not only allowed the medium of the paint to fade away but also allowed the beholder to engage with the unfolding of the event as if truly experienced — the lived reality of the beholder merged with the painted reality of the fiction. This psychological and affective involvement temporarily unified two otherwise disparate worlds.[28]

So viscerally vivid could this confrontation with the world of the painting be, notes Junius, that the beholder could be inspired with feelings of fear.[29] As remarked upon by Junius, fear and naturalism, or horror and illusionism, are intimately connected with one another. It is the uncanniness of naturalism, the realism of the image — its visual "trickery" — that brings about the effect of fear or horror on the beholder. Yet, much like modern aesthetics, "the strongest form of persuasiveness is not illusion," remarks Thijs Weststeijn, "but the reality of the emotion that is felt."[30] While the naturalism of an image aids in elicting an affective response, it is ultimately the emotion felt that convinces the beholder of the painting's reality.

These same notions were expresed in seventeenth-century response theories to pictorial imitation. Relying heavily on an Aristotilean-inspired understanding of the emotions, early

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[27] Franciscus Junius, *On the Painting of Ancients,* cited in Thijs Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 137.
[28] Weststeijn, *The Visible World,* 137.
[29] Ibid., 156.
[30] Ibid., 162.

modern psychology held that the passions resided on the same mental level as the imagination. As such, the emotions could be activated through memory. This meant that if a realistically depicted image triggered the beholder's memory, igniting the emotions associated with that stored memory, the beholder would feel him/herself present at the event depicted.[31] The beholder would be transported to what Weststeijn refers to as, an "alternate reality."[32] Since a felt emotion is a real experience, it becomes irrelevant as to whether the sensation triggered is by something actual or something imaginary — the passions felt within the body override and surpass distinctions made between the fictional and the non-fictional.[33] In other words, the emotion evoked by the painting brings it to life.

In a dedicatory poem to Peter Paul Rubens' *Prometheus Bound* (fig. 4), a horrifying painting that bears similarities to Ribera's *Tityus,* the French poet, scholar, and historian Dominicus Baudius described in vivid detail the Flemish master's picture as if it were animated with life:

> Here, with hooked beak, a monstrous vulture digs about the liver of Prometheus, who is given no peace from his torments as ever and again the savage bird draws near his self-renewing breast and attacks it punishingly. He is not content with his inhuman sacrificial feast, but with his claws lacerates, here the agonized face, there the man's thigh. *He would fly murderously on spectators*, *did not his chained prey detain him*. He can do no more than terrify the frightened onlookers by turning his flaming eyes from one to the other. Blood flows from the chest and every part where his claws leave their mark, and his piercing eyes dart savage flames. *You might think he moves, that his feathers tremble*. Horror grips the onlookers.[34]

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[31] Weststeijn, *The Visible World*, 171.
[32] Weststeijn employs the term "alternate reality" throughout *The Visible World* to describe the experience naturalistically depicted images could have upon their beholders. Since naturalism appealed to the senses, beholders could transport themselves, through the imagination, to the scenes depicted in paint. This process, whereby paintings entered the world of lived experience, allowed the boundaries between art and life to dissolve. In so doing, beholders were transported to an "alternate reality."
[33] Weststeijn, *The Visible World,,* 171.
[34] Dominicus Baudius cited and trans. in Charles Dempsey "Euanthes Redivivus: Rubens's *Prometheus Bound," Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* vol. 30 (1967): 421 (italics mine).

The boundaries between art and life, as recounted by Baudius, dissolve in Rubens' *Prometheus.* Focusing much of his poem on Prometheus' tormentor, Baudius describes the domineering and vicious eagle as no longer belonging to the painted fiction of the two-dimensional surface, but rather as breaking into the space occupied by beholders.[35] Although Baudius notes that the eagle can do the spectators of the image no harm, preoccupied as he is by his prey, feelings of terror are nonetheless unleashed in those who gaze upon this painted fiction. Baudius implies that the horror of Rubens' *Prometheus* is achieved by the way that the eagle transgresses the space of the picture plane. The blood-thirsty bird becomes a threat to spectators precisely because he has entered the world of the living. The horror is the realism of the painted image, which is only amplified by the fact that the subject matter is itself unsettling. Not only does the eagle pose a threat to the bodily integrity of Prometheus but now too to the bodily integrity of the spectators themselves.

Although the eagle in Rubens' *Prometheus* is not actually alive, he becomes alive in the beholder's experience. The Flemish master's painting thus moves from the realm of distanced aesthetic contemplation to the realm of lived experiential reality. Caroline van Eck, largely focusing on early modern sculpture, further elaborates on the experience of seemingly lifelike artworks, noting that:

> works of art only come alive in the the viewer's expereience ... A painting doesn't actually breath or move; it is the viewer who because of the sculptor's virtuosity, is led to attribute in his or her viewing expereince, significant aspects of life to cold marble, and thus relive, while gazing at it, earlier experiences with actual living beings.[36]

[35] Baudius mistakes the eagle for a vulture in Rubens' *Prometheus Bound.* Whereas the vulture is proper to Tityus, the eagle is proper to Prometheus. It should also be noted that the eagle was in fact painted by Frans Snyders, and not by Rubens (See Dempsey "Euanthes Redivivus," footnote 9). I refer to the bird in Rubens' painting as an eagle.
[36] Caroline van Eck, *Art, Agency, and Living Presence*, 22.

Baudius picks up on this nuance in his poem. Directly addressing the beholder of the painting, he writes "you might *think* [the eagle] moves, that his feathers tremble." While engaging in an early modern ekphrastic tradition that described artworks as coming to life, Baudius nonetheless maintains that Rubens' *Prometheus* is ultimately nothing more than a painted image. Despite this, however, the experience of horror is one that is truly felt — "horror grips onlookers" concludes Baudius in the final line of the poem. "The tension between, on the one hand, feeling strong emotions by experiencing the things seen as they were real, and on the other hand the aesthetic admiration of the work because one knows that it is a brilliant painting, must have been central for the enjoyment of such works," notes Eric Jan Sluijter.[37]

Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* would have operated along similar lines to Rubens' *Prometheus*. The Spaniard's heightened use of naturalism combines with a subject matter that is itself deeply disturbing. Hauntingly grotesque, the physical violence and abject pain endured by Ribera's Ixion and Tityus enter the world of lived experiential reality triggering within beholders' affective responses. Created twenty years after the Flemish master's *Prometheus,* Ribera's Furies confront beholders with the very force of their brute horror.

Ixion and *Tityus* blur distinctions between fictional representation and lived experience. The monumental and contorted bodies of these giants are catapulted to the front of the picture plane through strong contrasts in light and dark. The blackness of the background pushes the highly sculpted and illuminated bodies of these deformed figures forwards and into the beholder's space in a manner that threatens to break the bounds of the picture plane. The French painter and engraver Roger De Piles wrote of the lifelike effect of chiaroscuro on the beholder

[37] Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals: History Painting in Amsterdam 1630-1650* (Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 49.

stating that "skilful chiaroscuro will not allow the viewer to calmly pass [the painting] by, it will call out to him, arrest him for at least a moment.[38] This visual effect encapsulates beholders in the painted fiction, dissolving the boundaries between art and life — the painted image reaches into the beholder's space just as the beholder reaches into the painting's space. This confusion of clearly delineated boundaries gives to these images a sense of immediacy which eradicates the spatial and temporal distance between those who behold the painted fiction and those who are represented within it. [39] Confronted by scenes of painfully grotesque torture, the beholder becomes a witness to these scenes of unfolding violence as the time and space of the paintings become conflated with the time and space of lived reality.

Elongated, dirt-covered, and glistening with sweat, Ixion hunches over a wooden wheel as he gazes at his executioner, the demonic satyr, who rotates the torture device on which his body is being slowly broken. Visceral violence is heightened in Ribera's depiction of Tityus, the companion piece to *Ixion*. Blood and guts seep from Tityus' abdomen as the smirking vulture tears out lengths of intestine from the giant's side. Tityus's face is aged and wrinkled, and his open mouth unleashes a blood-curdling scream in response to this violent act of bodily destruction. Gazing heavenwards, Tityus raises his arm as if to futilely shield himself from the sensation of pain enacted upon his flesh. As Mark Adam Williamson and Edward Payne have suggested, Ribera likely drew inspiration for his horrific scenes of violence from the *Piazza del Mercato,* the site of brutal public spectacle in Naples where executions were held.[40] The realistically depicted bodies of Ixion and Tityus are anything but heroic. Twisting and thrashing

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[38] Roger de Piles, *Cours de peinture par principes (*Paris : 1708), 4, cited and trans. in Weststeijn, *The Visible World,* 145.
[39] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Foreword," in *Beholding Violence in Medieval and Early Modern Europe,* ed. Allie Terry-Fritsch and Erin Felicia Labbie (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2012), xvi.
[40] See Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 33-34; Payne, "Sublime and Grotesque," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwEOaQZsdoo.

in pain, these could be seen as the bodies of real-life criminals, the "lowly" and degraded, receiving punishment for their heinous crimes. Ribera strips away the mythological narrative content associated with The Furies, focusing instead on the suffering body in order to increase the impact of horror upon beholders.[41]

Since spectacles of public torture were common in seventeenth-century Spain, beholders of Ribera's Furies no doubt had witnessed similar violently gruesome executions first-hand.[42] Familiarity with such spectacles would allow beholders to transport themselves to the scenes of horrific torture taking place in Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus*. Ribera's vivid imagery could potentially trigger beholders' imaginations and simultaneously unleash the emotions associated with that stored memory. The empathic relationship ignited by Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* and achieved through the beholders' activation of the passions allowed them to visualize the sensation of horror as if they were bystanders at the events depicted. Although visualized, it is the force of the sensation of these images that allows Tityus's blood-curdling scream to be heard; it allows the pain of Ixion's broken bones to be uncomfortably felt. Ribera's visual rhetoric had the power to ignite an embodied and sensorial experience within beholders whereby the unexpected shock of sensation would itself have been horror inducing. It is thus by unifying the senses through paint that Ribera provokes a "violence of sensation."[43] As Gilles Deleuze remarks, "the painter make[s] visible a kind of unity of the senses, [making] a multisensible figure appear visually."[44] Ribera's compositional and painterly techniques would have suggested

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[41] Payne, "Bodies Suspended", 214.
[42] "Ceremonies of death" were common forms of public torture in Spain c. 1600. See Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering Executions and the Evolution of Repression: From a Preindustrial Metropolis to the European Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 43.
[43] Gilles Deleuze, "Painting and Sensation," in *Francis Bacon the Logic of Sensation,* trans. Daniel W. Smith (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 37.
[44] Ibid., 37.

to beholders that they imagine this torture as real — paint gives way to reality and the paintings become the events they depict. Thus, Ribera's vividly lifelike and nightmarish depictions of *Ixion* and *Tityus* would have come alive in the mind's eye and beholders would have truly experienced the felt emotions of fear, shock, disgust, or dread.

The Dangers of Horror

Drawing on the ancient writings of Aristotle, early modern theorists held that the depiction of strongly emotive events aided in the development and shaping of a positive character. Horror, as one of the effects of tragedy, was to bring about a cathartic or purifying transformation in the audience through terror.[45] While the beneficial qualities of a painting or staged play came from its affective impact, too much, or an excess of, horror, was considered detrimental to the imagination. The Dutch playwright Joost van den Vondel elaborated on tragedy's intended goal:

> since seeing stirs the heart more than hearing an account of the event, the staging of the tragic act should be such that … without showing grotesque and gruesome cruelties, and causing miscarriages and deformities by alarming pregnant women, it provokes compassion and terror, so that the tragedy may achieve its end and object, which is to moderate these two passions in people's minds … cleanse spectators of faults, and teach them to endure the calamities of the world more calmly and more equably.[46]

According to Vondel, the staging of tragic events was intended to arouse audiences by provoking feelings of compassion and terror. This was beneficial as it taught them to face the world's hardships more peacefully. However, this was not the case with tragedies that showcased brute

[45] Daniel, Heinsius, *On Plot in Tragedy,* trans. by Paul R. Sellin and John J. McManmon (Northridge: San Fernando Valley State College, 1971), 11-12.
[46] Joost van den Vondel, *Jephta,* ed. N.C.H. Wijngaards (Zutphen: Thieme, 1977), 38-39, verses 139-155, cited and trans. in Weststeijn, *The Visible World,* 195.

violence and abject horror but lacked a didactic or moral lesson. Such works were understood as being particularly dangerous to those perceived as weak-minded, especially, as Vondel notes, mothers and their unborn children. The playwright asserts that, "grotesque and gruesome cruelties" could impact the anatomy of the foetus in the mother's womb leading to "miscarriages and deformities."

The discourse surrounding the dangers associated with an excess of horror was applied not only to theatre but also to artworks. Indeed, so horrifying was another series of Ribera's Furies created for the Amsterdam art connoisseur and patron Lucas van Uffelen, that he refused the commission after his pregnant wife, upon looking at the painting of Ixion, gave birth to a child with a physical deformity. Joachim von Sandrart recounts this tale in his 1675 *Teutsche Academie der Elden Bau-, Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste,* wherein he describes the painting as

> so horrible that Frau Jacoba von Uffelen, when this great work of art was set up on the threshing floor at Amsterdam was so badly frightened that the next boy born to her had crooked, misshapen fingers, whereupon this picture, heartily disliked by this selfsame good family, was banished at once and afterwards sent to Italy.[47]

Although this is no doubt a sensationalized account, the passage provides insight into contemporary understandings regarding painting's ability to negatively affect the beholder, and points to the disturbing physiological impact that an excess of horror could have on the bodies of the unborn. Indeed, so frightening were these images, yet so forceful in their very agency, they were believed to have deformed the body of what would have otherwise been a healthy child.

The idea that "progeny can be modified by the statues and paintings that the mother gazes upon during her pregnancy" is attributed to the Greek philosopher Empedocles who contributed

[47] Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie,* Book II, 191, http://ta.sandrart.net/-text-405.

to the shaping of ancient theories of generation still credible in Europe in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-centuries.[48] Stories of monstrous births, as recounted by Sandrart, thus also shed light on contemporary notions regarding the viewership of images as gendered. Objects that ignited feelings of horror and revulsion were particularly dangerous to pregnant women and their unborn children as the mother's supposedly weak and susceptible imagination was seen to be too easily moved or carried away by the emotions.[49] While her active- and rational-minded husband could remain undisturbed by unpleasant images, the 'passive' mother was more likely to be affected and overwhelmed by them as they provoked within her powerful and potentially uncontrollable passions. Unlike those who could imagine themselves present at the event depicted in paint, the mother in Sandrart's account mistook the image for the real thing, allowing herself to be engulfed by its horrifying reality.

There are several early modern accounts wherein the vivid maternal imagination, influenced by an image, produced monstrous progeny, indicating the potential dangers associated with extremes scenes of horror. For instance, Nicolas Malebranche, recounts an event wherein a pregnant woman, after having witnessed the execution of a criminal on a wheel, gave birth to a child whose body was broken in the same places as that of the convict.[50] The French philosopher concluded by defining terror as that which "can disturb the imagination."[51] While Malebranche's tale is one wherein the mother is influenced by witnessing an actual execution, Sandrart's account of Frau Uffelen, in which she mistakes Ribera's paintings for real scenes of torture, is nonetheless described as having a similar effect upon the foetus. Her child had "misshapen,

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[48] Marie-Hélène Huet, *Monstrous Imagination* (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1993), 4-5.
[49] Ibid., 7.
[50] Nicolas Malebranche, *De la recherche de la vérité* (1674), 115, cited and trans. in Huet, *Monstrous Imagination,* 48.
[51] Malebranche, *De la recherche*, 116, cited and trans. in Huet, *Monstrous Imagination,* 48.

crooked fingers" much like the painted depiction of Ixion who Sandrart describes as having had fingers "crisped with pain."[52] The deformed body of the child mimicked the deformed body of Ixion as represented in the painting.

Since the imagination was understood as the sight in the mind where images were produced and stored, a weakened imagination was one unable to differentiate between aesthetic representation and lived reality.[53] Due to her weakened imagination, the mother chooses art over nature as the model for the child she is carrying in her womb.[54] As Marie-Hélène Huet argues, "the mother's imagination reproduces what it sees without discrimination, without understanding."[55] In so doing, the mother transgresses that which was considered the natural hierarchy, and reproduces, or gives birth, to a child that is an imitation of an image that is itself already an imitation of nature. Influenced by a painting that forms an impression in the mother's imagination, the misshapen child is born as a result of art rather than as a result of natural processes. In other words, the child is a reproduction of a reproduction. [56] The image, through the imagination, becomes a reality in the body of the monstrous birth; the representation becomes a real, living, being. As Huet remarks, "the monster assumes the appearance of that which is not, that is, the appearance of something that does not exist, something that is already itself a mere appearance, a reflection, a portrait."[57] Because the maternal imagination cannot differentiate between reality and representation, the mother, it would seem, gives life to a monstrous child

[52] Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie,* Book II, 191, http://ta.sandrart.net/-text-405.
[53] Huet, *Monstrous Imagination,* 19.
[54] Ibid., 24.
[55] Ibid., 21.
[56] Ibid., 24.
[57] Ibid., 35.

which is the living equivalent of the artwork; the horror of the appearance is made real in the anatomical deformity of the progeny, a body marked by the mother's terror.

Artworks excessive in their depiction of horror were considered dangerous. Although it was by no means inacceptable to depict that which was considered ugly, grotesque, or horrifying, visually unpleasant things were to be made pleasurable through art. According to Aristotle "there are some things that distress us when we seem them in reality, but the most accurate representations of these same things we view with pleasure, as for example the forms of the most despised animals and corpses."[58] Even a corpse could be made pleasing through art. The power of a painting's horror was thus intimately connected to the power of a painting's naturalism. As argued above, naturalism was considered dangerous precisely because it confused the boundaries between represented and representation, which could lead to disastrous consequences such as deformed children. While the artist depended on nature for his artistic creations, an over-reliance proved precarious. Naturalism had to be engaged with cautiously. Philip Sohm describes this ambivalence towards the naturalistic style as "the paradox of beneficial poisons" — like a poison, naturalism was beneficial in small doses, but an extreme amount was considered fatal. [59]

Although the artist was to rely on nature, he was simultaneously required to make nature beautiful through his art. Drawing heavily on the ancient texts of Plato, the antiquarian Giovanni Pietro Bellori, a prominent biographer of seventeenth-century artists, considered the world to be composed of mere forms — appearances, imitations, and simulacrums — far removed from the beautiful and divine forms of the heavenly universe, the prototypes or Ideas. As such, nature and

[58] Aristotle, *Poetics,* eds. L. Golden and O.B. Harrison (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968), 7, cited in Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body," 82.
[59] Philip Sohm, "Caravaggio the Barbarian," in *Caravaggio Reflections and Refractions,* ed. Lorenzo Pericolo and David M. Stone (Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 180.

other terrestrial objects were considered mere reflections, corrupted imperfections, of the divine and inconceivable Ideas. Through the interpretive and creative processes, however, the divinely inspired (Platonic) artist, maintained Bellori, was believed capable of capturing in his images the superior beauty of the celestial universe. The Ideas circulating in the artist's imagination improved upon what he found in nature.[60] Nature and Ideas were thus required to operate in tandem with one another if the artist was to produce a beautiful image. The artist who directly translated nature onto the canvas without regard for beauty was one who brought the impure and corrupt to life.

Indebted to the realist tradition established by the infamous Michelangelo da Caravaggio, Ribera was committed to depicting the natural world, the world of his own subjective experience. In so doing, Ribera, like Caravaggio, operated outside conventional notions of artistic decorum, grace, and beauty.[61] Caravaggio, wrote the classical art apologist, Giovanni Battista Agguchi, "was so devoted to appearance that he had no regard for beauty."[62] Ribera was critiqued on similar grounds in 1724 by Spanish artist Antonio Palomino in his *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors* when he wrote of the artist the following, "[he] did not enjoy painting sweet and devout subjects as much as he liked expressing horrifying and harsh things."[63] Devoid of beauty, the horrifying and harsh belonged to the world of appearances, of imperfect nature. According to critics, both artists rejected the creative and interpretive processes, preferring to

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[60] Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le Vite de' pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni* (Rome: 1672), in *Italian and Spanish Art 1600-1750,* ed. and trans. Robert Enggass and Jonathan Brown (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1992), 8-16.
[61] Pietro Bellori, *Vite de' Pittori, Scultori et Architetti* (Rome: 1672) in *Caravaggio Studies,* ed. and trans. Walter Friedlander (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974). 252.
[62] Giovanni Battista Agucchi cited in Keith Christiansen, "Introduction," *Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652),* ed. Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez and Nicola Spinosa (New York City: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), xiii.
[63] Antonio Palomino, *Lives of the Eminent Spanish Painters and Sculptors* (1724), cited and trans. in Edward Payne, "Ribera's Grotesque Heads: Between Anatomical Study and Cultural Curiosity," in *Ugliness: The Non-Beautiful in Art and Theory,* ed. Andrei Pop and Mechtild Widrich (New York & London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 85.

instead translate lived reality directly onto the canvas.[64] This was considered an act of mimesis lacking in aesthetic judgement, and without aesthetic judgement the boundaries between art and life seemed to collapse.

While Caravaggio, like Ribera, was known as a painter of scenes of gruesome violence, what most concerned the critics was not blood, gore, or beheadings, but rather the artist's extreme naturalism. Caravaggio's early biographers denigrated his naturalistic style in an attempt to discredit this type of painting. Art theorist and painter Vincencio Carducho, in his 1633 *Dialogos de la Pintura,* warned against this quickly developing trend in art when he wrote the following inflammatory remarks:

> In our times, Michelangelo da Caravaggio arose in Rome with a new dish, prepared with such a rich, succulent sauce that it has made gluttons of some painters, who I fear will suffer apoplexy in the doctrine. They don't even stop stuffing themselves long enough to see that the fire of his art is so powerful … that they may not be able to digest the impetuous, unheard-of, and outrageous technique of painting without preparation. Has anyone else managed to paint as successfully as this evil genius, who worked naturally, almost without precepts, without doctrine, without study, but only with the strength of his talent, with nothing but nature before him, which he simply copied in his amazing way? I heard a devoted follower of our profession say that the coming of this man to the world was an omen of the ruin and demise of painting, and compare it to how at the end of this world the Anti-Christ, with false miracles and strange deeds, will lead to perdition great numbers of people, who will be moved by seeing his works, apparently so admirable but actually deceiving, false, and transitory, to say that he is the true Christ. Thus this Anti-Michelangelo, with his showy and superficial imitation, his stunning manner, and liveliness, has been able to persuade such a great number and variety of people that his is good painting, and his method and doctrine the true ones, that they have turned their backs on the true way of achieving eternity, and of knowing the certainty and truth of this matter."[65]

As a strong adherent of idealized beauty, Carducho considered Caravaggio's naturalistic art as one appealing to nothing other than the senses. According to Carducho, Caravaggio was the anti-

[64] Christiansen, "Introduction," xiii.
[65] Vincencio Carducho, *Diálogos de la Pintura* (Madrid: 1633), trans. Enggass and Brown, *Italian and Spanish Art,* 173-174.

Christ who, rejecting the classical idealism established by Michelangelo, was bringing about the "ruin and demise of painting." Bellori observed that the age of Caravaggio was one wherein "the representation of vile things [began]." By using nature as his model, Caravaggio allowed the quotidian and the common, the lowly and degraded to seep into the artistic discipline. In rejecting idealized beauty, Caravaggio destabilized artistic tradition.

Critics seized upon Caravaggio's violent nature and temperamental outbursts as the basis for an *ad hominem* attack on the artist's naturalism. This is evinced in Francesco Susinno's 1728 *Le vite de' pittori messinesi* wherein he likens Caravaggio's artistic practice to a torture chamber:

> It should be understood that before Caravaggio began to work for the Lazzari [*The Resurrection of Lazarus*] this crazy artist requested from them a room in the hospital. In order to support his capricious wish and to please him Caravaggio was given the best room … In order to give the central figure of Lazarus a naturalistic flavor he asked to have a corpse dug up that was already in a state of decomposition and had it placed in the arms of the workmen who however were unable to stand the foul odor and wanted to give up their work. Caravaggio with his usual fury raised his dagger and jumped on them, and as a result those unlucky men were forced to continue their job and nearly die like those miserable creatures who were condemned by the impious Maxentius to die tied to corpses. Caravaggio's picturesque room could in some fashion be called the slaughterhouse of the same tyrant.[66]

Naturalism, according to Susinno, required Caravaggio to engage in horrific acts in order for the artist's painted depictions to achieve a convincing level of mimetic realism. Supposedly operating without creative genius, Caravaggio relied solely on the model, and if violence was to be depicted in art then the models themselves would be required to suffer. Such sensationalized tales were not unique to Caravaggio's naturalism, however. In Carlo Ridolfi's 1648 account of the artist Gentile Bellini, the biographer claimed that, when visiting the Turkish Sultan Mehmed II, Bellini presented the sultan with a painting of the beheading of St. John the Baptist. Believing

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[66] Francesco Susinno, *Le vite de' pittori messinesi,* ed. Valentino Marinelli (Florence: Felice Le Monnier, 1960), cited and trans. in Sohm, "Caravaggio the Barbarian," 182.

the artist had inaccurately represented the placement of St. John's severed neck, the sultan had a slave decapitated before Bellini's eyes in order to verify the painting's accuracy.[67] According to such accounts naturalism in art was uncompromising and unforgiving in its attempt to accurately and convincingly imitate lived reality. As Sohm argues, such fictionalized anecdotes were not because "artists were thought to be more sadistic or masochistic [in the seventeenth century], but because the torture motif was an effective apologue denoting the mistaken literalism of naturalistic agendas."[68] For the adherents of classical idealism, Caravaggio epitomized the new naturalistic style and thus became their scapegoat. As a follower of Caravaggio, Ribera was also described as a sadist, despite the lack of any documentary evidence to support such claims.[69] Myths merged with historical truths and naturalism was made to be seen a dangerous pictorial pursuit.

While Ribera certainly followed in Caravaggio's footsteps, the Spaniard's naturalism is pushed to an even higher degree of mimetic realism. As Keith Christiansen observes, "even Caravaggio's depictions of gypsies and cardsharps, which provided the initial impulse for Ribera's work, seem less direct, less raw in their mode of address, and are more closely bound to established conventions."[70] As evinced in *Ixion* and *Tityus,* Ribera's artistic practice is one deeply committed to exploring the psychological, emotional, and physical limits of the human condition.[71] Ribera's acute attention to and understanding of the world of human experience allows his works to fully come alive. This was recognized by Spanish art theorist Francisco Pacheco who wrote "for among all the great paintings the Duke of Alcalá has, [Ribera's] figures

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[67] See Kim, "The Horror of Mimesis," 335 & Sohm, "Caravaggio the Barbarian," 183.
[68] Sohm, "Caravaggio the Barbarian," 183.
[69] Payne, "Sublime and Grotesque," https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gwEOaQZsdoo.
[70] Christiansen, "Introduction," xii.
[71] Spinosa, "Ribera and Neapolitan Painting," in *Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652),* ed. Alfonso E. Pérez Sánchez and Nicola Spinosa (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed by Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1992), 21.

and heads seem alive, and all the rest painted."[72] The uncanniness of the truthfulness to reality stops beholders in their tracks allowing Ribera's works take on a life of their own.

Inviting comparison with Caravaggio's highly dramatic and violent depiction of *Judith Beheading Holofernes* (fig. 5) (a painting the young Ribera would have certainly seen during his c. 1613-16 sojourn in Rome), Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus,* unlike the Italian master's Holofernes, are not shown in a moment in between life and death.[73] Whereas beholders of Caravaggio's image would have seen that Holofernes's head was to soon tumble to the ground, cutting his life-source and thus extinguishing the pain of execution, Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* capture a moment in a story which is itself one of eternal punishment — there is no end to The Furies' torture. Unlike Caravaggio, Ribera depicts the slow and unwinding process of torturous bodily pain. As Michel Foucault notes in *Discipline and Punish,* "death-torture is the art of maintaining life in pain, by subdividing it into a 'thousand deaths,' by achieving before life ceases 'the most exquisite of agonies.' Torture rests on a whole quantitative art of pain."[74] While these bodies almost reach the climax of a breaking point, Ribera refrains from providing this sense of release — there is no death for Ixion and Tityus. The moment of "maintaining life in pain" is made eternal creating a tension that runs throughout these paintings. Within *Ixion* and *Tityus* there is a particular sense of temporality as past, present, and future are condensed and collapsed into the eternal moment. It is as if time ceases to exist. Despite his attempt to evade the pain, Tityus's scream will forever be heard just as his guts too will continue to spill out of the abject wound until the end of time. Ribera, unlike Caravaggio, engages in a visceral prolongation of pain by

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[72] Francisco Pacheco, *El Arte de la Pintura* (1649), ed. Bonaventura Bassegoda i Hugas (Cátedra: Madrid, 1990) cited and trans. in Tanya S. Tiffany, "Velázquez's *Bodegones* and the Art of Emulation," *Annuario del Departamento de Historia y Teoría del Arte (U.A.M.)* XVIII (2006): 86.
[73] Christiansen, "Introduction," xiii.
[74] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1979), 33-34.

extending the moment of torture, and in so doing, *Ixion* and *Tityus* are made hauntingly unsettling.

It seems no wonder then that the force of Ribera's hellish depictions of experiential bodily torture was believed capable of affecting the so-called feeble-minded. As Sandrart put it in his tale of Frau Uffelen, the horror of such paintings was experienced as a "merciless realism" with potentially damaging results. Whereas Caravaggio was denigrated for his pictorial naturalism, Ribera was denigrated for his depictions of cruelty. At its extremes, naturalism had dangerous repercussions on the world of the living.

Despite the potential adverse affects associated with horrific images, however, early modern art collectors sought out deeply unsettling and brutally grotesque scenes of violence. Sluijter has written about the cognoscenti on the Keizergracht in Amsterdam who avidly collected depictions of horror. These elite art patrons engaged in competitive collecting, evaluating each other's paintings to see which inspired the greatest feelings of terror.[75] Constantin Huygens in his autobiography of 1629/30 provides a vivid account of the horrifying effects of Rubens' *The Head of Medusa* (fig. 6) seen in the collection of his friend Nicolaas Sohier, a wealthy Amsterdam merchant:

> Of the many paintings [that I have seen] I always seem to call to mind one which our friend Nicholas Sohierus of Amsterdam showed to viewers among his magnificent furnishings: Medusa's head, which is entangled with snakes born from her hair, has been cut off. In it he mixes the still pleasing sight of a woman, who recently was very beautiful, and a sight horrid with recent death and the most disgusting reptiles which suffer ineffable diligence that the viewer is struck with sudden terror (indeed the painting is usually covered) and delighted by the vivid and charming cruelty of the matter. Yet … I prefer to eulogise this [painting] rather in the house of friends than my own … Away with you, experts, who appreciate beautiful things just because of their horror; if someone loves to sing to me about murder and blood with the same grace of voice by which he is capable to convey mirth, jokes and laugher, should I not ask him to delight me with his

[75] Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals,* 40.

> saying as well? Someone may represent beautiful things less elegantly, but horrible things never pleasantly.[76]

Huygens' account sheds light on the aesthetics of horror prevalent in Europe at the time and provides insight into the conflicting array of emotions horrifying paintings could arouse within beholders. While Huygens recognizes Rubens' artistic virtuosity in executing the figure of Medusa he also states that horrible things can never be painted pleasantly. Indeed, the terror unleashed by the painting ultimately led Huygens to claim that he would rather view this painting in his friend's house than have it displayed on the walls of his own home. Rubens' *Medusa* must have been an infamously horrifying picture in its day considering Huygens directly addressed it in his autobiography.

Lucas van Uffelen was immersed in this context of competitive collecting in Amsterdam, which is what perhaps prompted him to have a series of Ribera's Furies commissioned for his own collection. In Sandrart's account of *Ixion'*s negative impact on Frau Uffelen and her child, he also draws attention to the fact that the painting was subsequently shipped back to Italy. This is a telling example of how horrifying this work must have been considering Uffelen was an avid collector of Ribera's gruesome scenes of violence and no other paintings by the artist are documented as having been returned.[77] Perhaps it is not too great a leap to suggest that Ribera surpassed the limit of acceptable horror in art, even outdoing Rubens' *Prometheus Bound,* a painting many considered the most terrifying of its time.[78]

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[76] Constantin Huygens cited and trans. in Ulrich Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa: Reflecting the Passions in Paintings," in "The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands," ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Herman Roodenburg, special edition, *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 60 (2010): 151.

[77] Besides owning paintings of Ribera's Furies, Uffelen is documented as having had a picture by the artist of the flaying of St. Bartholomew in his collection (Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie,* Book II, 191, http://ta.sandrart.net/en/text/405#tapagehead).

[78] The air of competitive rivalry was not only operative between collectors but also between artists themselves, notes Sluijter. Many were competing to surpass Rubens, the Flemish artist considered the greatest in Europe at the time.

Controlling Horror

Ribera's aesthetic of horror was in particular demand amongst the seventeenth-century Spanish elite.[79] As avid collectors of Ribera's paintings, the Neapolitan viceroys introduced the artist's works to the king and also greatly contributed to his international reputation and success. Indeed, it was the Neapolitan viceroy Conde de Monterray, an influential figure at Philip IV's court, who commissioned Ribera's Furies as a gift to the king to commemorate his newly inaugurated Buen Retiro palace.[80] Although the original location of The Furies within the Buen Retiro remains undocumented, their monumental scale suggests they were displayed in a special room and were intended to be seen by members of the court as well as guests.[81] While Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* provoke a confrontation with horror, beholders at the court, namely the highly educated and elite nobles invited to the Buen Retiro by the king, would have known not to respond to these paintings with an outward display of fear, shock, disgust, or dread.

In order to assess these paintings' potential impact, I turn to Neostoic philosophy, which was important across Europe and of great interest at the Spanish court.[82] Neostoicism originates

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His *Prometheus Bound* (1612) was a point of departure for many artists, including Rembrandt and Van Dyck, who sought to outperform the master's depiction of pain and expression of emotional violence (Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals,* 45).

[79] Hendrix, "The Repulsive Body," 69, 72.

[80] Marshall, *Baroque Naples,* 223.

[81] This assumption is also reinforced by the fact that a now lost version of Ribera's *Apollo and Marsyas,* a gruesome painting depicting a flaying, was displayed in a room in the Alcázar where the Spanish king received guests (Edward Payne, "Skinning the Surface," 85.)

[82] A favourite painter at the Spanish court, Peter Paul Rubens created numerous mythological works for the Alcázar, Buen Retiro, and Torre de la Parada. Rubens was a strong adherent of Neostoic philosophy and, as many art historians have recently argued, much of his artistic output was shaped and influenced by the writings of Justus Lipsius. Since Neostoicism was held in high regard at the Spanish court, Ribera's mythological paintings made for Philip IV may similarly be seen through the lens of this practical philosophical discourse. For discussions of Rubens and Neostocism see Aneta Georgievska-Shine and Larry Silver, *Rubens, Velàzquez, and the King of Spain* (Surrey & Burlington: Ashgate, 2014); Suzanne Walker, "Composing the Passions in Rubens's Hunting Scenes" and Ulrich Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa: Reflecting the Passions in Paintings, with some Considerations of Neuroscience in Art History," in "The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands," ed. Stephanie S. Dickey and Herman Roodenburg, special issue, *Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art* 60 (2010): 109-124 & 151-176; Ulrich Heinen, "Peter Paul Rubens – Barocke Leidenschaften," in *Peter Paul Rubens Barocke Leidenschaften,* ed. Nils Büttner and Ulrich Heinen (Munich: Himer Verlag München, 2004), 28-38; Simon A. Vosters, "Das

in the sixteenth-century writings of the Flemish philosopher and humanist Justus Lipsius. His fundamental Neostoic message was that the exercise of prudence was an effective means to master and control the passions. Drawing on the ancient texts of Seneca, Lipsius revived Roman stoicism by making it compatible with Christianity. By fighting the passions and developing the integrity of the soul, one could transcend the corporeal along with the material world of distractions. [83] This practical philosophy was particularly suited to "the austere style of comportment" set in place by Philip IV's grandfather, Philip II, in the late sixteenth-century.[84] The king was required to train himself so as to present to the world an outward appearance of rigid self-control. This mode of behaviour was also adopted by members of the court. Courtiers were to observe proper restrained conduct as they reflected the moral values of the king and the Spanish monarchy.[85]

Reiterbild Philipps IV. von Spanien als Allegorie der höfischen Affektregulierung," in *Rubens Passioni,* ed. Ulrich Heinen and Andreas Thielemann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht), 180-191.
For a discussion of the influence of Neostocisim on early modern Spanish literature see Jeremy Robbins, "Blatasar Gracián's El Critcon and the Arts of Perception, *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* no. 82, 8 (2005): 201-224 & "Scepticism and Stocisim in Spain: Antonio López de Vega's Heráclito y Demócrito de Nuestro Siglo," *Culture and Society in Habsburg Spain,* ed. Nigel Griffin et al. (London: Tamesis, 2001), 137-152.

[83] Georgievska-Shine and Silver, *Rubens, Velàzquez, and the King of Spain*, 9.

[84] Jonathan Brown and J.H. Elliott, *A Palace for a King: The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1980), 84.

[85] Jonathan Brown and J.H. Elliott, *A Palace for a King: The Buen Retiro and the Court of Philip IV,* rev. ed. (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 31-32.
It should be noted, however, that the boundaries between a Neostoic philosophy of mind and the early modern practice of dissimulation cannot be easily distinguished from one another. While Neostocism promoted the mastery of one's emotions through the strength of reason, the culture of dissimulation insisted that the emotions be shielded from public view in order to uphold specified codes of ritualized comportment. To this end, the Neostoic philosophy and the practice of dissimulation, both highly esteemed and equally valued within the atmosphere of the seventeenth-century Spanish court, insisted upon a cultivation and performance of self (For a discussion of dissimulation at court see Jon R. Snyder, *Dissimulation and the Culture of Secrecy in Early Modern Europe* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2009).
Another well-known and highly influential text that may have contributed to the shaping of behaviour at the seventeenth-century Spanish court was Lucretius' didactic poem, *De rerum natura,* written in the first century B.C. Engaged in explaining the fundamentals of Epicurean philosophy, the six-book poem instructs readers on how to develop a tranquility of mind in order to overcome the fear of death. The end of book three specifically addresses the terror and torment endured by the Furies. Lucretius describes the Furies' futile fear of eternal punishment as the result of a weak mind "plagued with vain terror." Familiarity with this text would have certainly shaped the ways in which beholders at court responded to Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus.* (See Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura,* "Book 3", rev. ed, trans. W.H.D. Rouse (Cambridge & London: Harvard University Press, 1992), 265-275).

Although Neostoicism held that extreme passions were morally dangerous, it was paradoxically only through exposure to them that one could learn how to control the emotions and thereby cultivate the virtue of self-restraint. Upholding this Neostoic philosophy would have been particularly challenging when faced with Ribera's striking images. While *Ixion* and *Tityus* sought to provoke a strong affective response, beholders at the Spanish court were to overcome what the Roman stoic philosopher, Seneca, described as the *ictus,* the involuntary surge of emotions or bodily paralysis triggered by the sight of blood, guts, and wounds.[86] Rational judgement was expected to intervene, preventing the senses from giving into the sway of the emotions. In an environment where order and decorum were held in high esteem, responses to Ribera's Furies would have been quite different from Sandrart's account of Frau Uffelen's reaction. As Lipsius maintained, "we strip off our manhood when we pass over into the mourning and weeping of children and women."[87] This gendered view on emotional response, in which women were viewed as feeble-minded and men as rational and decorous, suggests that the sophisticated and supposedly strong-minded men invited to the Spanish court were to face horror with manly stoic indifference. Ribera's paintings thus functioned as a twofold lesson in behaviour and response.

Lipsius's 1584 Senecan-inspired *Concerning Constancy,* the text which most prominently contributed to the shaping of Neostoic thought in the seventeenth century, is written as a dialogue that unfolds between the pupil Lipsius and his Neostoic advisor, Langius. Referencing the myth of Prometheus, Lipsius asks his advisor how "[to] drive off the wicked birds that are

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[86] Ulrich Heinen, "Huygens, Rubens and Medusa," 155.
[87] Justus Lipsius, *Concerning Constancy,* ed. and trans. R.V. Young (Temple: ACMRS, 2011), 53.

tearing me to pieces, and [to] remove these chains of anxiety by which I am bound securely to this Caucasus."[88] Langius responds with the following:

> I shall truly remove them and as a new Hercules I shall release this Prometheus. Only listen carefully and intently. I have called you to Constancy, Lipsius, and in it I have placed the hope and the preservation of your well-being. Above all, then, we must come to know it. *Constancy* I here designate *an upright and unmoved vigor of mind that is neither uplifted nor cast down by outward or chance occurrences*. I mentioned 'vigor,' and I mean firmness deeply rooted in the mind, not by opinion, but by judgment and right reason … the true mother of Constancy is Patience and a meekness of mind, which I define as *the willing endurance without complaint of whatever occurs or befalls man from without …* Right reason … is nothing else but *the true judgement and sense of things human and divine* (insofar as the latter have regard to us). Opinion is the opposite of this – *a politeness and false judgment of these same matters.*[89]

Desiring to free himself from the chains that bound him to his emotions, the student here fails to understand the full implications of the Neostoic principle. As Langius advises, it is none other than the self that can bring about one's release from the powers of bodily passions. The transformation of the self cannot be taught, but rather must be cultivated and learned from within.

In comparing his overly passionate self to Prometheus, Lipsius references a classical figure enslaved to the torment of emotions. As we have seen, Ixion and Tityus too were figures that, due to their inability to harness right reason, were sentenced to a life of eternal punishment for having committed impassioned and lustful crimes. Not only had Ixion and Tityus rejected reason in favour of pursuing their animalistic impulses on earth, but also in Hades they were unable to overcome the clutches of their bodily passions. This is evidenced most clearly in the depiction of *Tityus* wherein the giant vocalizes his pain through a scream — he is incapable of withstanding bodily torture. The scream not only affirms the punishment but also draws attention

[88] Lipsius, *Concerning Constancy,* 27.
[89] Ibid., 27, 29.

to the very materiality of the giant's flesh. Despite the presence of the vulture that tears at his liver, Tityus is ultimately his own torturer — his inability to transcend his body, and therefore bodily pain, is a consequence of his inability to harness reason to overcome passion. In Hades, Ixion and Tityus eternally relive the repercussions of their uncontrolled passions through the punishments inflicted upon their flesh. These bodies, suspended in time and space, are caught in an eternal loop: unrestrained emotions lead to brutal bodily torture, and the torture feeds into further incontrollable emotional responses. While indeed figuratively chained to the boulders on which they lay, both Ixion and Tityus are metaphorically chained to their bodily passions — they are victims of their own failed self-control.

Ixion and *Tityus* thus served to remind courtly beholders of the dangers associated with submission to unrestrained passions. While initially challenged by the affect of horror provoked by Ribera's images, beholders who were able to overcome the surge of the *ictus* by mentally withstanding subjection to these shocking impressions would have been able to read these paintings as examples of negative self conduct, *exempla contraria.* The actions and behaviours of Ixion and Tityus were not to be emulated, as uncontrolled passions could lead to torturous consequences.

As an homage to Titian's Furies in the Alcàzar palace, Ribera's paintings, like the Venetian's, functioned as political allegories demonstrating the power of the Hapsburg monarch to condemn and punish those who challenged the divinely appointed authority of the king.[90] During the reign of Philip IV the Spanish economy was devastated by inflation — taxes were high, and the royal treasury was constantly on the brink of bankruptcy.[91] This combined with

[90] Marhsall, *Baroque Naples,* 223.
[91] Steven N. Orso, *Philip IV and the Decoration of the Alcázar of Madrid* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 6.

civil and foreign wars led to covert opposition and tension within the Spanish government.[92] In this fraught context, mythological and allegorical art works served an important role at court as they functioned to reinforce the monarch and his power, as well as his recognized moral attributes and virtues.[93] "Neither Philip nor his predecessors," remark Jonathan Brown and J.H. Elliott, "were indifferent to the function of art as political propaganda."[94] As such, the torture of *Ixion* and *Tityus* could have operated as a warning, reminding elite courtly beholders of the potential consequences of negative actions and behaviours. Much like Zeus, the king of gods who punished the Furies for their crimes of passion, Philip IV too could punish those who challenged his authority.

Members of Philip IV's court were not only familiar with, but had probably themselves witnessed, public executions in Spain. The iconography of Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* could have certainly drawn parallels to these spectacles of torture in the minds of contemporary beholders. Whereas instant death (beheading, hanging, and garroting) was an honourable form of execution, prolonged death (breaking on the wheel, burning, and drowning) was considered dishonourable.[95] The punishment of Ixion — the body broken on the wheel — was reserved for the most loathsome criminals who had committed the most heinous crimes. If the crime committed was deemed particularly repulsive, then the ritual of public execution was not so much about death itself but more about the prolongation of the spectacle of pain.

As an expression of monarchical power, public torture was a spectacle designed to deter people from transgressing the law and challenging the king's authority. The horror of pain

[92] Brown and Elliott, *A Palace for a King* (1980), 191-92.
[93] Ibid., 157.
[94] Ibid., 140.
[95] Pieter Spierenburg, *The Spectacle of Suffering,* 71.

instilled the greatest fear in the public: a means to terrorize by way of example.[96] More than this, it also revealed to the public that their bodies were not their own: they belonged to the king. As Foucault remarks, it is the "expression of power that punishes," and this power is invested in "excesses of torture."[97] Crimes against society were considered crimes against the body of the king who governed that society. In order to re-establish the king's temporary loss of power over his subjects, he had to mark the body of the criminal, and he did this by displaying it, beating it, and breaking it. This "exercise in terror" performed at the scaffold thus functioned to reactivate the king's power.[98] As such, spectacles of torture were thought to contribute to the well being and proper governance of society as a whole.

As Mitchell B. Merback notes, however, the Christian attitude towards the body, pain, and death held that even a disgraceful death (such as breaking on the wheel) could end in a "good" rather than a "bad" death.[99] The sinner at the scaffold or gallows who repented and asked for forgiveness proved that redemption through death was possible. While the body was punished, the soul could nonetheless transcend. The criminal, by willingly and remorsefully accepting suffering and death, could die a death not unlike that of Christ's. Christ, after all, had also died a criminal and yet he was the son of God.[100]

The notion of dying a good death is expressed in Ribera's *The Martyrdom of St. Philip* (fig. 7), a painting which stands in striking contrast to the artist's *Ixion* and *Tityus.* Documented in the Alcàzar collection of 1666, *The Martyrdom* depicts the patron saint of Philip IV being

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[96] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 34, 58.
[97] Ibid., 34-35.
[98] Ibid., 49.
[99] Mitchell B. Merback, *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe,* Reaktion Books, 1999, 141.
[100] Ibid., 141-142.

strung up on a cross.[101] A crowd observes the scene as two men pull the ropes to raise the cross's horizontal bar while a third helps heave the elongated body of the emaciated saint upwards and against the vertical post. Despite this being a spectacle of torturous bodily punishment, St. Philip does not flinch in pain. Rather, the saint's body is docile and his eyes glance towards the heavenly blue skies above. In both body and expression, St. Philip reveals his ability to transcend the pain enacted upon his corporal being ─ he is capable of overcoming the materiality of the flesh through his belief in God. According to *The Golden Legend,* a thirteenth-century apocryphal text detailing the lives of saints, Philip, a disciple of Jesus, was crucified for preaching the Gospel. Because the teachings of Christ were considered heretical by the Jews, St. Philip was condemned a criminal.[102] Although St. Philip died the death of a convict, he was nonetheless able to suffer in peace due to his Christian faith. Unlike Ribera's giants, St. Philip does not twist or contort in pain, nor does he unleash an agonizing scream. As Williamson notes of Ribera's martyrdom scenes more generally, "the saints, although being inflicted with great pain, express few signs of physical, and presumably emotional, suffering. They are always silent." [103] Whereas Ribera's St. Philip dies a "good death," Ixion and Tityus endure what would have been considered a "bad death" – one that led to eternal damnation. Ixion and Tityus give into the pain of sensation; bodily control is lost at the hand of violence. These criminals do not learn from the mistakes of their initial transgression; instead they repeatedly submit to their carnal passions as they continually fail to exercise strength of mind.

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[101] "*The Martyrdom of Saint Philip,* Ribera, José de", Prado Museum Madrid (website), updated February 13, 2018, https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-martyrdom-of-saint-philip/a221ea0e-d38c-4018-be83-af9119458701.
[102] Ibid., https://www.museodelprado.es/en/the-collection/art-work/the-martyrdom-of-saint-philip/a221ea0e-d38c-4018-be83-af9119458701.
[103] Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 36.

Thus, a different visual iconography emerges in Ribera's art when depicting saintly as opposed to criminal bodies. The body of St. Philip, representative of the saintly body, remains impassive and unflinching in the ropes that bind him to the cross. The bodies of Ixion and Tityus, on the other hand, representative of the criminal body, pull, strain, and thrash against the chains that bind them. [104] As such, Ribera's St. Philip, in his ability to transcend bodily and emotional pain, typifies behaviour reflective of contemporary Neostoic thought. Indeed, through a painting like *The Martyrdom of St. Philip,* a work which hung in one of the main audience halls of the Alcázar, the miracles of God were made visible to courtly beholders so that they could fashion their self-conduct in imitation of the saintly ideal. To this end such images, as noted by Pacheco, were to teach, move, and please beholders by working on their affections.[105] This notion is reinforced by Giovanni Battista Armenini, who writing in the spirt of the Counter-Reformation, elaborated on the goal of persuasive painting in his 1583 *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*:

> The purpose of painting is to nourish the spirits of mortals, to console them with the highest pleasure and delight, and to move their spirits and ennoble minds to virtuous deeds. [Painting] is so well suited to move the passions and the affections of men that it seems impossible to find anything more ardent and impassionate, for through [its] power [it] moves men to face death itself.[106]

[104] Merback discusses a similar distinction in the visual iconography of Christ and the Two Thieves in late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century visual practices. See *The Thief, the Cross and the Wheel: Pain and the Spectacle of Punishment in Medieval and Renaissance Europe,* Reaktion Books, 1999.
[105] Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 39.
[106] Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting* (1583), ed. and trans. Edward J. Olszewski (New York: B. Franklin, 1977), Book I, 98, cited in Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 19.

Religious paintings sought to ignite the passions, moving beholders to piety. As Pacheco maintained, the tortured body of the saint was to be shown "suffering with pleasure."[107] The promise of salvation taught beholders how to face death more equably and calmly.

At the Spanish court, different types of images were mobilized to move beholders to virtue. Whereas the didactic quality of a religious martyrdom scene like Ribera's *The Martyrdom of St. Philip* was to inspire beholders to model their bodily and emotional conduct after that of the stoic saint's, the horrific quality of the artist's *Ixion* and *Tityus* was to inspire proper Neostoic conduct by revealing the dangers resulting from submission to extreme passions.

Engaged in a discourse surrounding contemporary notions of discipline and punishment, Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* provided examples of negative self-conduct. Defying the divine rule of the gods, the Furies were characters whose overly passionate actions and behaviours were not to be imitated. Thus, these paintings could have functioned as a non-violent form of visual punishment, mobilized to ensure social stability and deter subversion to royal authority by confronting beholders with images of the ruler's power to punish. By encouraging an awareness of horrific punishment and an inducement of stoic behaviour within beholders, these paintings would have been effective tools for a monarch.

More than this, however, Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* could have also functioned as negative moral *exempla* not only for members of the court, but also for Philip IV himself.[108] As the king was the "father of his country," note Aneta Georgievska-Shine and Larry Silver, "his

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[107] Pacheco, *El Art de la Pintura* (1649) cited and trans. in Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 34.

[108] Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 163. As Brown and Elliott remark, Philip IV was the "supreme custodian" of etiquette and decorum at the Spanish court, regularly updating the *etiquetas de palacio,* a written document denoting official court etiquette. As such, the King was himself an exemplary model of courtly conduct and protocol (Brown and Elliott, *Palace for a King* (2003), 31.

self-control remains the *sine qua non* of good rule in the kingdom. Passions, emotions, and vices — such as anger and lust — need mastery by strength of reason, mind, and spirt."[109] As such, Philip IV had to represent himself as a king who embodied the epitome of the Neostoic ideal. Indeed, uncontrolled passions in a monarch threatened to destabilize and upset the natural order and the balance of the universe.[110] To this end, images like *Ixion* and *Tityus* were to help towards the cultivation and formation of a prudent and proper king. Spanish diplomat Saavedra Fajardo, writing about the ideal Christian king in his 1640 *Idea de un príncipa politico Cristian,* claimed that art was to serve both a moral and didactic purpose "so that through your eyes and ears … your Highness's mind may be more informed concerning the science of ruling."[111]

Conclusion

Ribera's *Ixion* and *Tityus* redefined the expression of pain in art as the unidealized and subjective experience of physical and emotional agony. By using a heightened level of mimetic realism to depict the torturous punishments enacted upon the flesh of the cardinal transgressors, Ribera made the experience of pain horrifyingly real. Dissolving the boundaries between art and life, the artist's *Ixion* and *Tityus* sought to confront seventeenth-century beholders with the very force of their brute horror. While some art historians have focused on the overt horror of these paintings as a means to denigrate the Spaniard's supposedly sensationalistic and sadistic approach, this thesis has shown that a discussion of horror provides a generative means for exploring the intended moral functions of *Ixion* and *Tityus.* The varying responses to these

[109] Williamson, "The Martyrdom Paintings of Jusepe de Ribera," 248.
[110] Georgievska-Shine and Silver, *Rubens, Velázquez, and the King of Spain,* 38.
[111] Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea de un príncipa politico Cristian* (1640), cited in Georgievska-Shine and Silver, *Rubens, Velázquez, and the King of Spain*, 265.

paintings reveal how horror operates differently depending on viewership and context. Whereas Ribera's Furies were described in terms of their negative impact on the supposedly overly-passionate Frau Uffelen and her child, within the controlled context of Philip IV's Buen Retiro these paintings were thought to have a potentially positive effect. The confrontation with horror provoked by *Ixion* and *Tityus* taught courtly viewers to suppress strong emotions by developing a Neostoic frame of mind. Thus, the horror of these artworks was considered beneficial, teaching beholders how to face terror with equanimity.

Figures

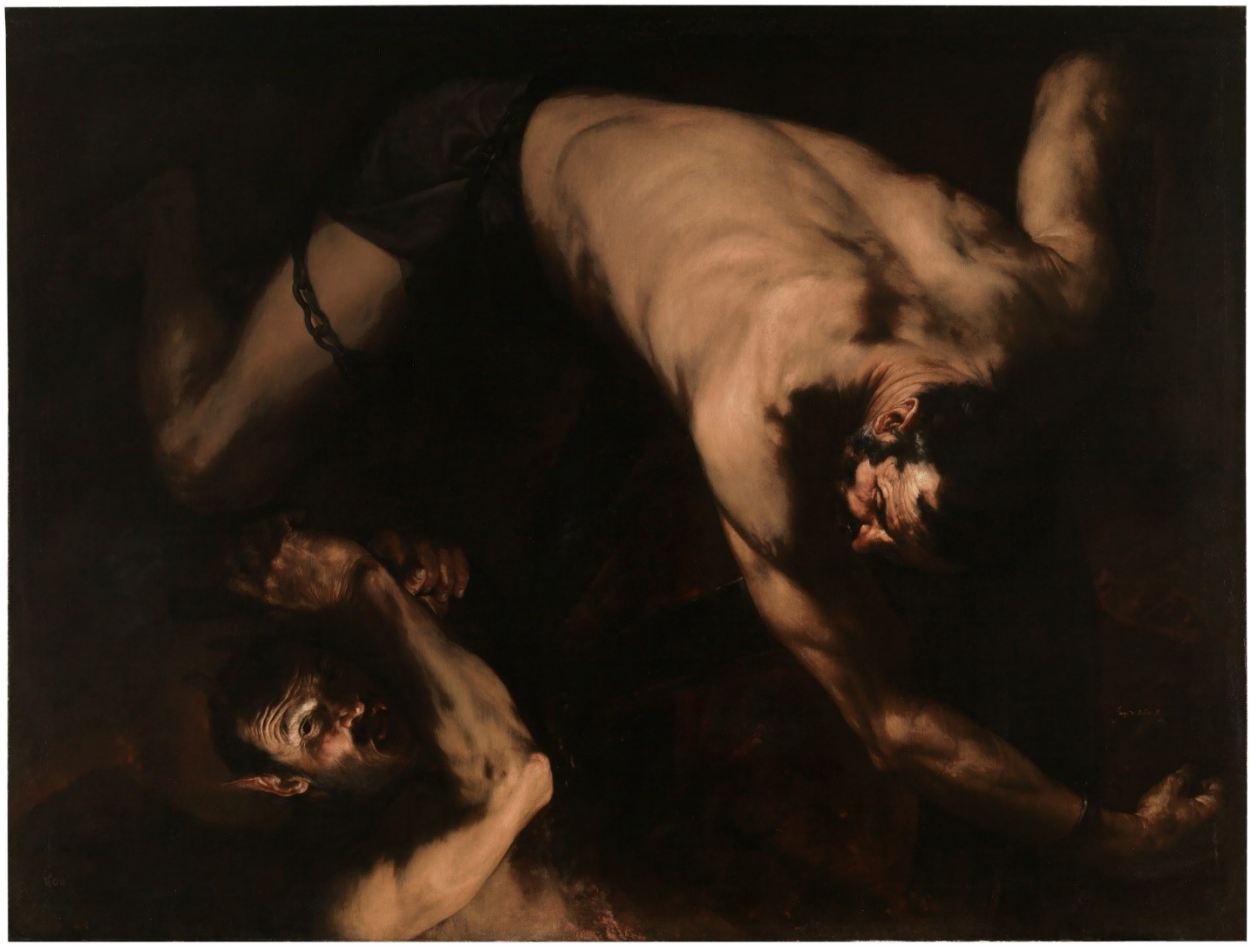

Fig. 1. Jusepe de Ribera, *Ixion,* 1632, oil on canvas, 220 cm x 301 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

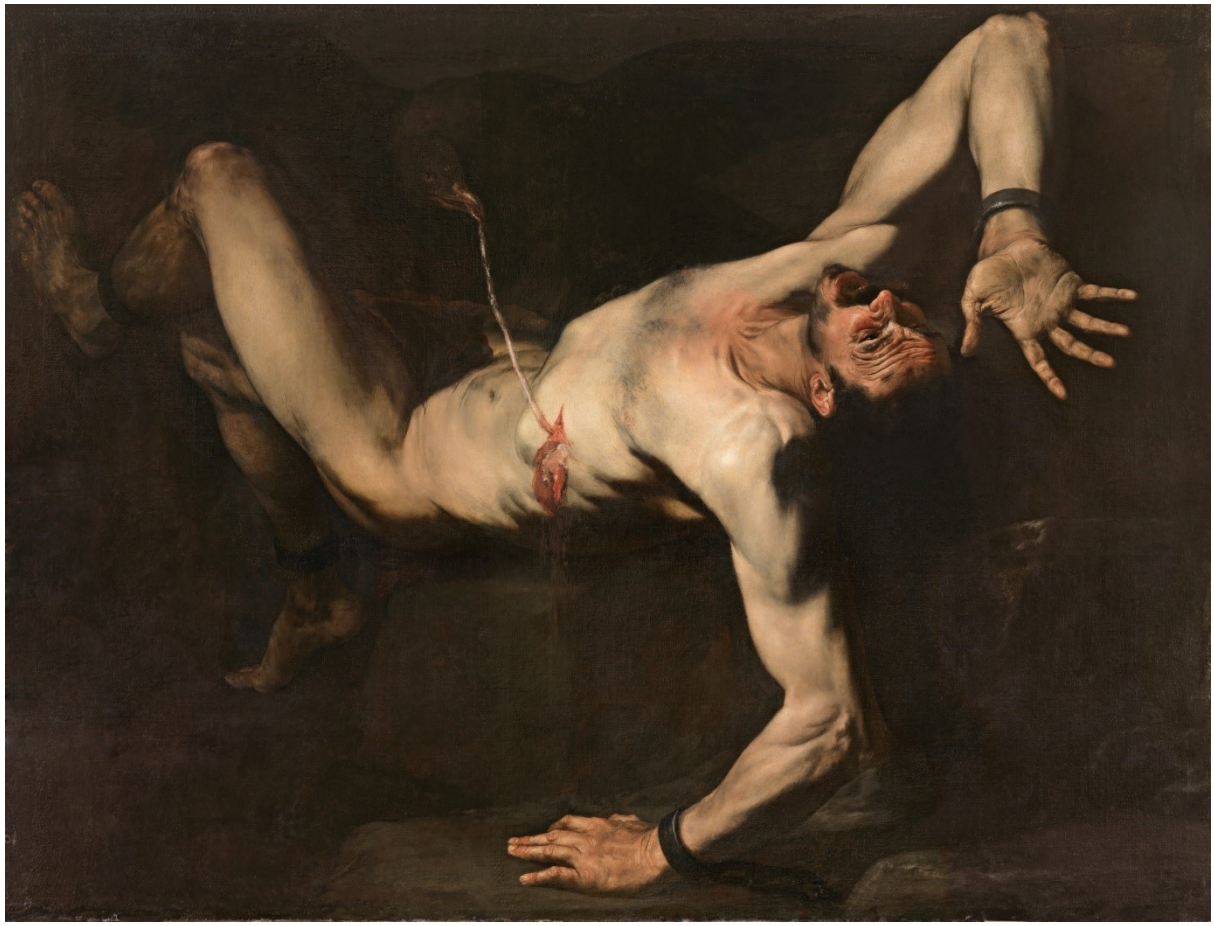

Fig. 2. Jusepe de Ribera, *Tityus,* 1632, oil on canvas, 227 cm x 301 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

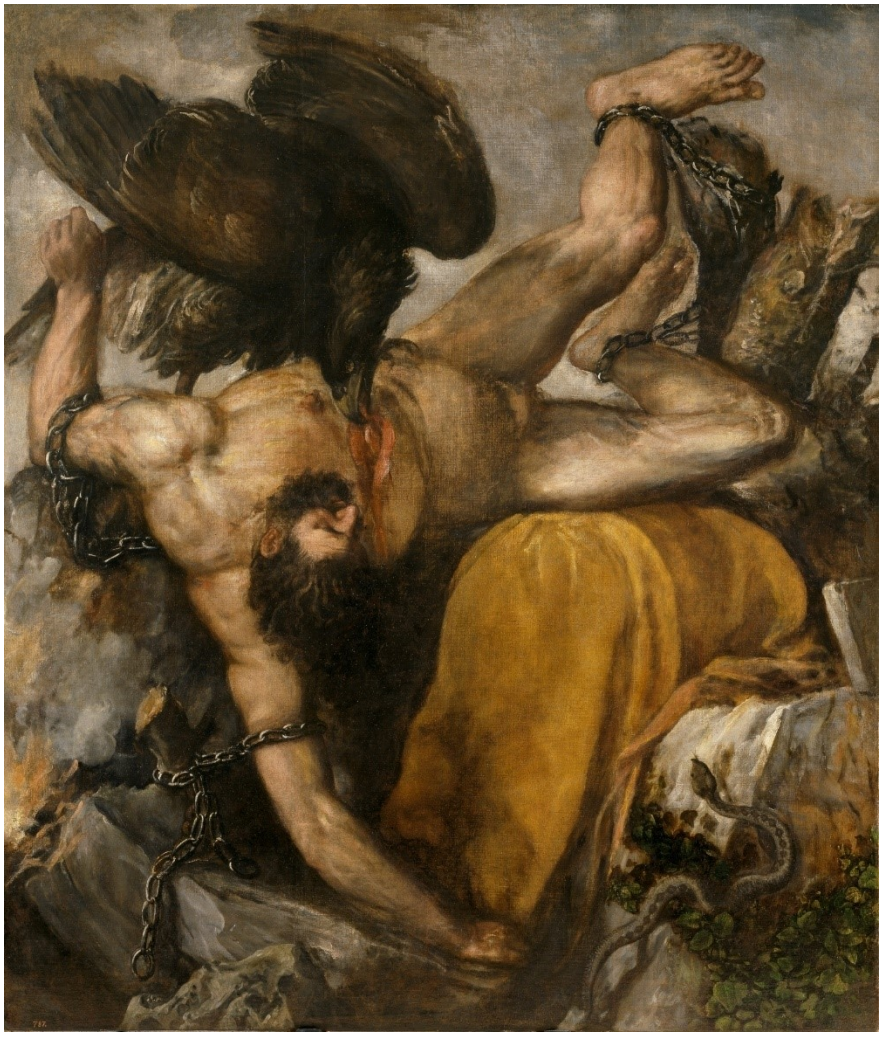

Fig. 3. Titian, *Tityus,* ca. 1548, oil on canvas, 253 cm x 217 cm, Museo del Prado Madrid.

Fig. 4. Peter Paul Rubens and Frans Snyders, *Prometheus Bound,* c. 1612, oil on canvas, 243 cm x 210 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art.

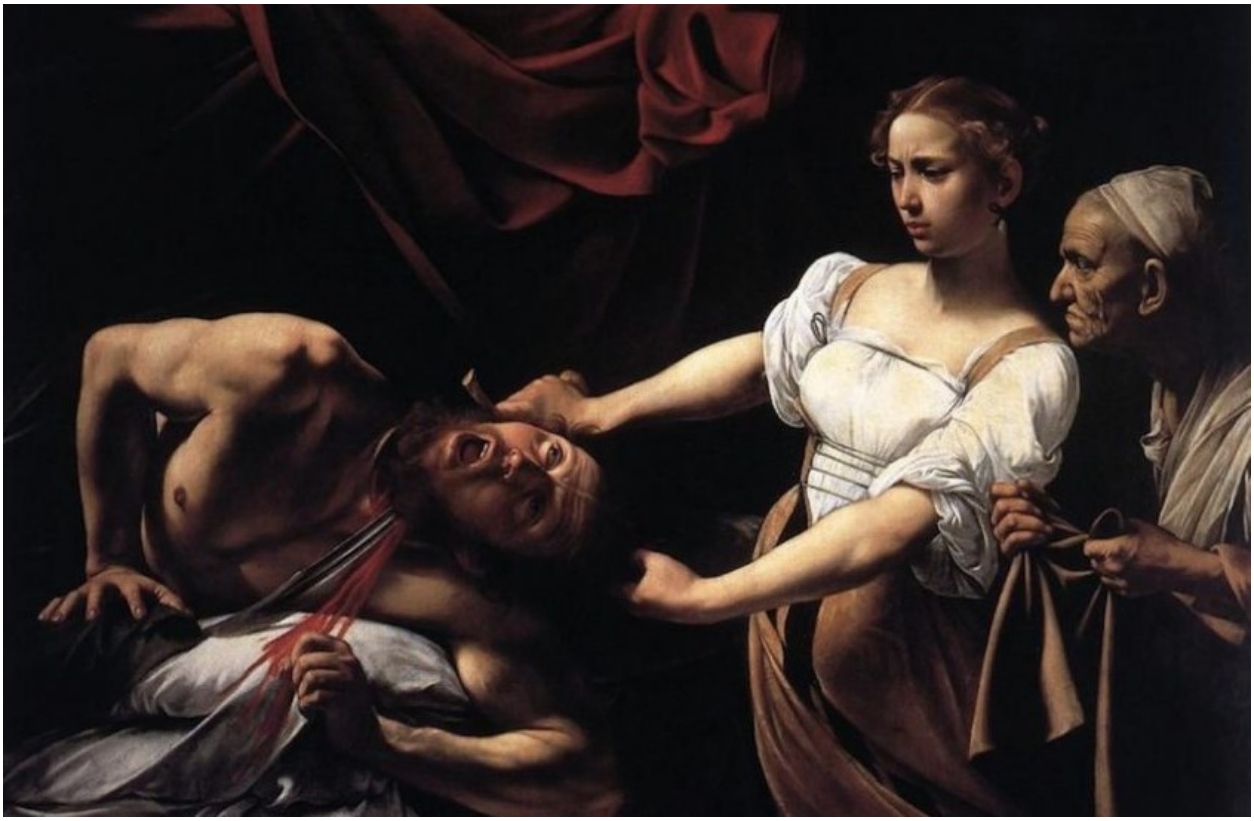

Fig. 5. Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Judith Beheading Holofernes,* 1598-1599, oil on canvas, 145 cm x 195 cm, Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Rome.

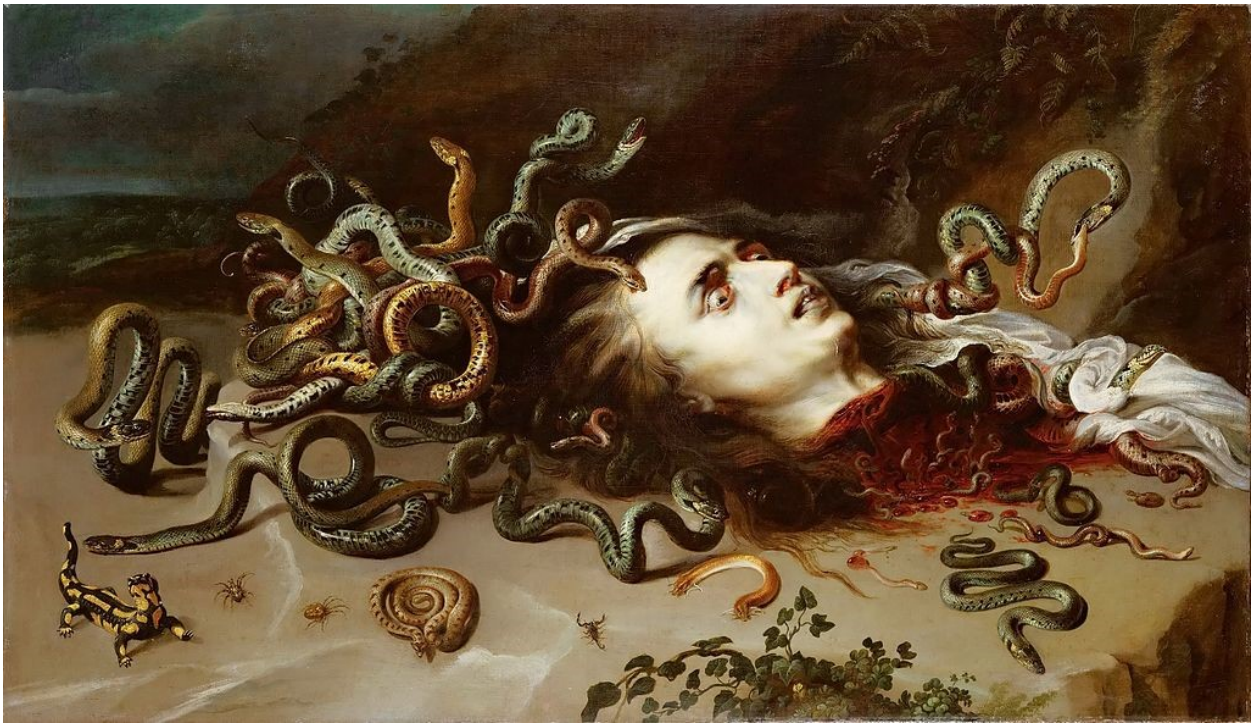

Fig. 6. Peter Paul Rubens, *Head of Medusa,* ca. 1617-18, oil on canvas, 68.5 cm x 118 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

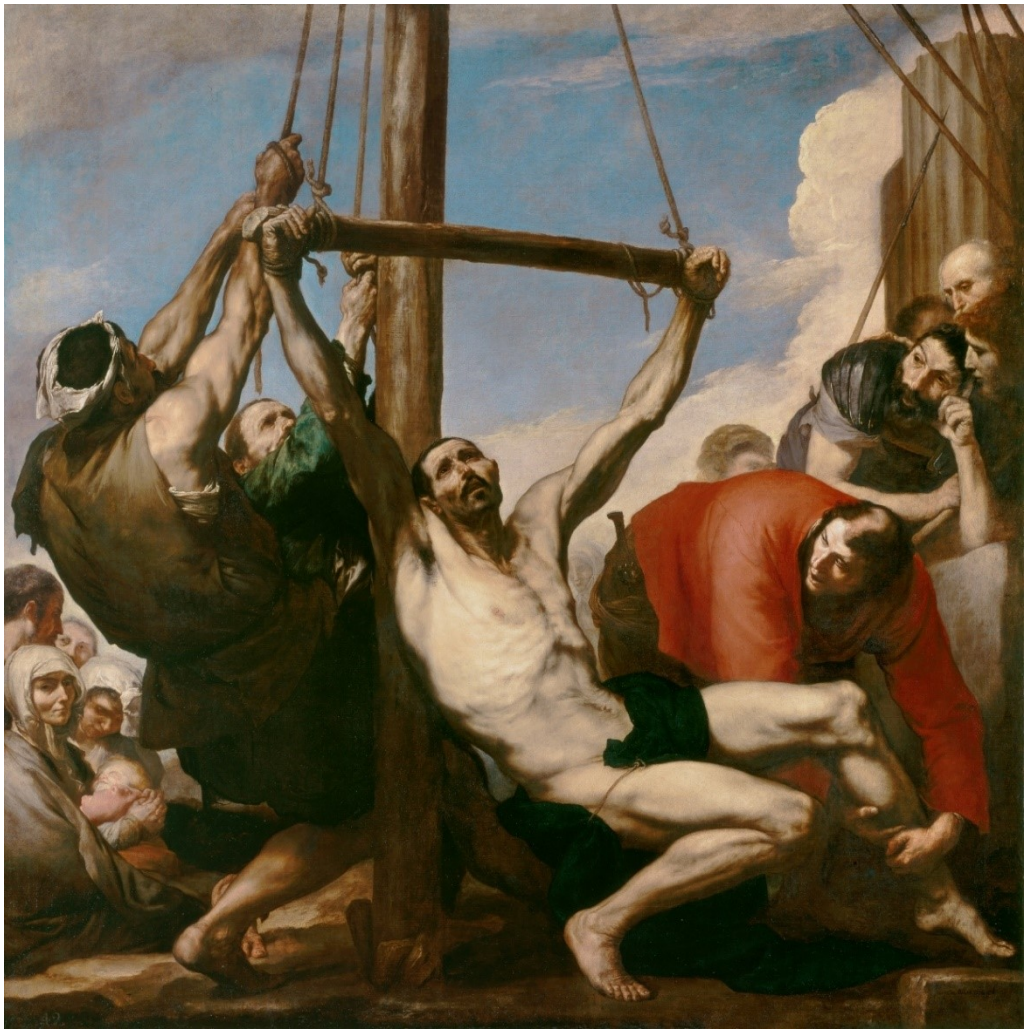

Fig. 7. Jusepe de Ribera, *The Martyrdom of Saint Philip,* 1639, oil on canvas, 234 cm x 234 cm, Museo del Prado, Madrid.

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