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Source: *The Art Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Dec., 1940), pp. 197-269

Published by: [College Art Association](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3046716>

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UT PICTURA POESIS: THE HUMANISTIC THEORY OF PAINTING

By RENSSELAER W. LEE

INTRODUCTION

TREATISES on art and literature written between the middle of the sixteenth and middle of the eighteenth century nearly always remark on the close relationship between painting and poetry.¹ The sister arts as they were generally called—and Lomazzo observes that they arrived at a single birth²—differed, it was acknowledged, in means and manner of expression, but were considered almost identical in fundamental nature, in content, and in purpose.³ The saying attributed by Plutarch to Simonides that painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking picture, was quoted frequently and with enthusiasm; and Horace's famous simile *ut pictura poesis*—as is painting so is poetry⁴—which the writers on art expected one to read “as is poetry so is painting,”⁵ was invoked more and more as final sanction for a much closer relationship between the sister arts than Horace himself would probably have approved. So deeply rooted, in fact, was the association of painting with poetry that it is not unusual to find the critics referring in a way that startles the modern reader to poets as painters; and if they do not with equal bluntness call painters poets, at least they are almost unanimous in asserting that painting merits serious consideration as a liberal art only by virtue of its likeness to poetry. In the middle of the sixteenth century Ludovico Dolce is rather more inclusive than the average when he declares that not only poets, but all writers, are painters; that poetry, history, and in short, every composition of learned men (*qualunque componimento de'dotti*) is painting.⁶

1. In preparing this study I have been particularly indebted to Professor Erwin Panofsky for valuable advice and criticism. Professor Frank J. Mather, Jr., Professor Walter Friedlaender, and Professor Samuel H. Monk of the Department of English, Southwestern College, have also given useful suggestions. Mr Helmut von Erffa, Miss Margot Cutter, Mrs. Katharine Pediconi, and my wife have given generous assistance in various ways.

2. Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura*, Milan, 1585, VI, 65, p. 486: “Considerando la cagione onde sia nato quel detto antico tanta esser la conformità della Poesia con la pittura, che quasi nate ad un parto l'una pittura loquace e l'altra poesia mutola s'appellarono”; cf. Leonardo da Vinci, *Trattato della pittura*, ed. H. Ludwig, Vienna, 1872, I, 21, and see note 6.

3. This was also the opinion of antiquity: cf. Aristotle *Poetics* I-II. See also Plutarch *De gloria Atheniensium* III, 346 f-347 c, in which occurs the famous aphorism of Simonides that painting is mute poetry, poetry a speaking picture.

4. *Ars poetica* 361; see note 15 for the entire passage.

5. Charles du Fresnoy in his seventeenth-century poem *De arte graphica*, Paris, 1667, 1-8, so enjoins in a passage that remains the best single text for the entire doctrine based on *ut pictura poesis*, citing as it does both the Horatian simile and the saying of Simonides, and declaring in effect that painting, since unworthy subject matter concerns it no more than it does poetry, has an equal status with poetry as a liberal art:

“Ut pictura poesis erit; similisque Poesi

Sit Pictura; refert par aemula quaeque sororem,
Alternantque vices et nomina; muta Poesis
Dicitur haec, Pictura loquens solet illa vocari.
Quod fuit auditu gratum cecinere Poetae;
Quod pulchrum aspectu Pictores pingere curant:
Quaeque Poetarum Numeris indigna fuere,
Non eadem Pictorum Operam Studiumque merentur.”

6. *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino*, Florence, 1735 (first ed. Venice, 1557), p. 116. Dolce quotes as authority for his statement Petrarch's designation of Homer as “Primo pittor de le memorie antiche,” and he explains what he means in another passage (pp. 106 ff.), when after stating that “il Pittore è intento a imitar per via di linee, e di colori . . . tutto quello che si dimostra all'occhio,” he says that “il Poeta col mezzo delle parole va imitando non solo ciò che si dimostra all'occhio [here Dolce means he is like the painter], ma che ancora si rappresenta all'intelletto. Laonde essi in questo sono differenti, ma simili in tante altre parti, che si possono dir quasi fratelli.” It was, then, in the imitation through the medium of words of that which the eye perceives in external nature that Dolce considered the poet to be like the painter whose media of imitation are lines and colors, though he legitimately added another province of the poet's art, the imitation of that “which is also represented to the intellect”—intellectual concepts and processes of thought—in which the painter does not share (see p. 254 and note 282). The concept allied to Dolce's that the poet, or for that matter the historian, is a painter in the sense that his descriptions have clearness or distinctness, is found in antiquity. Plutarch (*loc. cit.*)



Fig. 1—Leningrad, Hermitage Museum: Poussin, *Armida and the Sleeping Rinaldo*



Fig. 2—Detroit, Institute of Arts: Poussin, *Selene and Endymion*

Lomazzo not many years later, with an enthusiasm that even the sympathetic humanist will allow to be disproportionate to the truth, maintains the complementary view that there is no such thing as a painter (Lomazzo means a painter worthy of the name) who is not imbued with something of the poetic spirit.⁷ And at the end of the critical tradition of the Renaissance Sir Joshua Reynolds can still refer quite naturally to Shakespeare as “that faithful and accurate painter of nature” or remark that “Michelangelo possessed the poetical part of our art in a most eminent degree.”⁸

The habit of associating writers whose imagery is vivid or full of color with painters was known to antiquity.⁹ Furthermore the critics of the sixteenth century had before their eyes in the unrivaled painting of the Renaissance an open book, so to speak, of brilliant pictorial imagery; and this fact, even without the encouragement of antiquity, might have made their references to certain poets as painters at once quite natural and a handsome compliment to the word-painting of the poets concerned. In any event, critics for two centuries believed that it was in pictorial vividness of representation, or, more accurately, of description—in the power to paint clear images of the external world in the mind’s eye as a painter would record them on canvas—that the poet chiefly resembled the painter. Ariosto “when he marvelously describes the beauties of the fay Alcina” is for Dolce a painter who has provided those who paint on canvas with a perfect image of feminine beauty,¹⁰ an opinion that finally in the mid-eighteenth century Lessing was not to share. For Lessing found in Ariosto’s stanzas an excess of descriptive detail that resulted in no distinct image of a living woman and therefore overstepped the limits of the poet’s art.¹¹ And the *Laokoön* was directed against those artistic transgressions, whether of poetry or the figure arts, that Horace’s *ut pictura poesis* might encourage, or might be invoked to justify. With no more than this passing glance at the character and critical fortunes of poetry as the sister art of painting, and remembering Dolce’s ominous qualification of painting as a learned art,

mentions this quality (*ἐνάργεια*) in Thucydides, and quotes from one of the historian’s accounts of a battle to show that it is found both in the arrangement (*διάθεσις*) of the scene and in the writer’s power of vivid description (*διάρθρωσις*). Lucian (*Εἰκόνας* 8), anticipating Petrarch, calls Homer “the best of painters (*τὸν ἄριστον τῶν γραφέων*) even if Euphranor and Apelles are present,” and suggests that the painter who would add color to the statue of ideal womanhood that he is imagining, remember Homer’s description of Menelaus’ thighs as ivory tinged with crimson, and his epithets of laughter-loving, white-armed, and rosy-fingered, all of which produce visual images in the mind’s eye. On the antiquity of the concept of the poet as painter, and on the Renaissance and Baroque habit of calling poets painters and vice versa, see also the comments and citations in K. Borinski, *Die Antike in Poetik und Kunsttheorie*, Leipzig, 1914, I, 183ff. For the Renaissance conception of the poet as pictorial imagist see also the well-known passage in the second dialogue of Francisco de Hollanda (ed. J. de Vasconcellos, Vienna, 1899, p. 67) wherein Lattanzio remarks that “it would seem indeed that the poets had no other aim than to teach the excellence of painting . . . since one thing of which they are most studious is to paint well and imitate good painting.” He then comments on the “paintings” of Virgil and observes that you may read all Virgil and discover nothing else therein but the art of a Michelangelo. It is Virgil’s pictorial imagery that he has in mind—pastoral landscape, the harbor of Carthage surrounded by hills and woods, the burning of Troy, etc. Incidentally these Virgilian pictures that he cites are about

as remote as possible from the painting of Michelangelo.

An interesting example, and more entertaining than most, of the habit common from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century of referring to poets as painters occurs in the painter Antoine Coypel’s remark that Molière knew so well how to paint the characters of men that individuals have taken for their own portraits those that he made after general nature. Although there is here, no doubt, a certain confusion in Coypel’s mind as to the capacities and limitations of painting and poetry, it is certainly Molière’s ability to delineate character with objective vividness that leads Coypel to liken him to a painter. Coypel had previously remarked in a way that recalls Dolce that all which imitates nature is called painting, and that one is always calling Homer and Virgil great painters. No one who has read through much of the critical literature of the period will be inclined to disagree with this latter statement (see Coypel’s discourses before the Académie Royale published in 1721, in H. Jouin, *Conférences de l’Académie Royale de Peinture*, Paris, 1883, p. 258). It is not difficult to see how this association of poetry with the painter’s objective or vivid imitation of external nature could be put to bad uses in encouraging descriptive poetry. For some remarks on the influence of *ut pictura poesis* on the history of literature, see note 29.

7. *Op. cit.*, VI, 2, p. 282.

8. *Discourses* VIII and xv. His fifteen *Discourses* were delivered before the Royal Academy from 1768 to 1790.

9. See note 6.

10. *Op. cit.*, p. 178.

11. *Laokoön*, xx.

we may proceed to ask why the critics who named poets painters, also virtually identified the art of painting with the art of poetry.

Chiefly responsible without question was the authority of two ancient treatises on literature: Aristotle's *Poetics*, and Horace's *Ars poetica*. Both Aristotle and Horace had suggested interesting analogies between poetry and painting, though they had by no means tended to identify them as did the Renaissance and Baroque critics. Aristotle had said for instance that human nature in action is the object of imitation among painters as well as poets¹²—an analogy that was as true of Italian painting of the Renaissance as it had been of ancient painting; and in arguing that plot was the most essential element in tragedy he had remarked that a canvas smeared at random with the loveliest colors will not give as much pleasure as a portrait done in outline.¹³ Thus plot in tragedy in a general way resembles design in painting, and the comparison is, it appears, innocent enough. But comparisons which to Aristotle were certainly no more than a means of clarifying his discourse on the drama served the critics as a point of departure for developing their often questionable doctrine of the sister arts. The *Ars poetica* provided two particularly potent texts for this doctrine. One was a passage in which Horace after describing a painting of grotesque hybrids and comparing it to a book whose vain imaginings are fashioned like a sick man's dreams, admits the equal right of painters and poets to liberty of imagination, provided this potentially dangerous Pegasus be tethered to the stall of the probable and congruous.¹⁴ The other was the famous passage containing the simile *ut pictura poesis* in which the poet, after remarking that the sensible critic will know how to excuse the faults that must occur even in great literature, pleads for further flexibility in critical judgment by declaring in effect that poetry should be compared to painting which exhibits not merely a detailed style that requires close scrutiny, but also a broad, impressionistic style that will not please unless viewed from a distance.¹⁵ Again these comparisons were in their place

12. *Poetics* II. 1: "Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμώμενοι πράττοντας"—"since artists imitate men doing or experiencing something." Aristotle goes on to say that both poets and painters imitate men as better or worse than ourselves or much as we are, Polygnotus depicting them as better, Pauson as worse, and Dionysius like ourselves (cf. xxv. 26–28). This fundamental passage, often quoted or remembered by Renaissance and Baroque critics (cf. notes 41 and 64), was brought very much up to date in the early eighteenth century by Antoine Coypel who applied it not only to French classic drama (Corneille had made men better than they are, Racine as they are) but to the Florentine, Venetian, and Flemish schools of painting: Michelangelo and Raphael painted men better than they are "par la grandeur de leur goût et l'élévation de leurs idées" (one detects here the growing Longinian influence), Titian as they are; but the Flemings and Dutch "les ont fait plus méchants, c'est à dire par la bassesse des sujets et leur petit goût de dessin" (see Jouin, *op. cit.*, p. 249). Cf. note 52.

13. *Op. cit.* VI. 19–21: "Ἀρχὴ μὲν οὖν καὶ οἶον ψυχὴ ὁ μῦθος τῆς τραγῳδίας, δεύτερον δὲ τὰ ἥθη. παραπλήσιον γὰρ ἔστιν καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γραφικῆς. εἰ γὰρ τις ἐναλείψει τοῖς καλλίστοις φαρμάκοις χύδην, οὐκ ἂν ὁμοίως εὐφράνειεν καὶ λευκογραφήσας εἰκόνα."

14. *Ars poetica* 1–13:

"Humano capiti cervicem pictor equinam iungere si velit, et varias inducere plumas undique collatis membris, ut turpiter atrum desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne, spectatum admissi risum teneatis, amici? credite, Pisones, isti tabulae fore librum persimilem, cuius, velut aegri somnia, vanae

figentur species, ut nec pes nec caput uni reddatur formae. 'pictoribus atque poetis quidlibet audendi semper fuit aequa potestas.' scimus, et hanc veniam petimusque damusque vicissim; sed non ut placidis coeant immitia, non ut serpentes avibus geminentur, tigribus agni."

As early as the thirteenth century Durandus with Horace in mind had already sanctioned the painter's freedom of imagination. Cennini in his *Libro dell'arte* (ed. Milanese, Florence, 1859, p. 2) had compared poet and painter in a manner similar to Horace. Speaking of painting as coming next in honor after science, he remarks: "E con ragione merita metterla a sedere in secondo grado alla scienza, e coronarla di poesia. La ragione è questa: che il poeta, con la scienza prima che ha, il fa degno e libero di poter comporre e legare insieme sì e no come gli piace, secondo sua volontà. Per lo simile al dipintore dato è libertà potere comporre una figura ritta, a sedere, *mezzo uomo, mezzo cavallo, si come gli piace, secondo sua fantasia*." But with the grotesquerie of medieval art behind him, Cennini does not include Horace's deprecation of art that is "velut aegri somnia." For Durandus and Cennini see Borinski, *op. cit.*, I, 96–97. Cennini's coupling of painting with poetry on grounds of imaginative freedom is an interesting anticipation of many passages in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century criticism. See notes 145, 171.

15. *Ibid.* 361–365:

"Ut pictura poesis: erit quae, si propius stes, te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longius abstes. haec amat obscurum, volet haec sub luce videri, iudicis argutum quae non formidat acumen; haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit."

legitimate and illuminating, but when they were appropriated by the Renaissance enthusiasts who sought for painting the honors long accorded poetry, their original context was not always remembered.

The Renaissance champions of painting who proclaimed its noble rank among the arts, and in the famous case of Leonardo da Vinci its superiority even to poetry,¹⁶ were until the sixteenth century more generally concerned with the technical problems and scientific theory of their art than with the development of a fundamental aesthetic. Their foremost interest, and this reflected, of course, the realistic development of painting during the Quattrocento, was in how the painter might represent in its completeness the three-dimensional world on a two-dimensional surface. When, however, the progress of realistic experiment had ended for the time being, and after the brief glory of the high Renaissance in Florence and Rome, painting had settled into the uncreative formulas of Mannerism, criticism in a way that recalls its rise under not dissimilar conditions in fourth-century Greece, took a new lease on life. But towards the end of the sixteenth century the painter-theorists like Lomazzo and Armenini were no longer concerned, as Leonardo had been, with recording new technical or scientific knowledge based on actual experiment in painting.¹⁷ Instead they were interested in organizing and codifying knowledge already at hand for the benefit of young painters who all the more, it was believed, because they lived in a degenerate age, needed categorical instruction based on the great invention and practice of the past;¹⁸ for the critics of painting no less than the nostalgic poets of the time looked backward wistfully to the golden age of ancient art, and with excellent reasons of their own to the recent triumphs of the Renaissance.¹⁹ They had the professional point of view of an age of academicians, including the naive belief that prescription literally followed insures good practice.

The codifying of technical and scientific knowledge was, however, only one aspect of the new criticism and historically the least important. For after 1550 all critics whether painters or not—and here again theory intervened to assert ideal potentialities of the art that were no longer evident in its practice—were concerned with defining painting in fundamental terms; and this included, as was remarked above, a discussion of its essential nature, its content, and its end. In this philosophical province it was natural, even obligatory since the critics lived under the always lengthening shadow of Greece and Rome, that they should turn like the critics of literature to the authority of antiquity. But no theoretical treatise had survived that attempted, as the *Poetics* did for literature, to define the nature of the art of painting, and to discuss it in terms of formal aesthetic; nor had the Renaissance inherited any seasoned advice to the practicing painter concerning good taste or effective presentation that could compare with the shrewd good sense and practical wisdom of the *Ars poetica*.²⁰ Now the analogies between poetry and painting that these famous

16. For Leonardo's comparison of painting with poetry see his *Trattato della pittura*, I, 2, 14–28, 46. These passages are brought together and translated in J. P. Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, 2nd ed., London, 1939, I, 52–68.

17. See the chapter on the theory of art in the period of Mannerism in J. Schlosser-Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, Florence, 1939, pp. 332–51.

18. For Lomazzo this knowledge was not only the technical and scientific knowledge that concerned proportion, movement, color, light, and perspective—the subjects of the first five books of the *Trattato*—but also the knowledge based on ancient and modern literature and the history of painting and sculpture that would help to insure an expres-

sive and appropriate composition for a vast variety of subjects (book VI); and the knowledge of iconography in the narrower sense—attributes of the Trinity, saints, pagan gods, etc. (book VII). See especially *Trattato*, "Proemio," pp. 11–16; cf. Gio. Battista Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Pisa, 1821 (first ed. Ravenna, 1587), I, 1, pp. 13 ff.; cf. also the second paragraph in Appendix 1.

19. See Lomazzo, *op. cit.*, VI, 64, p. 481.

20. Roger de Piles in his comparison of painting and poetry (*Cours de peinture*, Paris, 1708, pp. 420 ff.) was well aware of the fact that little valuable criticism of painting and little painting of value had survived from antiquity, and he regarded it as prejudicial to the esteem in which painting was held by many sensible people of his day—

treatises contained could not fail in a humanistic age to impress critics who sought to invest painting with the dignity of a liberal art, for Aristotle and Horace, not to mention fragmentary utterances of other ancient writers,²¹ had by implication already accorded her this dignity. And being in search of the doctrine that these ancient analogies seemed to imply, and finding it nowhere developed in antiquity,²² the critics did not limit their borrowings from the *Poetics* and the *Ars poetica* to those passages, after all few in number, in which painting and poetry are compared. Far more important, they did not hesitate to appropriate as the foundation of their own theory many basic concepts of the two ancient treatises, making them apply in a more or less Procrustean manner to the art of painting for which they were never intended. The theory of painting that resulted could not fail under such conditions to show much that was pedantic and absurd if it was not absolutely false, for in imposing on painting what was merely a reconditioned theory of poetry, the enthusiastic critics did not stop to ask whether an art with a different medium could reasonably submit to a borrowed aesthetic. And it was when the critics were occasionally independent enough to stray from the beaten path of antique doctrine and, instead of harping on the obvious likenesses of painting and poetry, attempted to analyze their differences or engaged in lively apology for one art or the other, that their remarks were often the most illuminating. Nevertheless the new *Ars pictoria* for all its defects was the child of the humanistic Renaissance, and contained much that was reasonable and true—much, indeed, that is so obviously true that even the sympathetic reader of sixteenth-century treatises is both vexed and amazed at the repetitious verbosity which attended the humanistic investiture of the art of painting. And the core of the new as of the ancient theory—that painting like poetry fulfils its highest function in a representative imitation of human life, not in its average but in its superior forms—is, notwithstanding its virtual eclipse at the present time, important and central to any final estimate of the painter's art.

This humanistic doctrine had been more than implied, if never clearly defined, a century before the age of criticism began in Italy, in the writing of Leon Battista Alberti,²³ who, though unfamiliar with Aristotle's *Poetics*, knew that the painting of a "history"—a significant human action—is the chief business of a serious painter, and had learned from Latin authors that the artists of antiquity had sought to bestow an ideal beauty upon their works. It appears later in the treatise of Leonardo,²⁴ for if the experimental painter-scientist was largely unconcerned with inherited theory, he still could not fail to absorb some of it in the intellectual air of Florence; and Leonardo further shows the inalienable humanism of his race in his famous and often repeated statement that the expression of human emo-

people who obviously set great store by the prestige afforded by antique models. See Appendix I, "On the Lack of Ancient Criticism of Painting."

21. Plutarch, for instance, says that painters and poets represent the same subjects, and that the underlying purpose of both is the same (*De gloria Atheniensium* III. 347a); the elder Philostratus finds painting and poetry equally the repositories of wisdom (*Imagines* I. 294k); the younger Philostratus emphasizes the power of painting to express character and emotion and finds a certain element of imagination (*φαντασία*) common to painting and dramatic poetry (*Imagines*, Prooemium, 390k).

22. Pliny's famous account of painting in antiquity (*Historia naturalis* xxxv) upon which the sixteenth-century critics drew so heavily in their desire to proclaim the time-honored dignity of the art, although it occasionally adumbrates theories of art, is not a theoretical work.

23. *Della pittura*, 1436. See the standard edition of Janitschek, L. B. *Alberti's kleinere kunsttheoretische Schriften*, Vienna, 1877, pp. 143 ff. Cf. Cicero *De inventione* II. 1, 1; *Orator ad Brutum* II. 7 ff., where the theory of ideal imitation has a strongly Platonic rather than Aristotelian character; Pliny *op. cit.* 62–64; notes 50, 69, 74, 97. Aristotle's *Poetics* was not well known until the sixteenth century. The first reliable Latin translation, that of Giorgio Valla, appeared in 1498; the first commentary, Robertelli's, in 1548; the first Italian translation, Segni's, in 1549. Both Robertelli and Segni remark on the long neglect of the book. See J. E. Spingarn, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, 7th impression, New York, 1938, pp. 16 ff.

24. In his admonition to the painter "to be solitary and consider what he sees and discuss with himself, choosing the most excellent parts of the species of whatever he sees." "If he does this," Leonardo adds, "he will appear to be a second nature." See *Trattato*, I, 58a.

tion through bodily movement is fundamental to the painter's art.²⁵ Most significant of all—and one will make due allowance for important differences in conception and expression between the art of antiquity and that of the Renaissance—the doctrine of ideal imitation had been essentially embodied in the greatest Italian painting from Cimabue to Michelangelo. It could not, then, fail to be axiomatic in a consciously critical age like the later-sixteenth century that, despite its spiritual confusion and its pedantry, still nourished the flame of humanism, and that possessed so magnificent an inheritance, both distant and immediate, of mythopoetic art. The seventeenth century continued to cherish the humanistic theory of painting and developed it, moreover, in a way that the preceding century had never done. For the Italian critics, intent on the more important business of pointing out how painting resembled poetry in range and profundity of content, or in power of expression, had never fostered the notion, though it could be traced back to Aristotle, of purely formal correspondences between the sister arts: design equals plot, color equals words, and the like.²⁶ But the later French and English critics sometimes overworked these correspondences,²⁷ and by what amounted to a most unfortunate extension of the same kind of artificial parallel, they sometimes attempted to enclose the art of painting in an Aristotelian strait-jacket of dramatic theory.²⁸ The result for criticism and practice was a serious confusion of the arts that resulted, as every one knows, in Lessing's vigorous and timely attempt in the mid-eighteenth century to redefine poetry and painting and to assign to each its proper boundaries.²⁹ In the preceding century, in fact, La Fontaine neatly

25. *Ibid.*, 122, 483, etc.

26. See note 13. Cicero (*Orator* XIX. 65) had compared the Sophists' use of words to a painter's arrangement of colors. Plutarch in a curious passage (*Moralia* 16c) compares color which "is more stimulating than line drawing because it is life-like and creates an illusion" with plausible fiction; line is by implication compared with a work of literature that lacks the illusion of life even though it be elaborate in meter and diction. This is a very unusual parallel and does not recur, so far as I know, in later criticism. It would have pleased the "Rubenistes" at the close of the seventeenth century. Cf. note 41.

27. John Dryden, for instance, for whom in the usual manner plot equals design and "Expression, and all that belongs to Words, is that in a Poem, which Colouring is in a Picture," after making some remarks on design and color in the ancient poets (e.g. Virgil's design is inferior to Homer's, but his coloring better) goes on to say that lights and shadows are like tropes and figures. The whole comparison, which extends for several pages, is absurdly elaborate (see his *Parallel between Painting and Poetry*, the preface to his translation of Du Fresnoy, London, 1716, p. 11 ff.; first ed. 1695).

The Abbé Batteaux remarks that "les mesures et l'harmonie" constitute the coloring of poetry, imitation its design (*Les beaux arts réduits à un même principe*, Paris, 1746, pp. 138, 140). Elsewhere in the same essay he says what amounts to the same thing when he equates "dessing" with "fable," "coloris" with "versification" (p. 247). When Minturno in the sixteenth century differentiates the means of imitation in poetry from those in painting, he is not concerned as Dryden and Batteaux were, in establishing formal correspondences between them (see note 41).

28. See pp. 256 ff. below.

29. For the effect of the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* on literature during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries see pp. 3-57 of the late Professor Irving Babbitt's essay *The New Laokoön*, Boston and New York, 1910, which deserves to be better known among historians of art. Babbitt shows clearly how the formal confusion of the arts

engendered by *ut pictura poesis* led first in the seventeenth century, under the influence of the pseudo-Aristotelian doctrine of the Renaissance that it was better to imitate the ancients than real life, to the use of "poetical diction"—that stock of traditional words, elegant phrases, figures of speech and the like, known as the poetical colors (as opposed to choice of subject and mode of treatment which were compared to design in the sense of an outline drawing or sketch) that the poet was supposed to lay on from the outside like pigments. Such a theory of poetry could only result in that extreme artificiality of language against which the Romantic poets revolted in the name of spontaneous and sincere expression.

The school of descriptive poetry that arose in the first half of the eighteenth century as a result of the growing interest in external nature and found in Thomson's *Seasons* its finest and most influential example, showed a new capacity on the part of the poets for writing with their eyes on the object, rather than on literary models, although even the best of them are never free from the influences of poetical diction. This school was quick to enlist under the banner of *ut pictura poesis* in order to justify its own kind of poetical pictures: descriptions, often exhaustive, of landscape, rustic life, still-life including farm equipment, etc.; and it was against this school, strongly represented in Germany by Brockes, Haller, and Kleist, that Lessing revolted both as a humanist and as an aesthete, believing as he did that the medium of poetry is fundamentally adapted to the rendering of human action, not to description; for words that follow one another in time can only produce, in the successive addition of details in a description, a blurred and confused image, whereas the painter can render these details as they coexist in space and produce a clear image that can be apprehended in a single moment of time (*Laokoön*, XVI-XX). For a useful and fairly complete summary of critical opinions concerning the relationship between painting and poetry up to Lessing's time, see W. G. Howard's introduction to his edition of the *Laokoön*, New York, 1910; for a more extended, though not very conclusive, study of how the critics of painting interpreted

anticipating Lessing had already put his finger at the root of the trouble when he wrote:

Les mots et les couleurs ne sont choses pareilles
Ni les yeux ne sont les oreilles.³⁰

I—IMITATION

This essay will first attempt to sketch the development of the humanistic theory of painting in European criticism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, noting how it is everywhere pervaded and molded by the direct or implied comparison of painting with poetry; it will then test one aspect of the theory by applying it to a capital example in the Baroque period of the impact of poetry on the sister art—the illustration of a famous episode of Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* among the painters of the seventeenth century. Inasmuch as the doctrine of imitation was the corner-stone of Renaissance as it had been of ancient aesthetic, one may reasonably begin a discussion entitled *ut pictura poesis* with a consideration of the manner in which the Italian critics of the sixteenth century applied to the art of painting a doctrine which the ancients had developed chiefly as it concerned the art of literature.

First of all, the critics observed in language unmistakably Aristotelian that painting like poetry was an imitation of nature, by which they meant human nature, and human nature not as it is, but, in Aristotle's phrase, as it ought to be,³¹ "raised," as a modern writer has well expressed it, "above all that is local and accidental, purged of all that is abnormal and eccentric, so as to be in the highest sense representative."³² In the sixteenth century the doctrine of ideal imitation had not yet entirely supplanted the older and scarcely compatible notion that art is an exact imitation of nature, and it is not unusual, at least until past the middle of the century, to find them disconcertingly side by side—a fact which, the reader will agree, does not argue for the philosophical capacities of these writers. The concept of literal imitation had occurred already in the Trecento,³³ and was the natural accompaniment during the Quattrocento of a realistic point of view and practice among those artists who were striving strenuously to capture the perfect illusion of visible

this relationship, see his "*Ut pictura poesis*" in *Publ. of the Mod. Lang. Assn. of America*, xxiv, 1909, 40-123. Howard has availed himself of the learned introduction and commentary in Hugo Blümner's monumental edition of the *Laokoön*, Berlin, 1880.

30. *Conte du Tableau*. Various writers have called attention to La Fontaine's anticipation of Lessing.

31. See especially the famous passage (*Poetics* ix. 1-3) where Aristotle states that poetry is more philosophic and serious than history because it reveals general truths, whereas history gives only particular facts; and cf. xv. 11 (see Bellori's translation below, note 64) and xxv. 1-2. The literary theorists of the Cinquecento frequently remark that poetry is like painting in its power to idealize nature. Fracastoro (*Naugerius sive de poetica dialogus*, Venice, 1555; I quote from the text reprinted by Ruth Kelso in *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature*, ix, 1924, p. 158) remembering Plato and Aristotle, states that the poet is not like the realistic painter who paints things as they are, but like the painter who contemplating the most fair and universal idea of his creator fashions them as they ought to be: "Video, o amici, in paucissimis illis tanti philosophi verbis illucere ac pateferi nobis

poetae officium ac finem: alii siquidem singulare ipsum considerant, poeta vero universale, quasi alii similes sint illi pictori, qui et vultus et reliqua membra imitatur, qualia prorsus in re sunt, poeta vero illi adsimiletur qui non hunc, non illum vult imitari, non uti sorte sunt et defectus multos sustinent, sed universalem, et pulcherriman ideam artificis sui contemplatus res facit, quales esse deceret." In like manner Scaliger compares Virgil, for him the paragon among ancient poets, with those painters and sculptors who, selecting the best from many objects in nature and combining these excellences into one image, seem "not to have learned from nature, but to have vied with her, or rather to have created laws for her to obey" (*Poetices*, Geneva, 1561, III, 25, p. 113). The passage is quoted and receives further comment in note 43. For a general survey of the theory of poetry during the Renaissance which it may be useful to compare with my discussion of the literary theory of painting, see Spingarn's *Literary Criticism in the Renaissance*, especially pp. 3-59.

32. Quoted from Babbitt, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

33. For instance in Boccaccio's praise of Giotto's ability to paint so accurate a likeness of things that men mistook his paintings for reality; see *Decameron*, vi, 5. This recalls Pliny.

nature.³⁴ Furthermore, it had received a kind of blessing from antiquity in Pliny's account of those ancient painters who created so convincing an illusion of life that animals and men, nay artists themselves, mistook their art for reality.³⁵ Leonardo at the crossroads between the early and high Renaissance knew, for all his intense interest in the particular, that painting is a great deal more than literal representation,³⁶ yet he could also remark that a picture is most praiseworthy when it conforms most to the thing imitated,³⁷ and although Vasari in his attempt at a theoretical introduction to the art of painting shows that he is aware of the universalizing function of art,³⁸ the *Lives* are filled, as everyone knows, with an admiration of literal imitation that sometimes rivals Pliny; and he even praises Raphael, purest type of the high Renaissance style, for his unsurpassed naturalism. No one can doubt then that as late as the mid-sixteenth century cultivated men, with a genial inconsistency that would give pause to any thoroughgoing theoretician, could adopt the current idea of art as a generalizing and embellishing agent, yet still consider the painter's ability to be the ape of nature—the *scimmia della natura*—his foremost accomplishment. Greater consistency, indeed, might be expected of the critic Dolce, author of the first notable humanistic treatise on painting in the Cinquecento, for he was steeped in the ancient theoreticians as Leonardo and Vasari who had more compelling interests were not, and had published in his youth a translation of Horace's *Ars poetica*. Yet even Dolce, after defining art as the imitation of nature, and adding that the painter whose works most nearly approach her is the most perfect master,³⁹ can in a later passage redefine the goal of art by remarking that "the painter must labor hard not only to imitate but also to surpass nature."⁴⁰ Dolce was probably aware of inconsistency, for he tries to square the first definition with the second by insisting that it is only in creating the human figure that the painter

34. Alberti, whose theory in many respects anticipates the Cinquecento, nevertheless states that it is the painter's business to reproduce reality very closely (*Della pittura*, p. 143); and his instructions concerning perspective and anatomy belong to an age that was scientifically interested in the exact reproduction of reality.

35. *Hist. nat.* xxxv.

36. See note 24.

37. *Trattato*, III, 411.

38. Introduction to the 1568 edition of the *Vite* (ed. Milanesi, Florence, 1878, pp. 168 ff.). Vasari was elsewhere aware of the idealizing function of art. See Schlosser-Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, pp. 278 ff.

39. *Dialogo della pittura*, p. 106: "Dico . . . la Pittura non essere altro che imitatione della Natura: e colui, che più nelle sue opere le si avvicina, è più perfetto Maestro." Cf. p. 112.

40. *Ibid.*, p. 176: "Deve adunque il Pittore procacciare non solo d'imitar, ma di superar la natura. Dico superar la Natura in una parte: che nel resto è miracoloso, non pur, se vi arriva, ma quando vi si avvicina. Questo è in dimostrazione col mezzo dell'arte in un corpo solo tutta quella perfezione di bellezza, che la natura non suol dimostrare a pena in mille. Perchè non si trova un corpo humano così perfettamente bello, che non gli manchi alcuna parte. Onde habbiamo esempio di Zeusi . . ." (the story of Zeuxis follows). Dolce here anticipates in a tentative and unsystematic way, and without discarding the really antagonistic theory of the direct imitation of nature, Bellori's seventeenth-century Platonico-Aristotelian definition of art (see p. 208 and notes 55–60) as the artist's imitation of an Idea or mental image of beauty in his own mind derived, as in the case of Zeuxis, from a bringing together of excellences observed in different individuals none of whom was, however, perfectly beautiful in himself. Dolce, who was anything but a systematic thinker, thus reflects in unreconciled

form opposite points of view concerning imitation that had been present in antiquity itself (see E. Panofsky, *Idea*, Leipzig, 1924, pp. 5 ff., for discussion of antique theories of imitation). He was still too close to the realistic point of view of the Renaissance to give up entirely, as Bellori did later, the theory of exact imitation of nature in favor of the definite theory of art as a universalizing and embellishing agent. In an interesting passage in Benedetto Varchi (*Due lezioni*, Florence, 1549, pp. 111 ff.), Dolce could have found a hint for his juxtaposition of the two doctrines of imitation. Apropos of the fact that poets and painters have a like goal in imitating nature (cf. note 6 for Dolce's comments on the same subject), Varchi writes: "Essendo il fine della Poesia e della Pittura il Medesimo, secondo alcuni, cioè imitare la natura, quanto possono il piu, vengono ad essere una medesima, e nobili ad un modo, e però molte volte gli scrittori danno a' Pittori quello, che è de' Poeti, e così per lo contrario, onde Dante, che . . . seppe tutto, e tutto scrisse, pose nel Ventinovesimo canto del Purgatorio: 'Ma legge Ezechiel, che gli dipinse.'" Varchi here states the Renaissance doctrine already noted in Dolce of the exact imitation of nature. But shortly after he continues: "I dipintori, se bene nel ritrarre dal naturale, debbono imitare la natura, e sprimere il vero quanto piu fanno, possono non dimeno, anzi debbono, come ancora i Poeti, usare alcuna discrezione, onde molto fu lodato la prudenza d'Apelle, il quale devendo ritrarre Antigono, che era cieco da uno occhio diede tal sito alla figura, che ascose quell'occhio di maniera, che non si poteva vedere." Here Varchi qualifies his advice to the painter to imitate nature as closely as possible with the phrase *con alcuna discrezione*, a phrase which hints at idealization and which he explains in the familiar story of Apelles and Antigonus; and he thus closely parallels Dolce who, though he advises painters to imitate nature exactly, says that art must at the same time surpass nature.

may improve upon nature; in all other respects he is hopelessly outclassed. The old notion of exact imitation Dolce can still accept with some enthusiasm for nature in general, but for the all-important human figure to which in Italian painting the rest of nature had always been subsidiary, it will no longer do. And it is apropos of the human figure in action that Dolce, following the method of literary critics of his day who were prescribing rules for poetry based on Aristotle and Horace,⁴¹ developed his own doctrine of ideal imitation. It will be worth while briefly to examine his treatment of the doctrine, for it contains, though in attenuated and undeveloped form, most of the fundamentals of an aesthetic theory that will persist for two centuries.

Dolce discusses two ways whereby the painter may, to repeat Aristotle's phrase, represent life not as it is, but as it ought to be. By a method which Aristotle would have approved, he may go direct to nature, and selecting the fairest parts from a number of individuals, produce a composite figure more perfect than commonly exists. This was the celebrated method of Zeuxis in painting the divine beauty of Helen, and one that few writers on painting after Alberti ever forgot to extol.⁴² Or he may use as perfect a single model as he can find, following the example of Apelles and Praxiteles who rendered their celebrated images of Aphrodite after Phryne, most beautiful of courtesans. Now in the golden age of antiquity an Apelles who had a Phryne for a model could succeed by this really unorthodox method. But a modern artist, Dolce insists, cannot find a standard of perfection in a single woman, for nature even under the best conditions is never without her defects. If then the artist, correcting her imperfections, would "surpass nature," would render her fairer than she is, he must be guided by a study of the faultless antique. For the antique is already that ideal nature for which the painter strives and "the ancient statues contain all the perfection of art."⁴³

41. The most important sixteenth-century treatises on poetry were the following: Vida, *De arte poetica*, Rome, 1527 (in verse); Daniello, *La poetica*, Venice, 1536; Robortelli, *In librum Aristotelis de arte poetica explicationes*, Florence, 1548; Fracastoro, *Naugerius sine de poetica dialogus*, Venice, 1555; Minturno, *De poeta*, Venice, 1559, and *L'arte poetica*, Venice, 1564; J. C. Scaliger, *Poetices*, Geneva, 1561; Castelvetro, *La poetica d'Aristotele, vulgarizzata et sposta*, Vienna, 1570; Torquato Tasso, *Discorsi dell'arte poetica*, Venice, 1587. All of the comparisons between painting and poetry in Aristotle and Horace were also available to the critics of painting in these influential treatises where they recur many times. The following, for instance, is Minturno's way of summing up Aristotle's position that poetry and painting have the same objects of imitation, but that their means of imitation are different: "Ne più la poesia, che la pittura questa varietà di persone ci descrive [Minturno has just been saying that poets represent men as better or worse than they are, or as average]. Perciochè tra pittori Polygnoto i migliori dipinse; Pausone i peggiori; Dionysio i mezzani. Diverse anchora sono le cose con le quali si fa l'imitazione. Conciosia cosa che i pittori con li colori e co' liniamenti la facciano: . . . i poeti, com' ho detto, con le parole, con l'harmonia, con li tempi" (*L'arte poetica*, pp. 2-3). Cf. notes 12, 13, 26, 27.

42. See note 40.

43. *Op. cit.*, p. 190: "Devesi adunque elegger la forma più perfetta, imitando parte la Natura. Il che faceva Apelle, il quale ritrasse la sua tanto celebrata Venere, che usciva dal Mare . . . da Frine famosissima cortigiana della sua età; et ancora Praxiteles cavò la bella statua della Venere Gnidia della medesima giovane. E parte si debbono imitar le belle figure di marmo, o di bronzo de' Mestieri antichi. La mirabil perfettion delle quali chi gusterà e possederà a

pieno, potrà sicuramente corregger molti difetti di essa Natura, e far le sue Pitture riguardevoli e grate a ciascuno: perciochè le cose antiche contengono tutta la perfettion dell'arte, e possono essere esemplari di tutto il bello." For Scaliger, Virgil among ancient poets was superior to nature for the same reasons that Dolce found the ancient artists superior. The following passage (*Poetices*, III, 25, p. 113) which should also be compared with the quotation from Dolce in note 40, is a most interesting epitome of what was most important in Renaissance aesthetic combining as it does the comparison of Virgil to painters who idealize nature; the doctrine that by a selective process the painter is able, as Dolce said, "non solo d'imitar, ma di superar la natura"; the doctrine that there is a universal perfection inherent in the regular system of proportions in nature (cf. Vasari, *loc. cit.* in note 38), but that nature contains defects which result from accidents of time and place; finally the notion that antiquity is "belle nature": "Hactenus rerum ideae quem ad modum ex ipsa natura exciperentur, Virgilianis ostendimus exemplis. Ita enim eius poesi evenisse censeo sicut et picturis. Nam et plastae et ii, qui coloribus utuntur, ex ipsis rebus capessunt notiones, quibus lineamenta, lucem, umbram, recessus imitentur. Quod in quibusque praestantissimum inveniunt, e multis in unum opus suum transferunt: ita ut non a natura didicisse, sed cum ea certasse, aut potius illi dare leges potuisse videantur. Quis enim putet ullam unquam talem fuisse foeminae cuiuspian pulchritudinem in qua aliquid non desideraretur ab iudice non vulgari? Nam tametsi in ipsis naturae normis atque dimensionibus universa perfectio est: tamen utriusque parentis mistio, tempus, coelum, locus multa afferunt impedimenta. Itaque non ex ipsius naturae opere uno potuimus exempla capere, quae ex una Virgiliana idea mutuati sumus."

It is noteworthy that when Dolce counsels the painter to imitate “le belle figure di marmo o di bronzo de’ Mestieri antichi,” he does not think of such imitation as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. And if, we may surmise, the painter did not fall into the aesthetic quagmire of merely copying the antique statues, but used them discreetly as a criterion of ideal attainment, he might as successfully achieve that higher beauty for which he strove as if he had followed the first and less precarious method for the creative artist of “improving upon nature with means drawn from nature herself” without having dangerous recourse to the perfect standards of ancient art. Dolce does not say that one method is better than the other, and he would probably have agreed that a good artist could successfully combine the selective imitation of nature with intelligent adaptations from the antique. But any student of Renaissance theory knows into what a cul-de-sac of criticism the literary theorists often strayed in their exaggerated admiration of antiquity, and how the deeper implications of Aristotle’s doctrine were often lost in the constant admonition to the poets to imitate ancient models.⁴⁴ Now Horace, whose authority in the sixteenth century was enormous, had pointed out the way to this modification of the Aristotelian doctrine in urging his dramatic poet to be chary of new invention and follow, instead, the *exemplaria Graeca*—to find a model, that is, in the great poetry of the past.⁴⁵ And without this hint from Horace or some other Latin admirer of Greek forbears, ancient art and literature in the sixteenth century commanded sufficient admiration to have generated of themselves the pseudo-Aristotelian doctrine of the imitation of perfect models. Fortunately throughout the tradition of classicism in Renaissance and Baroque criticism the critics of painting generally succeeded, as Dolce did, in preserving more of Aristotle’s meaning than the literary theorists,⁴⁶ but the pseudo-Aristotelian doctrine of imitation was always potentially dangerous, and among the French Academicians of the seventeenth century was strong enough to encourage the production of a kind of art that only the deeper understanding of a Poussin could save from empty formalism.⁴⁷ For the advice to follow the antique, or perhaps an exemplary modern like Raphael who had shown the way to its successful imitation, always tended to become a dogmatic counsel to abide by an artificial and forever invariable canon of beauty. And, if accepted in any sense literally, such counsel could only result in that uninspired traditionalism against which the Romantic Movement in the name of individual expression and a fresh interest in particular nature would finally revolt.

44. Scaliger, for instance, following Vida, carried the un-Aristotelian notion of the imitation of models to a dogmatic extreme in practically deifying Virgil. Why bother with nature at all, he says, when you have everything you may want to imitate in Virgil who is a second nature (*Poetices*, III, 4, p. 86). Later he added, apparently with some heat (*ibid.*, v, 3, p. 233), that “nothing was omitted by that heavenly genius: there is nothing to be added unless by fools, nothing to be changed unless by the impudent.” (*Ita nihil omissum coelesti viro illi: nihil addendum, nisi ab ineptis, nihil immutandum nisi ab impudentibus.*) Cf. Pope’s remark in the *Essay on Criticism* that Virgil had found his own second nature in Homer:

“But when t’ examine ev’ry part he came,
Nature and Homer were, he found, the same.”

See the discussion of the theory of imitation in Babbitt, *The New Laokoön*, pp. 3–18.

45. See note 68.

46. At the end of the seventeenth century Roger de Piles sums up at its best the critical attitude toward the study of antiquity, adding a particular word of caution for the painter who in imitating ancient sculpture would be imitat-

ing an art different in certain ways from his own: “Le Peintre ne sauroit donc mieux faire que de tâcher à pénétrer l’excellence de ces Ouvrages, pour connoître la pureté de la Nature, et pour dessiner plus doctement et plus élégamment. Néanmoins comme il y a dans la Sculpture plusieurs choses qui ne conviennent point à la Peinture et que le Peintre a d’ailleurs des moyens d’imiter la Nature plus parfaitement que le Sculpteur, il faut qu’il regarde l’Antique comme un Livre qu’on a traduit dans une autre langue, dans laquelle il suffit de bien rapporter le sens et l’esprit, sans s’attacher servilement aux paroles de l’Original” (“L’idée du peintre parfait” in his *Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, Paris, 1715, pp. 26–27; 1st ed. 1699).

47. See Félibien’s report of Van Opstal’s analysis of the Laokoön group before the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture; also Sébastien Bourdon’s remarks on the imitation of antique statues (Jouin, *Conférences de l’Académie*, pp. 19–26; 137–40). These are exaggerated examples of the uncritical worship of the antique. Bourdon’s own painting is, in part at least, typical of the stultifying effect of such doctrine. In condemning the Academy’s excessive enthusiasm for antique models, it should not be forgotten that some sensible things were said during its *Conférences*.

The cult of the antique produced then in the sixteenth century an important modification of Aristotle's theory of imitation that had far-reaching results. For Aristotle himself had not counseled the imitation of models, but clearly believed that significant imitation of nature is a function of the selective imagination and does not fundamentally depend on any external norm of perfection like the antique. Nor did Aristotle in his profound doctrine of the imitation of a superior nature mean that the artist should turn from nature herself, who must always provide fresh materials for selective imitation, to an a priori Idea of perfection in his own mind. But near the end of the century a Neo-Platonic critic like Lomazzo could temporarily divert the theory of imitation entirely from Aristotelian channels by declaring that ideal beauty, the image of which one sees reflected in the mirror of his own mind, has its source in God rather than in nature—a quasi-religious and mystical doctrine in harmony with the serious temper of the Counter-Reform, and one that did not empirically find a standard of excellence in selecting the best from concrete and external nature, but discovered it in Platonic fashion in the subjective contemplation of an inward, immaterial Idea.⁴⁸ But in 1664, in the secularizing age of the high Baroque, Giovanni Pietro Bellori resumed and brought to fruition what had been until the late sixteenth century the normal Italian mode of thinking about the arts.⁴⁹ Before Bellori wrote, this habit of mind, by nature empirical yet possessing a deep, qualifying strain of idealism, had found in the realm of aesthetic philosophy only hesitant and tentative expression. Alberti and Vasari, and one may include Raphael in a famous letter to Castiglione, had all associated the Idea that raises art above the mere imitation of things with direct experience of nature;⁵⁰ but their utterances on the subject are naive or fragmentary, and are valuable less as contributions to aesthetic than as interesting reactions of a receptive and sensitive artist and of two distinguished writers on art (who were also artists in their own right) to philosophical ideas of their age—ideas of which they were sympathetically aware, but which they had considered in none too philosophical a manner. And although Dolce, who does

48. Compare, for instance, Varchi's use of the word *discrezione* (see note 40) to suggest merely that the artist should alter and improve the raw material of nature with Lomazzo's very different and highly significant use of it in his last work, *Idea del tempio della pittura*, Milan, 1590, 12–14, where as a result of Neo-Platonic influences near the end of the sixteenth century, the term is used to mean that inner perceptive faculty of the artist which enables him to behold in his own mind the emanation of the supreme Idea of beauty which is in God, and to discern in this emanation the standard of perfect art. This theory of imitation differs fundamentally from the earlier theory of Dolce who finds an outward standard of perfection in the antique, not an inward standard in the image of ideal beauty in the mind's eye. The *locus classicus*, however, for Lomazzo's Neo-Platonism is chapter xxvi of the same book, entitled "Del modo di conoscere e costituire le proporzioni secondo la bellezza," in which, following Ficino's famous commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, he develops the theory that earthly beauty is an immaterial emanation of the divine beauty which the artist recognizes only because he is aware of the reflection of the divine beauty in his own mind (see Panofsky, *Idea*, pp. 52–56; for the reprinted texts of Ficino's commentary and Lomazzo's chapter *ibid.*, pp. 122–30; see note 108).

49. *L'idea del pittore, dello scultore e dell'architetto*, a lecture given before the Accademia di San Luca in Rome in 1664 and printed in 1672 as introduction to his *Vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*.

50. Alberti was aware of the concept of selective imita-

tion: he tells the famous story of Zeuxis; his statement that "the Idea of the beautiful escapes the inexperienced artist" (*Della pittura*, p. 151) is typical of an age that associated artistic achievement with experiment and practice. Raphael writes in 1516 to Castiglione that if he will paint a beautiful woman, it is necessary to see many beautiful women, but since there is a scarcity of handsome models, he makes use of a certain Idea that comes into his mind. This Idea or mental image of beautiful womanhood he probably associated with his experience of the individual beauty of women, but he cannot be said to have had in mind any very definite approximation of Aristotle's theory of the selective imitation of nature. The Idea may also have had some association in his mind with the Platonic idea of absolute beauty about which he could have heard much from Castiglione and others, but, again, writing as an intuitive artist, not as a humanist or philosopher, he does not say so. Vasari's remarks on the Idea (Introduction to the 1568 edition, pp. 168 ff.) have been explained by Panofsky to mean that it is derived empirically from experience of nature. But Vasari was no theorist and cannot be said to have given much thought to the classical doctrine of imitation. See the important discussion of the concept of the Idea during the Renaissance in Panofsky, *Idea*, pp. 23 ff. Panofsky cites and discusses all of the passages mentioned here. Friedlaender's Neo-Platonic interpretation of the passage in Vasari in his review of Panofsky's *Idea* (*Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft*, vi, 1928, 61–62) in my opinion overemphasizes the importance of what rather appears to be a very slight adumbration of Neo-Platonic theory.

not use the term "Idea," clearly anticipates a theory that Bellori a century later was to clothe in more philosophical language, his remarks on imitation lack any really considered theoretical basis.⁵¹ Bellori was then the first to combine the twin tendencies of the Italian mind into what, despite its own philosophical inconsistencies, may reasonably be called a theory of art.⁵² Moreover, in proclaiming external nature to be the source of those ideal conceptions that are the objects of artistic imitation, he redirected the theory of painting, after its Platonic interlude during the age of Mannerism, into the Aristotelian tradition where it was to abide as long as classicism prevailed. And in so doing he once and for all validated Aristotle's *Poetics*, already enthroned in literary theory, as a capital document for the theory of painting as well.

Although the Neo-Platonic beginning of his treatise and the terminology throughout have led certain critics to consider him a "Platonist,"⁵³ Bellori's theory was in a fundamental sense, as Panofsky has demonstrated, opposed to that of the Neo-Platonic critics of the preceding century. For Bellori redefined the Idea that an artist should imitate, not in terms that a thoroughgoing Platonist would commend, but as an image of selected and embellished nature⁵⁴ which the painter forms in his imagination after the empirical method of Zeuxis who, being without benefit of the a priori presence of the Platonic Idea in his mind's eye, before he painted the ideal beauty of Helen fashioned for himself in a business-like way a composite mental image of the chief perfections of his five handsome models.⁵⁵

51. See notes 40 and 43.

52. Cf. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 61. He makes the point that Bellori's definite formulation of a theory that had already existed without such formulation in Renaissance criticism was the result of his opposition to Mannerism on the one hand, and on the other hand to the naturalism of Caravaggio who, says Bellori, like Demetrius (mentioned in Aristotle's *Poetics*), painted things as they are (not, the implication is, as they ought to be). Cf. note 12.

53. See Schlosser-Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, p. 591: "Il ragionamento del Bellori è prettamente platonico." This is incorrect. There is plenty of adventitious Neo-Platonism in Bellori, but for a true Platonist the Idea would have unqualified, metaphysical existence independent of nature. Bellori's own opinion (*op. cit.*, p. 10) that it was Plato's meaning "che l'Idea sia una perfetta cognitione della cosa, cominciata su la natura" is only true if taken to mean that sense perception is the initial stimulus which prompts the mind to rise to a contemplation of that ideal truth or beauty of which the things of earth are only imperfect copies. For Plato, of course, the soul has knowledge of the ideas before birth, and sense perception merely serves to recall this knowledge. But in the very next sentence Bellori speaks of "Natura istessa, da cui deriva la vera Idea," which is a flat contradiction of the Platonic doctrine of a priori knowledge. Cf. Panofsky, *op. cit.*, p. 136, note 2.

54. See Panofsky's discussion of Bellori's theory (*ibid.*, pp. 57-63) to which I am greatly indebted. Panofsky has demonstrated the renewed interest in nature in Bellori's doctrine of ideal imitation and has noted that Bellori was the first to formulate what became among the French theorists of the age of classicism the doctrine of "la belle nature." The whole of Bellori's treatise on the Idea is reprinted in an appendix at the end of Panofsky's book.

55. Bellori, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5 (unless otherwise noted, my discussion of Bellori's theory is based on this important passage):

"Quel sommo ed eterno intelletto autore della natura nel fabbricare l'opere sue maravigliose, altamente in se stesso riguardando, costituì le prime forme chiamate Idee, in modo che ciascuna specie espressa fù da quella prima Idea, formandosene il mirabile contesto delle cose create. . . . li

nobili Pittori e Scultori, quel primo fabbro imitando, si formano anch'essi nella mente un esempio di bellezza superiore, e in esso riguardando emendano la natura senza colpa di colore e di lineamento. Questa Idea, ovvero Dea della Pittura e della Scoltura aperte le sacre cortine de gl' alti ingegni de i Dedali e de gli Apelli, si svela a noi e discende sopra i marmi e sopra le tele; originata dalla natura supera l'origine e fassi originale dell'arte, misurata dal compasso dell'intelletto diviene misura della mano, e animata dall'immaginativa dà vita all'immagine. Sono certamente per sentenza de' maggiori filosofi le cause esemplari ne gli animi de gli Artefici, le quali risiedono senza incertezza perpetuamente bellissime e perfettissime. Idea del Pittore e dello Scultore è quel perfetto, ed eccellente esempio della mente, alla cui immaginata forma imitando si rassomigliano le cose, che cadono sotto la vista: tale è la finitione di Cicerone nel libro dell'Oratore a Bruto. 'Ut igitur in formis et figuris est aliquid perfectum et excellens, cuius ad excogitatum speciem imitando referentur ea quae sub oculis ipsa cadunt, sic perfectae eloquentiae speciem animo videmus, effigiem auribus quaerimus.' Così l'Idea costituisce il perfetto della bellezza naturale, e unisce il vero al verisimile delle cose sottoposte all'occhio, sempre aspirando all'ottimo ed al maraviglioso, onde non solo emula, ma superiore fassi alla natura, palesandoci l'opere sue eleganti e compite, quali essa non è solita dimostrarci perfette in ogni parte. Questo pregio conferma Proclo nel Timeo, dicendo, se tu prenderai un'huomo fatto dalla natura e un altro formato dall'arte statuaria, il naturale sarà meno prestante, perche l'arte opera più accuratamente. Me Zeusi, che con la scelta di cinque vergini formò l'immagine di Elena tanto famosa da Cicerone posta in esempio all'Oratore, insegna insieme al Pittore ed allo Scultore a contemplare l'Idea delle migliori forme naturali, con farne scelta da vari corpi, eleggendo le più eleganti.

"Imperochè non pensò egli di poter trovare in un corpo solo tutte quelle perfezioni, che cercava per la venustà di Helena, mentre la natura non fa perfetta cosa alcuna particolare in tutte le parti. 'Neque enim putavit omnia, quae quaereret ad venustatem, uno in corpore se reperire posse, ideo quod nihil simpliciter in genere omnibus ex partibus natura expolivit.' "

Aristotle had associated the nature and the excellence of artistic production with the knowledge of universals derived from particular experience,⁵⁶ and in a passage that hints at the idealizing function of art and anticipates the story of Zeuxis in later writers, he had remarked that the superiority of the painter's art over real objects lay in his having collected scattered excellences into one composite example of them all.⁵⁷ And when Bellori asserted that the Idea—the fair object of the painter's imitation—was derived from nature by a process of selecting the best, despite his use of Platonic terminology he was well aware, as were the French theorists of the age of classicism, that a similar concept underlay the theory of imitation in the *Poetics*. For the imitation of men better than ourselves, of life as it ought to be, in the pattern of an ideal tragedy, implies a highly discriminating selection of materials from the world of human character in action. It should be remembered, however, that at the beginning of his discourse Bellori in Platonic language that recalls the writing of his Mannerist predecessors had described the Idea as an “*esempio de bellezza superiore*” in the artist's mind, comparing it with the ideal pattern in the mind of God that had been the divine exemplar of the created world; and Bellori had further recalled the opinion of the greatest philosophers that the “*cause esemplari*,”⁵⁸ or ideal types after which works of art are fashioned, abide in the minds of artists (like the divine ideas in the heaven of Plato's *Phaedrus*) in the perfection of imperishable beauty. But while in his lofty preamble he is investing the Idea with this Platonic dignity, Bellori with a philosophical inconsistency of which he was certainly unaware⁵⁹ can simultaneously proclaim its origin in nature (*originata della natura*) and define it as the perfection of natural beauty (*il perfetto della bellezza naturale*). And during the remainder of his discourse⁶⁰ he leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that he thought of the Idea not primarily as an archetype of beauty existing a priori in metaphysical independence, but as derived a posteriori by a selective process from the artist's actual experience of nature. Furthermore, it is through the selected truth of art that the Idea manifests its superiority to the factual truth of nature from which, however, it takes its origin (*originata della natura, supera l'origine, e fassi originale dell'Arte*). Thus a renewed interest in nature as the source of ideal conceptions is central to Bellori's thought which reflects, at least to this extent, an empirico-idealistic, or generally Aristotelian, point of view as thoroughly characteristic of the Baroque seventeenth century as the mystical and Platonic point of view had been characteristic of the preceding period of Mannerism. And although he is still strongly aware of the absolute beauty of Plato that had haunted the imagination of the Renaissance—indeed he praises the Idea with the fervid language of the Platonic enthusiast⁶¹—Bellori in giving the

56. *Metaphysics* I. 1, 981a: “*γίγνεται δὲ τέχνη δταν ἐκ πολλῶν τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἐνομημάτων μιὰ καθόλου γένηται περὶ τῶν ὁμοίων ἀπόδησις*.” Aristotle goes on to say that experience is a knowledge of particulars, art of universals, and to suggest that the wisdom of artists resembles that of philosophers.

57. *Politics* III. 6, 1281b. Socrates had been reported by Xenophon to express a similar concept (*Memorabilia* III. 10, 1), and Plato, despite his hostility to painting, had remarked on its idealizing function when he compared his ideal state to a painter's picture of an ideally beautiful man, adding that the painter would not be any the less a good painter if he could not prove that it is possible for such a man to exist (*Republic* v. 472). These passages are cited by Panofsky (*op. cit.*, pp. 7–8). The story of Zeuxis is found in Cicero's *De inventione* (II. 1, 1) where Bellori read it (he quotes from it at the end of the passage quoted in note 55). It had also been readily available to the Renaissance in Pliny (*Hist. nat.* xxxv).

58. For the *cause esemplari* see perhaps the passage in Plato's *Phaedo* (100c) in which it is argued that the absolute beauty is the cause (*αἰτία*) of beauty in all things that partake of it. But cf. Seneca *Epistolae* LXV. 2 ff. (quoted by Panofsky, p. 76). After defining the four Aristotelian causes, Seneca adds: “*His quintam Plato adicit exemplar, quam ipse ideam vocat.*”

59. See Friedlaender (*op. cit.*, p. 63) for some interesting comments on Bellori's inconsistencies.

60. Cf. another such direct statement as: “*Tutte le cose . . . dall'arte . . . hanno principio dalla Natura istessa, da cui deriva la vera Idea*” (*op. cit.*, p. 10). See note 63.

61. Dryden at the beginning of his partial translation of Bellori's discourse which he included in his *Parallel between Painting and Poetry* (pp. v ff.) remarks that Bellori's *Idea of a Painter* “cannot be unpleasing, at least to such who are conversant in the Philosophy of Plato”; at the end he makes the following pregnant comment on Bellori's style: “In

theory of painting an Aristotelian orientation was the first writer in the seventeenth century to formulate what became the cardinal doctrine of French classicism—the doctrine of “la belle nature.”⁶²

It is worth observing in this connection that Bellori’s attitude towards the antique is entirely reasonable, if one makes allowance for his century’s excessive admiration of it. For Bellori no more than Dolce considered the ancient statues objects of imitation in themselves, but found them significant only as glorious examples of the work of artists whose claim to the admiration of posterity is precisely that, selecting the best from nature, they imitated the Idea of the beautiful. The example of the antique thus teaches the modern artist that if he too will contemplate the fair Idea of that which he will represent—for the Idea of the beautiful divides itself into various forms: “the brave, and magnanimous, and jocund, and delicate of every age and of both sexes”—he will in some measure, at least, succeed as antiquity succeeded.⁶³

After Bellori, despite his residual Platonism, has effectively restated the theory of imitation in Aristotelian fashion by re-affirming the source of the Idea in nature, he recalls Aristotle’s advice to the tragedians to follow the good painters in imitating life as it ought to be, adding in a curious juxtaposition of the Aristotelian and the Platonic that “to make men fairer than they commonly are and to choose the perfect belongs to Idea.”⁶⁴ And then in precise Aristotelian language he defines painting as the representation of human action.⁶⁵ Thus he states what earlier critics hinted or took for granted, that painting like poetry is an imitation of human action of more than common beauty or significance. And in this connection one may recall the thoroughly humanistic and Aristotelian observation of Poussin, who more profoundly perhaps than any critic understood the significance of *ut pictura poesis* for the painter’s art, that without action drawing and color in painting are of no avail.⁶⁶

II—INVENTION

Poussin also gave expression to another aspect of the doctrine that obtained all through the period of Renaissance and Baroque criticism, and like the theory of imitation to which it was closely related, underwent a certain development. “The novelty in painting,”

these pompous Expressions, or such as these, the Italian has given you his Idea of a Painter; and though I cannot much commend the Style, I must needs say there is somewhat in the matter: Plato himself is accusom’d to write loftily, imitating, as the Criticks tell us, the Manner of Homer; but surely that inimitable Poet had not so much of Smoak in his Writings, though not less of Fire. But in short, this is the present genius of Italy.”

62. See note 54. Cf. Babbitt, *The New Laokoön*, pp. 10–11.

63. *Op. cit.*, pp. 11 ff.: “Ci resterebbe il dire che gli antichi Scultori havendo usato l’Idea meravigliosa, come habbiamo accennato, sia però necessario lo studio dell’antiche sculture le più perfette, perche ci guidino alle bellezze emendate della natura; . . . li Pittori e gli Scultori, scegliendo le più eleganti bellezze naturali, perfettonano l’Idea, l’opere loro vengono ad avanzarsi e restar superiori alla natura, che è l’ultimo pregio di queste arti, come habbiamo provato. Quindi nasce l’ossequio e lo stupore de gli huomini verso le statue e le immagini, quindi il premio e gli honore degli Artefici; questa fù la gloria di Timante, di Apelle, di Fidia, di Lisippo.”

64. *Ibid.*, p. 8; he translates from *Poetics* xv: “. . . insegna al tragico li costumi de’ migliori, con l’esempio de buoni Pittori, e Facitori d’immagini perfette, li quali usano l’Idea: e sono queste le parole: ‘Essendo la tragedia imita-

tione de’ migliori, bisogna che noi imitiamo li buoni Pittori; perchè quelli esprimendo la propria forma con farli simili, più belli li fingono. ἀποδίδόντες τὴν οἰκειάν μορφήν, ὁμοίους ποιοῦντες, καλλίους γράφουσιν.’

“Il far però gli huomini più belli di quello che sono comunemente, e eleggere il perfetto, conviene all’Idea. Ma non una di questa bellezza è l’Idea; varie sono le sue forme, e forti, e magnanime, e gioconde, e delicate, di ogni età e d’ogni sesso.”

65. *Ibid.*, p. 9: “. . . essendo la Pittura rappresentatione d’humana attione.”

66. In Bellori, *Le vite dei pittori*, p. 461 (his collection of Poussin’s observations on painting appended to the *Vita*): “Due sono gli strumenti, con che si dispongono gli animi degli uditori: l’attione e la dittione, la prima per sè stessa è tanto vevole ed efficace, che Demostene le diede il principato sopra gli artificii rettorici, Marco Tullio perciò la chiama favella del corpo, Quintiliano tanto vigore e forza le attribuisce, che reputa inutili li concetti, le prove, gli affetti senza di essa, e senza la quale inutili sono i lineamenti e’l colore.” This passage in which Poussin applies to painting some ancient criticism of oratory is interesting as an indication of the great influence which the ancient rhetoricians exerted on Renaissance theorists in reinforcing the Aristotelian view that painting is essentially an imitation of human life. Cf. note 97.

he said, "does not consist principally in a new subject, but in good and new disposition and expression, and thus the subject from being common and old becomes singular and new."⁶⁷ The conservative Horace who did not forbid but discouraged the creation of a new subject as an impractical venture, and who, as we have seen, found a standard of perfection in Greek literature of a bygone age, had advised the dramatic poet to adopt the safe and sane course of adhering to fables that tradition had made familiar;⁶⁸ and the later critics followed suit in their belief that invention (*inventio*), a term that regularly included the choice of subject as well as the general planning of the composition, should concern itself principally with traditional themes. From the time of Alberti it had been assumed, if not actually stated, that the only painter worthy of the name was the painter of history⁶⁹—that is, of any fable ancient or modern, sacred or profane, that history or poetry, esteemed as liberal studies, might provide.⁷⁰ It was inevitable that the Bible and the ancient writers should supply most of these, and that in time scriptural and antique subject matter should be considered almost as indispensable to good invention as a knowledge of antique sculpture to good design.

Now this notion might be very well and even profound in the mind of a distinguished *peintre-philosophe* like Poussin, whose integrity of intellect, poetic insight, and subtlest inventiveness in composition could transform traditional material into an art of uniquely sophisticated originality. But in the mind of a shallow and uninventive painter of the academic type it might, like the dangerous counsel to imitate ancient art, easily lead to a corruption of Aristotle's theory of imitation; for it could encourage the imitation of famous paintings that had treated brilliantly the most important "histories," rather than of nature itself. And the study of nature, Poussin would have agreed, must always serve as the beginning even for the renewing of time-honored themes.

It was actually the French theorists of the seventeenth century who first declared the noble subject to be a *sine qua non* of the grand style that aimed at universal truth through the imitation of "la belle nature";⁷¹ for the great events of scripture, or of Greek and Roman fable or history, "which," as Reynolds later observed, "early education and the universal course of reading have made familiar and interesting to all Europe without being degraded by the vulgarism of ordinary life in any country,"⁷² easily adapted themselves to ideal representation. But the Italian critics of the sixteenth century had already implied this doctrine (it was better implied than formulated!) in urging the painter, as Quintilian had urged the orator, to acquire at least a competent knowledge of the poets and historians without which, all critics of art and literature were agreed, fine invention is impossible; and to cultivate the acquaintance of learned men.⁷³ A century before, the humanistic Alberti had

67. *Ibid.*, p. 462: "La novità nella Pittura non consiste principalmente nel soggetto non più veduto, ma nella buona, e nuova disposizione e espressione, e così il soggetto dall'essere commune, e vecchio diviene singolare, e nuovo." Cf. the very similar remark of Torquato Tasso regarding the novelty in epic poetry which Poussin may well have had in mind: "La novità del poema non consiste principalmente in questo, cioè che la materia sia finta, e non più udita; ma consiste nella novità del nodo e dello scioglimento della favola" (*Le prose diverse di T. Tasso*, ed. Guasti, Florence, 1875, I, 12).

68. *Ars poetica* 128–31:

"Difficile est proprie communia dicere; tuque
rectius Iliacum carmen deducis in actus
quam si proferres ignota indictaque primus.
publica materies privati iuris erit."

Ibid., 268–69:

"vos exemplaria Graeca
nocturna versate manu, versate diurna."

69. See Alberti, *Della pittura*, p. 105: "Grandissima opera del pittore sara l'istoria"; p. 109: "Grandissimo opera del pittore con uno colosso! ma istoria, maggiore loda d'ingegno rende l'istoria che qual sia colosso."

70. See Appendix 2, "*Inventio, Dispositio, Elocutio*."

71. See note 78.

72. *Discourse iv*.

73. See Cicero *De oratore* I. 34, 158: "Legendi etiam poetae, cognoscendae historiae, omnium bonarum artium doctores et scriptores eligendi et pervolutandi"; I. 16, 72, after he has noted the close affinities between orator and poet: "sic sentio neminem esse in oratorum numero habendum, qui non sit omnibus eis artibus, quae sunt libero

already reminded the painters that it was from Homer that Phidias in ancient times had learned to represent Zeus with divine majesty.⁷⁴ And for Lomazzo near the end of the sixteenth century the sentiment of history is the nurse of good composition producing gravity and truth; and painters are like poets not only in possessing “il furor d’Apolline,” the divine inspiration of which Plato had spoken in the *Phaedrus*, but also in having as objects of representation the illustrious deeds and glory of heroes; for he cannot be a painter who has not also something of the spirit of a poet.⁷⁵ It is, moreover, always implied in the critical writing of this time that the painter, like Horace’s poet,⁷⁶ should be a profound student of human nature which his knowledge of literature, in providing him with appropriate examples of human action and emotion, will also enrich. But whether it is a question of literary knowledge, or of immediate experience of life, for good painting as for good writing *sapere*, as Horace had said, *est principium et fons*; and that *eruditio libero digna*, that “learning worthy of a free man” of which Cicero had written,⁷⁷ is the inspiration equally of painters and of poets.

The French Academy inherited this humanistic point of view; and during the seventeenth century, at least, maintained the superiority of the historical painter over all others. After remarking that the mere representation of things in line and color is a mechanical process, and that you can tell a good painter by a difficult and noble invention, Félibien in an interesting passage arranges painters in hierarchical order according to the kind of subject matter which they prefer. The lowest type is the painter of still-life, and thence one proceeds through painters of landscape, of animals (a better subject than landscape, because animals are living and moving, not dead!), and of portraits to the *grand peintre*. He,

dignae, perpolitus.” Quintilian, *Inst. orat.* x. 1, 27: “Plurimum dicit oratori conferre Theophrastus lectionem poetarum. . . . Namque ab his in rebus spiritus et in verbis sublimitas et in adfectibus motus omnis et in personis decor petitur”; cf. Dolce, *Dialogo*, pp. 170–72: “Et è impossibile, che il Pittore possedga bene le parti, che convengono alla inventione, si per conto della historia, come della convenevolezza, se non è pratico delle historie e delle favole de’ Poeti. Onde si come è di grande utile a un letterato per le cose, che appartengono all’ufficio dello scrivere, il saper disegnare: così ancora sarebbe di molto beneficio alla professione del Pittore il saper lettere. Ma non essendo il Pittor letterato, sia almeno intendente, come io dico, delle historie, e delle Poesie, tenendo pratica di Poeti, e d’huomini dotti.” But Dolce also argued (*ibid.*, p. 251) that poets could learn from painters: if Raphael’s painting of Alexander and Roxana recalls Lucian’s famous description (*Herodotus*, chap. 4–6), so Virgil owed his Laokoön to the Rhodian sculptors. With Dolce’s remarks on the “pittor letterato,” one should compare Daniello’s advice to the poet to become learned if he would produce fine inventions (*La poetica*, Venice, 1536, p. 27). Armenini, *De’ veri precetti della pittura*, III, 15, pp. 234–35, shows the pedantic preciseness and the moral and religious bias of the Mannerist critic in exhorting the painter to read the Bible, the lives of Christ, the Madonna, the sainted Virgins and Martyrs, the saints’ legendary, the lives of the Church Fathers, etc. Among profane works he advises first Plutarch; then Livy, Oppian, etc., and “gli uomini illustri del Petrarca, le Donne illustri del Boccaccio, e per la favola la Geneologia degli Dei del medesimo; di Alberico, cioè del Cartari, le Trasformazioni di Ovidio, o come è d’Antonio Apulejo, e l’Amadigi di Guala”; cf. Lomazzo, *Idea*, p. 36.

74. *Della pittura*, p. 147: “Fidias, più che le altri pictori famoso, confessava avere imparato da Homero poëta,

dipingiere Jove con molta divina maestà. Così noi studiosi d’imparare più che di guadagno, da i nostri poeti impareremo più et più cose utili alla pittura.” Alberti may have owed the content of this passage to Valerius Maximus, *De factis dictisque memorabilibus*, III, 7. Janitschek (in his edition of Alberti, *op. cit.*, p. 244) finds a source in Strabo, *Geography*, VIII, C 354; cf. the tribute to Homer as the greatest creator of images of the gods that Dio Chrysostom puts into the mouth of Phidias (*Twelfth, or Olympic Discourse*, 57 ff.). Varchi, following Pliny, states (*Due lezioni*, p. 116) that Zeuxis and Apelles owed respectively to Homer “le donne grandi e forzose,” and “Diana fra un coro di Vergini”; he is archaeologically askew when he adds that the Campidoglio wolf was made after the image described by Cicero and later by Virgil.

75. Lomazzo, *Trattato*, VI, 2, pp. 281 ff.: “. . . il sentimento dell’istoria, che di qui ne nasce la buona compositione, parte tanto principale nella pittura che tanto ha del grave, e del buono, quanto è più simile al vero in tutte le parti . . . poeti, a’ quali i pittori sono in molte parte simili; massime che così nel dipingere, come nel poetare vi corre il furor di Apolline, e l’uno e l’altro ha per oggetto i fatti illustri, e le lodi de gl’Heroi da rappresentare . . . Anci pare per non so quale conseguenza che non possa essere pittore, chi insieme anco non habbia qualche spirito di poesia”; Lomazzo may have remembered here the saying of the elder Philostratus (*Imagines* I. 294k) that poets and painters contribute equally to our knowledge of the deeds and appearance of heroes; Reynolds writing on the grand style (*Discourse* IV) associates historical painting with the poetical: “In conformity to custom, I call this part of the art history-painting; it ought to be called poetical, as in reality it is.”

76. Cf. *Ars poetica* 309 ff.; especially 317–18:

“respicere exemplar vitae morumque iubebo
doctum imitatore et vivas hinc ducere voces.”

77. *De oratore* I. 5, 17.

imitating God whose most perfect work is also man, paints groups of human figures and chooses subjects from history and fable. "He must," writes Félibien, "like the historians, represent great events, or like the poets, subjects that will please; and mounting still higher, be skilled to conceal under the veil of fable the virtues of great men, and the most exalted mysteries."⁷⁸ Less than forty years later, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, this humanistic point of view had already begun to change and to point toward the still distant Romantic Movement, when the forward-looking critic Roger de Piles daringly extended the meaning of "historical invention" to include any choice of objects that "simply of themselves represent a subject for the painter."⁷⁹ It would have been in the interest of clarity had De Piles allowed the term to retain its original connotation of "having to do with fable," and invented a more appropriate category in which to place still-life and landscape painting. But if his new and inclusive use of it is not particularly apt, his desire to extend the welcome of criticism to those essentially pictorial provinces of the painter's art that the Academicians strenuously bred in the tradition of classicism—and of *ut pictura poesis*—had hitherto considered little more than hack-work, is historically very significant. At the end of the eighteenth century Reynolds, who combined allegiance to the grand style of historical painting with a breadth of outlook that recalls De Piles, said all that it is necessary to say in criticism of the academic hierarchy of the styles when he remarked: "Whether it is the human figure, an animal, or even inanimate objects, there is nothing, however unpromising in appearance, but may be raised into dignity, convey sentiment, and produce emotion, in the hands of a painter of genius. What was said of Virgil, that he threw even the dung about the ground with an air of dignity, may be applied to Titian: whatever he touched, however naturally mean, and habitually familiar, by a kind of magic he invested with grandeur and importance."⁸⁰ Reynolds' point would have greater force for the modern reader had he chosen Chardin rather than Titian as an illustration, although Chardin would certainly not have been so perfect a pendant to Virgil. But no liberal humanist of today will deny that individual genius is a more important factor than choice of subject matter in producing painting that is humanly significant, even though he will not admit—

78. See Félibien's preface to his *Conférences de l'Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture*, Paris, 1669. The *Conférences* are reprinted in vol. v of the edition of his *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres* published at Trevoux in 1725; I quote from p. 310: "Il est constant qu'à mesure qu'ils [painters] s'occupent aux choses les plus difficiles et les plus nobles, ils sortent de ce qu'il y a de plus bas et de plus commun, et s'anoblissent par un travail plus illustre. Ainsi celui qui fait parfaitement des paysages est au-dessus d'un autre qui ne fait que des fruits, des fleurs, ou des coquilles. Celui qui peint des animaux vivans est plus estimable que ceux qui ne représentent que des choses mortes et sans mouvement; et comme la figure de l'homme est le plus parfait ouvrage de Dieu sur la terre, il est certain aussi que celui qui se rend l'imitateur de Dieu en peignant des figures humaines, est beaucoup plus excellent que tous les autres . . . un Peintre qui ne fait que des portraits, n'a pas encore atteint cette haute perfection de l'Art, et ne peut prétendre à l'honneur que reçoivent les plus sçavans. Il faut pour cela passer d'une seule figure à la représentation de plusieurs ensemble; il faut traiter l'histoire et la fable; il faut représenter de grandes actions comme les Historiens, ou des sujets agréables comme les Poètes; et montant encore plus haut, il faut par des compositions allégoriques, sçavoir couvrir sous le voile de la fable les vertus des grands hommes, et les mystères les plus relevés. L'on appelle un grand Peintre celui qui s'acquitte

bien de semblables entreprises." Félibien's remarks on allegory derive from the Renaissance theory of epic poetry, which was, of course, current in the seventeenth-century France. The epic was supposed to contain a hidden meaning beneath the veil of the action. See Spingarn, *op. cit.*, pp. 107.

79. De Piles is still conservative enough to remark that it is reasonable to consider a history (he means a history in Félibien's sense of the term) the highest kind of painting, and that it is usual to contrast a history with a painting of beasts, or of landscape, or of flowers, etc. Nevertheless, in including under the term "historical invention" (in contrast to what he calls allegorical, and mystical invention), true and fabulous history, portraiture, views of countries, beasts, and all the productions of art and nature, he is saying something new; and he shows a highly complimentary attitude toward the painter even of "the flower, fruit, plant, and insect" in remarking that even subjects such as these, that are not found in books or established by tradition, make demands on the painter's intelligence and inventive genius, and, he adds (and this is an old-fashioned compliment that no seventeenth-century Academician would have given any painting but a history in the strict sense of the word), are capable of yielding instruction. See *Cours de peinture*, pp. 53–55.

80. *Discourse XI*.

and neither, certainly, would Reynolds—that (granting them to be equal in purely pictorial skill) the painter of still-life is in the last analysis the equal of the painter of human action and emotion. For it is one thing to admit that in the minds of the Academicians *ut pictura poesis* was a doctrine that tended to circumscribe and formalize the art of painting, denying it conditions proper to its own development; it is another to deny with the aesthetic purists of the twentieth century that there is any virtue in the doctrine whatsoever.

In the mid-eighteenth century Lessing was in the curious position of objecting not only to *ut pictura poesis* as it was exemplified in the historical painters, but also to those critics of the doctrine who, like De Piles, approved an enlargement of the painter's legitimate sphere of activity. Looking backward like the theorists of the Italian Renaissance to the authority of Aristotle, and opposed to romantic tendencies in eighteenth-century criticism, he was, moreover, influenced by the rather narrow purism of Winckelmann's tendency to identify beauty with Greek statuary. Believing that bodily beauty is the end of painting ("the highest bodily beauty is, therefore," he says, "the highest end") he could only think of landscape painting and still-life, whether painted by an artist of genius or not, as inferior forms of art. But he had an even lower opinion, as he himself remarks, of historical painting wherein he thought that painters showed their cleverness in mere expression without subordinating the latter to bodily beauty. Lessing and Félibien would have argued violently concerning the scope and importance of historical painting; nevertheless it is possible that Lessing had the French critic in mind when he wrote a series of preparatory notes for the *Laokoön* in which, much like Félibien, he arranges painters in hierarchical order from those who paint landscape and still-life to those who paint mankind; the important difference being that for Félibien the highest ranking painter is the historical painter who paints significant human actions, whereas for Lessing he is the painter who subordinates everything to "körperliche Schönheit."⁸¹

These notes of Lessing epitomize the rigorous classicism of his attitude toward the figure arts, but they also indicate how little he understood the nature and possibilities of the art of painting. Apropos of his statement that "the highest bodily beauty exists only in man and even in him only by virtue of the ideal," a modern critic has made the following pertinent comment: "For Lessing, as for the classicist in general, beauty does not consist primarily in expression, but in a certain informing symmetry and proportion that, like true plot in tragedy, points the way to some human end."⁸² This is undoubtedly true, and one will admire the fundamental humanist in Lessing and the objective clarity of his method of arguing from first principles. One will also admit that the stupid or blatant rhetoric of much academic art of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and a disproportionate emphasis on expression among the critics, justified to a very great extent his dislike of historical painting wherein he saw bodily beauty, for him the chief *raison d'être* of painting, sacrificed to expression which might legitimately predominate in poetry but in

81. *Nachlass C.* (ed. Blümner, pp. 440-41):

"Der Ausdruck körperlicher Schönheit ist die Bestimmung der Malerey.

"Die höchste körperliche Schönheit also, ihre höchste Bestimmung.

"Die höchste körperliche Schönheit existiert nur in dem Menschen, und auch nur in diesem vermöge des Ideals.

"Dieses Ideal findet bey den Thieren schon weniger, in der vegetabilischen und leblosen Natur aber gar nicht Statt.

"Dieses ist es, was dem Blumen- und Landschaftsmahler seinen Rang anweist.

"Er ahmet Schönheiten nach, die keines Ideals fähig sind; er arbeitet also bloss mit dem Auge und mit der Hand; und das Genie hat an seinem Werke wenig oder gar keinen Antheil.

"Doch ziehe ich noch immer den Landschaftsmahler demjenigen Historienmahler vor, der ohne seine Hauptabsicht auf die Schönheit zu richten, nur Klumpen Personen mahlt, um seine Geschicklichkeit in dem blossen Ausdrücke, und nicht in dem der Schönheit untergeordneten Ausdrücke, zu zeigen."

82. Babbitt, *The New Laokoön*, p. 46.

painting should remain strictly subordinate.⁸³ Yet it must be admitted that Félibien's definition of the greatest painting as that which represents serious actions, or delightful fables, or significant allegory—in short his allegiance to the doctrine *ut pictura poesis*—affords far wider and richer scope to the pictorial art than Lessing's austere and circumscribing definition. For although Lessing's avowed purpose in the *Laokoön* was to dispel a confusion between the temporal art of poetry and the spatial art of painting, in defining the end of painting as the representation of bodily beauty he unconsciously confused painting with sculpture. Seeking to destroy a confusion that originated in the Renaissance, he fell into another that originated in the antiquarian and archaeological research of the eighteenth century and was, in a sense, "hoist with his own petard."

Thus the fate of *ut pictura poesis* was various among critics of painting in the eighteenth century. De Piles and Reynolds, both of whom adhered to the spirit of the doctrine, could nevertheless implicitly criticize its exclusive character by welcoming within the painter's legitimate precincts matter that the French Academicians of an earlier day had considered profane. Lessing, far more conservative, would have agreed with Félibien that without subject matter drawn from human life, no painting is worthy of the name. But in his effort to purify the art of those elements that encouraged it, in the name of expression, to go beyond the limits of an art of figures coexistent in space, he tended to minimize the importance for the painter of human emotion and psychology. Instead, he adopted a narrow conception of formal beauty as the goal of painting—"beautiful shapes in graceful attitudes"; these alone, he remarked, among the "pictures" of Homer, the painters had found suitable to their proper powers. Had Lessing's conception of formal beauty been less restricted, critics of painting and aestheticians would be less inclined to quarrel with him, for no one will deny the general rightness of his contention that the greatest painting, like the greatest poetry, observes the limitations of its medium; or that it is dangerous for a spatial art like painting to attempt the progressive effects of a temporal art like poetry. Where Lessing went astray as a critic of painting was in defining its limits too strictly, and this appears nowhere more clearly than in his failure to take sufficiently into account that great middle-ground of human content on which both poetry and painting, as arts of expression, are equally free to draw. He was not unaware of this ground, but his reasonable objection to painting with literary intentions, his utter lack of understanding of the pictorial significance of the development of modern painting, and the dominant influence of the antique all combined to narrow his conception of formal beauty to a point that could allow the painter little room for the expression of human emotion.⁸⁴

83. Lessing remarked (*Laokoön*, xvii) that the poet Kleist had he lived would have refashioned his descriptive poem *Frühling* in such a way as to convert "a series of pictures scantily interwoven with sentiments (*Empfindungen*) into a series of sentiments sparingly interspersed with images." For Lessing's objection to descriptive poetry as trespassing on the province of the painter's art, see note 29. He believed, of course, that progressive action (which would include "a series of sentiments") was the province of the poet.

84. Lessing's approbation of the expression of emotion in painting is characteristically confined in the *Laokoön* to certain ancient paintings, e.g., Timanthes' *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, about which he had read in Pliny or elsewhere, but of which he could have had no direct experience. He has nothing to say in favor of expression in any modern painter. On the contrary, he objects (*Laokoön*, iii) to that enlargement of the realm of art in modern times which has per-

mitted it to extend its imitations over all of visible nature in which beauty has only a small share, and he objects to the fact that truth and expression, not beauty, have become the first law of art. He praises Zeuxis (*ibid.*, xxii) who, although he knew Homer's famous lines in which the elders express their admiration of Helen's beauty, limited himself to painting only her naked beauty, and he violently objects to the painting based on the same lines in Homer that the Comte de Caylus proposed for modern artists: Helen covered in a white veil on the walls of Troy in the midst of Priam and the elders—a painting in which the artist must exert his particular skill, says Caylus, to make us feel the triumph of beauty in the eager looks and expressions of astonishment on the faces of the elders. Lessing's excellent doctrine of the fruitful moment for the plastic artist (*ibid.*, iii) in which he was to some extent anticipated by Shaftesbury, Du Bos, and Caylus himself, rightly limits the depiction of expression to that least transitory moment

Lessing's well-known objection to allegory offers further interesting comment on the puristic character of his attitude towards painting. Commenting in his preface to the *Laokoön* on the famous aphorism of Simonides,⁸⁵ he remarks with a large measure of truth that the modern fashion of allegorical pictures is the result of the mistaken effort on the part of painters to turn their art into mute poetry "without having considered to what extent painting can express universal ideas without giving up its proper *métier* and becoming an arbitrary method of writing" (*zu einer willkürlichen Schriftart zu werden*). In condemning allegory on the grounds of its arbitrary character, Lessing was anticipated by the Abbé du Bos, who though willing to admit that traditional allegorical figures have acquired the rights of solid citizenship in the arts, cannot tolerate their younger brethren that have issued from the fertile brains of modern painters. "Ils sont des chiffres," writes Du Bos, "dont personne n'a la clef, et même peu de gens la cherchent."⁸⁶ He goes on to say that the mingling of real and allegorical figures destroys verisimilitude (Aristotle's dramatic probability), and that Rubens' painting of the birth of Louis XIII, which he admits to be magnificent, would give more pleasure had the painter substituted for his allegorical personages women of that time who, in assisting Marie de'Medici during her travail, might have shown the various human emotions that such an event would cause. "Painters are poets," adds Du Bos, "but their poetry does not consist so much in inventing idle fancies (*chimères*) or 'jeux d'esprits,' as in conceiving what passions and what sentiments one should give to people according to their character and the condition of life in which one supposes them to be, just as it consists in discovering the expressions that will suitably render these passions apparent to the eye and enable one to perceive what these sentiments are."⁸⁷ Lessing would have agreed with Du Bos in detesting the obscurity of much allegorical painting—an obscurity that resulted from what, as we have seen, he called "an arbitrary manner of writing"; and although he does not develop the implications of this phrase, one may be certain that he means the idiosyncratic use of allegorical figures to serve as a kind of extended literary comment on the action in a painting. He would, however, have objected to the way in which Du Bos identifies the poetical element in painting with expression; for, as we have seen, Lessing considered expression far more appropriate to poetry than to painting, believing that in the latter it tended seriously to interfere with the all-important depiction of bodily beauty. Now no one will deny that the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced a host of obscure, vapid, and thoroughly tiresome allegories that would drive anyone at moments to espouse the "probability" of a Du Bos, or the purism of a Lessing. One may, in fact, go so far as to say that in allegory the art of painting, for reasons of which Du Bos may have been more aware than Lessing, has never achieved its most profound interpretation of human life. Nevertheless Lessing's downright objection to allegory is another clear indication of the one-sidedness of his criticism, and of his insensitiveness to the purely pictorial, as well as to certain imaginative, capacities of the painter's

in emotional experience which would permit the beholder of a picture to imagine in temporal terms more than the painter with his single moment of time could actually represent. But he never in the *Laokoön* comments on the application of this doctrine to expression in the work of any modern painter. He was evidently more interested in the kind of formal beauty that the unseen Helen of Zeuxis represented to him. For the "Menge schöner Körper, in schönen Stellungen" in Homer see *ibid.*, xvi. See p. 260 and note 305.

85. See p. 197 above.

86. *Réflexions critiques sur la poésie et sur la peinture*, 6th ed., Paris, 1755, I, 24, p. 194 (first ed. 1719). Cf. De Piles' earlier criticism of Le Brun on precisely these grounds (*Abrégé de la vie des peintres*, p. 511): Le Brun, he admits, treated allegorical subjects with much imagination, "mais au lieu d'en tirer les symboles de quelque source connue, comme de la Fable, et des Médailles antiques, il les a presque tous inventés, ainsi ces sortes de tableaux deviennent par-là des énigmes, que le spectateur ne veut pas se donner la peine d'éclaircir." Cf. note 176.

87. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

art. Of these Reynolds was fully aware when he wrote his opinion of the Marie de' Medici series; for although he agreed with Du Bos that Rubens was at fault in mixing allegorical figures with real personages, he also insisted that in sacrificing truth to nature, Rubens gained another kind of truth that was more significant. "If," says Reynolds, "the artist considered himself as engaged to furnish this gallery with a rich, various and splendid ornament, this could not be done, at least in an equal degree, without peopling the air and water with these allegorical figures; he therefore accomplished all that he purposed. In this case all lesser considerations, which tend to obstruct the great end of the work, must yield and give way."⁸⁸ Reynolds would have been the first to admit that painting can have a greater end than Rubens here fulfilled—such an end he discerned in the profound and overpowering invention of Michelangelo on the Sistine ceiling⁸⁹ the greatness of which, Reynolds knew, is no mere matter of rhetoric, or of pictorial brilliance, or, *pace* Lessing, of bodily beauty either; nevertheless, on the subject of pictorial allegory Reynolds spoke a more decisive word than Lessing when he continued his criticism of the Luxembourg paintings as follows: "It must always be remembered that the business of a great painter is to produce a great picture; he must therefore take special care not to be cajoled by specious arguments out of his materials.

"What has been so often said to the disadvantage of allegorical poetry,—that it is tedious, and uninteresting,—cannot with the same propriety be applied to painting, where the interest is of a different kind. If allegorical painting produces a greater variety of ideal beauty, a richer, a more various and delightful composition, and gives to the artist a greater opportunity of exhibiting his skill, all the interest he wishes for is accomplished; such a picture not only attracts, but fixes the attention."

Lessing would certainly have retorted that Rubens, like all painters of allegory, had been cajoled out of his main argument by specious materials. And in so saying, he would have again displayed that uncompromising dialectic that resulted in vital distinctions in his criticism of poetry and painting, but which, because he did not understand painting, and had adopted a narrow conception of her scope of imitation, left her, in reality, not a sister of poetry at all, but a kind of lesser sister of sculpture bereft of her proper sensuousness and of her proper range of expression. Lessing had excellent reasons both as a humanist and aesthete for objecting probably to the bulk of allegorical painting. But he would not have been able to distinguish between the pictorial and imaginative brilliance of the Luxembourg series, and the "icily regular, splendidly null" allegorical histories, say, of Le Brun.

III—EXPRESSION

When Lessing objected to predominant expression in historical painting, he objected to something that the critics of the sixteenth century who developed the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* had insisted upon as fundamental. For if human beings in action are, as Aristotle said, the theme of painting, it follows that the movements of the body that express the affections and passions of the soul are the spirit and the life of art and the goal to which the whole science of painting tends. Lomazzo further insists that it is precisely here that painting most resembles poetry; for the inspired genius of both arts lies in the knowledge and power to express the passions, and the painter without expression, however perfect a stylist or technician he may be, must be prepared to endure the censure of posterity.⁹⁰ In the early Renaissance Alberti had included as essential to good composition an accurate

88. *Discourse vii.*

89. *Discourse xv.*

90. See Appendix 3, "Lomazzo on Expression."

knowledge of bodily movements as expressive of human emotion, citing Giotto's *Navicella* as a model for painters who would seek to be skilled in this most difficult and all-essential province of their art;⁹¹ and throughout the whole critical tradition of classicism in Italy and France it is insisted not only that expressive movement is the life blood of all great painting, but that the painter himself, like Horace's tragic actor, if he is to move the beholder of his picture with the human emotions expressed therein, must first feel these emotions himself. *Si vis me flere, dolendum est primum ipsi tibi* is Horace's famous maxim⁹² that served as a text for writers on expression in art and literature for more than two centuries.

This concern with the importance of expression in painting is not surprising among critics who believe that painting like poetry is an imitation of human life, and is, indeed, indispensable in any humanistic theory of the arts. For the humanist in insisting that great painting has the power through expressive movement to stir human emotion will readily agree with Horace that the artist must first possess in his own soul a capacity for deep and intense human experience. But the imaginative participation of the artist in the emotions of his characters is, to a greater or less extent, recreated in him who experiences a work of art; and it is when he speaks of this experience of the beholder that Lomazzo carries his theory of expression to an unfortunate extreme and shows the danger that dwells in any too emphatic insistence on the participation of the spectator in the emotions of persons represented in a picture. For surely all semblance of that essential detachment which in aesthetic experience mysteriously accompanies and qualifies emotional participation, is completely lost when Lomazzo, commenting on Horace's *si vis me flere*, observes that a painting in which the movement of the figures is rendered in life-like fashion (*con moti al naturale ritratti*) will cause the observer "to smile with him who smiles, think with him who thinks, . . . marvel with him who marvels, desire a beautiful young woman for his wife if he beholds a fair female nude in a picture, . . . desire to eat with him who eats precious and delicate foods, fall asleep with him who sweetly sleeps, etc."⁹³ This passage—an unconscious parody of Horace's remarks on expression, with painting assuming in a curious way the rôle of his tragic actor in its power to stir emotion in the spectator through the human emotions or sensations contained within its lines and colors (just as Horace's actor feeling grief would cause others to grieve)—is a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* as well of the modern theory of empathy. It is further interesting as showing the important influence that the typical Renaissance admiration of painting as a palpable and exact imitation of nature could have on a conscientious but confused critic who was attempting to deal with aesthetic ideas of a more advanced character. Lomazzo owes something here to Leonardo's praise of painting as superior to poetry in inciting men to acts of worship and of love through the realistic vividness of its imagery. That passage also contains the story of the man who always yawned when he beheld a certain figure yawning in a picture⁹⁴ and thereby recalls those stories of the efficacy of realistic art that delighted the writers of late antiquity⁹⁵—stories more often extravagant than edifying that frequently recur in the

91. *Della pittura*, pp. 121 ff.

92. *Ars poetica* 102–3. Cf. Daniello, *La poetica*, p. 40: "Ne potrete voi ciò fare giamai se gli animi vostri non siano dentro commossi et infiammati prima"; Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura*, p. 226: "Ne puo muovere il Pittore, se prima nel far delle figure non sente nel suo animo quelle passioni, o diciamo affetti, che vuole imprimere in quello d'altrui. Onde dice il tante volte allegato Horatio, se vuoi ch'io pianga, è mestiero che tu avanti ti dolga teco."

93. Lomazzo, *op. cit.*, II, I, p. 105.

94. *Trattato della pittura*, I, 25; cf. Cicero *De oratore* II, 44, on the power of the orator to rouse similar emotions.

95. Especially Pliny, *loc. cit.*; in the early eighteenth century the Abbé du Bos (*Réflexions critiques*, I, 38, p. 389), taking the part of the moderns sensibly observes that it would be foolish to give credence to the exaggerated accounts of the efficacy of ancient painting, and, because modern painting cannot achieve these same effects, judge that the latter is therefore inferior to the former.

critical writing of the sixteenth century. Thus when Armenini, remembering Plutarch, tells how Cassander trembled before the life-like portrait of the dead Alexander whom he had learned to fear, he illustrates with the authority of antique example the concept that painting as an art expressive of human emotion has power to move the beholder.⁹⁶ Horace, we have seen, was the foremost authority for this concept, but it should also be remarked that writers on expressive movement in painting, no less than critics of literature who were discussing the power of language to interpret and arouse the passions, also owed much to Cicero and Quintilian. For in shaping the education of the ideal orator, the ancient rhetoricians had been concerned not merely with words, but equally with gesture and facial expression as vital means of conveying human emotion. The Renaissance critics had, in fact, their invitation to compare painting with oratory in Quintilian's own observation that it is no wonder that gesture in oratory has a powerful effect on the mind, when the silent gestures in a painting can so penetrate to the heart that they seem to surpass in efficacy the power of speech itself.⁹⁷

Alberti had counseled the painter to read the "*rhetorici*,"⁹⁸ and Leonardo may possibly remember Quintilian when he advises the painter to learn the fine points of expressive movement from the dumb whose only speech is gesture;⁹⁹ but virtually always, as one would expect, Leonardo based his remarks on expression not on written prescription, but on his own keen observation of human life. Thus when he compares the movements of arm and hand that accompany the words of the orator intent on persuading his audience with those movements which must, if the painter's illusion of life is to be convincing (all the more, in fact, because painting is mere illusion, not reality), unfailingly express the mental activity of the persons represented,¹⁰⁰ he is evidently not thinking of the counsel of a Quintilian, but remembering his own experience of advocates in the courts, including those stupid advocates who, as they sought to persuade without the proper use of gestures, resembled wooden statues—a warning to painters not to neglect the study of movement without which their own figures might seem equally wooden. Leonardo's conviction that painting which does not convincingly externalize the passions of the soul¹⁰¹—admiration, reverence, grief, suspicion, fear, joy, and the like—is, in his habitual phrase, "twice dead,"¹⁰²

96. *Life of Alexander*, lxxiv; Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, I, 3, p. 30; cf. Alberti, *Della pittura*, p. 89.

97. *Inst. orat.* xi. 3, 67: "Nec mirum, si ista, quae tamen in aliquo posita sunt motu, tantum in animis valent, cum pictura, tacens opus et habitus semper eiusdem, sic in intimos penetret adfectus, ut ipsam vim dicendi nonnunquam superare videatur"; cf. xi. 3, 65 ff., and Cicero *De oratore* III. 59, a chapter on the significance of gesture and facial expression as indicative of the *motus animi* that follows one containing illustrations of these emotions from the poets. Cf. also Alberti, pp. 121–31; Dolce, pp. 108, 206; du Fresnoy, *De arte graphica*, 230 ff., and note how the latter declares it is the rhetorician's business to treat of the passions: "Hos ego Rhetoribus tractandos defero"; cf. note 66 for some relevant remarks of Poussin.

For the influence of the ancient theory of rhetoric on the Renaissance theory of poetry which, in regard to matters of expression, parallels its influence on the theory of painting, see Murray W. Bundy's introduction to Kelso's translation of Fracastoro's *Naugerius* (see note 31). The *Naugerius* is full of comparisons between the poet and the orator. Vida (*De arte poetica*, II. 496 ff.) advises the poet who seeks by the expression of human emotion to move his hearers to consult the eloquence of the great orators:

"Nec te oratores pigeat, artisque magistros

Consuluisse, Sinon Phrygios quo fallere possit
Arte, dolis quocunq[ue] animos impellere doctus;

* * * * *

Discitur hinc etenim sensus mentesque legentum
Flectere, diversosque animis motus dare, ut illis
Imperet arte potens, dictu mirabile, vates.
Nam semper, seu laeta canat, seu tristia moerens,
Affectas implet tacita dulcedine mentes."

98. *Op. cit.*, pp. 145–47.

99. *Trattato*, III, 376.

100. *Ibid.*, 368.

101. Leonardo succinctly states the dramatic theory of expression that was to become standard in all essentials throughout Renaissance and Baroque criticism of painting in the following passage (*ibid.*, 285): "et ancora ti ricordo . . . et sopra tuto, che li circostanti al caso, per il quale è fatta la storia, sieno intenti à esso caso, con atti che mostrino *admiratione, riverentia, dolore, sospetto, paura, gaudio*, o' secondo che richiede il caso, per il quale è fatto il congionto o' uero concorso delle tue figure." Expression of the passions must, then, in each case be strictly related to the dramatic motive in the picture. This was to be the doctrine of the French Academy.

102. *Ibid.*, 297, 368, etc.

appears not only in his intense preoccupation as a draughtsman and painter with movement and facial expression, but also in the care with which he sometimes recorded in his writing the changing attitudes of the body under the stress of emotion, or the deformations of cheek, eyes, mouth, and hair.¹⁰³

Nearly a century later Lomazzo's observations on expression lack entirely the empirical directness of Leonardo's which was not to appear again in Renaissance or Baroque criticism. The product of a pedantic age, they are an elaborate prescription for the painter in which a few Leonardesque remarks on gesture and facial expression are scattered among a long array of examples of the passions in scripture, history, and myth, many of which must have been suggested to Lomazzo by their illustration in notable paintings of the Renaissance.¹⁰⁴ And frequently, following the ancient example of Cicero,¹⁰⁵ he quotes passages from the poets—chiefly Ariosto and Dante—which vividly portray human emotion, thereby giving substance to his earlier statement that it is in the expression of the passions that painting most resembles poetry.¹⁰⁶

In his commentary first published in 1668 on Du Fresnoy's *De arte graphica*, Roger de Piles at the end of a disquisition on the passions in which one may detect his reading of the ancients, Alberti, Leonardo, and Lomazzo (such is the inevitable accumulation of critical pastiches as one moves forward in time), remarks with indubitable correctness that the latter has written at large in his second book on every passion in particular; but then has the good sense to deliver this warning to prospective painters: "Beware you dwell not too long upon it, and endeavor not to force your genius."¹⁰⁷ Here De Piles already gives evidence of a certain forward-looking distrust of the all-sufficiency of academic rules for the painter—a distrust which, despite his willingness to accept most of the doctrine founded on *ut pictura poesis* and his belief in the steadying effect of the rules, was to increase in his later writings; moreover, in his implication that genius should, in some measure at least, be free to spread its wings, he gives voice to an important doctrine that had already appeared chiefly under Neo-Platonic auspices in Italian criticism of the Mannerist age.¹⁰⁸

103. See, for instance, the passage (*ibid.*, 385) in which, after remarking that the painter should vary the movements that occur with weeping and laughing according to the particular cause of these manifestations of emotion, Leonardo analyzes the bodily and facial movements that may accompany the former as follows: "Deli quai pianti alcuno si dimostra disperato, alcuno mediocre, alcuni solo lacrimosi, et alcuni gridano, alcuni col viso al cielo e co' le mani in basso, havendo le dita di quelle insieme tesute, altri timorosi, co'le spalli inalzate à gli orecchi; et cosi seguono secondo le predette cause. Quel, che versa' l pianto, alza le ciglia nelle loro gionture et le stringie in sieme, e compone grinze disopra in mezzo li canti della bocca in basso; et colui che ride gli ha alti, et le ciglia aperte et spatiose." Cf. Appendix 5.

104. *Trattato*, II, *passim*. Cf. Appendix 5.

105. *De oratore* III, 58.

106. See note 90. Lomazzo frequently shows great discernment in choosing effective poetical illustration. How vivid, for instance, is the image of timid fear in the following lines from Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* (Canto I) where the poet is describing the flight of the beautiful Angelica through the forest from the amorous Rinaldo (*op. cit.*, II, 9, p. 128):

"E spesso il viso smorto adietro volta
Che le par che Rinaldo habbi alle spalle."

107. Dryden's translation, 2nd ed., London, 1716, p. 165.

108. The Neo-Platonic doctrine that beauty is essentially *gratia*—an emanation from the countenance of God

which is perceived by the artist in earthly things because he possesses and is aware of a like emanation in his own soul—gave a mystical character to the conception of beauty at the end of the Mannerist period that was opposed to the classical conception accepted by the Renaissance that beauty depends on proportion of parts. The association of the Idea of beauty in the artist's soul with a divine emanation means that the creative faculty, since it partakes of the absolute, can no more be forced into the groove of the rules than beauty can be defined in terms of mathematical proportion. See Lomazzo, *Idea*, chap. xxvi, and cf. the source material in Ficino, all reprinted in Panofsky, *Idea*: see note 48.—Cf. also the interesting passage in Zuccari, *L'Idea de' pittori, scultori ed architetti*, II, 6, p. 133 (quoted by Panofsky, p. 101) especially: "L'intelletto ha da essere non solo chiaro, ma libero, e l'ingegno sciolto, e non così ristretto in servitù meccanica di si fatte regole." Lomazzo (*Idea*, p. 8) remarks on the necessity of following one's own genius and of avoiding too close imitation of others. Genius should, however, be tempered with reason and study (*ibid.*, pp. 112 ff.). This was also the opinion of Du Fresnoy (30–36) who, well aware that "*normarum numero immani Geniumque moretur*," states that he is writing his *De arte graphica* in order to effect a reasonable compromise between genius and the rules. See the important discussion of the theory of art in the age of Mannerism in Panofsky, pp. 39 ff.; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 68 ff.

The notion that genius is inspired and that the "rules" are ineffective to produce great art goes back to a famous

And this doctrine in *De Piles* anticipates, four years before its translation by Boileau, the enormous influence that would gather momentum in the following century of the treatise of *Longinus on the Sublime*. *De Piles* was definitely influenced in his later writings by Longinus who had maintained that the sublime in art is the product of genius—of that inward greatness of soul that must from time to time inevitably transcend the rules, the correct observance of which by a lesser artist would result in mediocrity.¹⁰⁹

Some thirty years later when the Longinian temper had grown upon him, *De Piles* again showed his skepticism of prescribed rules for expression when he criticized those definitions of the passions that Le Brun in his treatise on the subject had taken from Descartes' *Traité des passions de l'âme*. *De Piles* remarks truthfully and, one may hope, a little caustically, that these definitions are not always accommodated to the capacities of painters, who are not all philosophers, though in other respects they may not want sense and good natural parts.¹¹⁰ He adds that Le Brun's definitions are very learned and fine but too general, and it is perfectly clear from the pages that follow that *De Piles* found the ancients who appealed to nature (he has Horace and Quintilian particularly in mind) more valuable sources of advice for the painters on this important subject than he found Le Brun, even though the latter's treatise carried with it the impressive sanction of the Cartesian philosophy. The modern reader of Le Brun's treatise will scarcely fail to agree with the opinion of *De Piles*, for nowhere did the aesthetic legislation of the Academy display itself in such absurdly detailed and absurdly abstract categories as in this attempt to specify the minute changes in facial expression by which each passion manifests itself through the complex action of those subtle vapors known as the *esprits animaux* which are the product of certain refinements of the circulatory system. One need not consider here the details of those deformations of pupil, eyebrow, nose, and mouth, or of those changes in complexion wrought by the *esprits* after sensory or imaginative stimuli have set them in motion. It should be remembered, however, that the treatise of Descartes, who shared the profound interest of his age in the *perturbationes animae*, was largely responsible for the special psycho-physiological character of the theory of expression during the last decades of the seventeenth century among the painter-theorists of the Academy who, legislating as they were for an art that would conserve the outward record of the soul's inner activity, were naturally far more precise in charting the details of expression than the philosopher himself had been. But behind the categorical exactitude with which they formulated the visible manifestations of these invisible states of the soul lay not only the rational thoroughness of the Cartesian method, but also the central concept of the Cartesian physics that the whole

passage in Plato's *Phaedrus* (245a): "But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art (*ἐκ τέχνης*), meets with no success, and the poetry of the same man vanishes into nothingness before that of the madman" (trans. H. N. Fowler, Loeb Classical Library, London and New York, 1928, p. 469). Junius (*De pictura veterum*, Amsterdam, 1637, I, 4, p. 22) applies the Platonic concept to painters as well as poets: "Utraque certe sequitur occulta quaedam naturae semina: unde persaepe videas cum Poetas, tum Pictores, ad amorem artis non tam provido multum diuque pensitatae rationis consilio duci, quam coeco quodam avidae mentis impetu trahi atque impelli." Lomazzo (see note 75) had already remarked that painters are like poets in sharing "il furor di Apolline." In insisting on the necessity of inspiration in artistic creation as opposed to reason (even though the latter also be encouraged to make its con-

tribution), the Platonic tradition of the Renaissance prepared the way for the enthusiastic reception later of the doctrine of Longinus.

109. See note 311 and p. 262.

110. *Cours de peinture*, pp. 164 ff. It should be noted that after criticizing Le Brun, *De Piles* turns about and pays his respects to the famous Academician, remarking that his demonstrations may be of service to most painters. But certainly this is said without conviction and is merely a lukewarm and perfunctory salute to the tradition with which in this as in other respects, *De Piles* was often in disagreement. Descartes' treatise was published first in 1649. Le Brun's *Traité des passions*, as he called it in manuscript, was published first in Amsterdam and Paris in 1698 under the title *Conférence de M. Le Brun . . . sur l'expression générale et particulière*. The treatise is reprinted in Jouin, *Charles le Brun*, Paris, 1889, pp. 371-93.

universe and every individual body is a machine, and all movement, in consequence, mechanical.¹¹¹ Hence the exhaustively precise nature of Le Brun's anatomy of the passions which treats the body as a complex instrument that records with mechanical exactitude the invariable effects of emotional stimuli rather than as the vehicle of a humanly significant emotional life.¹¹²

Now no artist could undertake to follow precepts like Le Brun's without falling into the rut of arid formalism. It is enough for the artist, De Piles sensibly remarked, "without waiting for order or the judgment of reason" to know that the passions of the soul are caused by the sight of things and to ask himself how he would behave if seized with the passion that he would portray. But the rules for expression were nevertheless important to the honest theorists and second-rate painters of the Academy who with insufficient realization of the dangers that lurked about them, sought consciously to practice an exact, yet extensive pictorial rhetoric of gesture and facial expression that would both accord with their century's ideas of decorum and of "la belle nature" and satisfy its lively interest in the depiction of emotion. Through the heightened language of the drama, Corneille had created characters who embodied in typical mode the passions of the soul, and in the art of the greatest of French painters, whose profundity of mind and sentiment they never wholly understood, the Academicians discovered to their complacent satisfaction, and only with partial truth, a prefiguration of their chilling formulas for expression. Now everyone will acknowledge that the eminently rational genius of Poussin, who did not live to read the discourses of the Academicians, could invest the typical mode of rendering the passions with ideal significance and grandeur, and no one will deny that his interest in the expression of the passions was the intensely scrutinizing interest of his age. But the writing of those who admired him as a master of expression—of Le Brun, Testelin, and others—might better, in part at least, be the writing of physiologists rather than of aestheticians, so analytically precise is the method by which they chart those visible changes in the face that accompany the "mouvements intérieures" within the body in experience of the emotions;¹¹³ and although this type of quasi-scientific analysis could with its methodical prescriptions make a singularly barren contribution to the rules for good painting, it had nothing to contribute to the humanistic theory of the art. One may perhaps be permitted to quote at this point a remark of Addison's which, though it was made in another connection, is nevertheless appropriate here: "Great scholars are apt to fetch their comparisons and allusions from the sciences in which they are most conversant, so that many a man may see the compass of their learning in a treatise on the most indifferent subject. I have read a discourse upon love which none but a profound chymist could understand, and have heard many a sermon that should only have been preached before a congregation of Cartesians."¹¹⁴ Certainly no Dolce, or Bellori, or even Lomazzo who at times yielded to few in the gentle art of multiplying profitless distinctions, would ever have remarked that it

111. See Appendix 4, "The Cartesian Theory of the Passions."

112. See Appendix 5, "Symposium on the Passion of Wrath."

113. The Cartesian psycho-physiological theory of expression that received its fullest statement among the Academicians in Le Brun's *Traité des passions* had first appeared in the *Conférences* of the Academy more than thirty years before the *Traité* was published in 1698, for instance in Van Opstal's discourse on the Laocoön in 1667, and to a less extent in Le Brun's discourse of the same year on Poussin's *Fall of the Manna* (Jouin, *Conférences de*

l'Académie, pp. 19–26; pp. 56–59). A fairly complete statement of the theory presented before the Academy in 1675 by Henri Testelin was published in 1680 in a collection of his discourses under the title *L'expression générale et particulière* (reprinted in Jouin, *ibid.*, pp. 153–67). For further information on discussion of expression of the passions among the Academicians and for some excellent criticism of Le Brun's treatise see A. Fontaine, *Les doctrines d'art en France*, Paris, 1909, pp. 67 ff. See also the discussion of the influence of Descartes on the Academy in L. Hourticq, *De Poussin à Watteau*, Paris, 1921, pp. 42 ff.

114. *Spectator*, no. 421 (July 3, 1712).

was in the expression of the passions according to Le Brun that painting most resembles poetry.

It must be said, however, in favor of the Academicians that when they attempted during their *conférences* to analyze great masterpieces of painting, they habitually spoke of expression less in the psycho-physiological jargon of Descartes and Le Brun than in terms of the logical dramatic relationship of each figure in the painting to the cause of his emotion. Here, one should remember, another and far more significant aspect of the Cartesian philosophy exerted a dominant influence over the minds of the painter-theorists. This was the fundamental epistemological concept that the mind which knows itself more certainly than it knows the external world arrives at truth through the independently valid process of its own deductions, through its orderly procedure from one clearly-known proposition to another¹¹⁵—a concept that was reflected in the view of the critics that every element in a painting whether formal or expressive must as the logical part of a rational order unfailingly contribute to the demonstration of a central dramatic idea.¹¹⁶ And this was a consummation which, theoretically at least, the painter could achieve only if the rules for historical invention, disposition or *ordonnance*, and coloring,¹¹⁷ were scrupulously observed. “Dans cette même satisfaction d’une pensée bien conduite,” writes a modern critic, “où Descartes avait discerné la vérité absolue, Le Brun plaça la beauté souveraine.”¹¹⁸ Félibien remarks that the expression of subsidiary figures in a painting is related to that of the protagonist as arms and legs to the human body,¹¹⁹ and when he reports Le Brun’s analysis of Poussin’s painting of the *Fall of the Manna in the Wilderness* (Fig. 4), he reports a discourse in which, it is true, some psycho-physiological commentary on expression is present, but in which the speaker is more particularly concerned with illustrating how diversely the characters in the pictorial drama react to the cause of their emotion; how diversely the expression of the passions is a dramatic illustration of the central idea of the painting—God’s manifestation of his mercy to the suffering Israelites in causing the manna to descend upon them from heaven. “Monsieur Poussin,” Le Brun is reported to have remarked in speaking of the expressions in the picture, “a rendu toutes ses figures si propres à son sujet, qu’il n’y en a

115. This concept is developed in “Méditation II” and in Part IV of the *Discours de la méthode*. In the latter occurs the famous *cogito, ergo sum*, the philosophical starting-point of the Cartesian logic and epistemology.

116. See Descartes’ third precept of method (*Discours*, Part II): “De conduire par ordre mes pensées, en commençant par les objets les plus simples et les plus aisés à connaître, pour monter peu à peu comme par degrés jusques à la connoissance des plus composés, et supposant même de l’ordre entre ceux qui ne se précèdent point naturellement les uns les autres. . . .

“Ces longues chaînes de raisons, toutes simples et faciles, dont les géomètres ont coutume de se servir pour parvenir à leurs plus difficiles démonstrations, m’avoient donné occasion de m’imaginer que toutes les choses qui peuvent tomber sous la connoissance des hommes s’entresuivent en même façon, et que pourvu seulement qu’on s’abstienne d’en recevoir aucune pour vrai qui ne le soit, et qu’on garde toujours l’ordre qu’il faut pour les déduire les unes des autres, il n’y en peut avoir de si éloignées auxquelles enfin on ne parvienne, ni de si cachées qu’on ne découvre.” It is the certain knowledge of God that ultimately gives validity to the Cartesian method (“Méditation V”).

With the passage above one may compare a passage in Félibien’s preface to his *Conférences de l’Académie* (p. 307) in which he remarks that although in the observations of the *Conférences*, the absolute order of the “rules” for the

understanding of art is not preserved, nevertheless precepts are so often repeated apropos of the various pictures that are discussed, that “il ne laisse pas de s’en faire dans l’esprit un arrangement si juste [Félibien means an orderly conception of the rules], qu’en voyant un Tableau, toutes les notions que l’on a des parties qui peuvent servir à le rendre parfait, viennent sans confusion les unes après les autres, et en découvrent les beautés à mesure qu’on le regarde [these “parties” are later divided into those belonging to theory—as history (invention), decorum, expression etc.—and those belonging to practice—disposition, drawing, color etc.]. Ce qui arrivera de même à ceux qui voudront travailler après en avoir formé une idée, et bien conçu toute l’œconomie.” One may say, then, that just as the philosopher conducting his thoughts according to an order which is the abstract creation of the mind aims “by these long chains of reasons” at complex forms of truth, so the critic or the painter instructed in the rules will discover that his conceptions of those parts that are necessary to a perfect painting arrange themselves in his mind without confusion and in logical order; and that it is by virtue of these “chaînes des raisons” that the painter achieves that orderly pictorial truth that corresponds to the complex proposition of the philosopher.

117. See note 70. This is the old division of Dolce.

118. Hourticq, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

119. *Op. cit.*, p. 316.

pas une dont l'action¹²⁰ n'ait rapport à l'état où étoit alors le peuple Juif, qui au milieu du Desert se trouvoit dans une extrême nécessité, et dans une langueur épouvantable, mais qui dans ce moment se vit soulagé par le secours du Ciel."¹²¹ Le Brun then proceeds to demonstrate how the dramatic event causes the expression of such varied emotions among the Israelites as admiration, joy, benevolence, fear, surprise, religious awe, and even feminine vanity of a sort, and he insists again that out of this diversity of psycho-physical reactions to the dramatic event Poussin has achieved pictorial unity not only because the different movements and facial expressions of the figures are always referred to the principal subject, but because the painter has selected his "expressions" in such a way that the picture has this further claim to impeccable logic of structure: like a drama on the stage, it observes the Aristotelian unity of action in having a beginning, a middle, and an end.¹²² We shall discuss later this curious analogy between painting and dramatic poetry,—an analogy of more than doubtful validity yet a perfectly natural development of the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* under the impulse of the Cartesian passion for order and clarity.

Here we may note that Poussin himself evidently set great store by the diversity of emotional expression in this painting, for when after long labor to finish it, he finally despatched it to Chantelou, he wrote his friend that he would easily recognize those figures "qui languissent, qui admirent, celles qui ont pitié, qui font acte de charité, de grande nécessité, de désir de se repaître, de consolation et autres, car les sept premières figures à main gauche vous diront tout ce qui est ici écrit et tout le reste est de la même étoffe." "Lisez l'histoire et le tableau," he adds, "afin de connaître si chaque chose est appropriée au sujet."¹²³ According to Poussin, then, the way in which to understand this painting is to "read" it, comparing it at the same time with the story in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. And although the critics would have looked carefully to see if the painter had been properly faithful to his text, Poussin does not advise Chantelou to "read" his picture merely that his friend may test his accuracy as an historical painter. This reading is rather to be a discriminating exercise of the intellect that will result in a judgment of the painting's excellence on more important grounds. A most fundamental condition of this excellence is the painter's ability to represent human emotions that are clearly appropriate to the sub-

120. By the general term action Le Brun means any movement of the body, including facial movement, that expresses inward emotion. See his explanation of "action" in Appendix 4.

121. Jouin, *Conférences*, pp. 55-56. The notion that expression must be strictly related to the central dramatic event—rendered "secondo che richiede il caso"—had been clearly stated by Leonardo (see note 101). And Lomazzo in selecting the Crucifixion as typical of a scene of human sorrow for which he is attempting to prescribe a good composition (*Trattato*, vi, 34, p. 363), tells how the grief in the painting, motivated by the dead figure on the cross, must vary according to the closeness of the relationship of the different figures to Christ. The figures will be arranged in the picture to form a kind of emotional crescendo as one moves from those at the greatest distance from the cross whose grief is the least, if it exists at all, to the overwhelming grief of John, and even more of Mary, at the foot of the cross in the center. The Academicians take over and develop the psychological implications of Leonardo's doctrine. For them "expressions" are not only "what the event requires"—not only have this strict dramatic relationship to the event—but are also external signs of a variety of emotions, typical of the male or female sex at various ages or in different conditions of life, which the

dramatic event as a kind of efficient cause has stimulated into activity. For the Academicians, then, with their interest in the passions of the soul, the "expressions" in Poussin's *Fall of the Manna* (Fig. 4) are not only dramatically related to the event by a direct causal connection (as the emotions in Leonardo's *Last Supper*, for instance, are related to the dramatic pronouncement of Christ) but each expression has also, as Le Brun says, its "cause particulière"—in the character or condition, that is, of the different persons represented. Poussin's painting is thus not only a pictorial drama, but within the dramatic frame of reference, it is also an analysis of the passions. The same might be said of Leonardo's *Last Supper* or his *Adoration of the Magi*, but in Leonardo the dramatic intensity and concentration are greater—the central composition forces one to view the passions almost entirely as rendered "secondo che richiede il caso"; whereas frequently in Poussin, the dramatic structure is looser, and the analysis of the passions appears to have something of its own excuse for being.

122. Jouin, *Conférences*, p. 64.

123. Letter of April 28, 1639. I quote from the modernized text in the edition of Pierre du Colombier, Paris, 1929, p. 12. For the original text see *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin*, ed. Ch. Jouanny, Paris, 1911, p. 21.