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# Lelio Orsi, Antonio Pérez and *The Minotaur Before a Broken Labyrinth*

Rhoda Eitel-Porter

A little-studied drawing of a muscular, half-human creature is found among the rich holdings of the Morgan Library & Museum, New York (fig. 7).<sup>1</sup> A noble, powerful figure, he stands quivering with repressed energy before a structure of four low concentric walls out of which he seems to have emerged. Although he resembles a centaur – a mythical animal with the body of a horse and the torso, arms and head of a human – and the Minotaur is more commonly shown with a bull's head and a human body, the cloven hoofs and the presence of a maze suggest this is the Minotaur of Crete emerging from the labyrinth.<sup>2</sup> He holds a club in his left hand, wears a fluttering cloak knotted at his shoulder (but illogically held in position), while his tail snakes in a vigorous curl behind him. He points to a Latin inscription in a banderole above, *USQUE ADHUC*, which may be translated as 'hitherto', 'up to this time' or 'thus far'. Several old inscriptions attribute the sheet to Lelio Orsi (1508/11–87).<sup>3</sup> The following article attempts to shed light on the iconographical tradition of the image, the patron for whom it was made, its use as the design for a print as well as its attribution and date.

The presence of a motto and the clear legibility of the image – due in part to the simplification of the maze-like structure and the way it is tilted upward in a wilfully non-perspectival construction – suggest that the drawing is a design for an impresa. Imprese, or personal devices, were one of the principal genres of sixteenth-century figurative language and Paolo Giovio's *Dialogo delle imprese militari et amorose*, published in Venice in 1555,

was a first attempt to systematize them. They generally combined a personalized symbolic image with a motto in order to express a concept. Refined and elitist, they were meant to demonstrate the courtly wit, or *ingegno*, of its inventor and were thus often suitably obscure. Imprese and emblems are closely related to each other, but imprese were intended to hint at their meaning rather than express it outright, as outlined by Stefano Guazzo in 1586: 'And those ingenious persons having realized that emblems are either too open or too simple, set about adumbrating their secret thoughts under the finest veil of imprese'.<sup>4</sup> The hidden message could often be deciphered only within its original courtly context or within that of a cultured academy of literati.

The motif of a labyrinth, alone or in combination with the Minotaur, made occasional appearances in emblems and imprese. Closely associated, for instance, with the legendary foundation of the city of Mantua, the labyrinth was a traditional device of the ruling Gonzaga family. It is first associated with Isabella d'Este (1474–1539), Duchess of Mantua, and was mentioned in the subtitle of a poem by Serafino Aquilano, published in 1503 'Sopra un laberinto che portava la Marchesana de Mantova per impresa' (On the subject of a labyrinth worn as a personal device by the Duchess of Mantua).<sup>5</sup> Its earliest known representation is in the Sala del Labirinto in the Corte Vecchia of the Ducal Palace in Mantua, thought to date from Isabella's time.<sup>6</sup> Generally the Gonzaga labyrinth is accompanied by the motto 'forse che sì forse che no' (perhaps

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1. Inv. 1982.12. Provenance: sale, London, Sotheby's, 17 April 1980, lot 144, repr., as attributed to Lelio Orsi.
2. The drawing has been mentioned in publications only twice, once in the 1980 sale catalogue and once in the museum's acquisitions list, *Nineteenth Report to the Fellows of the Pierpont Morgan Library, 1978–1980*, edited by C. Ryskamp, New York, 1981, p. 207, as Lelio Orsi, and as possibly showing the Minotaur emerging from the labyrinth.
3. At lower right, in pen and brown ink, *Lelio da Novellara*; on verso, at center, in violet pencil, *Lelio Orsi detto da Novellara*; at lower center, in pencil, *Orsi*; below, in pencil, *Lelio da [Novellara]* (partially

effaced); at lower right, in pencil, 13.

4. S. Guazzo, *Dialoghi piacevoli, dalla cui familiare lettione potranno senza stanchezza e satieta, non solo gli uomini, ma ancora le donne raccogliere diversi frutti morali e spirituali*, Venice, 1586, p. 55 (or Piacenza, 1587, p. 151): 'Et per tanto essendosi avveduti con successo di tempo i pellegrini ingegni che questi emblemi sono ò troppo aperti ò troppo umili, si sono rivolti ad adombrare i suoi secreti pensieri col finissimo velo delle imprese'.
5. H. Kern, *Labyrinthe: Erscheinungsformen und Deutungen*, Munich, 1982, p. 279 and *La prima donna del mondo: Isabella d'Este, Fürstin und Mäzenatin der Renaissance*, edited by S. Ferino-Pagden, Vienna 1994, pp. 81–82.
6. R. Berzaghi, 'Appunti. Francesco II e Vincenzo Gonzaga. Il Palazzo di San Sebastiano e il Palazzo Ducale', *Paragone*, xli, 1990, pp. 62–73; Ferino-Pagden, op. cit., p. 82.





7. Attributed to Lelio Orsi, *Minotaur Before a Labyrinth*, here dated c. 1579–87, pen and brown ink, brown wash, over traces of black chalk, 165 x 182 mm (New York, Morgan Library & Museum).

yes, perhaps no). Although Orsi is known to have worked for the Gonzaga of Novellara, a cadet branch of the Mantuan family, and a letter of 24 March 1583 mentions an impresa that he designed for Duke Alfonso and his wife Vittoria, the Morgan drawing is unlikely to have been a Gonzaga commission, as will be seen.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, Orsi is likely to have been aware of these prominent uses of the labyrinth motif.

Labyrinth imagery is traditionally paired with the Minotaur of Crete, the monster that, according to legend, was held captive at Knossos in the maze constructed by Daedalus for King Minos. At times, the Minotaur can be a kind of substitute for the labyrinth itself. One Renaissance emblem shows the Minotaur on a Roman standard.<sup>8</sup> It first occurs in Andrea Alciato's *Emblematum liber* (Augsburg, 1531); later editions

7. *Lelio Orsi*, edited by E. Monducci and M. Pirondini, Milan, 1987, p. 293.

8. D. Mansueto, 'Ars Gemina. On Emblems, Flags and Political Communication', in *The Art of Persuasion Emblems and Propaganda*, edited

by C. McCall Probes and S. Mödersheim (Glasgow Emblem Studies – vol. 17), Paris, 2014, pp. 11–14. See also the University of Glasgow's emblem database and website, in particular the *Alciato at Glasgow* section.

show the creature with a club, and in the Frankfurt 1567 edition the Minotaur points upward with his index finger (fig. 8) like he does in fig. 7. Alciato accompanied the emblem with the motto 'One's plans should not be revealed' (*non vulganda consilia*), which he elucidated on the following page:

The monster that Daedalus imprisoned in its Cretan lair, with hidden entrance and obscuring darkness, the Roman phalanx carries painted into battle; the proud standards flash with the half-man bull. These remind us that the secret plans of leaders must stay hid. A ruse once known brings harm to its author.<sup>9</sup>

The Minotaur on the military banner is thus an imperative for leaders to keep their intentions secret. Published in dozens of editions Alciato's book attained enormous popularity and is occasionally credited with creating the new genre of the emblem book.

Not much later the Spanish statesman and courtier Gonzalo (or Consalvo) Pérez (1500–66) adopted an impresa of the Minotaur at the centre of a labyrinth accompanied by the motto *IN SILENTIO ET SPE* (in silence and hope) taken from the Book of Isaiah, 30:15 'in silentio et in spe erit fortitudo vestra' (Your strength shall be in silence and hope). It first featured in 1555–59 on the obverse of a portrait medal of Pérez by Jacques Jonghelinck (1530–1606) that shows the creature drawing an arrow across a bow, and again at the colophon of Pérez's own translation into Spanish of Homer's *Ulysses*, published in Venice in 1562, where the Minotaur demonstratively places his hand on his chest; he also sows what are presumably seeds of hope with the other hand.<sup>10</sup> In Girolamo Ruscelli's *Le Imprese illustri* and Battista Pittoni's *Imprese di diuersi prencipi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi et huomini letterati et illustri* (both Venice, 1566), the Minotaur instead raises his finger to his lips in a call for discretion (fig. 9).<sup>11</sup> Secretary of State in Spain from 1556 until his death in 1566, first to



8. *Non vulganda consilia* (Plans should not be revealed): Roman Banner with a Minotaur, from A. Alciato, *Liber Emblematum* (Frankfurt, 1566–67), woodcut, 53 x 66 mm (Glasgow University Library).

Charles V (reg. 1519–56) and then to his successor, Philip II (reg. 1556–98), Pérez was well acquainted with Italian humanist and artistic trends. In his younger years he had frequented the circles of Pietro Aretino (1492–1556) and Cardinal Pietro Bembo (1470–1547) in Italy and there once existed a portrait of Pérez by Titian (c. 1488–1576), no longer traceable but mentioned in a letter of 20 December 1536 from Aretino to Pérez.<sup>12</sup> He may have personally known Lodovico Dolce, who composed the poems accompanying Pittoni's *Imprese*.<sup>13</sup> Pérez's impresa continued to be featured in later editions of Pittoni and Ruscelli.

9. English translation of Alciato, 1531 edition, taken from Alciato at Glasgow website.

10. The medal exists in two sizes, 41 mm – dateable 1555–56, damaged and without inscription – and 64 mm diameter, with inscription; L. Smolderen, *Jacques Jonghelinck*, Louvain-la-Neuve, 1996, pp. 210–13, nos. 3–4, plate lvii, figs. 1–4; A. Armand, *Les médailleurs italiens des quinzième et seizième siècles*, Paris, 1883–87, III, p. 283, describing the smaller medal then in the collection of T. W. Greene. Smolderen adumbrates an alternative attribution to Jacopo da Trezzo (active in Brussels 1555–59) and names the creature as Chiron rather than the Minotaur. The colophon reproduced in A. González-Palencia, *Gonzalo Pérez, Secretario de Felipe Segundo*, Madrid, 1946, I, opposite p. 352; F. Rodríguez de la Flor, *Pasiones frías: secreto y disimulación en el Barroco hispano*, Madrid, 2005, p. 63, and Mansueto, op. cit., p. 16, note 19. The 1562 translation was a revised edition of a book first published in Salamanca 1559, and republished in 1553 and 1556 (*La Vlyxea de Homero repartida en XIII*

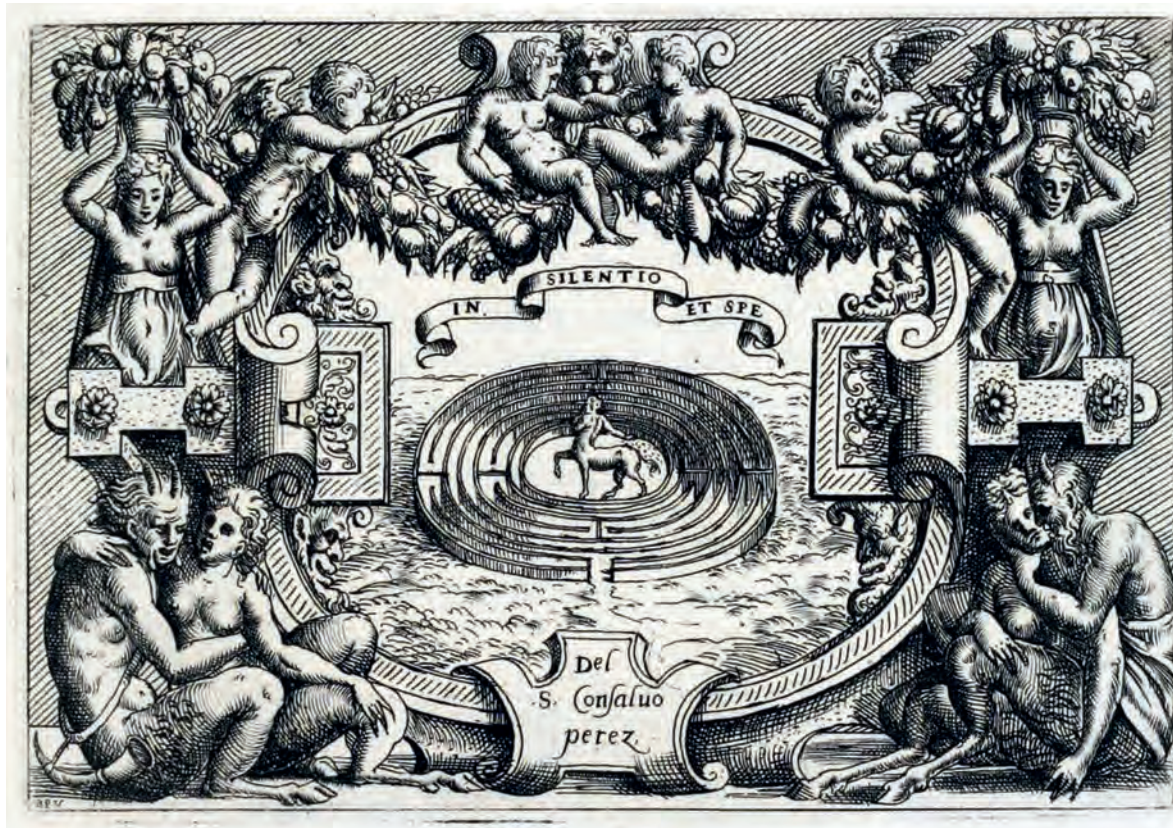
*libros, Traduzida de griego en romance castellano por el Señor Gonçalo Pérez*, Venice, 1553. Antwerp, 1556), in all three instances without the minotaur and/or labyrinth impresa.

11. See also Mansueto, op. cit., p. 16, and fig. 10 showing the impresa from Venice 1584 edition of Ruscelli.

12. González-Palencia, op. cit., I, p. 10.

13. The poem accompanying Pérez's impresa reads: *Ne la confusa, et intricata stanza / Del Labirinto, ove perdeo la vita / Più d'un, che per sciocchezza, et ignoranza / No seppe far, come deuea, partita, In silentio sovente, et in speranza / Di magnanimo cor posta è l'uscita. / Che'l tacere e sperar è di tal sorte, / Che puo tar l'huom da ingiuriosa morte* (In the confused and intricate room / of the labyrinth, where more than one person has lost his life, / who because of stupidity and ignorance / did not know how he should leave, as he must, for frequently in silence and in hope / of a magnanimous heart the exit is placed. / For keeping silent and hoping is such / that it can save man from an injurious death).





9. Battista Pittoni, *Consalvo Pérez's impresa*, from *Imprese di diuersi prencipi, duchi, signori, e d'altri personaggi et huomini letterati et illustri* (Venice, 1566), engraving, 114 x 170 mm (London, British Library).

Although Orsi's drawing of the *Minotaur Before the Labyrinth* may have been commissioned by Pérez, it more closely resembles an impresa first used by his son Antonio (1540–1611) in his *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez, secretario de Estado, que fue, del Rey de España Don Phelippe II, deste nombre* (The Narrations of Antonio Pérez, who was state secretary of King Philip II of Spain), as noted by Donato Mansueto.<sup>14</sup> Antonio Pérez was a colourful character. Born in Madrid, he attended the universities of Alcalá, Salamanca, Leuven, Venice and Padua, before succeeding his father as Secretary to King Philip II of Spain in 1566 and as State Secretary for the affairs of southern Europe in 1568. He was soon at the heart of political intrigues and was instrumental in the murder in 1578 of Juan de Escobedo, secretary to the king's half-brother, Don Juan of Austria (1547–78), who Pérez had insinuated was plotting against the king. At that point

his fortunes turned. Philip became suspicious of his motives, regretted having consented to Escobedo's murder, and in 1579 had Pérez placed under house arrest. In 1585 Pérez was imprisoned, after a legal process in which he was found guilty of corruption (and later murder), but he escaped in 1590, while incarcerated in Madrid. He fled to Zaragoza, where he had many local supporters, and then in 1591 to France, initially as the guest of Catherine de Bourbon (1559–1604), regent of the principality of Béarn. Much the rest of his life was spent trying to make a living off the sale of state secrets, including several years from April 1593 to July 1595 in England, where, however, he failed to garner a position at the court of Queen Elizabeth I or with her chief minister William Cecil. His notoriety was such that he is thought to have served as a model for the character of the affected Spanish braggart Don Adriano de Armado

14. I am grateful to Donato Mansueto for letting me know in an email of 27 April 2015 of the connection of the image to Antonio rather than Gonsalvo Pérez and for referring to Mansueto, *op.*

*cit.*, p. 17, note 16 which mentions the two adjacent emblems in the *Relaciones*, one with the motto *IN SPE*, the other with *USQUE ADHUC*.



in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour Lost*, which the playwright was working on in 1594 or 1595.<sup>15</sup> Pérez died in Paris.

The Morgan design closely corresponds to a roundel in Pérez's *Relaciones*, a polemical tract against the Spanish king published in 1598 (fig. 10). On the right side of the engraved illustration, we see, as in the drawing, the Minotaur with a broken labyrinth accompanied by the motto *USQUE ADHUC*. It is paired at left by Gonzalo Pérez's *impresa*, with the motto shortened to *IN SPE*. Unlike Pittoni's simpler image, in each case the Minotaur's upper body stands proud of the confines of the labyrinth, and a hilly landscape with one or two castles was added. As in the drawing, the path leading out of the labyrinth is a surprisingly straight and simple one, possibly implying that the decision to exit lies well within the Minotaur's powers. Previous versions of the text – initially published in Pau in 1591, then under the

pseudonym Raphael Peregrino with an augmented text printed by Richard Field in London in 1594 – were not illustrated. The 1598 editions were the author's definitive and final version.<sup>16</sup> In its introduction 'Antonio Pérez a Todos', addressed to all readers, the author tells of how he was reading in solitude chapter eight of St Paul's Epistle to the Romans and quotes verse 19, *Nam expectatio creaturae revelationem filiorum Dei expectat* (For the creature waits in earnest expectation for the manifestation of the sons of God).<sup>17</sup> This is taken from a biblical passage, verses 18 to 22, that are a message of Christian salvation, predicated on present suffering and future glory: 'The whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time' yet there is the hope of 'being delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God'. As early as his time in captivity Pérez may have

15. See G. Ungerer, *A Spaniard in Elizabethan England: the Correspondence of Antonio Pérez's exile*, London, 1974–76 and *ibid.*, *Anglo-Spanish Relations in Tudor Literature*, Bern, 1956, pp. 81–154.

16. *Un Pedazo de historia de lo sucedido en Çaragoça de Aragón, a 24 de Setiembre del Año 1521* (Fragment of a history of what happened in Zaragoza of Aragon on 24 September of the year 1521), [Béarn], [1591], only three copies of this edition are said to exist, one in a manuscript in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, department of manuscripts, code Espagnol 90, pp. 270–311. *Pedaços de historia, o Relaciones, assýllamadas por sus auctores los peregrinos ... La primera relacion contiene el discurso de las prisiones y aventuras de Antonio Perez, ...*

*desde su primera prision hasta su salida de los reynos de España. Otra relación de lo sucedido en Caregoça de Aragon a 24 de septiembre del año de 1591 por la libertad de Antonio Perez. Contienen de mas estas relaciones, la razon y verdad de hecho ... De mas de esto el memorial que Antonio Perez hizo del hecho de su causa, para presentar en el juyzio del tribunal del justicia que llaman de Aragon, [1594]*, where the imprint is given as Leon, but it was in fact published by Richard Field in London. The publisher of the Paris, 1598 edition remains unknown.

17. A. Pérez, *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez, secretario de Estado, que fue, del Rey de España Don Phelippe II, deste nombre*, Paris, 1598, p. 14 of the introduction (the book is not consistently numbered).



10. Thomas de Leu, *Two Roundels, Each with the Minotaur and Labyrinth*, from *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez* (Paris, 1598), engraving, 62 x 124 mm (London, British Library).





11. Thomas de Leu, *Prison with Chains, Shackles and Rope*, frontispiece of *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez* (Paris, 1598), engraving, 92 x 123 mm (London, British Library).

commissioned from Orsi a new impresa as an expression of the hope of redemption.<sup>18</sup> By the time the drawing was used to illustrate the *Relaciones*, the image took on a new, more overtly political meaning made explicit in the introductory text. In the 1598 *Relaciones* the author expounds on his mistreatment by a cruel and ungrateful king and denounces him as a tyrant. He shares his story, as he states, so that those who are curious should listen before entering the labyrinth that is pre-

sented to them. He claims that while reading St Paul, two images of the labyrinth came to his afflicted mind. One was of an enclosed labyrinth, with the Minotaur raising his finger to his lips and the motto 'IN SPE', an indication that he had had much to be quiet about, but had indeed been silent. The second image was of the same labyrinth, this time broken, with the Minotaur's finger pointing to heaven and the motto 'USQUE ADHUC'. This second image was a warning to his Prince

18. I am grateful to Michael Bury and Tono Eitel for this suggestion.

19. Pérez, 1598, op. cit., pp. 14–15, in particular: *y fortuna aquellas dos devisas de aquellos Labyrinthos. La una del labyrintho cerrado con un Mynotauo con el dedo en la boca, con aquella letra IN SPE, tomada del mismo lugar. No fuera de proposito, pues tenia tanto que callar, como se va viendo, que callava. La segunda devisa del mismo Labyrintho, pero roto, con el dedo apartado de la boca, enderegado al çielo, con la letra USQUE ADHUC, sacada del mismo lugar. La primera para mostrar a my Príncipe que sobre tal golpe de agravio, sobre tal quiebra de meritos, y esperanças, en medio de aquellas*

*prisiones, metido en aquel Labyrintho de confusion de animo tendria constante my silencio, y firme my confiança IN SPE, en esperança del, y de la fee de cavallero, que meavia diversas vezes empenado. La segunda para advertirle, que al fin, llegando la hora, faltando, digo, lo que digo, se romperia el Labyrintho, y silencio, y que éste duraria solo USQUE ADHUC, hasta el punto del desengaño de mi esperança ... Y que assy era çierto, que todas las criaturas padescian gimiendo dolores de parto USQUE ADHUC, hasta la hora del desagravio, y juycio de Dios'* (and fortune those two devices of those labyrinths. The one of the closed labyrinth with the Minotaur with the finger to





12. Thomas de Leu, *Tityus in Chains Devoured by the Vulture*, from *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez* (Paris, 1598), engraving, 100 x 124 mm (London, British Library).

that when the time came, the labyrinth would break, as would Pérez's silence – which had lasted *usque adhuc*, up to his time, but would collapse upon further betrayal and loss of hope.<sup>19</sup>

The paired images of Minotaur and labyrinth are presented as emblematic of the courtier Pérez as he understood his fate. Long a faithful and discreet subject of the Prince within the labyrinth of courtly life, as shown in the roundel at left, he was prepared to break down the walls

of court (as in the roundel at right and in the Morgan drawing), due to the unfair betrayal by his Prince and master. The omission of '*in silentio*', the new motto *usque adhuc* and the diatribe in the *Relaciones* contain a thinly disguised threat to reveal state secrets. The related notion of the Minotaur as the *monstrum fortunae* can be traced back to Pérez's first letter addressed to Catherine de Bourbon and to the 1591 version of his text, but it was a device to which Pérez remained faithful until his death and is even

the mouth, with the letters IN SPE, coming from the same place [i.e the mouth]. And so he had much to be quiet about, as can be observed, so he was silent. The second device of the same labyrinth, but broken, with the finger not on the mouth but raised to heaven, with the words USQUE ADHUC coming out of his mouth. The first to show my Prince that about such bursts of anger, such breaking of honour and hope, in the middle of these prisons, put in such a labyrinth my silence would have been con-

stant, and firm my confidence IN SPE and hope in the knight, who in several instances burdened me. The second [device] is to warn him that at last the time would come when the labyrinth would break, and my silence and that it would only last USQUE ADHUC [to this moment], to the point of disillusionment of my hope ... and that it was true, that all suffering creatures were howling in pain of childbirth up to this time, until the hour of atonement, and the judgement of God).



13. Thomas de Leu, *Vestal Virgin*, from *Relaciones de Antonio Pérez* (Paris, 1598), engraving, 67 x 51 mm (London, British Library).

referenced in his epitaph of his own composition.<sup>20</sup>

Pérez is likely to have commissioned the new impresa of the Minotaur before a broken labyrinth for himself after his downfall in 1579, which then was combined with his father's to create the double emblem and its admonitory story. Before his disgrace, he made liberal use of his father's impresa. Although no visual records survive, we know from an inventory of the furnishing of his country villa La Casilla on the outskirts of Madrid, completed in 1573 but confiscated only six years later, that many of his belongings bore the emblem of the Minotaur and labyrinth. The bed hangings and the table, chair and cushion covers were all ornamented with embroidery depicting this device, which was also imprinted on the leather bindings of his books, armour and a gilded carriage.<sup>21</sup>

Equally cultivated as his father – in 1577 the Venetian envoy to Madrid referred to him as a man of learning – Pérez surely developed the conceit of this narrative dou-

ble emblem himself as well as selecting or devising the three other illustrations that grace the *Relaciones* (figs. 11–13).<sup>22</sup> The engraved frontispiece, inscribed *ILLUSTRAT, DUM VEXAT* (he clarifies even while annoying), taken from Seneca, is a relatively simple design, showing an empty prison cell with a broken rope, heavy padlocked chains and shackles, one of which is open, indicative of an escaped prisoner or at least imprisonment. The second engraving shows Tityus, son of Zeus, chained to a rock with a vulture feeding on his liver, the giant's punishment for having attempted to rape Leto.<sup>23</sup> The inscriptions *POENÂ NON CAUSSÂ* (the punishments but not the crimes) and *In Emblema Titij nostri Poenâ, non caussâ Titij* (Our punishments [are as] in the emblem of Tityus, but [our] blame/responsibility is not like that of Tityus) express Pérez's belief that he had been punished as cruelly as Tityus but without the cause, in other words undeservedly. The fact that Pérez owned a seal with the motif of Tityus as indicated by various archival documents in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, also strongly suggests his identification with the fate of this character.<sup>24</sup> The fourth engraving, inscribed *DUM CASTE LUCEAM* (While light shines honestly), is of a vestal virgin carrying a burning lamp on her head.

The *Tityus* engraving bears the name of Thomas de Leu (1560–1612) at lower left, suggesting that he was responsible for all the illustrations in the *Relaciones*. Of Flemish origin, Leu was born in Audenarde, arriving in Paris sometime after 1576 but before 1580 and marrying the daughter of the painter Antoine Caron in 1583. He mostly worked after the designs of others, usually crediting them as *inventor* and himself with the phrase *sculpsit*, as in his engraving *Phaeton* after Antoine Caron; *Justice*, his first dated engraving, of 1579, is after Federico Zuccaro. He was also a publisher and print dealer. In all likelihood he received the commission to illustrate the *Relaciones* in Paris in around 1598 from Pérez, who presumably supplied him with the Morgan drawing, or a derivation thereof. Leu is unlikely to have needed detailed drawings for the other images: Figs. 11 and 13 are relatively simple compositions, and for *Tityus* he closely followed a print that exists in multiple versions after a design by Michelangelo (fig. 14).<sup>25</sup>

20. A. Pérez, *Las Obras y relaciones*, Geneva, 1631, p. 757. For Pérez's epitaph titulating himself 'monstrum fortunae', see Ungerer, 1974–76, op. cit., II, p. 246. no. 495 and p. 332.

21. A. Delaforce, 'The Collection of Antonio Pérez', *Burlington Magazine*, CXXIV, December 1982, p. 747.

22. The envoy is cited in Delaforce, op. cit., pp. 742–45.

23. *D'après Michelangelo: La fortuna dei disegni per gli amici nelle arti del Cinquecento*, edited by A. Alberti, A. Rovetta and C. Salsi, Venice, 2015, II, p. 131, no. 230.

24. G. Marañón, *Antonio Pérez (el hombre, el drama, la época)*, Madrid,

1958, I, p. 192. A cast of this seal is among the collection of James Tassie (1735–99) in the V&A, London, inv. 748–1870.

25. Inscribed *TITIVS GIGAS A VLTURE DIVERSISQ. PENIS LACERATVS* (The giant Tityus torn by the vulture and other punishments) and dated 1543 on rock at right, A. von Bartsch, *Le peintre graveur*, Vienne, 1803–21, xv, p. 259, no. 39; Alberti, Rovetta and Salsi, op. cit., pp. 128–29, no. 227; Fig. 14 is inv. Dyce 1191. Michelangelo drawing at Windsor is inv. 12771. The bronze plaque of Tityus after Michelangelo by Giovanni Bernardi (1494–1553) could also have served as visual source.





14. Anonymous artist after Michelangelo, *Tityus in Chains Devoured by the Vulture*, 1543, engraving, 294 x 426 mm (London, Victoria and Albert Museum).

One might be tempted to argue that the drawing of an escaped Minotaur before the broken labyrinth should be interpreted as a more literal reference to Pérez's flight from Spain, which occurred in 1591. In this case one would need to look beyond Orsi, who died four years earlier. No drawings from Leu's hand are known and drawings by artists from his orbit, such as Marten de Vos (died 1603), Antoine Caron (died 1599) or Michael Coxie (died 1592), look different. On the other hand, the vigorous physique of the figure, the clear silhouetting, the delicate washes, as well as the drawing's obvious debt to Giulio Romano (1499–1546) are characteristics of known works by Orsi, with whom Pérez could have come into contact during his years in Italy.<sup>26</sup> It is worth recalling that Pérez's taste was notably of an Italian bent. He had repeatedly travelled to Italy from the age of twelve, studied Latin in Venice, learned Italian and had

amassed a renowned art collection, including Parmigianino's *Cupid*, now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, and three pictures by Correggio: the *Danae*, *Leda and the Swan* and *Ganymede*. Pérez had good relations with Mantua, receiving, for example, the gift of a painting from Duke Guglielmo Gonzaga in 1574. The aforementioned letter of 1583 which speaks of Orsi as having designed an *impresa* for Alfonso and Vittoria Gonzaga, underscores his eminence as a master of this genre. If indeed by Orsi, the window for the creation of the *Morgan Minotaur Before a Labyrinth* is likely to have been between 1579, the beginning of Pérez's woes, and the artist's death in 1587. One can almost picture Pérez, imprisoned and with ample time on his hands after his loss of court office, commissioning from an established Italian artist a suitable *impresa* reflective of his new situation as a hopeful yet defiant outsider.

26. Philip Pouncey's opinion, who was working for Sotheby's auction house at the time of the sale and purchase by the Morgan Library of the drawing, is recorded in a letter in the departmental file for the drawing. It is from Richard Day from 1980 and states 'I

gather that Philip's opinion was that, although he wasn't absolutely positive, he felt an attribution to Lelio Orsi was as near as he could get'. Compare drawings by Orsi in Monducci and Pirondini, op. cit., nos. 151 and 174.

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