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Author(s): Jeffrey M. Muller

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Rubens's Theory and Practice of the Imitation of Art

Jeffrey M. Muller

Only recently has it been suggested that Rubens informed his art with theory. Müller Hofstede has proposed to see Rubens's work in light of the principle "ut pictura poesis" as outlined by Lee.[1] Both Müller Hofstede and Winner have recognized the artist's method of juxtaposing chosen texts and images to generate invention and to discover rules for the imitation of nature.[2] Held, adding to Parkhurst's contributions, has examined the theoretical implications of Rubens's participation in F. Aguilonius's *Opticorum Libri Sex* (Antwerp, 1613), demonstrating the artist's self-conscious definition of his own *ingenium* in temperamental terms and pointing to Rubens's quasi-scientific validation of verbal authority with direct observation.[3]

The evidence that these contributions begin to explore can be circumscribed in a relatively narrow compass, but it is rich in visual and philological significance. First, Rubens kept a notebook on theory which, lost in its original form, survives in several transcriptions and fragments.[4] Second, some of Rubens's paintings, above all the decoration of his house in Antwerp, make profound statements about the nature of art.[5] Third, comments on the theory of art are scattered through the painter's correspondence.

Seeking to understand the choices Rubens made as a collector, I was led to question this body of evidence for an explanation of the painter's stance towards the art of the past. The present article therefore considers in depth one theoretical point: the problem of artistic imitation in Rubens's thought and practice. The magnification achieved by this focus reveals both the intricacies and the larger issues of Rubens's theory.

Rubens looked at the art of the past through a perspective defined by Renaissance theories of imitation.[6] It was a one-point perspective centered on the artist's perception of his own position in the history of art.

That Rubens formulated a theory of artistic imitation is made evident by his essay *De Imitatione Statuarum*, a fragment published from the artist's notebook on theory.[7] Only three paragraphs long, the essay considers its subject in terms and issues that indicate Rubens's point of departure and the direction he took in the imitation of art.

Rubens argues in *De Imitatione Statuarum* that the artist who aims at perfection must have a profound knowledge of ancient sculpture. This knowledge is to be gained with caution because for some artists, beginners and masters alike, the imitation of sculpture is destructive "to the point of the extermination of their art." It is necessary for the painter to make "judicious" use of the statues and, above all, to avoid the taint of the appearance

[1] Müller Hofstede, 50ff. Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting*, New York, 1967.

[2] Müller Hofstede, 50ff. Matthias Winner in Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, *Peter Paul Rubens: Kritischer Katalog der Zeichnungen*, exh. cat., Berlin, 1977, 33, No. 5.

[3] Julius S. Held, "Rubens and Aguilonius: New Points of Contact," *Art Bulletin*, LXI, 1979, 257ff. Charles Parkhurst, "Aguilonius' Optics and Rubens' Color," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XII, 1961, 35ff.; Charles Parkhurst, "Red-Yellow-Blue: A Color Triad in Seventeenth-Century Painting," *Baltimore Museum of Art Annual*, IV, 1972, 33ff.

[4] The most complete discussion to date of the notebook is made by Jaffé, I, 297-99, on the notebook itself; 303, on two manuscript transcriptions: MS Johnson, and MS De Ganay. The "Antwerp Sketchbook," the attribution of which is still not settled, is a third, partial transcription. It is useful to consult the printed edition of Rubens's notebook: Rubens, *Théorie de la figure humaine* (evaluated by Jaffé, I, 34). The value of the *Théorie de la figure humaine* as evidence of Rubens's views cannot be fully determined until its contents are compared with those of the manuscript transcriptions of Rubens's theoretical notebook. Relevant passages of the *Théorie de la figure humaine* are presented here as pertinent information rather than as supportive evidence.

[5] See Elizabeth McGrath, "The Painted Decoration of Rubens's House," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLI, 1978, 245ff.

[6] On Renaissance theories of artistic imitation, see Izora Scott, *Controversies Over the Imitation of Cicero*, New York, 1910; Hermann Gmelin, "Das Prinzip der Imitatio in den romanischen Literaturen der Renaissance," *Romanische Forschungen*, XLVI, 1932, 173ff.; Giorgio Santangelo, *Il Bembo critico e il principio d'imitazione*, Florence, 1950; Giorgio Santangelo, *Le epistole "De Imitatione" di Giovanfrancesco Pico della Mirandola e di Pietro Bembo*, Florence, 1954; J. D. P. Warners, "Translatio-Imitatio-Aemulatio," *De Nieuwe Taalgids*, XLIX, 1956, 289ff., L, 82ff. and 193ff.; Ferruccio Ulivi, *L'imitazione nella poetica del Rinascimento*, Milan, 1959; and G. W. Pigman III, "Versions of Imitation in the Renaissance," *Renaissance Quarterly*, XXXIII, 1980, 1ff. On the question of artistic imitation in painting, see Battisti, 86ff.; E. H. Gombrich, "The Style *all'antica:* Imitation and Assimilation," in *Norm and Form: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance*, London, 1966, 122ff.; Lee (as in n. 1), 11-12; R. Wittkower, "Imitation, Eclecticism, and Genius," in *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Earl R. Wasserman, Baltimore, 1965, 143ff.; and Dempsey, 60ff.

[7] First printed in De Piles, 139ff. Müller Hofstede, 53, supposes that Rubens wrote the essay soon after his return to Antwerp in 1608.

of stone.[8]

The artist must exercise his judgment first by distinguishing matter from form, stone from figure, and the "necessity" (or nature) of the marble from the artifice with which it has been worked. Next, he must choose the best statues, "which are most useful, as the common ones are useless, even harmful. ..." Failure to make these distinctions will result in figures that look like colored marble instead of flesh and blood. Crudeness, rigidity, and affected depictions of anatomy will draw the opprobrium of nature, driving out those subtleties of shadow, luminosity, and movement which Rubens believed necessary for the painter's art.[9]

The distinctions of "matter from form," "stone from figure," and "the necessity of the marble from the artifice with which it has been worked," and the avoidance of the "accidents" of stone present in even the best sculptures rest, of course, on Aristotle's conception of being. All perceivable, concrete things are a union of form and matter: "If then matter is one thing, form another, the compound of these a third, and both the matter and the form and the compound are substance, even the matter is in a sense called part of a thing, while in a sense *it* is not, but only the elements of which the formula consists. E.g., ... the bronze is a part of the concrete statue, but not of the statue as form."[10] Further, the ability to distinguish form from matter is essential for the definition of anything: "For definition is of the universal and of the form. If then it is not evident which of the parts are of the nature of matter and which not, neither will the formula of the thing be evident." In the case of forms embodied in a variety of materials this distinction is easy to make; the form of the circle is apparent whether embodied in wood or bronze. But Aristotle admitted that "it is hard to effect this severance in thought. E.g., the form of man is always found in flesh and bones and parts of this kind. ..."[11] To insist on the existence of form separate from matter in such cases "leads away from the truth and makes one suppose that man can possibly exist without his parts, as the circle can without the bronze. But the case is not similar; for an animal is something perceptible and it is not possible to define it without reference to movement. ..."[12] Movement is understood here as the force that unites form and matter. Nature and art are the most important movers: "Art is a principle of movement in something other than the thing moved, nature is a principle in the thing itself. ..."[13]

The application of these ideas is clear in Rubens's essay *De Imitatione Statuarum*. A work of art as an imitation of nature is produced by the artist's combination of the form of the thing imitated with some material at his disposal. Where, as with a man or animal, the thing imitated is defined by the union of a form and of a material always particular to it, and that material is inaccessible to the artist, the form will be affected by the "accidents" of the new material with which it is combined. Because the painter is better able to reproduce the "accidents" of flesh, Rubens considered it essential for the imitative goal of the art that the painter avoid the "accidents" of stone that are a constant of the sculptor's union of form and matter.[14]

The distinctions and judgments required by Rubens also agree with the rhetorical theory of artistic imitation

[8] De Piles, 139: "Aliis utilissima aliis damnosa usque ad exterminium Artis. Concludo tamen ad summam ejus perfectionem esse necessariam earum intelligentiam, imo imbibitionem: sed judiciosè applicandum earum usum & omnino citra saxum." On the term "judicious" in 16th-century criticism, see Robert Klein, "*Giudizio* et *Gusto* dans la théorie de l'art au Cinquecento," *Rinascimento*, ser 2, I, 1961, 107ff. Klein, 108, observes that during the second half of the 16th century the term *discrezione* was substituted for *giudizio*. Rubens used both words to express the same idea: see below, n. 23. On the concept of "judiciousness" in 16th- and 17th-century art, also see Dempsey, 56-58.

[9] De Piles, 139-141: "Nam plures imperiti & etiam periti non distingunt materiam à forma, saxum à figura, nec necessitatem marmoris ab artificio. Una autem maxima est Statuarum optimas utilissimas ut viles inutiles esse, vel etiam damnosas: Nam Tyrones ex iis nescio quid crudi, terminati, & difficilis molestaque Anatomiae dum trahunt videntur proficere, sed in opprobrium Naturae, dum pro carne marmor coloribus tantum representant. Multa sunt enim notanda imo & vitanda etiam in optimis accidentia citra culpam Artificis praecipuè differentia umbrarum, cum caro pellis, cartilago suà diaphanitate multa leniant precipitia in Statuis nigredinis & umbrae quae sua densitate saxum duplicat inexorabiliter obvium. Adde quasdam maccaturas ad omnes motus variabiles & facilitate pellis aut dimissas aut contractas à Statuariis vulgo èvitatas, optimis tamen aliquando admissas, Picturae certà sed cum moderatione necessarias. Lumine etiam ab omni humanitate alienissimae differunt lapideo splendore & aspera luce superficies magis elevante ac par est, aut saltem oculos fascinante."

[10] Aristotle VIII, *Metaphysica*, trans. J. A. Smith, 1034b-1035a.

[11] *Ibid.*, VIII. 1036a.

[12] *Ibid.*, VIII. 1036a-b.

[13] *Ibid.*, VIII, 1069b-1070a. This Aristotelian conception of the artist is discussed by Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*, trans. Joseph J. S. Peake, New York, 1968, 17, who also discusses the approach as elaborated by Seneca, 19ff.

[14] This point had already been discussed in the same terms by Benedetto Varchi, "Qual sia più nobile, o la scultura o la pittura," in *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, III, *Pittura e scultura*, ed. Paola Barocchi, Turin, 1978 (from *Lezzione di Benedetto Varchi, nella quale si disputa della maggioranza delle arti* ..., Florence, 1549), 539: "... concederebbero [sculptors], credo io, che, in quanto agli accidenti, e massimamente, essendo l'obbietto degli occhi, i colori che ci dilettano infinitamente, la pittura soprastà alla scultura, ma nelle cose sostanziali, come ne dimostra il tatto, che, per lo essere materiale, è più certo che la vista [e] s'inganna meno, essere il contrario; e direbbero che l'una arte e l'altra cerca d'imitare quanto può il più la natura, ma, non potendo fare le figure vive, perche allora sarebbero la natura medesima, cercano di farle più somiglianti al vivo che possono; e potendosi imitare due cose, che si ritruovano in tutti i corpi, cioè la sostanza e gli accidenti, direbbero che essi imitano più la sostanza che gli accidenti, et i pittori più gli accidenti che la sostanza." I therefore disagree with Müller Hofstede, 53, who stresses the connection between Rubens's discussion and the *paragone* of painting and sculpture made by Baldassare Castiglione. Rubens considered but did not engage the issue in his essay. Rather, he limited his argument to the question of accident dependent on material. In a sense, he agreed with Varchi. If Rubens wanted to carry the *paragone* a step further, he would have had to deal with the problem of how "form" is perceived through the senses of sight and touch; and he would have had to challenge Varchi's supposition of an absolute dichotomy between "substance" and matter. These are precisely the questions that Galileo

formulated most fully in antiquity by Quintilian and revived as a major theme of Renaissance poetics and art theory. Quintilian argued for a selective and analytical use of past art and against slavish and exclusive imitation. Slavish imitation threatens to produce stagnation, for if no effort had been made to improve on the work of predecessors, "the art of painting would be restricted to tracing a line round a shadow thrown in sunlight."[15] Worse, rote imitation leads to degeneration, for "the models which we select for imitation have a genuine and natural force, whereas all imitation is artificial and moulded to a purpose which was not that of the original. ..."[16] The imitator must therefore compete with and try to improve upon his model: "For the man whose aim is to prove himself better than another, even if he does not surpass him, may hope to equal him. But he can never hope to equal him, if he thinks it is his duty merely to tread in his footsteps: for the mere follower must always lag behind."[17]

Following one model unquestioningly will force the imitator to swallow the bad with the good. Quintilian supported this point with two arguments. First, since it is impossible "to produce a perfect and complete copy of any chosen author, we shall do well to keep a number of different excellencies before our eyes, so that different qualities from different authors may impress themselves on our minds, to be adopted for use in the place that becomes them best."[18] Second, "even great authors have their blemishes, for which they have been censured by competent critics and have even reproached each other."[19]

Quintilian also suggested criteria for the selection of models: "The nicest judgment is required in the examination of everything connected with this department of study. First we must consider whom to imitate. For there are many who have shown a passionate desire to imitate the worst and most decadent authors. Secondly, we must consider what it is that we should set ourselves to imitate in the authors thus chosen."[20]

These steps in judgment are not arbitrary, but follow the larger and assumed purpose of the art. Quintilian thus conceived of the history of rhetoric, with a supportive parallel in the history of painting, as a progressive development. Each art develops as a synthesis of contributions that allow it to achieve its purpose more effectively. No one man can be considered perfect or complete in his work. The progressive concept of history was thus offered as encouragement for the competitive and selective use of earlier models.[21]

Because Quintilian maintained, however, that the orator comes by good judgment only through self-knowledge, a subjective element was introduced into the process of imitation: "for there are some things which, though capable of imitation, may be beyond the capacity of any given individual, either because his natural gifts are insufficient or of a different character."[22] Relativity of individual talent extended to relativity of place and time. In rhetoric and painting a variety of styles had developed that could lay equal claim to perfection, but none of them had yet attained it.

The theory epitomized by Quintilian served along with Aristotle's metaphysics as the premise of Rubens's *De Imitatione Statuarum*. The painter will approach past art keeping in mind that the purpose of his art is the imitation of nature. Rubens asserted that ancient sculpture could be helpful to this end, but that the artist must judge first, like Quintilian's orator, which examples are best, and second, what elements are worthy of imitation. Presumably Rubens viewed all past art with the same purpose and distinctions in mind, thus working towards a progressive synthesis of the contributions of his predecessors.

Truth to nature required that Rubens should in some way validate the authority of his models. Devoting the second paragraph of *De Imitatione Statuarum* to this problem, Rubens linked the issue of artistic imitation to the dynamics of present and past, the very nature of history.

He who can apply the necessary distinctions should certainly make full use of ancient sculpture. "For what can we degenerates do in this wayward age," asked Rubens, "what base Genius fetters us on the ground, apart from the heroic, to that diminished *ingenium* and judgment?" The artist listed the possible causes of decadence: it could be that we are still surrounded by the same impenetrable fog in which our fathers dwelt, or perhaps it is the will of God that we lapse into an even worse state, hopelessly debilitated in tandem with an aging world.[23]

Rubens next posited a decline in physical stature which accompanied the diminution of intellectual capacity. It may be, he wrote, that in antiquity mankind was closer to the original and unspoiled perfection of nature, unscathed

answered in his letter of *paragone* written to Lodovico Cigoli: *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, III, *Pittura e scultura*, ed. Paola Barocchi, 707ff. Further, to cite Castiglione as the unique source for Rubens's differentiation of the appearances of light and shadow on statues and on living figures ignores other discussions of the same problem: e.g., Giorgio Vasari's letter to Benedetto Varchi, in *ibid.*, 499, and Vasari's comments on Mantegna cited below.

[15] *Institutio Oratoria* x. ii. 7-8.

[16] *Ibid.*, x. ii. 11-12.

[17] *Ibid.*, x. ii. 10.

[18] *Ibid.*, x. ii. 26.

[19] *Ibid.*, x. ii. 15.

[20] *Ibid.*, x. ii. 14.

[21] *Ibid.*, XII. x. 1-11 and x. ii. 8-9.

[22] *Ibid.*, x, ii. 19.

[23] De Piles, 143: "Ea quisquis sapienti discretione seperaverit, Statuas cominus amplectetur, nam quid in hoc erroneo saeculo degeneres possumus quam vilis Genius nos humi detinet ab heroico illo imminutos ingenio iudicio: seu Patrum nebulâ fusci sumus seu voluntate Deùm ad pejora lapsi postquam lapsi non remittimur aut veterascente mundo indeboliti damno ...."

by the vice and corrupting accidents of senescent ages. Proof of the decline of human stature is provided by both profane and sacred texts which mention heroes, giants, and cyclopes. Although Rubens admitted that most of these accounts are fabulous, he added that some must, no doubt, be true.[24]

The sacred and profane texts to which Rubens alluded must be those commonly cited to prove the widely accepted theory of progressive decline.[25] The myth of a Golden Age such as Ovid describes might be paired with the passage in Genesis that speaks of the antediluvian age (Gen. 6.4): "There were giants in the earth in those days. ..."[26] Lucretius's perception of the world's gradual and general decline was presented in religious dress by the apocryphal second *Book of Esdras* and by Saint Cyprian.[27] Pliny the Elder believed that the stature of mankind was decreasing generation by generation.[28] The heroes Rubens mentioned could be Homer's Hector or Virgil's Turnus.[29]

The authority of these ancient words was not sufficient for the artist who sought explanations derived from experience. The last paragraph of *De Imitatione Statuarum* therefore argued that: "The principal cause of the difference between men of our age and the ancients is the sloth and lack of exercise of those living; indeed, one eats and drinks, exercising no care for the body." As a result, people have fat paunches always refilled by a vicious cycle of gluttony, while feeble arms and legs seem conscious of their own idleness. "By contrast, in antiquity, everyone exercised daily and strenuously in palaestras and gymnasiums." Rubens cited Hieronymus Mercurialis's *De Arte Gymnastica* which documents the various kinds of difficult and robust exercises practiced by the ancients. Finally he added his own observation that any part of the human body that is exercised — arms, legs, neck — will increase in size and grow, fed by juices which the heat of activity attracts. Fat turns to muscle as we see in the backs of porters, the arms of gladiators, the legs of dancers, and the physique of oarsmen.[30]

[24] *Ibid.*, 143-44: "... seu etiam objectum naturali antiquitus origini perfectionique propius offerebat ultro compactum quod nunc seculorum senescentium defectu ab accidentibus corruptum nihil sui retinuit delabente in plura perfectione succedentibus vitiis: Ut etiam Staturae hominum multorum sententiis probatur paulatim decresentis quippe profani sacrique de Heroüm, Gigantum, Cyclopumque aevo multa quidem fabulosa aliqua tamen vera narrant sine dubio."

[25] In general on the issue of the decline of nature in 16th- and 17th-century thought, see Richard Foster Jones, *Ancients and Moderns: A Study of the Rise of the Scientific Movement in Seventeenth-Century England*, St. Louis, 1961. Also see Benedetto Croce, *Storia della età Barocca in Italia*, Bari, 1946, 66-68; August Buck, "Aus der Vorgeschichte der Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes in Mittelalter und Renaissance," *Bibliothèque d'humanisme et renaissance*, XX, 1958, 527ff. (which reference I owe to the kindness of Professor Judith Colton); Hans Baron, "The *Querelle* of the Ancients and Moderns as a Problem for Renaissance Scholarship," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XX, 1959, 3ff.; and Jean Céard, "La Querelle des géants et la jeunesse du monde," *Journal of Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, VIII, 1978, 37ff. There are two important references to the issue in art theory prior to Rubens. First, Leon Battista Alberti, *Della pittura*, ed. Luigi Mallè, Florence, 1950, 53, in the dedicatory prologue to Filippo Brunelleschi, comments on the greatness of the ancients and the lesser stature of the moderns: "Onde stimai fusse quanto da molti questo così essere udiva, che già la Natura, maestra delle cose, fatta anticha et stracca, più non producea chome né giganti così né ingegni quali in que suoi quasi giovinili et più gloriosi tempi produsse amplissimi et maravigliosi." Alberti states that his experience of the greatness of Florentine artists has changed his opinion. On Alberti's specific source, see E. H. Gombrich, "A Classical Topos in the Introduction to Alberti's Della Pittura," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XX, 1957, 173. The second reference is Lodovico Dolce, *Dolce's "Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento*, ed. and trans. Mark W. Roskill, New York, 1968, 200-03, a letter by Dolce to M. Gasparo Ballini. Here, on the superhuman size of Michelangelo's figures, Dolce asserts that the stature of men is varied in nature: "Di quì, quantunque egli sia piu difficile assai lo havere a dipingere huomini terribili e di statura di Gigante, che non è il farne di mansueti e comuni: non ne segue però, che'l Dipintore, il cui oggetto dee essere d'imitar la natura, si dia sempre a finger quello, che la natura o non mai, o di rado suol producere. Che se bene non è cosa favolosa, che stati siano i Giganti; de' quali oltre a quello, che se ne legge nelle historie Greche e Latine, le sacre lettere ne fanno testimonianza: non di meno essi non furono piu, che a un tempo, o vero in poche età ...." Dolce cites Saint Augustine and Dante to support his argument and continues: "Non dee adunque il Dipintore, che è imitatore & emulo della natura, riputar piu bella nell'huomo quella forma [of giants], che è più sprezzata da essa natura. Anzi, si come tra le bellissime opere di lei la più cara, e la piu aggradevole all'occhio, è la varieta: così dee procacciare il Dipintore d'esser vario nelle cose sue: e non vi essendo, non puo dilettar compiutamente. Ora vedete, se questa parte cotanto necessaria si ritrova nell'opere di Michele Agnolo. Che tutte le figure ch'egli fa, sono grandi, terribili, e spaventose." Expressions in Rubens's circle of the idea of nature in decline have been noted by Emil Kieser, "Antikes im Werke des Rubens," *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, N.F., X, 1933, 135, n. 52. For the original texts see *Correspondance de Rubens*, I, 59, letter of Philip Rubens to Peter Paul Rubens, July 15, 1602: "Quid veterrimi sanctissimique patres, qui quò propiùs ab exordio mundi aberant, eò magis ad ejus conditorem et perfectam naturam accedebant?" and *ibid.*, V, 9, Morisot to Rubens, September 13, 1628: "Sed jam artes senectute saeculorum debilitatae homines non reperiunt qui mereantur aeternitatem."

[26] Ovid, *Metamorphoses* I. 89-112, on the Golden Age. On the connection between the belief in a Golden Age and the belief in the decline of nature, see Harry Levin, *The Myth of the Golden Age in the Renaissance*, Bloomington, 1969, 148ff.

[27] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* II. 1150 and v. 826. *Holy Bible, Apocrypha*, ed. Henry Wace, I, London, 1888, 98 and 135. *The Writings of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage*, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis, I, Edinburgh, 1868, 425-27.

[28] Pliny, *Historia Naturalis* VII. 73.

[29] Virgil, *Aeneid* XII. 896-902.

[30] De Piles, 145-47: "Causa precipua quà nostri aevi homines differunt ab Antiquis est ignavia & inexercitatum vivendi genus; quippe esse, bibere nulla exercitandi corporis cura. Igitur prominet depressum ventris onus, semper assidua repletum ingluvie, crura enervia & brachia otii sui conscia. Contrà antiquitùs omnes quotidie in palestris & gymnasiis exercebantur violenter ut verè dicam nimis ad sudorem, ad lassitudinem extremam usque. Vide Mercurialem de Arte Gymnastica, quam varia laborum genera, quam difficilia, quam robusta habuerint. Ideo partes illae ignavae absumenbantur tantoperè; venter restringebatur abdomine in carnem migrante. Et quidquid in corpore humano excitando passivè se habent: nam brachia, crura, cervix, scapuli, & omnia quae agunt auxiliante natura & succum calore attractum subministrante in immensum augentur & crescunt; ut videmus terga Getulorum, brachia Gladiatorum, crura Saltantium et totum fere corpus Remigum." See Hieronymus Mercurialis, *De Arte Gymnastica Libri Sex*, Venice, 1573.

By attributing the inferiority of the moderns to bad habits, Rubens reversed the direction of the argument, reestablishing the selective theory of artistic imitation that he introduced in the first paragraph of *De Imitatione Statuarum* but then seemed to undermine in the second. It could now be argued that the *ingenium* and judgment of modern artists, like the bodies of men, required only diligence and rule to equal or surpass the ancients. Rubens thus introduced the possibility of progress in art, embracing another important element of Quintilian's theory of artistic imitation.

In *De Imitatione Statuarum*, Rubens based his discussion on a consideration of the most profound questions: what is the purpose and nature of art, what possibilities are offered by history? His answers do not merely paraphrase Aristotle and Quintilian, but rather develop a consistent theoretical position located at the center of the issues considered in his time to be crucial for the future of art.

First, by confronting the problem of decline, Rubens connected the issue of artistic imitation to the larger debate then current over the relationship between modern and ancient culture. His shift from a hypothesis of inexorable decay to an explanation of decline rooted in a controllable cause placed the artist on the side of those who battled against the rigid authority invested in ancient texts and images.

The kind of argument that Rubens implied was stated explicitly by Loys Le Roy. Nature is as fertile as she ever was and has not dispensed all her gifts to the ancients:[31]

> And were the way of life to which we are used not corrupted, preferring leisure to diligence, pleasure to utility, riches to virtue, nothing would prevent this age from producing personages in philosophy as eminent as were Plato and Aristotle, or in medicine as Hippocrates and Galen, or in mathematics as Euclid, Archimedes, and Ptolemy.

Consequently, Le Roy believed that "the perpetual imitators and constant translators or commentators hidden under the shadow of others are truly slaves, having no spirit at all. ..."[32] Le Roy, like Rubens, saw the possibility of progress and exhorted his contemporaries to avoid slavish imitation.

Within the narrower field of poetic and art theory, Quintilian's approach to artistic imitation represented only one camp in a debate that spanned the sixteenth century. The other side argued that the idea of each art would be embodied most perfectly in the work of one man who would then provide an exclusive model for those who followed.[33] As Cicero set the perfect example for writers of Latin prose, so it was suggested that ancient sculpture or Michelangelo might serve as the surest guides in art.[34]

From the publication of the second edition of Vasari's *Vite* in 1568, this exclusive approach to artistic imitation was widely perceived and attacked as the cause of the decline that painting was thought to have suffered after the achievements of the High Renaissance masters.[35] Lomazzo, for example, repeating Quintilian, observed: "I have never found that someone who has followed the example or in the footsteps of another has been able to equal, let alone surpass him." The dependence of Michelangelo on the Torso Belvedere, of Daniele da Volterra and Perino del Vaga on Michelangelo, of Parmigianino and Giulio Romano on Raphael, of Barocci on Correggio, and of Titian's followers on Titian were offered as instances of decadence springing from the slavish imitation of one or another "maniera."[36]

In 1568 Vasari noted a decline from Michelangelo's perfection and substituted the example of Raphael's selective imitation for the exclusive model of Michelangelo: it was

[31] Loys Le Roy, *De la Vicissitude ou variété des choses en l'univers ... Plus s'il est vray ne se dire rien qui n'ayt esté dict au paravant: & qu'il convient par propres inventions augmenter la doctrine des anciens, sans s'arrester seulement aux versions, expositions, corrections, & abregez de leurs escrits*, Paris, 1577, fols. 113v-114r on nature's continued fertility and fol. 114r for the quotation: "Et n'estoit la maniere de vivre corrumpue de laquelle usons, preferans l'oisiveté à diligence, le plaisir à l'utilité, les richesses à vertu: rien n'empeche que cest aage n'elevast en philosophie d'aussi eminens personnages que furent Platon & Aristote, ou en medecine qu'Hippocrates & Gallien, ou és Mathematiques qu'Euclide, Archimede & Ptolomee."

[32] *Ibid.*, fol. 114v: "Les imitateurs perpetuels, & tousiours translateurs ou cõmentateurs cachez soubs l'õbre de l'autruy sont vrayement esclaves, nayans rien de genereux. ..." Also see Werner L. Gundersheimer, *The Life and Works of Louis Le Roy*, Geneva, 1966, 118-19, on Le Roy's attacks upon slavish imitation.

[33] For the debates that polarized the issue along these lines see Angelus Politianus, *Opera Omnia*, ed. Ida Maïer, I, Turin, 1971, 113-14, Poliziano to Cortesi, 114-16, Cortesi to Poliziano; for the exchange between Bembo and Giovanfrancesco Pico see the edition of Santangelo cited above, n. 6. The tracts by Giovanfrancesco Pico, Bembo, and Erasmus are translated in Scott (as in n. 6). Gmelin, 359-360 (as in n. 6), lists later 16th- and early 17th-century writings on artistic imitation. Rubens's awareness of literary concepts of artistic imitation is demonstrated in his letter to Pierre Dupuy of June 22, 1628: *Correspondance de Rubens*, IV, 435: "Ho visto qui un libretto che mi piace assai intitulato: Imperatoris Justiniani defensio adversus Alemannum autore Thoma Rivio, il stylo e bono et al parer mio mero Ciceroniano senza affettatione alcuna. ..."

[34] See Battisti, 98-100, on the ideal of exclusive imitation in Renaissance art theory.

[35] See below, n. 37.

[36] Lomazzo, II, 381 (from *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura ed architettura*, Milan, 1584): "... non ho mai ritrovato che alcuno che abbi seguito l'orma o l'essempio d'un altro, lo abbia potuto agguagliare non che avvanzare. Michel Angelo ne fa fede, il quale non è mai potuto aggiungere alla bellezza del torso d'Ercole di Appollonio ateniese, che fu da lui continovamente seguitato; si come Daniello Ricciarelli, Perino del Vaga et altri che hanno seguitato la maniera d'esso Michel Angelo non hanno mai potuto agguagliar lui. Cosí alla maniera di Raffaello non è arrivata mai quella del Parmigiano, di Giulio Romano e d'altri che l'hanno seguitata; né a quella di Tiziano e Giorgione quelli che l'hanno seguitata; né a quella d'Antonio da Correggio Federico Barozzi e molti che si proposero d'imitarla."

at this point that Vasari allowed for the historical possibility of further progress in art.[37] The possibility of progress contained within the detection of decline stems from the cyclical schema of history that Vasari used.[38] This conception of history has already been related to the wider context of Humanist thought and, in particular, to Renaissance confidence in progress.[39] Yet the note of pessimism sounded in the second edition of the *Vite* grew more from Vasari's actual perception of the lesser stature of Michelangelo's epigones in comparison with their "perfect" master than from any artificially imposed desire to complete the Renaissance cycle.[40] This perception, experienced by Vasari and others, was then conceptualized in terms of the opposing theories of artistic imitation that contained within themselves positions on the possibility of progress. Gombrich has pointed out that Quintilian's presentation of the history of rhetoric as a progressive development gave the Renaissance a ready model of historical optimism.[41] It is crucial to note here that Quintilian presented his progressive schema of history as the basis for his argument in favor of the selective theory of artistic imitation. As we have already seen, Quintilian warned that slavish imitation would lead to stagnation and decadence. The explanation and remedy for the perceived decline in painting were thus also ready at hand and quickly grasped.[42]

It is not surprising, then, that the major theoretical statement of Rubens's time, Agucchi's *Trattato* (1607-1615), begins, as does Quintilian's discussion of artistic imitation, with the argument that painting developed progressively from a primitive beginning: "Art is not born from one, but from many, and over a length of time."[43] The Renaissance thus witnessed a gradual perfection which flowered in four schools: the Roman, Venetian, Lombard, and Tuscan.[44] Agucchi maintained that subsequent to this efflorescence painting had declined to the point where, even though it had not fallen into the "shadowed obscurity" of the previous barbarous ages, it had lost almost all sense of what is good.[45]

Like the cinquecento critics before him, Agucchi presented selective imitation as the key to further progress and to the solution of crisis. The assumption of progress and the terms of the selective theory of artistic imitation left no doubt that the new synthesis would be different from and an improvement upon earlier art. The decisive issue perceived within the larger problem of synthesis was the union of Lombard-Venetian *colore* with Tuscan-Roman *disegno* achieved by Agucchi's hero, Annibale Carracci.[46] The positions Rubens took in his *De Imitatione Statuarum* imply the same view of the history of art.

Rubens's more particular demand that artists imitate nature and not art defined more precisely the role of artistic imitation. Vasari, Lodovico Dolce, Domenicus Lampsonius, G. B. Armenini, and the Carracci who wrote "postille" to Vasari all warned against confusing the sculptures of the ancients with the "first things" of nature from which they had been derived.[47]

The discoveries of earlier art were useful therefore only insofar as they provided a reliable basis for the imitation of nature. But from his *De Imitatione Statuarum*, it is

[37] Vasari, IV, 376-77. The contrast is deliberate since Vasari turned from praise in 1550 for Raphael's imitation of Michelangelo to praise in 1568 for Raphael's ability to find an alternative path on the basis of selective imitation of a variety of masters. See Giorgio Vasari, *La vita di Michelangelo nelle redazioni del 1550 e del 1568*, ed. Paola Barocchi, I, Milan and Naples, 1962, 219-221, for the relevant texts of both editions and I, xxi-xxii, for commentary. Also on this question, see Battisti, 100. On Vasari's concept of history and Michelangelo's place in it, see Julius Schlosser Magnino, *La letteratura artistica*, trans. Filippo Rossi, ed. Otto Kurz, Florence, 1977, 315-320. Schlosser saw the essential difference between the first and second editions and the role of Michelangelo's figure within the concept of achieved perfection and inevitable decline. E. H. Gombrich, "The Renaissance Conception of Artistic Progress," in *Norm and Form* (as in n. 6), 9, notes the conceptual crisis caused by Michelangelo's supposed attainment of perfection in a progressive development; Svetlana Leontief Alpers, "*Ekphrasis* and Aesthetic Attitudes in Vasari's *Lives*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXIII, 1960, 209, suggests that Vasari saw Michelangelo as the perfector of means, "disegno," and that Vasari believed that equal greatness was an open possibility extending into the future given the inexhaustible variety of the end of art, "invenzione." Hence Vasari's expressions of a fear of decline in the edition of 1568 are termed "rhetorical" by Alpers. Given, however, the different contexts of the expressions, their pointed contrast to the first edition, and the sympathetic response they created in other critics, their significance should not be so easily discounted. To do so also presupposes that Vasari said things only within the confines of a consistent theory or as rhetorical gestures. Also see Wolfram Prinz, "I *Ragionamenti* del Vasari sullo sviluppo e declino delle arti," in *Il Vasari storiografo e artista*, Florence, 1974, 857ff.

[38] Vasari, I, 243.

[39] Baron (as in n. 25), 12, where Vasari's historical construct is compared with that of Machiavelli. Zygmunt Wazbinski, "L'idée de l'histoire dans la première et la seconde édition des *Vies* de Vasari," in *Il Vasari storiografico e artista*, Florence, 1974, 2-3, also connects Vasari's historical construct to 16th-century theory.

[40] Baron (as in n. 25), 12.

[41] Gombrich (as in n. 37), 3.

[42] For example, Vasari, IV, 376-77, or Lomazzo whose *Idea del tempio della pittura* of 1590 presents an intricate system based on the rough sketch of a theory of selective artistic imitation contained in the *Trattato* of 1584. R. P. Ciardi observes that Lomazzo's intent was to reassert the importance of individual gifts and temperament in opposition to the obedient conformance to an alien style required by the exclusive method of imitation (in Lomazzo, I, lxxv-lxxix). Yet Lomazzo's system was also closed, with a limited number of exemplars whose qualities could be divided exactly and related to astrological figures: see Robert Klein, "Les Sept Gouverneurs de l'art selon Lomazzo," *Arte lombarda*, IV, 1959, 280.

[43] Agucchi's *Trattato* reprinted in Mahon, 241: "L'arte non è nata da vn solo, ma da molti, & in lunghezza di tempo."

[44] *Ibid.*, 244-46 and also Mahon's note 19[a] to 19[b] on Agucchi's sources.

[45] *Ibid.*, 247. E. H. Gombrich, "Mannerism: The Historiographic Background," in *Norm and Form* (as in n. 6), 100-01, identifies Dionysius of Halicarnassus as the model for Agucchi's formulation of decline. Gombrich also observes the necessity of the assumption of decline in order to set the stage for the appearance of a new hero equal in stature to the giants of the past.

[46] Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, I, London, 1971, 87-88, and Dempsey, 43.

[47] For Vasari and Lampsonius see below. G. Battista Armenino, *De' veri precetti della pittura*, Milan, 1820 (1st ed. Ravenna, 1586), 344: "Le sculture ed i rilievi ai quali le perfette pitture debbono assomigliarsi, non s'intende solamente esser quelle di marmo e di bronzo, ma più presto le

already evident that Rubens sought the Aristotelian knowledge of nature as it should be, of universals derived from experience, as the foundation of his art. Rubens's theory of imitation rejected exclusive dependence on either art or on the accidental appearances of nature. That Rubens consciously espoused the selective imitation of nature as well as of art is shown by his fresco of *Zeuxis Painting Helen* which adorned the exterior of his workshop in Antwerp.[48] The story of Zeuxis who combined the most beautiful features of five women to paint a Helen of perfect beauty was, of course, used to exemplify the artist's power to purge nature of accidental imperfections.[49]

The image of *Zeuxis Painting Helen* on the façade of Rubens's workshop referred to more than the imitation of perfected nature. The major antique source of the story, Cicero's *De Inventione*, recounts it to illustrate the selective method of artistic imitation.[50] Consequently, in the sixteenth century Zeuxis's *Helen* symbolized the selective imitation of both art and nature.[51] Rubens would have had both interpretations in mind when he decided to paint the story on his workshop.

Smyth is correct to stress the anti-*maniera* intent of *De Imitatione Statuarum* insofar as the essay rejects exclusive dependence on art and insists on the imitation of nature.[52] But the subjective element of selective imitation and Rubens's definition of his own *ingenium* in temperamental terms have already been noted.

In *De Imitatione Statuarum* Rubens asked the painter to "imbibe" the ancient sculptures, to absorb them so completely that they became part of him.[53] The image of drinking in continues a tradition of metaphors that characterizes the final end of selective imitation in the formation of an unmistakable personal style. Seneca, in one letter, introduced the most famous of these images: the bee that transforms nectars of the several most beautiful flowers into honey, the body that digests different foods into its own substance, the son who resembles his father.[54] The tensions between originality and adherence to tradition, individual manner and the imitation of a variety of models are relaxed in these metaphors which stress the function of imitation as the enrichment of an already formed and integrated artistic personality.

Rubens constructed his theory of artistic imitation so that it intersected and layered in building-block fashion the various levels of discourse concerning the problem. A foundation was laid in natural philosophy, the structure of history placed next, then the polemics of imitation developed during the Renaissance, and finally the state of the art of painting around 1600, which served as the keystone on which the other issues rested. Rubens was not dealing in commonplaces, but rather was clarifying the nature of his art in response to the crucial questions of the age.

The theoretical positions that Rubens formulated informed the general direction of his practice. His use of past art corresponded closely with the principles stated and implied in *De Imitatione Statuarum*. The issue of which came first, theory or practice, is beside the point, since for this artist they were joined to the same end.

Take, for example, Rubens's study and use of the Hercules Farnese.[55] To judge by his drawings, the artist focused his attention on the Hercules as one of what had become a canon of the "best" sculptures.[56] They were con-

vive, come è un bell'uomo, una bella femmina, un bel cavallo, ed altre simili cose. ..." Also see Giovanni Battista Armenini, *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, ed. and trans. Edward J. Olszewski, n.p., 1977, 294. Heinrich Bodmer, "Le note marginali di Agostino Carracci nell'edizione del Vasari del 1568," *Il Vasari*, x, 1939, 109-110: "Il signor Vasari non s'accorge che l'antichi buoni maestri hanno cavate le cose loro dal vivo, e vuol piutosto che sia buon artista dalle seconde cose che sono l'antiche, che da le prime e principalissime, che son le vive, le quali si debbono sempre imitare, ma costui non intese quest'arte." This was a "postilla" to Vasari's criticism of Venetian painters ca. 1500: Vasari, VII, 426-27. For comments on this "postilla" see Bodmer's notes in "Le note marginali," 109-110; Mahon, 199, n. 7; Denis Mahon, "Eclecticism and the Carracci: Further Reflections on the Validity of a Label," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, 308-09; A. W. A. Boschloo, *Annibale Carracci in Bologna*, I, The Hague, 1974, 44-45; Dempsey, 51, who stresses the reassertion of the goal of art as imitation of nature in Carracci's defense of Titian. The value of the sculptures was not denied; rather, primary reliance on them was rejected. Dolce (as in n. 25), 138: "E per fare un corpo perfetto, oltre alla imitatione ordinaria della Natura, essendo anco mestiero d'imitar gli antichi, è da sapere, che questa imitatione vuole esser fatta con buon giudicio, di modo, che credendo noi imitar le parti buone, non imitiamo le cattive."

[48] McGrath (as in n. 5), 268-69.

[49] For the application of this interpretation to Rubens, see Müller Hofstede, 59.

[50] Cicero, *De Inventione*. II. ii, 4.

[51] The story is used by both Giovanfrancesco Pico and Erasmus to argue for the selective and open method of artistic imitation: see Scott, pt. II, 3 and 34-35 respectively (as in n. 6).

[52] Craig Hugh Smyth, *Mannerism and Maniera*, Locust Valley, N.Y., 1962, 25-26, and 79, n. 178.

[53] See above, n. 8.

[54] Seneca, *Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*, lxxxiv. See Pigman, 4-9 (as in n. 6), on transformative images.

[55] On Rubens's use of the Hercules Farnese, see Hans Mielke in the exhibition catalogue, *Peter Paul Rubens* (as in n. 2), 23-24, No. 2.

[56] Held, I, 51, notes the canonical quality of Rubens's choice of sculptures to draw. In Rubens, *Théorie de la figure humaine*, 15, a canon of statues of the first rank is established: "Afin que ceux qui cherchent à connoître ce qu'il y a de plus beau & de plus savant dans la sculpture & la peinture, tant pour le dessein & la juste proportion des membres, que pour les mouvemens, les attitudes, & les différens contours des figures qui constituent la beauté du corps humain, puissent les admirer, mesurer, & rechercher soigneusement dans toutes leurs parties, & prendre de chacunes ce qui est susceptible d'imitation." Under male statues are listed: the Hercules Farnese, Hercules with Telephos (formerly identified as Commodus, Vatican Museums), Hermes (formerly identified as Antinous, Vatican Museums), the Laocoon, the Apollo Belvedere, and the Borghese Warrior. The one statue supposed to suffice for the study of female nudes is the Medici Venus. The chapter of the *Théorie de la figure humaine*, 47, on the representation of children begins thus: "Parmi les modeles de statues qui nous restent de l'antiquité, il faut toujours choisir les meilleurs, & imiter dans chacune ce qui convient le mieux à chaque âge. Pour l'enfance, par exemple, nous en avons un exemple très-parfait dans ces génies enfans qui se voient autour de la statue du Nil, dans les jardins du Vatican: ils sont ronds & délicats. ..." On the selection Rubens made of statues to study in Rome, see Marjon van der Meulen, "Rubens and the Antique Sculpture Collections in Rome," *Gentse Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, XXIV, 1976-78, 147ff.

sidered best because, as Vasari writes, they possess "the appeal and vigour of living flesh ..." and are "derived from the finest features of living models. Their attitudes were entirely natural and free, exquisitely graceful and full of movement."[57] Yet Rubens warned that the indiscrete use of even these best sculptures would result in the "dry, hard, and harsh style" that Vasari credited them with having taken away.[58]

His literally "superficial" studies of the Hercules Farnese therefore transformed the "accidents" of stone into those of flesh and blood, the "first things" of nature from which the figure was derived (Fig. 1).[59] Held has observed that such drawings were executed mostly in black chalk, a medium suggestive of the softness of skin instead of the hardness of marble.[60] The mat white of the paper beneath the delicate lines of chalk gives his Hercules that inner luminosity which Rubens believed missing in sculpture. This metamorphosis is most striking in the artist's majestic studies of the head of the Hercules Farnese where heightening increases the range of chiaroscuro set down in chalk (Fig. 2).[61]

In another fragment from his theoretical notebook Rubens delved below the surface in his search for the truly "elemental" form of the Hercules Farnese (Fig. 3).[62] All human figures, according to the artist, are composed of three geometrical solids: the sphere which is the basis of female form, the pyramid which underlies the shape of extremities and the thorax of one of two kinds of robust male figure, and the cube.[63] The Herculean form, typical of heavy-set athletic men, has its foundation in the cube.[64]

Rubens cited Quintilian, Cicero, and Plato to justify his premise of geometrical structure.[65] The particular association between cube and strength derives ultimately from the *Timaeus* where Plato says that the cubic form belongs to the element earth: "For of the four kinds earth is the most immobile and the most plastic body, and of necessity the body which has the most stable basis must be preeminently of this character."[66]

Rubens did not quote his sources verbatim, but rather used their authority as the point of departure for his own observations. Significantly, he labeled his cubic dissection of the head of the Hercules Farnese a "Probatio," an experimental confrontation of ancient texts and sculpture made in the effort to rediscover those principles around which the art of antiquity was organized as a true mirror of nature.[67]

The Hercules Farnese thus became the type on which Rubens patterned the strongest men in his compositions: Samson, Saint Christopher, Hercules, and Roman heroes in Rubens's work all bear resemblance to the sculpture.[68] When the artist painted a variation on the Hercules Farnese filtered through the Adam of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment* he insisted on the cubic proportions of the figure (Fig. 4).[69] Rubens studied a select group of sculptures with the same attention he gave to the Hercules Farnese. The Laocoon, the Apollo Belvedere, the Medici Venus, and a few others also served as archetypes for many of the artist's figures.

Further in agreement with *De Imitatione Statuarum* was Rubens's practice of drawing live models in the poses of famous ancient statues and figures from Renaissance painting.[70] The two double drawings of a *Youth Posed as the Spinario* in the British Museum and Dijon, the *Model Posed as the Crouching Venus of Doidalsas* in Berlin, and the Morgan Library *Study of Daniel* based on a *Saint Jerome* by Muziano illustrate Rubens's habit of returning to the "first things" of nature from which the works of art were derived.[71]

[57] Translation from Giorgio Vasari, *The Lives of the Artists*, trans. George Bull, Baltimore, 1965, 251; Vasari, IV, 10.

[58] *Ibid.*, IV, 10. Translation by Bull, 251.

[59] On Rubens's drawing of the Hercules Farnese in Milan, see Giorgio Fubini and Julius S. Held, "Padre Resta's Rubens Drawings After Ancient Sculpture," *Master Drawings*, II, 1964, 134; Müller Hofstede, in *Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640: Katalog 1*, 240, No. 49.

[60] Held, I, 52. Victor H. Miesel, "Rubens' Study Drawings After Ancient Sculpture," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, sér. 6, LXI, 1963, 314, differentiates between Rubens's drawings after ancient sculpture done primarily for the purpose of study and other drawings made for reasons of archaeological documentation or for publication.

[61] For this drawing and its verso, see Antoine, Count Seilern, *Flemish Paintings and Drawings at 56 Princes Gate*, London, 1955, 85, No. 53.

[62] See Jaffé, I, 19-20.

[63] *Ibid.*, I, fig. LXXV, MS De Ganay, fol. 4r, and 20.

[64] The text of Rubens's study of the Hercules Farnese (Fig. 3) begins: "Forma Herculea sive robusti viri supra modum ex cubo Fundamentum habet (Ut Columnae Tuscum genus quod Atletis assimilatur) Tum ex Circulo et Equilaterali nascitur Triangulo. ..." As Jaffé, I, 20, notes, Rubens must have known Lomazzo's discussion "Della proporzione del corpo virile di sette teste" (Lomazzo, *Trattato*, II, 54-55), where the Hercules Farnese is cited as the basis of the proportional type appropriate for the representation of strong men.

[65] Jaffé, I, fig. LXXV, MS De Ganay, fol. 4r. The relevant passages are Cicero, *De Natura Deorum* II. 18, on the circle and sphere; *ibid.*, I. 10, on Plato's belief that the sphere is the most perfect form. Notably, Rubens cites Cicero's report rather than Plato's original words. *Institutio Oratoria* I. x. 41.

[66] Plato (Loeb Classical Library), trans. R. G. Bury, VII, London and New York, 1929, 135.

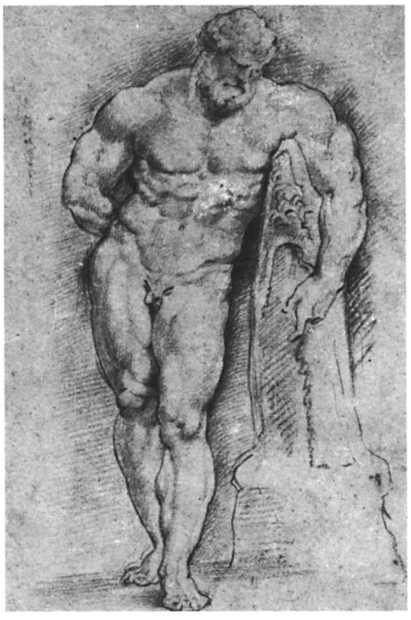
[67] As in Fig. 3: "Probatio Cubi ex Herculis Farnesii facie seu capite Ex Antiquo."

[68] Samson in the *Samson and Delilah* now in the National Gallery, London; Saint Christopher on the exterior of the left wing of the *Descent From the Cross* triptych in Antwerp Cathedral; Hercules in the oil sketch in Rotterdam (see below, n. 69); Castor in the *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

[69] See Julius S. Held, *The Oil Sketches of Peter Paul Rubens*, I, Princeton, 1980, 331-32, No. 243. Held challenges the view that Michelangelo's figure influenced Rubens's *Hercules*. The shift of pose and the musculature of the torso in Rubens's figure are so close to Michelangelo's Adam that it is difficult to deny the connection.

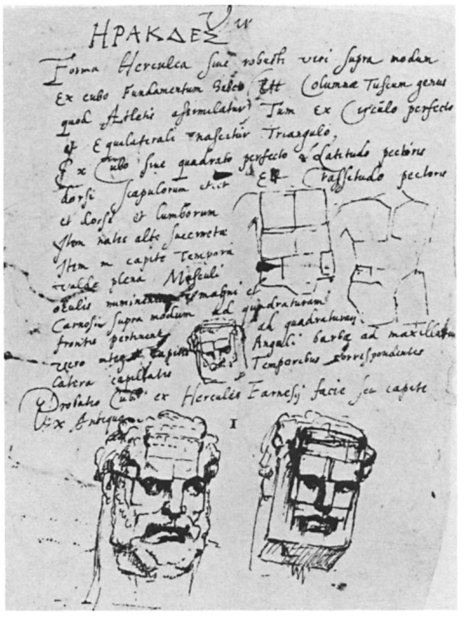
[70] See Miesel (as in n. 60), 319-320.

[71] For the British Museum drawing, see John Rowlands, *Rubens Drawings and Sketches*, London, 1977, 28, No. 14; for the Dijon drawing, see Anne-Marie Logan, "Some Early Drawings by Rubens," *Gentse Bijdragen tot de Kunstgeschiedenis*, XXIV, 1976-78, 112 and Fig. 6; for the drawing in Berlin, see Winner (as in n. 2), 51-52, No. 11; for the Morgan Library drawing see Michael Jaffé, *Rubens and Italy*, Oxford, 1977, 41.



1 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Hercules Farnese*. Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana

2 Peter Paul Rubens, *Head of the Hercules Farnese*. London, Home House Trustees Society

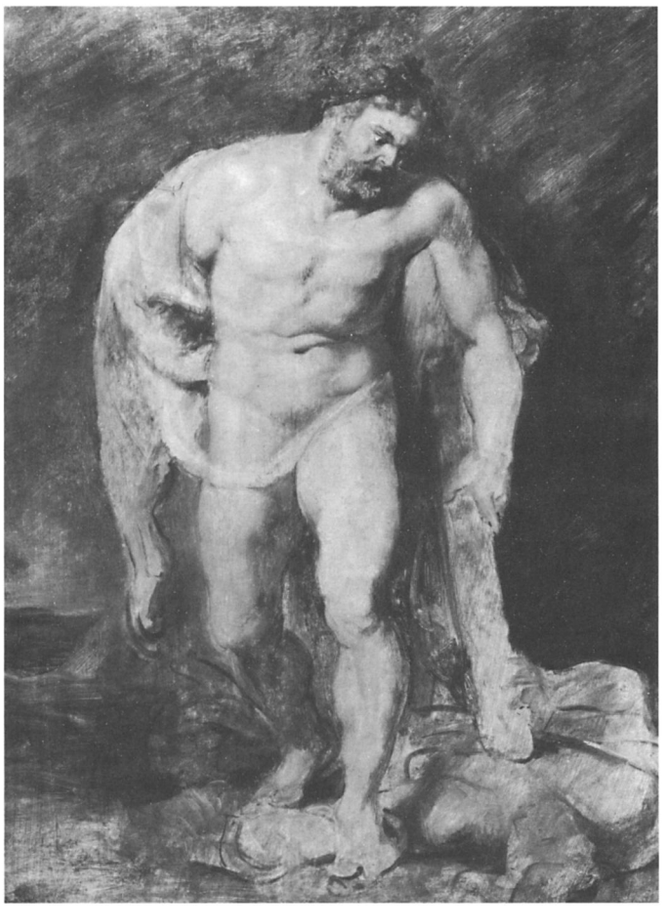


3 Peter Paul Rubens, *Cubic Analysis of the Hercules Farnese*. London, Home House Trustees Society

Another pervasive characteristic of Rubens's art, the largeness and robustness of his figures, also reflects convictions stated in *De Imitatione Statuarum*. Rubens thought of antiquity as a Golden Age of physical well-being when men and women were bigger and stronger, fed by fluids responding to the warmth of activity. The heroic race that stands at the center of his art can be seen as Rubens's re-creation, through the mediation of ancient sculpture and Renaissance painting, of the physically and, by implication, morally and intellectually superior past. It was this assumed superiority, after all, which gave Rubens his rationale for the imitation of ancient sculpture.

On the other hand, his dispute with French connoisseurs over the proper way to paint legs implemented in practice Rubens's belief that the authority of past art must yield to the observable facts of nature. In a letter from Paris dated December 1, 1622, N. C. Peiresc informed Rubens about the reception given to the artist's four designs for the *Life of Constantine* tapestries. Many objected in particular to "that manner of the legs (not straight according to common usage) but delineated in an arc," as in the design for *Constantine's Elocution* (Fig. 5). Peiresc recalled Rubens's earlier justification of the practice on the grounds that curved legs are prevalent in nature. Although the Parisian connoisseurs admitted the truth of the effect in nature, they argued that it resulted from either a national or a general defect and that, in any case, the ancient sculptors, and Michelangelo, Raphael, Correggio, and Titian had avoided legs like that.[72] Despite these criticisms, Rubens continued to paint bowed legs,

[72] *Correspondance de Rubens*, III, 86: "L'allocutione che era molto a mio gusto per l'esatezza degli habiti militari antiqui trovo molti contradittori, non per altro che per quella maniera delle gambe (non dritte secondo l'usanza commune) ma delineate in arco. Io mi ricordo ben di ciò che V.S. mi disse in proposito del bell'arco delle gambe di quel Moze di Firminet et di quel St Paolo, che la natura faceva sicuramente quell'effetto in apparenza, et questi contradittori non posson negare la verita dell'effeto ... questo e piu tosto un poco di diffetto o di certe nationi (como di que' che'erano tutti Blesis pedibus o forzi generale) et che poi che l'hanno vietato gli scultori antiqui, et Michael Angel, et Raphaele, et il Corregio et il Titiano par che si habbia di vietare ancora hoggidi." Could it be that Peiresc's letter was also an ironic joke intended for Rubens, the "Apelles of his age"? The Parisians praised the accuracy of the Roman sandals painted by Rubens in another of the designs, but they criticized the way he painted legs. This brings to mind the story of Apelles and the shoemaker recounted by Pliny (*Historia Naturalis* XXXV. 85). Apelles exposed his work to public criticism, and a shoemaker, passing by, faulted the detail of a sandal in one picture. Apelles accepted the criticism and this encouraged the shoemaker to attack the artist's way of painting legs. Apelles reacted angrily, saying that now the shoemaker did not know what he was talking about. Likewise, the Parisians might be accused of ignorant criticism.



4 Peter Paul Rubens, *Hercules Triumphant Over Discord.* Rotterdam, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen

5 Peter Paul Rubens, *Constantine's Elocution.* Philadelphia Museum of Art

thus setting the imitation of nature above the dictates of established canons of beauty.[73]

Beyond the specific points of agreement, there exists a general correspondence between Rubens's practice and the theory of artistic imitation implied in *De Imitatione Statuarum.* His copies, adaptations, and transformations of earlier art implement the process of choice, judgment, and synthesis outlined by Quintilian and Seneca.

Two remarkable groups of works record this metamorphic stage in Rubens's art: his painted copies after other paintings and his retouchings of drawings and paintings by other artists. The unprecedented and unique importance of these activities for Rubens's art is consistent with the extension of Quintilian's ideal of imitation to the limits of practice.

One frame of reference contemporary with Rubens clarifies the relationship between his painted copies of paintings and theories of imitation. In his *Trattato,* Agucchi reports of Annibale Carracci's activity in Bologna that: "In regard to the imitation of Titian and Correggio, he [Annibale] arrived so far that the best connoisseurs of the art believed his work to be by the hands of these same masters." One *signore* commented that Annibale would be at a disadvantage if his pictures were mistaken for those by Titian and Correggio. But Annibale replied that the deception would be to his credit, especially since the painter's goal is to fool the eyes of the viewer, "making appear to them as true that which is only feigned. ..."[74] Framed by this statement, the copy of a work of art can be seen as a representation, exactly like any history painting or portrait.

[73] It is perhaps owing to this conviction that later classicist critics withheld complete approval of Rubens's art: Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti moderni,* ed. Evelina Borea, intro. Giovanni Previtali, Turin, 1976 (1st ed., Rome, 1672), 267: "Si può opporre nondimeno al Rubens di aver mancato alle belle forme naturali per la mancanza del buon disegno ..."; and 268: "E benché egli stimasse sommamente Rafaelle e l'antico, non però imitò mai l'uno o l'altro in parte alcuna. ..." Further, Roger de Piles, *The Art of Painting,* London, 1744, 248 (quoted by Wolfgang Stechow, *Rubens and the Classical Tradition,* Cambridge, Mass., 1968, 27), writes that Rubens's "knitting of the joints is a little too extravagant. ..." It may be that De Piles here conforms to opinions like those of Bellori, since in De Piles's earlier work, *Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture,* Paris, 1677, 254-55, there is a defense of Rubens from similar charges: "Mais les Peintres qui ont dequoy imiter la nature plus parfaitement, ne doivent pas se borner aux Ouvrages anciens, ny les imiter en cela; ils ne s'en doivent servir tout au plus que des moyens pour faire choix de la belle Nature dont les Statueës Antiques tirent toute leur beauté. Rubens a puisé la mesme, il a crû ne pouvoir mieux chercher les beautez de la Nature que dans la Nature mesme"; and *ibid.,* 228, on Rubens: "Il estoit si fort persuadé que la fin du Peintre estoit d'imiter parfaitement la nature, qu'il n'a rien fait sans la consulter." My discussion was written independently of that by John Rupert Martin, *Baroque,* New York, 1977, 45-47, which comes to similar conclusions on the basis of the same evidence.

[74] Mahon, 250: "E quanto all'imitare Titiano, e'l Correggio, arriuò egli tant'oltre, che i migliori conoscitori dell'arte riputauano le opere di lui, essere di mano di que' medesimi Maestri. & à tale proposito non si lascerà qui di far mentione, che vn Signore principale, à cui Annibale dipinse alcuni quadri, l'auuertiì che egli si pregiudicaua troppo nello stare così intento all'imitatione delle maniere di que' due Maestri, perche i riguardanti, troppo ingannati dal credersi di mirare l'opere di mano degli stessi Correggio, e Titiano, ne dauano ad essi la lode, & egli, che n'era il vero autore, ne rimaneua priuo. Ma Annibale gli rispose, che non pregiuditio, ma guadagno grande si riputerebbe, se le sue opere partorissero veramente quell'inganno, perche il Pittore non hà da far altro, che ingannar gli occhi de' riguardanti, facendo lor apparire come vero quello, che solamente è finto. ..."

6 Titian, *The Rape of Europa.* Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

7 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Rape of Europa, after Titian.* Madrid, Museo del Prado

8 Peter Paul Rubens, *Cupids, after Titian.* Stockholm, Nationalmuseum

Rubens's copies are, therefore, representations of representations, paintings of paintings which refer to the viewer's memory of the originals.[75] Given the transformation of the original that Rubens invariably made, the encounter with the copy is, as Seneca imagined it, like meeting a young man who closely resembles his father. Even after the mistaken identity is corrected, the sensation of seeing double will return as the known figure of the father is recalled but cannot be quite fitted with the son. Rubens's painted copies in this way call to mind the reality of illusion behind representation. They fuse inextricably the imitation of nature and art.

As with the sculptures he drew, Rubens's choice of paintings to copy involved a careful judgment of the state of the art and of his own temperamental affinities. Above all, he painted copies of Titian. Raphael was the second favorite model, followed by Tintoretto, Veronese, Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Mantegna, Leonardo, Quentin Metsys, Elsheimer, and a few others.[76] These were the artists of the Italian and Netherlandish traditions who had made the most important and recent contributions to the progress of the art in the imitation of nature. The significance Rubens attached to his painted copies is demonstrated by the fact that he kept most of them in his museum at Antwerp.[77]

The varying degrees of change he made from original to copy also suggest that Rubens's practice was informed by theory. Renaissance literary critics divided the genus *imitatio* into species ordered on a line of increasing freedom from the model: *translatio, imitatio, aemulatio.*[78] Rubens's most faithful copies, that after Titian's *Rape of Europa,* for example, function on the level of *translatio* or close following for the purpose of learning and rendering the original more accessible (Figs. 6-7).

Rubens's freer copies and adaptations may be placed under the heading *imitatio* within the larger process of artistic imitation. The artist's addition of hands to Raphael's *Baldassare Castiglione,* his excerption and enlargement of the scene of sacrifice from Elsheimer's *Il Contento,* and his copies of Titian's early *Andrians* and *Cupids* in the style learned from Titian's late works are respectful transformations that bring elements of his models closer to Rubens's personal manner and to his goal of "lifelikeness" (Fig. 8).

[75] My discussion is indebted to the analysis of representation in Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things (A Translation of Les Mots et les choses),* New York, 1973, chaps. 1 and 3.

[76] For a representative selection of Rubens's painted copies, see the sales list of his estate published in 1640: Jean Denucé, *De 'Antwerpsche Konstkamers' in de 16e en 17e eeuw,* Antwerp, 1932, 56ff.

[77] See above, n. 76.

[78] See Warners (as in n. 6), *passim,* and Pigman (as in n. 6), 3.

9 Andrea Mantegna, *The Triumphs of Caesar* (left, *The Vase Bearer*, right, *The Elephants*. Hampton Court Palace (reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty the Queen)

In some cases Rubens changed his models in ways that suggest the critical and corrective species of imitation termed *aemulatio*. Two examples of Rubens's emulation respond so closely to the critical traditions that surround their models that it is possible to see them as visual statements of the theoretical positions already discussed.

The selective imitation of art is practiced critically in Rubens's copy, now in the National Gallery, London, after Andrea Mantegna's series of the *Triumphs of Julius Caesar* now at Hampton Court (Figs. 9-10). The London copy is the sole survivor of a group of three which probably repeated, with considerable license and on a reduced scale, all nine canvases of Mantegna's series.[79] The copies were a serious undertaking, for they reworked a major statement of Renaissance classicism and what Vasari called Mantegna's best effort.[80] Rubens kept the copies from the time he painted them around 1630.

Mantegna, hailed in the cinquecento as one of the first to incorporate an exacting study of ancient sculpture into his art, was nevertheless included by Vasari among the quattrocento masters whose "dry, hard, and harsh" style "lacked any sense of liveliness, as well as the harmonious blending of colors."[81] In his *Vita* of the artist Vasari criticized Mantegna more pointedly with words put into the mouth of Mantegna's teacher, Squarcione. His early work was inferior because:[82]

> Andrea had imitated marble statues. Stone, said Squarcione, was essentially a hard substance and it could never convey the softness and tenderness of flesh and natural objects, with their various movements and folds. Andrea would have done far better, he suggested, if he had painted his figures not in various colors but just as if they were made of marble, seeing that his pictures resembled ancient statues and suchlike things rather than living creatures.

[79] For an account of Mantegna's originals, see Andrew Martindale, *The Triumphs of Caesar by Andrea Mantegna in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Hampton Court*, London, 1979. For Rubens's copy, see Gregory Martin, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Flemish School: circa 1600-circa 1900*, London, 1970, 163-170, No. 278. I disagree on two points made by Martin. First, despite Martin's objections, it is probable that the London *Triumph* by Rubens after Mantegna is identical with one of the three pictures mentioned in the 1640 sales list of Rubens's collection: "Trois toiles collées sur du bois, representans les triumphes de Iules Cesar, apres Andrea Mantegna, imparfaites." (See Jeffrey M. Muller, "Peter Paul Rubens as a Collector of Art," Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1977, I, 352.) Martin states that Rubens is not mentioned as the painter, but the context makes it certain that Rubens was understood to be the author of the three copies. The next entry in the sales list is of "Six grandes pieces imparfaictes, contenants des sieges des villes, batailles & triumphes de Henry Quatriesme Roy de France, qui sont commencée depuis quelques années pour la galerie de l'hostel de Luxembourg, de la Reyne Mere de France." Here Rubens is not mentioned but is understood as the painter of the incomplete Henry IV cycle. Also, the unusual carrier described in the sales list, canvas pasted on panel, is that of the London *Triumph* by Rubens. Further, the incomplete state of the copies indicated in the sales list agrees precisely with the condition of Rubens's picture in the National Gallery. Martin, 164-67, convincingly demonstrates that Rubens did not have Mantegna's originals before him when he painted the London *Triumph*. This leaves the question of date more open. I agree with Wilhelm von Bode, "Kritik und Chronologie der Gemälde von Peter Paul Rubens," *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst*, N.F., XVI, 1905, 201, who, in opposition to an earlier dating, observed that the London *Triumph*: "Hat ganz die blonde, blumige Färbung und die malerische Behandlung der unter Tizians Einfluss bei seinem zweiten Aufenthalt in Madrid ausgebildeten Kunst des Meisters. ..." I do not feel that Martin's attempt to date the picture to 1628, prior to Rubens's departure for Spain, is based on convincing evidence. He relies on a discussion of female types and does not controvert Bode's analysis of the dependence of color and technique on Rubens's 1628-1630 study of Titian.

[80] Vasari, III, 397: "Il trionfo di Cesare; che è la miglior cosa che lavorasse mai."

[81] Translation from Bull's Vasari, *Lives*, 251. See Vasari, IV, 10.

[82] Translation from Bull's Vasari, *Lives*, 242. See Vasari, III, 389-391 for the original text and more in the same vein. On the significance of this passage for Vasari's position on the imitation of antiquity and nature, see Paola Barocchi, "Il valore dell'antico nella storiografia Vasariana," in *Il mondo antico nel Rinascimento: Atti del V Convengo di Studi sul Rinascimento, 1956*, Florence, 1958, 228; and Jan Białostocki, "The Renaissance Concept of Nature and Antiquity," in *The Renaissance and Mannerism: Acts of the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art*, II, Princeton, 1963, 26.

10 Peter Paul Rubens, *Roman Triumph, after Mantegna.* London, The National Gallery (reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees)

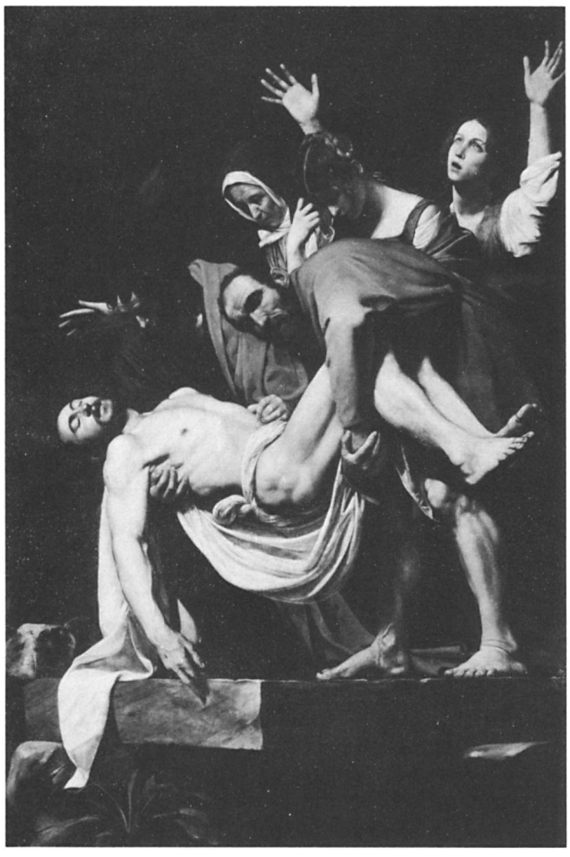
Domenicus Lampsonius made a similar criticism in his biography of Lambert Lombard. Lambert acknowledged ancient sculpture as the primary source of perfection in art and considered Mantegna as the greatest of the moderns because he came closest to the forms of antiquity. Mantegna's careful imitation of ancient sculpture was apparent precisely because of his rigid, meagre, and monochromatic figures. This was valuable because it allowed one to perceive unadorned the rules of what Lambert called the "grammar" of art which Mantegna had derived from the ancients.[83] Nevertheless, Lambert recognized the importance of the harmony of colors and warned against painting figures that look like statues of wood and stone. It was Titian who best avoided the petrified effect earlier attributed to Mantegna's pictures and whose use of color rendered his figures most lifelike.[84]

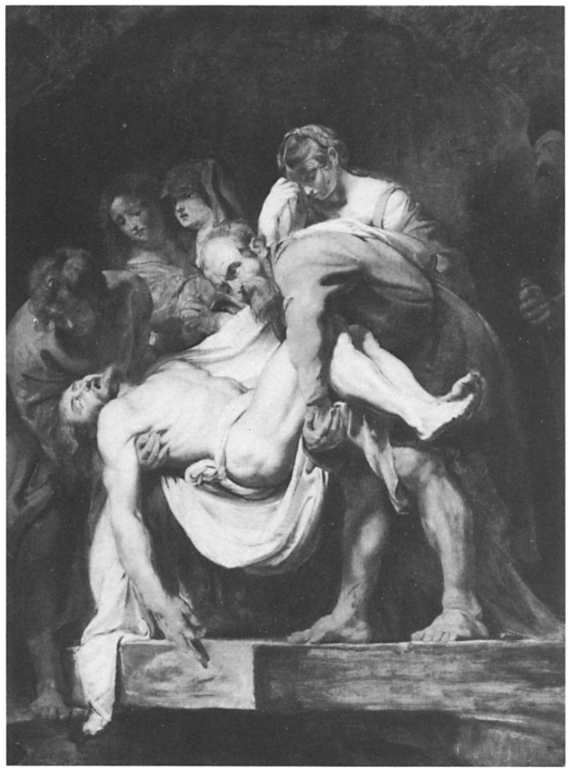
According to a critical tradition that Rubens used to formulate his own theoretical position, Mantegna was a perpetrator of the fault of slavish imitation that Rubens warned against in *De Imitatione Statuarum.*[85] The same tradition argued on the other hand that one of Mantegna's greatest strengths was his revival of ancient form. Man-

[83] Domenicus Lampsonius, *Lamberti Lombardi Apvd Ebvrones Pictoris Celeberrimi Vita* ..., Bruges, 1565, 14-15: Lambert says that more benefit is derived from the imitation of one ancient statue than from the imitation of all the moderns: "Inter haec autem ex vnius Mantenij rigidis illis quantumuis ac duris, & macris monochromatis, quàm ceterorum operibus, propterea quòd ex illa ipsa antiquorum & Mantenij operum macie exactius perspiceret atque addisceret grammaticen illam suam, artísque ipsius veluti fundamentum. ..."

[84] *Ibid.*, 22-23: "Atq; haec quidem, quam aiebam, Lombardi ratio operosę harmoges in diuersicolore pictura adhibendae est eiusmodi, vt nisi eam in exprimenda carne humana, maximeą; vt dixi, iuuenili, formosa, & pinguicula, omnibusą; asperitatibus lacunulis & sinibus quammaximè carente sequaris, nō carnē humanam, sed ligneā aut saxeam statuā pigmentis illitam representasse videare, nulla est enim caro humana, quātumuis etiam formosorum, ac delicatorū corporum, quin ob sanguinem non vno vbique, atq; eodē modo sub cute diffusum, hîc ad pallorem, illic ad ruborem, nōnusquam etiā ad liuorem aliquem inclinet, quàm colorū ludibundam varietatem in ipsis etiam vmbris eiusdem carnis deprehendas, nunc ad luteū, nunc ad roseum, modò ad cyaneum aut cęlestem colorem nònihil vergētibus." The imitation of this variety of colors applied with impastoed pigment ("nō sine pigmentorum quadā scabricie") will produce figures that seem alive rather than painted: "Adeò eminent imagines, ac velut extra tabulam exstare vidētur, ipsaque caro humana in morē viuae, nescio quo pacto tremebūda, & micans apparet, & quidē haec omnia sine adiumēto maioris illius obscuritatis vmbrarum, qua omnes propemodū pictores ante Titianū imaginibus suis hāc eminēdi atq; exstādī vim addere contai fuerant. Nā hic quidē densa illa vmbrarū opacitate, & quasi inamaena quadam nocte repudiata, hanc laetam, nitidā, atq; oculis natura lucis amātibus gratissmā, ac proinde perfećtissimā colorū addēdorum rationē excogitauit, in qua omnibus ad vnum huius aetatis pictoribus adhuc praecellere existimatur." It has been pointed out that these passages influenced Rubens's warning against painting figures that look like statues instead of flesh and blood: Justus Müller Hofstede, "Rubens und die niederländische Italienfahrt: Die humanistiche Tradition," in *Peter Paul Rubens 1577-1640: Katalog 1*, 24; Muller (as in n. 79), I, 268. Ironically, Adolf Goldschmidt, "Lambert Lombard," *Jahrbuch der Preuszischen Kunstsammlungen*, XL, 1919, 206-07, interpreted Rubens's attack on slavish imitation as a criticism of Lambert Lombard and his contemporaries. Despite Rubens's use of Lampsonius as a source, Goldschmidt's point remains valid.

[85] See above, n. 84.





11 Caravaggio, *The Entombment of Christ.* Vatican, Pinacoteca

12 Peter Paul Rubens, *The Entombment of Christ, after Caravaggio.* Ottawa, The National Gallery of Canada

tegna was perceived as an artist who prophesied the dawn of a new age but was confined by the shortcomings of his own time. Vasari, in the *Proemio* to the third part of his *Vite*, observed that the final age of the Renaissance resulted from innovations that made art lifelike: "una certa oscurità di ombre bene intese," "dolcezza e grazia ne' colori."[86] Titian, according to Vasari and Lampsonius, best developed these qualities, neglecting only the studied imitation of ancient sculpture which was Mantegna's strength.[87]

From this critical perspective, it is possible to see Rubens's *Triumph* as a tacit correction of Mantegna's over-literal imitation of sculpture. The relief-like surface of Mantegna's original was transformed by the light tonality, the relationship of red, yellow, and blue, the rich impasto, and the open brushwork learned by Rubens from the Venetians and above all from Titian.[88] The synthesis, in turn, combined Titian's color with the ideal beauty of ancient sculpture.

Rubens thought that because Mantegna had imitated ancient sculpture slavishly, he was unable to make lifelike representations of nature. On the other side of the question, the small copy he painted after Caravaggio's *Entombment of Christ* suggests that Rubens, for the purpose of his own art, considered Caravaggio to be too simplistic an imitator of nature (Figs. 11-12).[89] This interpretation is supported by the agreement between the changes Rubens made in his copy and the thrust of early seventeenth-century criticism directed against Caravaggio.

[86] Vasari, IV, 11. On this point see Smyth (as in n. 52), 8-9.

[87] Vasari, VII, 417-418, on Michelangelo's judgment of Titian's *Danae*: "Se quest'uomo fusse punto aiutato dall'arte e dal disegno, come è dalla natura, e massimamente nel contrafare il vivo, non si portrebbe far più nè meglio ... Ed in fatti così è vero, perciochè chi non ha disegnato assai, e studiato cose scelte antiche o moderne non può fare bene di pratica da sè nè aiutare le cose che si ritranno dal vivo, dando loro quella grazia e perfezione che dà l'arte fuori dell'ordine della natura. ..."

[88] On Rubens and Titian's color, see Theodor Hetzer, *Tizian: Geschichte seiner Farbe*, 3rd ed., Frankfurt a.M., 1969, 215-223; and Parkhurst, 1972 (as in n. 3), 36 and 109, n. 6. Parkhurst also suggests that Mantegna influenced Rubens's adoption of the red-yellow-blue combination. The recent cleaning of Mantegna's *Triumphs* makes this suggestion more plausible.

[89] For Rubens's copy, see Arthur von Schneider, *Caravaggio und die Niederländer* (repr. of 1933 ed.), Amsterdam, 1977, 96; Bernard Berenson, *Del Caravaggio: delle sue incongruenze e della sua fama*, ed. L. Vertova, Florence, 1951, 30-31; Seilern (as in n. 61), 44-45, No. 23, in relation to Seilern's *Entombment* which represents further development away from Caravaggio; National Gallery of Canada, *Catalogue of Paintings and Sculpture, I, Older Schools*, Ottawa and Toronto, 1957, 67, No. 6431; Mary Ann Graeve, "The Stone of Unction in Caravaggio's Painting for the Chiesa Nuova," *Art Bulletin*, XL, 1958, 226, emphasizes the iconographic change in Rubens's copy to a proper *Entombment;* Antwerp, Royal Museum of Fine Arts, *P. P. Rubens, Paintings, Oilsketches, Drawings*, Antwerp, 1977, 87, No. 32. I cannot agree with Jaffé's suggestion, *Rubens and Italy*, 57, that the copy after Caravaggio in Ottawa is identical with No. 36 of the 1640 sales list of Rubens's collection. Jaffé bases the identification on the English transcription of the

Agucchi attacked Caravaggio because he had "left behind the Idea of the Beautiful and was disposed to follow similitude in all."[90] Bellori writes that Caravaggio was criticized by his elders because he was "poor in invention and design, without decorum and without art, colored all his figures in one light and on one plane, without grading them."[91] Rubens was aware of these critiques since he convinced the Duke of Mantua to buy the most notorious example of Caravaggio's indecorum, the *Death of the Virgin*.[92]

Although the *Entombment* was one of Caravaggio's most conventionally acceptable pictures, Rubens changed in his copy precisely the elements criticized by Agucchi and Bellori.[93] Rubens modulated light and color to establish multiple planes of space. He polished away the compositional and emotional rough edges and rejected the lower-class types of the original. Caravaggio's picture was idealized in accordance with the standards of perfected nature and decorum set by Renaissance theory.[94]

The changes and improvements wrought by Rubens in his painted copies also appear in his numerous retouchings of other artists' drawings and paintings.[95] For example, his additions of body color to an anonymous pen and ink copy after Andrea del Sarto's *Birth of the Virgin* in SS. Annunziata heighten the contrasts of light and dark, the force of glances, and the impression of movement and space conveyed by the design (Fig. 13).[96] As with his drawings of sculpture and his copy after Mantegna, Rubens has made the image more animated.

Rubens's retouchings, similar in principle to his free copies, are different in that they physically alter their source and produce new works of art. This does not seem so daring in the cases where he drew on top of anonymous copies after well-known artists. But when he retouched original drawings and paintings by masters such as Giulio Romano, Jan Vermeyen, or Titian, Rubens literally grafted the present onto the past.[97]

13 Anonymous draftsman retouched by Peter Paul Rubens, *The Birth of the Virgin, after Andrea del Sarto.* Vienna, Albertina

The desire and confidence that led Rubens to work directly on old drawings and paintings must have grown from the view of the past and of his relationship to it that he developed on the foundation of the selective theory of artistic imitation. It is not so much that Rubens was making the past live as that he saw himself as part of a living and constantly changing tradition, singing with new verses a song passed down from one generation to the

original Flemish manuscript of the sales list (lost) which reads: "36. A Christ, in short; a coppie after Caronagio." (W. Noël Sainsbury, *Original Unpublished Papers Illustrative of the Life of Sir Peter Paul Rubens...*, London, 1859, 237.) The English transcription, sent by Balthazar Gerbier to Charles I on July 14, 1640, is a translation of the original Flemish manuscript. The English transcription is marred by numerous misreadings and mistranslations. This becomes apparent when it is compared with the French sales list printed by Jan van Meurs for Rubens's heirs. In this case, the printed French sales list reads: "Nostre Seigneur mort, copiè apres Coregio." Besides asserting that the copy was after Correggio, the listing comes in a section of the sales list apart from the special section devoted to Rubens's copies after other masters. It is therefore more likely that Rubens did not paint this copy after Correggio: see Muller (as in n. 79) I, 333-38, on the versions of the 1640 sales list.

[90] Agucchi's *Trattato* in Mahon, 257: "Il Carauaggio eccellentissimo nel colorire si dee comparare à Demetrio, perche hà lasciato indietro l'Idea della bellezza, disposto di seguire del tutto la similitudine."

[91] Bellori (as in n. 73), 218: "Né cessavano di sgridare il Caravaggio e la sua maniera, divolgando ch'egli non sapeva uscir fuori dalle cantine, e che, povero d'invenzione e di disegno, senza decoro e senz'arte, coloriva tutte le sue figure ad un lume e sopra un piano senza degradarle. ..." Bellori repeats this criticism, *ibid.*, 30. Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina pittrice: Vite de pittori Bolognesi*, II, Bologna, 1678, 10, puts a similar criticism of Caravaggio into the mouth of Annibale Carracci: see further Mahon, 36-37 and Dempsey, 85, n. 58.

[92] See *Correspondance de Rubens*, I, 362-69.

[93] The approval given to the *Entombment* is stressed by Graeve (as in n. 89), 226. See Giovanni Baglione, *Le vite de' pittori scvltori et architetti*, Rome, 1649, 137, of the *Entombment:* "E questa dicono, che sia la migliore opera di lui." Bellori (as in n. 73), 221, writes: "Ben tra le megliori opere che uscissero dal pennello di Michele si tiene meritamente in istima la Deposizione di Cristo nella Chiesa Nuova. ..."

[94] Rubens's reaction to Caravaggio's *Supper at Emmaus* in the National Gallery, London, was similar: see Von Schneider (as in note 89), 93.

[95] On Rubens's retouching of drawings, see Held, I, 58-61; Michael Jaffé, "Rubens as a Collector of Drawings, Part One," *Master Drawings*, II, 1964, 383-84. Recently, Anne-Marie Logan, "Rubens Exhibitions 1977," *Master Drawings*, XV, 1977, 406ff., has begun to differentiate more carefully between drawings retouched by Rubens and copies after other masters drawn completely by Rubens himself. As a consequence, the number of retouched drawings has increased. For Rubens's retouchings of paintings by Titian and Lucas van Leyden, see Muller (as in n. 79), II, 67-70, No. 33 and 91, No. 43. For Rubens's retouchings of pictures by Marten van Cleve and Ribera, see Hans Vlieghe, "Une Grande Collection Anversoise du dix-septieme siecle: Le Cabinet d'Arnold Lunden, beaufrère de Rubens," *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen*, XIX, 1977, 180-84, No. 29 and 198, No. 122. The equivalence between Rubens's copies and retouchings was first suggested to me by Professor Egbert Haverkamp Begemann.

[96] See Erwin Mitsch, *Die Rubenszeichnungen der Albertina*, Vienna, 1977, 148-49, No. 63. See Logan (as in n. 71), 110, on the technique of Rubens's retouchings of drawings.

[97] For Giulio Romano retouched by Rubens, see Jaffé (as in n. 95), 396, n. 28. For retouching of Vermeyen, see Held, I, 162-63, No. 169, and Mitsch (as in n. 96), 150, No. 64. For retouching of Titian, see above, n. 95.

next.[98] Insofar as his work continued the progress of painting, the whole body of past art became identical in a larger sense with his own contribution. In his copies and retouchings, Rubens thus carried to a consistent end Quintilian's idea that each artist's work develops from and transforms the work of his predecessors.

The correspondence I have noted between Rubens's copies and retouchings and the species of imitation proposed by Renaissance critics defines the broad outlines of the artist's practice in terms he must have known. Just as it has been shown that theoretical terms like *translatio, imitatio,* and *aemulatio* never gained precise and widely accepted meanings, so it is clear that the stages in Rubens's imitation of art cannot be strictly categorized.[99] On the contrary, the impression of organic growth from model to copy to adaptation and original invention is what most profoundly characterized Rubens's use of the artistic past.

Rubens's practice is best described with metaphors invented to suggest the transformative nature of selective imitation, the bee that changes nectar to honey, the body nourished by many foods that it has digested into its own substance, the river fed by several sources that flows forth from the artist's heart.[100] The aptness of these images for Rubens's art is not accidental. They complete the theoretical current followed by Rubens in writing and painting.

Rubens's personal style, the subjective force of his *ingenium* and temperament, was the crucible in which the various ores mined from nature and art were melted down into a new and more precious alloy. The physical energy, the *furia del pennello,* was channeled with mastery, subordinate to the purpose of art in the imitation of nature.[101] His style is therefore both pervasive and transparent, an atmospheric medium, like ether, through which energy is transmitted.

The integrity of his style allowed Rubens to imbibe powerful new elements throughout his career. Artistic imitation was a constant factor in his painting, witnessed most strikingly in his encounter of 1628 to 1630 with Titian. The numerous copies Rubens painted after Titian during these years indicate his decision to master the Venetian artist's style further. The choice was more specific in that Rubens directed his attention to Titian's later pictures.[102] Titian's late work offered a confirmation and guide for the path that Rubens had already taken and enabled the Flemish artist to form the style of his last decade.[103]

Two roughly similar anecdotes, one about Annibale Carracci, the other about Rubens, open up a window to the creative imagination which existed ideally as the place and agent of selective imitation. Agucchi writes that Annibale, pestered by his brother Agostino to comment on the Laocoon, appeared to ignore his brother's discourse. Agostino, offended, insinuated that Annibale esteemed neither the study of ancient sculpture in general nor the Laocoon in particular.[104] While Agostino continued his talk, growing more heated as his listeners grew more attentive, Annibale went over to the wall of the room and drew the figure of the Laocoon on it with charcoal: "And it was expressed just as felicitously as if he had the original right before his eyes in order to make an exact outline of it."[105] Agostino was mortified and confessed that his

[98] Samuel van Hoogstraeten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der Schilderkonst* (repr. of 1678 ed.), Soest, 1969, 193, justified the imitation of past art with a similar metaphor: the painter can borrow the melodies of an older work: "Even zoo wel als eenich dichter, die een nieuw liedeken op een oude stemme maekt. Ten is geen schande op een bekende vois, die reets al de werelt behaegt, eenige vaerzen te dichten." Van Hoogstraeten emphasized the necessity of equaling or surpassing that from which one borrows. The example he chose was Rubens: "Indienge by geval iets uit de outheit neemt, zoo dient de rest van uw werk het geleende gelijk te zijn, of liever in deugt te overtreffen. *Rubens* wiert van eenige zijner tegenstribbelaers gehekelt, dat hy geheele beelden uit d'Italiaenen ontleende ...: maer deeze groote geest dit vernemende, gaf tot antwoort: zy mochten 't hem vryelijk naedoen, indien zy'er voordeel inzagen. Hier meede te kennen gevende, dat yder een niet bequaem en was zich van dat voordeel te dienen."

[99] See Pigman (as in n. 6), 32.

[100] For bees and digestion, see above, n. 54. For rivers, see Erasmus, *Dialogus cui titulus Cicernonianus,* in *Opera Omnia,* ed. P. vander Aa, I, (repr. of 1703 ed.), London, 1962, 1022D.

[101] Bellori (as in n. 73), 267: "Alla copia dell'invenzioni e dell'ingegno aggiunta la gran prontezza e la furia del pennello. ..." Along similar lines: "Si mantenne sí unito e risoluto che sembrano le sue figure eseguite in un corso di pennello ed inspirate in un fiato. ..." William Sanderson, *Graphice: The Use of the Pen and Pencil,* London, 1658, 34, wrote that Rubens: "In an instant in the liveliness of spirit, with a nimble hand would force out, his over-charged *brain* into description, as not to be contained in the Compass of ordinary practice." Rubens was thus thought to be inspired by Plato's "divine frenzy." See Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences in Western Art,* Stockholm, 1960, 187 and 190. Lomazzo in his *Trattato* directly connected the gift of the "furor of Apollo" with the artist's ability to transcend mere imitation and invent his own figures and animated compositions: Lomazzo, II, 98-99. Lomazzo added that perfection is attainable only for those who can control their gift of frenzy with reason. Rubens self-consciously guarded the integrity of his style: *Correspondance de Rubens,* I, 145, letter from Rubens to Annibale Chieppio, May 24, 1603: "Avendo avuto sempre raccommandato il confondermi con nessuno qual si voglia grand huomo. ..." Martin Warnke, *Kommentare zu Rubens,* Berlin, 1965, 75, n. 30, cites the preceding passage of this letter as evidence of Rubens's adherence to the principle of stylistic unity. Warnke's reading of the letter as a statement of opposition to Lomazzo's doctrine of "eclecticism" ignores the individualistic basis of Lomazzo's ideas: see above, n. 42.

[102] Hetzer, 216 (as in n. 88) and Stechow, 41-44 (as in n. 73).

[103] I cannot agree with Svetlana Alpers, "A Taste for Rubens," *Art in America,* LXVI, 1978, 69, who asserts that Rubens did not develop his style in any "specific direction." The recognition of modality in Rubens's work should not blind us to the broader changes he made in his art through the years. Hetzer (as in n. 88), 218, already realized that Rubens consciously keyed color to different expressive moods. We may add that sometimes these color modalities could have resulted from Rubens's desire to paint in the manner of one or another artist: for example, the Veronese palette of purples, grays, and golden yellow on a light blue ground in the main altarpiece of S. Maria in Vallicella. Bellori (as in n. 73), 241, claimed that this picture was executed "con l'intenzione di Paolo Veronese."

[104] Mahon, 253-54.

[105] *Ibid.,* 253: "E gli venne così felicemente espressa, come hauesse hauuto dinanzi à gli occhi l'originale, per farne vn'aggiustatissimo contorno."

brother, better than he, had stamped the image of the statue on his imagination ("meglio di lui l'haueua Annibale impresa nella fantasia...").[106] Annibale remained taciturn and, only as he left, said laughing: "We real painters speak with our hands."[107]

In a similar vein, Samuel von Hoogstraeten recounts that Rubens in Rome was rebuked by one of his colleagues because "he copied or drew after so few Italian paintings and only spent his precious time wandering, looking, and sitting quietly...."[108] When the colleague warned that it is necessary to toil night and day to become a great master, Rubens answered, laughing like Annibale, "with the well-known maxim: 'I am most busy when you see me idle.'"[109] Perceiving that his inquisitor took this as a piece of arrogance, Rubens added with annoyance: "I believe that I have better retained that which I have looked at, than you who have drawn it."[110] At this they fell to a competition over who could more faithfully reproduce a work of art that Rubens had studied with his eyes and the other had drawn:

> But Rubens surpassed his rebuker, out of the treasure of his imagination, as far in this as in the rest of art. A painter may, like a useful bee that flies onto all kinds of flowers and sucks nothing but honey, extract all kinds of usefulness from the examples of others. To copy everything is too slavish, even impossible: and to entrust everything to one's imagination really requires a Rubens.[111]

Both stories have in common the contract between an artist of innate talent and an artist who relies too heavily on learned or acquired traits. In the case of Agostino, too much emphasis was placed on theory, to the exclusion of *ingenium* and practice. Rubens's competitor put too much faith in the effectiveness of diligent practice.[112]

The *ingenium* in Rubens and Annibale was seen to be the result of a specific set of qualities possessed by both artists. The most important power that enabled each to triumph over his less gifted challenger was memory. This becomes clear when one pictures the mental process implied in both instances. Each artist, having seen a particular work of art, was able to impress the image so clearly on his "imagination" that he could, at will, recall it exactly to mind. The ability to reproduce the image recalled depended only on sufficient skill in theory and practice. If Agostino or Rubens's colleague had pictured the images in their minds' eyes with equal precision, they too would presumably have been able to reproduce the images exactly.

Agucchi and Van Hoogstraeten describe the process of memory in commonplace terms derived from Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.[113] Memory is the orator's indispensable tool, "the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, ... the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric...."[114] Both Cicero and Quintilian believed that, although it could be improved by training, memory is an innate gift, the first sign of *ingenium*.[115]

The assumption that memory is a visual faculty increased its significance for art theory. Aristotle explained memory as the recall of past perceptions impressed on the mind.[116] Memories are like paintings in that "we have to conceive that the mnemonic presentation within us is something which by itself is merely an object of contemplation, while, in relation to something else, it is also a presentation of that other thing."[117] The visual nature of memory was reinforced by mnemonic techniques recorded in the ancient rhetorical treatises and then used continuously into the seventeenth century.[118] Such exercises were based on the keenest development of visual recall since, as Cicero maintained, "the most complete pictures are formed in our minds of the things that have been conveyed to them and imprinted on them by the senses, but the keenest of all our senses is the sense of sight."[119]

[106] *Ibid.*, 253.

[107] *Ibid.*, 254: "Noi altri Dipintori habbiamo da parlare con le mani."

[108] Van Hoogstraeten (as in n. 98), 194: "Dat hy zoo weynich Italiaensche Schilderyen kopieerde, of nateikende, en alleen zijn dierbaren tijt met wandelen, kijken, en stilzitten doorbracht. ..."

[109] *Ibid.*, 194: "Maer Rubens betaelde hem al lacchende met de bekende spreuk: *Ik ben aldermeest beezich, als gy my leedigh ziet.*"

[110] *Ibid.*, 194: "*Ik geloof beeter onthowen te hebben 't geen ik wel bezien hebbe, als gy, die 't hebt nageteykent.*"

[111] *Ibid.*, 194-95: "Maer *Rubens* overtrof zijnen berisper, uit den schat zijner inbeeldingen, hier in zoo verre, als in de rest van de kunst. Een Schildergeest mach als een nutte Bye, die op allerley bloemen vliegt, maer niet dan honich zuigt, ook allerley nutticheit uit de voorbeelden van andre trekken. Alles na te teykenen is te slaefs, jae onmooglijk: een alles op zijn inbeelding te betrouwen vereyscht wel een *Rubens*." I am most grateful to Dr. Erika Vegter for her help in translating this passage.

[112] J. A. Emmens, *Rembrandt en de regels van de kunst*, Utrecht, 1968, 113, notes that Van Hoogstraeten emphasized the importance of original invention. The artist's ability to reproduce faithful images on the basis of his memory was a *topos* of genius and virtuosity: see Ernst Kris and Otto Kurz, *Die Legende vom Künstler*, Vienna, 1934, 95, who mention Pliny's anecdote that tells of Apelles's ability to draw a recognizable portrait from memory: see *Historia Naturalis* xxxv. 89.

[113] On the Renaissance concept of memory in relationship to that of antiquity, see Frances A Yates, *The Art of Memory*, London, 1966.

[114] [Cicero], *Ad. C. Herennium*, trans. Harry Caplan (Loeb Classical Library), London and Cambridge, Mass., 1954, 204-05, II. xvi. 28. Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria* XI. ii, writes of memory: "Necque immerito thesaurus hic eloquentiae dicitur."

[115] *Ibid.*, I. iii. 1: "Ingenii signum in parvis praecipuum memoria est."

[116] Aristotle, III, *De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, trans. J. I. Beare and G. R. T. Ross, 450a-450b.

[117] *Ibid.*, 450b.

[118] Yates (as in n. 113), *passim*.

[119] *Ibid.*, 4, on the exercises. Cicero, *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (Loeb Classical Library), London and Cambridge, Mass., 1948, 468-69, II. lxxxvii. 357: "Vidit enim hoc prudenter sive Simonides sive alius quis invenit, ea maxime animis effingi nostris quae essent a sensu tradita atque impressa; acerrimum autem ex omnibus nostris sensibus esse sensum videndi. ..."

The "fantasia" and "imagination" on which Annibale and Rubens impressed the images of works of art they studied are two terms for the faculty identified by Aristotle as the seat of memory.[120] Federico Zuccaro, for example, in his Aristotelian mechanism of the "disegno interno" traced the perceptions of the five external senses to the "common sense" and from there to the "fantasy or imagination, like a secret treasure-house."[121] In Zuccaro's scheme, memory was a second, more deeply hidden treasury of the senses.[122]

The interdependence of memory, imitation, and invention, stressed by the ancient rhetoricians, was an important point of cinquecento art theory. Leonardo da Vinci stated this complex of ideas in a configuration that closely anticipated Rubens's position. First, Leonardo subscribed to the Aristotelian epistemology adapted by Zuccaro.[123] Leonardo counseled the artist "to repeat with the imagination the superficial outlines of forms previously studied or other notable things comprehended by subtle speculation, and this is really a praiseworthy and useful activity for confirming things in one's memory."[124] However, because memory cannot encompass the infinite effects of nature, Leonardo demanded that the artist check the inventions of his imagination against drawings made from life.[125]

Vasari further stressed the importance of memory. Drawing after life and after exemplary works of art, the artist must commit what he studies to memory. Above all, the form and parts of the human body must be so clearly impressed on the "fantasia" that the artist can portray any pose without the help of a model.[126]

Rubens combined in practice the principles advocated by Leonardo and Vasari. The stage of imaginative invention is represented by quick compositional drawings and oil sketches. His memory of works of art and of the varied poses of the human figure is demonstrated in these and in the more finished oil sketches. Studies after life would then be made or consulted to ensure fidelity to nature in the finished work.[127]

We do know that Rubens had an excellent visual memory, for in a letter of 1628 he described with precision the colors, composition, and iconography of the *Aldobrandini Wedding* which he had seen in Rome twenty years earlier. Rubens qualified his description by saying that it was "memoriter et ex tempore," as if it were a rhetorical exercise.[128] Similarly, in his letter of August 1, 1637 to Franciscus Junius, Rubens argued that it would be more useful to write a treatise on Italian painting than on the painting of the ancients because: "Those things which are perceived by the senses produce a sharper and more durable impression ... than those which present themselves to us only in the imagination, like dreams...."[129] This formulation repeats the gist of Cicero's comment on the senses quoted above. Further, it is an Aristotelian commonplace that differentiates between memories based on sense perceptions and images produced by the "imagination." The special quality of the imagination, or "fantasy" as Zuccaro conceived it, is that it is the place of dreams where, from the materials provided by the senses, we form our own fabulous images.[130] Rubens therefore discussed perception and the recall of visual images in the Aristotelian-rhetorical terms then generally accepted.

After he described the *Aldobrandini Wedding* "memoriter et ex tempore," Rubens asked for a good colored drawing of the painting so that he could judge it with "more clarity and foundation."[131] The symbolic nature of Van Hoogstraeten's anecdote becomes apparent

[120] Aristotle, III, *De Memoria*, 450a.

[121] Federico Zuccaro, *L'idea de' pittori, scvltori, et architetti, Libro Primo*, Turin, 1607, repr. in *Scritti d'arte di Federico Zuccaro*, ed. Detlef Heikamp, II, Florence, 1961, 176: "Prima i sensi esterni ... apportano a i sensi interni, cioè al senso commune tutte le specie spirituali particolarmente rappresentanti le cose sensibili singolari, & queste poi sono dal senso conseruate nella fantasia, ò immaginatiua, come in vna secreta Guardarobba." Zuccaro's presentation of the "disegno interno" was based on a currently accepted model of the structure of the human brain and of the dynamics of human epistemology. For the background of this, see Yates (as in n. 113), 256.

[122] Zuccaro (as in n. 121), II, 175: "L'vltimo senso ha l'organo nell'vltima parte del capo nostro, e si dice memoria, e questa è come vn'altro Guardarobba del senso."

[123] *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, ed. Jean Paul Richter, rev. Irma A. Richter, II, London, 1939, 100.

[124] *Ibid.*, I, 307: the translation is mine. It seems that Leonardo even used one of the mnemonic handbooks described by Yates: see Carlo Pedretti, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci Compiled and Edited From the Original Manuscripts by Jean Paul Richter: Commentary*, I, Oxford, 1977, 328.

[125] *The Literary Works of Leonardo*, I, 309 (as in n. 123). For the background of Leonardo's views, see E. H. Gombrich, "Leonardo's Method for Working Out Compositions," in *Norm and Form*, London, 1966, 58ff.

[126] Vasari, I, 172. This passage is cited by Bernice F. Davidson, *Mostra di disegni di Perino del Vaga e la sua cerchia*, Florence, 1966, 7, where Perino is suggested as the model on which Vasari based this ideal. Davidson also suggests that Perino was able to draw copies of works of art from memory.

[127] On Rubens's working method, see Held, I, 23-30.

[128] *Correspondance de Rubens*, IV, 406ff., Rubens to Peiresc, May 19, 1628: 407: "Questo è quanto posso dire confusamente *memoriter et ex tempore*."

[129] *Ibid.*, VI, 179: "... illa quae sub sensum cadunt acrius imprimuntur et haerent, et exactius examen requirunt atq. materiam uberiorem proficiendi studiosis praebent quam illa quae sola imaginatione tanqaum somnia se nobis offerunt ..."; trans. Ruth Saunders Magurn, *The Letters of Peter Paul Rubens*, Cambridge, Mass., 1955, 407. Vasari, II, 97, makes a similar distinction between the more reliable witness of one's sight and the less reliable witness of written sources and the testimony of others: "... venghiamo a' tempi nostri, dove abbiamo l'occhio, assai miglior guida e diudice che non è l'orecchio."

[130] Zuccaro (as in n. 121), II, 174: the "fantasia" receives information from the common sense, "formandone noue specie rappresentanti cose noue, come noi esperimentiamo nei sogni, ch'hauendo veduto per essempio monti, fiumi, piante, huomini, & oro s'insogniamo vedere monti d'oro, fiumi, e fonti d'oro, e simili."

[131] *Correspondance de Rubens*, IV, 407: "Si V.S. mi favorisce del disegno che fosse colorito et fatto di buona mano, potrò servirla un poco più distintamente et con più fondamenti. ..." For the translation, see Magurn, 264.

in light of this request. Rubens checked his memory of art in the way he measured his invented figures against the direct observation of nature. His collection of prints, drawings, paintings, and sculpture and the numerous copies he made and kept can thus be seen as the record of his memory of works of art.[132]

The theory of artistic imitation was a focal point in Rubens's practice of art. It was here that future confronted past, art was balanced with nature, and personal style was reconciled with tradition and verisimilitude. Rubens's theory of imitation is remarkable for its extensive grounding in natural philosophy. It is original and innovative in the thoroughness with which it was applied.

Brown University
Providence, RI 02912

[132] This point was first suggested to me by Professor Irving Lavin.

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Rubens's *Conversatie à la Mode*: Garden of Leisure, Fashion, and Gallantry

Elise Goodman

Rubens's *Conversatie à la Mode* of ca. 1632-34 (principal version in the Prado) is the most provocative and complex Garden of Love in seventeenth-century painting (Fig. 1).[1] In our time it has evoked varying interpretations. These, however, have not used the earliest titles assigned to it as their point of departure, nor placed it within its genre. Hence, few have focused on the gallant society reflected in it, and none has associated it with the contemporaneous ideas about fashion and etiquette which that genre reflects. The predominant discussions of iconography have concerned either the presence of portraits in the work or allegorical symbolism.

Gustav Glück in 1920 saw Rubens and his recent bride, Helena Fourment, in the couple at the left of the painting, and assumed that members of her family were models for the other participants.[2] However, even if Rubens did portray or allude to members of his family, I would suggest that he subordinated these portrayals to a general scene of

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[1] For a catalogue of all the extant versions and their dates as well as a summary of the scholarly literature, see Glang-Süberkrüb, 77-80, 87-114. I shall discuss the Prado version rather than the Waddesdon Manor variant, since the former is universally accepted as entirely by Rubens's hand and is more sophisticated iconographically.

[2] Glück, 63, 96-98.