Towards an Italian Renaissance Theory of Landscape

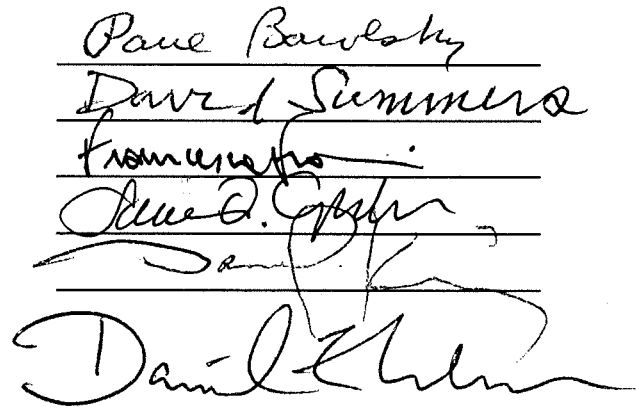
Karen Hope Goodchild
Atlanta, Georgia

B.A. University of Georgia, 1990
M.A. University of Virginia, 1993

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Department of the History of Art

University of Virginia
August, 1998



Abstract

Towards an Italian Renaissance Theory of Landscape

This dissertation reconstructs the sixteenth-century view of landscape painting by allowing authors of the period to describe for themselves what the genre signified. Ultimately, the thesis proposed is that there was always an "unspoken" theory of the genre that understood landscape as a feminine, non-rational subject to be both rendered and discussed as a lower mode of colorful details designed to engage only the senses. The dissertation is composed of four interconnected essays which progress from more general historical analyses of the literary and material factors that contributed to the rise of landscape painting and Academic landscape theory to an in-depth examination of Renaissance descriptions of landscape. Landscape differed from earlier genres in that it had no suasive content. This distinction set it at odds with the prevailing Horatian justification for art, that beauty and ornament existed to direct the soul towards a moral message. Thus, in Chapter One, "The Sensual Justification for Landscape," the concrete physical and psychological benefits thought to accrue from visual delight are explored in order to show that sensual pleasure had a vindication prior to the development of an autotelic aesthetic philosophy. Chapter Two, "The Feminine Language of Landscape," analyzes how landscape depictions were characterized as colorful, irrational embellishments the only end of which was pleasure. As a result, landscape's seductive charms were often addressed in the vocabulary of feminine beauty, a terminology gleaned from Petrarchan poetry and sixteenth-century treatises on beauty. Chapter Three, "Parerga and the Renaissance Theory of Landscape," furthers this investigation of detail and content versus form with a historical analysis of the word *parerga*. In the sixteenth century, parerga, a Greek word that can be literally translated as "beside the work," came to be used as a term for landscape, and this chapter traces the antique uses of the word, especially its link to mimesis, that conditioned the Renaissance definition of landscape. Finally, Chapter Four, "Vasari's Theory of

Landscape," carefully glosses the most important and fully realized contemporary exegesis of Renaissance art, Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*. Vasari's attitudes towards landscape are assessed through a close reading of both his descriptions of landscapes and his more general statements of artistic theory.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the McIntire Department of Art for its financial support of my graduate study and dissertation research. I also must thank the staff of the Bayly Art Museum and the University of Virginia libraries, particularly the Fiske-Kimball Fine Arts Library, for all their assistance through my many years of work on this project.

Without the encouragement and friendship of my fellow graduate students, chiefly those who spent many hours with me studying languages and walking and discussing landscape, I would surely not have completed this work. Their constant conversation manifested for me the community of scholarship that the ideal graduate experience contains. Specifically, I am grateful for the friendship of Steve Gavel and especially Johanna Bauman; Johanna's insightful comments and keen editorial eye improved this manuscript greatly.

My undergraduate advisors, William Eiland and Andrew Ladis, first set me on this path, and I owe them a immeasurably for the culmination of my years of graduate study. I must also thank my dissertation readers, Daniel Ehnbom, Francesca Fiorani, and Daniel Kinney, whose advice made this project a great deal better. Lawrence Goedde, who was my thesis advisor as well as a reader for this work, has always given me of level-headed advice and inspired me with his learning and his counsel. Lastly, I owe the deepest debt to my advisors, Paul Barolsky and David Summers. Their work has been an ever-present inspiration and model for my own.

Without the constant support and encouragement of my parents, James and Catherine Goodchild, this project could never have been completed. My Father gifted me with a tenacious will that kept me going when I might have flagged, and my Mother first exposed me to art. Her own artistic talents showed me the value that beauty can add to every life.

Finally, this dissertation is dedicated to my dearest friend, Thane Edmund Kerner.

List of Illustrations

13. Correggio, *Venus, Cupid and Mars* ("Educazione di Amore"), oil on panel, National Gallery, London, c. 1528 (Source: Alberto Bevilacqua, *L'opera completa del Correggio*, plate XLI).

14. Cosimo Rosselli and Piero di Cosimo, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Healing of the Leper*, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Rome, 1481-1482 (Source: Sharon Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction, Invention and Fantasia* [London, 1993], figure 1).

15. Piero di Cosimo, *The Incarnation with SS. Catherine of ALexandria, Margaret, John the Evangelist, Peter, Philip Benizzi and Antonius*, oil on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, c. 1505 (Source: Sharon Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo*, figure 88).

16. Piero di Cosimo, *TheLiberation of Andromeda*, oil on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence, c.1515 (Source: Sharon Fermor, *Piero di Cosimo*, figure 43).

17. Raphael, *Madonna of the Meadows*, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, 1505 (Source: Frederick Hartt, *Italian Renaissance Art,* figure 482).

18. Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Noli me Tangere*, oil on plaster, S. Silvestro al Quirinale, c. 1525 (Source: S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy: 1500-1699*, 3rd edition [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993], figure 92).

19. Bennozzo Gozzoli, *Procession of the Magi*, fresco, Chapel, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence, 1459 (Source: Frederick Hartt, *Italian Renaissance Art,* colorplate 41).

20. Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*, fresco, Tournabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence, 1485-90 (Source: Ronald G. Kecks, *Ghirlandaio: catalogo completo* [Florence, 1995], catalog 15, p. 133).

21. Giovanni da Udine, *Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, detail of garland*, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome, 1517 (Source: Giulia Caneva, *Il Mondo di Cerere nella Loggia di Psiche* [Rome, 1992], figure 1.9).

22. Dosso Dossi, *Melissa*, oil on canvas, Boghese Gallery, Rome, 1520's (Source: Frederick Hartt, *Italian Renaissance Art,* colorplate 93).

23. Pontormo, *St. Quentin*, oil on canvas, Pinacoteca Comunale, Sansepolcro, c.1530 (Source: Philippe Costamagna, *Pontormo: Catalogue raisonne de l'oeuvre peint* [Paris, 1994], catalog 23, p. 131).

24. Bartolommeo della Gatta, *St. Roch Interceding for Arezzo during the Plague*, tempera on panel, Pinacoteca, Arezzo, c. 1468 (Source: T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 102).

25. Giorgio Vasari, *Seige of Florence,* fresco, Sala di Clemente VII, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1566-71 (Source: T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 8).

26. Giorgio Vasari, *Return of the Marquis of Marignano to Florence after the conquest of Siena (26 June 1555)*, fresco, Sala dei Cinquecento, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence, 1563-1565 (Source: T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 208).

27. Giorgio Vasari, *Nativity*, oil on panel, Monastery of Camaldoli, Church of SS. Donatus and Hilarion, 1538 (Source: Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 45).

28. Correggio, *Christ in the Garden*, oil on panel, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, c. 1528 (Source: Alberto Bevilacqua, *L'opera completa del Correggio*, catalog 67, p. 104).

29. Parmigianino, *The Circumcision*, oil on panel, Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan, c. 1522 (Source: Mario di Giampaolo, *Parmigianino: catalogo completo dei dipinti* [Florence, 1991], catalog 8, p. 43).

30. Giorgio Vasari, *Nocturnal Landscape with a Burning Building*, fresco, Sala del Trionfo della Virtu, Casa Vasari, Arezzo, c.1542 (Source: Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 15).

31. after Titian, *Death of St, Peter Martyr*, engraving, (painting 1530, destroyed in fire, 1867) (Source: John Steer, *Venetian Art* [London, 1986] figure 74).

32. Giorgio Vasari, *Pieta*, drawing, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, Paris, c.1542 (Source: T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari*, figure 22).

Introduction
Towards an Italian Renaissance Theory of Landscape

At the end of the fifteenth century, Lorenzo de Medici attempted to define perfection in painting. Strikingly, Lorenzo recognized that for a painting to be flawless, two perfections must be met by the work--one internal and seemingly quantifiable, the other external to the work and unequivocally relative. The first perfection is met by three objective criteria, all factors that contribute to the actual craft of the finished object: the material of the work, the skill of the artist, and the beauty of the subject's composition. The second perfection, however, is the suitability of the image for its intended viewer. This last issue is a matter of taste, as Lorenzo points out:

Conciossiache alcuni si dilettano di cose allegre, come animali, verzure, balli e festi simili; altri vorrebbono vedere battaglie o terresti o maritime e simili cose marziali e fere; altri paesi, casamenti e scorci e proporzioni di prospettiva; altri qualche altra cosa diversa; e pero, volendo che una pittura interamente piaccia, bisogna adiungervi questa parte: che la cosa dipinta ancora per se diletti. [Because some delight themselves with cheerful things, like animals, verdure, dances and similar festive events; others like to see battles on earth and sea and similar fierce, martial scenes; others landscapes, buildings, foreshortenings, and measured perspectives; some others another diverse thing; and therefore, if you want a picture to be entirely pleasing, you must join this part to it: that the thing painted delight through itself.][1]

In this statement, Lorenzo is combining an ethical or formal concept of beauty, one that finds the good in an image inherent in the work itself, with an aesthetic conception of beauty, one that finds the value of art in its external effects. The latter attitude is often thought to have been a sixteenth-century discovery, created to justify the enjoyment of art.[2] Thus, the quote is interesting for its early awareness of the role of subjective pleasure in art. For the purposes of this dissertation, however, another aspect of Lorenzo's statement must also be noted. Lorenzo claims that landscape (*paese*) is one of the types of painting that differing tastes may find enjoyable.

Ernst Gombrich's famous essay, "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of

---

[1] Lorenzo de' Medici, *Opere*, ed. A. Simioni (Bari, 1913-4), II. 68. my trans.

[2] See, for instance, Mark Roskill, *Dolce's "Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento* (New York, 1968), pp.17-24. and Robert Klein and Henri Zerner, *Italian Art: 1500-1600: Sources and Documents*, 2cd ed. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. xvi.

Landscape," still the most accepted statement on the Italian "discovery" of the genre of landscape, claims that the first use of the word *paese* does not occur until 1521, in the Venetian writings of Marc Antonio Michiel.[3] Though obviously mistaken, this assertion has yet to be challenged, and landscape is still supposed not to have been a generally recognized category of painting until the mid-sixteenth century. Obviously, however, there were paintings familiar to Lorenzo at the end of the fifteenth century that were appreciated largely for their depictions of outdoor scenes, and he feels comfortable identifying such works as landscapes. That he does so in the context of describing the subjective pleasures of art is particularly interesting. Because much Renaissance artistic theory was written to describe art that suited the ethical conception of beauty, where beauty was to be used suasively in the service of a higher moral message, landscape is little discussed. As Lorenzo's quote shows, however, landscape was recognized as a separable facet of painting early on, well before the genre was given academic sanction. This dissertation seeks to extract, from texts like Lorenzo's as well as from Renaissance literature in general, the prevailing Renaissance attitude towards landscape before any coherent theory of the genre was set down.

Many studies have already been written on the genre of landscape, from Mark Roskill's recent *The Language of Landscape* to earlier, now-classic texts such as those by Kenneth Clark and Max Friedländer.[4] These books address the origins of the genre, but also, broadly, the development of the genre over time. As such, they tend to break landscape down into sets of stylistic responses that may or may not be linked to various sociopolitical factors, such as economics, literature, or scientific developments. In addition, images of landscape are seen as part of a progression, and are often understood by being compared against the paintings that came before or after them chronologically. Thus, such

---

[3] originally part of a collection of essays presented to Hans Tietze on his 70th birthday, March, 1950; rpt. *Gombrich on the Renaissance, Volume 1: Norm and Form* (London, 1993), p. 109.

[4] Mark Roskill, *The Languages of Landscape.* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1997); Sir Kenneth Clark, *Landscape into Art* (London, 1949); Max. J. Friedländer, *Essays über die Landschaftsmalerei und andere Bildgattungen* (The Hague, 1947). Roskill provides an impressive bibliographic survey of the literature of landscape.

studies tend to define landscape by the mindset that their era is supposed to betray: for example, the "idealized or pastoral" landscape, the "scientific or naturalistic" landscape, or the "romantic, fantastic or sublime" landscape.[5] These historical overviews also often take the perspective that landscape painting was slowly but inexorably moving towards "pure" landscape, with its ultimate expression being found in the optic experiments of Impressionism or the abstractions of Cubism. For my more narrowly-defined dissertation, however, which proposes only to examine the set of attitudes that were already in place in Renaissance thought prior to the definition of the new genre of landscape painting, the most important previous text remains Gombrich's article. Gombrich's work is of a more limited historical focus than the comprehensive studies of Clark or Friedländer, but the author's attitude towards his subject nonetheless reveals the same prejudices that color their texts.[6]

Gombrich begins his study by observing that references to the genre of landscape "precede the practice they purport to describe."[7] By this he means that through reading antique texts, Renaissance writers became aware of the idea of landscape painting before the "pure" genre re-emerged. From this observation he surmises that "landscape painting as we know it could never have developed without the artistic theories of the Italian Renaissance."[8] Most art historians, he notes, take the "stylistic" view that landscape emerged from a subsidiary role in other paintings. The stylistic view holds that in works like Joachim Patinir's, landscape backgrounds gradually subsumed the narrative foreground until minor Northern painters like Jakob Grim or Henri met de Bles eventually omitted the narrative elements all together.[9]

---

5 Roskill expresses this tendency well, saying: "Like the formal arrangement of landscape itself, its theory resists continual linear exegesis. Thus, so many books written take the approach of...a 'polyphonic' arrangement in which different perceptions of landscape are put into dialogue with one another." *Landscape*, p.9.

6 "The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape." *Gombrich on the Renaissance, Volume 1: Norm and Form* (London, 1993), pp. 107-121.

7 Gombrich, p. 107.

8 ibid., p.107.

9 for this view, see Clark and Friedländer (Op.cit.), and Otto Pächt, "Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscapes," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XIII (1950), pp.13-47.

Gombrich disagrees with this assessment because it fails to account for the "novelty" of the new genre's lack of didactic ties. He thinks that this novelty and the amazing rapidity with which landscape became established as a genre demand a theoretic analysis of what he calls the "institutional rather than stylistic" aspect of landscape. Thus, accepting the fact that there was indeed a proliferation of (Northern) landscapes being painted by 1550, and that this was a market-driven development, Gombrich asks: how did the people buying these new, subjectless paintings know that they wanted them? How did they even know what to call the new genre?[10]

Gombrich thinks that the market and nomenclature for the genre arose in Italy, specifically in Venice. As stated, he claims the first mention of landscape recorded is in Marc Antonio Michiel's inventory of Cardinal Grimani's collection, which in 1521 recorded *molte tavolette de paesi* by "Albert of Holland," "landscapes on large canvases and others drawn on paper with the pen by the hand of Domenico Campagnola," and Giorgione's famous *Tempesta*, described as "a small landscape (*paesetto*), on canvas, with a thunderstorm, a gypsy, and a soldier."[11] He goes on to cite several later examples of Italian usages of the term *paese*.

In these passages, Gombrich finds evidence for the Southern recognition of the genre, which he surmises acted to spur the Northern production of such images. This acceptance of such a non-didactic genre, he states, shows "a consciously aesthetic attitude towards paintings and prints, and this attitude, which prizes works of art for the sake of their artistic achievement rather than for their function and subject matter is surely a product of the Italian Renaissance."[12] Thus, by his argument, because Italians had a highly developed aesthetic attitude by the mid-sixteenth century, they could enjoy Northern

[10] The theory of a market-driven demand for non-commissioned landscape paintings in the North is promoted by Friedländer, p. 58.

[11] " Der Anonimo Morelliano," *Quellenschriften zur Kunstgeschichte*, ed. T. Frimmel (Vienna, 1888), 102.30.106; cited in Gombrich, p. 109.

[12] Gombrich, p. 110. Gombrich's attitude that landscapes begin to be painted only when art can be appreciated for its own interior aesthetic qualities is a common notion. For example, in the recent book *Leisure in Art and Literature*, the editors state in the introduction that paintings of leisure in general and landscape in particular show artists' attempts "to emancipate their art from the demands of religion, politics, and social concerns." ed. Tom Winnifrith and Cyril Barrett (London, 1992), p.9.

paintings for qualities other than subject matter. Their choice of landscape painting as the form for this non-didactic artistic enjoyment was conditioned by antiquity.

Already by 1450, Italians could read Leon Battista Alberti's paraphrase of Vitruvius' remarks on the sorts of painting appropriate to the garden. Though Alberti does not call these images of the "delightful countryside" landscapes, he follows Vitruvius in describing all of the natural charms that can be painted in outdoor scenes. Pliny also told Renaissance readers about the landscape genre, recounting the pleasant *topiaria* of the painter Studius.[13] Gombrich introduces these texts, and further suggests that the well-known link Horace sanctioned between painting and poetry also would have given rise to ideas about a "pastoral" sort of painting that mirrored its literary sister art.

From these avidly-read sources an awareness of antique landscape painting arose that needed a contemporary art to fill it, and Gombrich states that the beautifully-painted backgrounds of *oltramontani* painters could be made to fit existent antique theory. This worked well because it allowed the Northerners to excel at the sense-delighting "parerga" of art--the "pleasing trifles" as Gombrich translates the term. Such a division left the intellectual and more valorous art of figure-painting to the Italians.

Having promoted the view that landscapes were practiced in the North but thought about in the South, Gombrich next attacks the notion that such works accurately represent the world around us. The things represented in landscape, he opines, are the traditionally-sanctioned elements found to be "picturesque" and are not representative of unmediated nature. Thus, Gombrich has the evolution of landscape painting move through several stages. First, in the South, there was a theoretical knowledge of the genre found in antique texts. Then, aided by the newly-discovered ability to prize "art for art's sake," Renaissance audiences looked for a type of painting that could "fit" the new genre and discovered Northern landscape painting. Finally, such images gave viewers a "feeling" for the beautiful in nature that allowed them to appreciate the picturesque in the real world.

Gombrich's essay is a great contribution to landscape scholarship, and he glosses

[13] Sometimes read as Ludius or Spurius Tadius.

many of the central and seminal texts that contributed to the sixteenth-century understanding of landscape, some of which will be reiterated in these pages.[14] What Gombrich fails to do, however, is to allow the sixteenth-century commentators themselves to express what the concept "landscape painting" meant to a Renaissance audience. For Gombrich, the Renaissance is defined by two things: an individualism that allows for a "modern" and consciously aesthetic attitude towards art; and a drive by theorists to assemble the art of their time under the artistic principles that could be gleaned from extant antique texts. Gombrich takes these motivating factors, factors determined by late nineteenth and twentieth-century Renaissance historians, and adds to them the conception of landscape that arose in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries--that landscape is truly landscape only if it functions as a purely aesthetic object with no didactic content; and that all representations are subjective manifestations of the artist's historically-conditioned consciousness. This attitude, an amalgam of Gombrich's idea of what is compelling about the Renaissance mind and the Gombrich's of what is important about the rise of landscape, ends up determining his thesis and his interpretation of primary sources.

For example, overlooking the fact that the texts are very similar and even interdependent, Gombrich says that the texts of Pliny and Alberti inspired the Italian acceptance of Northern landscape painting, while Vitruvius' comments on the use of naturalistic scenery as walkway decorations prompted the idealized "Southern" views of Peruzzi and Veronese. Gombrich also suggests that in another text, Vitruvius planted the seed for what in centuries to come would result in the further division of landscape into the pastoral, the heroic and the romantic. In the end, Gombrich's essay neatly defines all of landscape through separate passages from antique theory, which he claims the Italian Renaissance rediscovered and developed modes of painting to fulfill.

One of Gombrich's greatest misunderstandings of the Renaissance attitude towards landscape is his insistence that he will consider only "pure" landscape, saying "by

[14] For instance, he is the first historian to introduce the word *parerga* in the context of landscape painting.

landscape painting I do not mean any rendering of the outdoor scene, but the established and recognized genre of art....For this distinction between landscape backgrounds and 'landscape as an absolute and entire art' has perhaps become a little blurred."[15] As the essay continues, it becomes apparent hat Gombrich's notion of what should be allowed as a "landscape" is itself a little blurred. By his cited definition, he will not allow that Joachim Patinir painted landscapes, even though in 1521, Albrecht Dürer calls Patinir "the good landscape painter."[16] Gombrich agrees, however, with Michiel's assessment, written in the very same year, that Giorgione's multi-figured *Tempesta is* a landscape. He justifies this statement by saying that, figures notwithstanding, Michiel's quote shows that cinquecento audiences appreciated Giorgione's work largely for its landscape.[17] Strangely, however, he does not allow Dürer's statement to show that *he* appreciated Patinir's paintings principally as landscape depictions. In short, these ambiguous and Italo-centric determinations do not tell us how Renaissance theorists understood landscape, but rather how Gombrich wants to understand it.

Gombrich again contradicts his primary sources in his assessment of the naturalism of landscape views. Paolo Pino says that Northerners are better landscape painters because the wildness of their own scenery lends itself to landscape depiction, while the garden-like beauty of Italy is more pleasing to behold in reality than in images. Pino obviously believes that painted landscapes show fairly accurate representations of the natural world, and this is an attitude, as we shall see, shared by many Renaissance commentators on landscape. While it is now evident that landscapes depicted edited and in many respects conventionalized views composed of traditionally-sanctioned details, it is important to note that in the Renaissance, the mimetic accuracy of landscape was an often-remarked on attribute of the genre.

These examples suffice to show that Gombrich does not take his sources at their

---

15 Gombrich, p. 107.

16 Albrecht Dürer, *Dürers Schriftlicher Nachlass*, ed. Lange-Fuhse (Halle, 1893), p.160.

17 Gombrich, p. 109.

word, but interprets what they mean in light of his own thesis. Thus, in order to assess more objectively what was thought about landscape painting in the Renaissance, this dissertation reconstructs the sixteenth-century view of landscape by glossing a variety of texts from the period in such a way as to allow Renaissance authors to describe for themselves what such representations signified. I will progress from a broad sketch of the way subjective, sensual pleasure in art has been historically received to a close analysis of the way landscape painting was described. As the following chapters show, what was depicted in landscapes was conditioned by antique theory, both literary and artistic, as well as by contemporary literary output. The attitude towards painted landscapes was also shaped by such texts, and through them it was construed as a minor, decorative art exhibiting the "feminine" traits of detail and mimesis in the service of sensual pleasure.

One reason sources such as the above-quoted text from Lorenzo have been overlooked in discussing the origins of landscape painting is that scholars have tended to assess the history of the genre on the basis of what *they* find most interesting about it. Thus, as Gombrich's article shows, many studies have wanted to detect the earliest instances of "pure" landscape because it seemed that these discoveries would pinpoint an historical moment when artistic consciousness came into its own and recognized "art for art's sake." My analysis brings forth another view of landscape, however. People were co-existing with images of nature, both visual and textual, long before the cinquecento, and, though not embraced by all moral or critical viewpoints, such images were already justified through the uses of pleasure. Renaissance audiences recognized as landscape both images with and without narrative elements; their understanding of landscape was not predicated on "purity" of content, but rather on landscape's historical associations with various artistic and literary traditions.

Under the current rigorous definition of the genre, the paintings that Lorenzo identified as landscapes might not now be categorized as such. The difficulty in historically defining and therefore delimiting what a genre may contain is addressed by Paul Alpers in his book *What is Pastoral?* He decides:

Genre should be conceived...as a grouping of literary works based, theoretically, upon both outer form (specific meter or structure) and also upon inner form (attitude, tone, purpose--more crudely, subject and audience). The ostensible basis may be one or the other (e.g., "pastoral" and "satire" for the inner form; dipodic verse and Pindaric ode for the outer); but the critical problem will then be to find the *other* dimension, to complete the dialogue.[18]

By insisting that a painting must exist autonomously on panel or canvas and contain no figures nor narrative elements in order to be defined as a landscape, many discussions are attempting only to describe outer form. Addressing the inner form of landscape images--that is, how they convey attitude, tone or purpose, and what their subject and intended audience is--makes the genre harder to pin down concisely, but ultimately leads to a richer and more historically accurate dialogue.

To find the "inner form" of landscape, we must consider how the elements of painting came together to be judged by sixteenth-century audiences. For them, the criteria for categorizing images were often elements of artistic production that we would either overlook or not calculate definitive of type, such as intended purpose, country of origin, or even size. Vasari, for instance, in discussing the works of Gian Girolamo Bresciano, says that the artist painted:

four pictures of Night and of Fire, which are very beautiful...[and] a Nativity of Christ, a very lovely effect of Night, and there are some other similar works of fantasy, in which he was a master. But, since he occupied himself only with things of this kind, and executed no large works, there is nothing more to be said of him save that he was a man of fanciful and inquiring mind.[19]

From this passage it is evident that all Girolamo's works are the same to Vasari-- they are *fantastiche* painted on small panels for private gentlemen. The interest he has in them is in their painterly display of unusual light effects; he does not make the distinction we would expect from him--that the panel showing a holy subject in a moonlit landscape is more

---

18 Rene Wellek and Austin Warren. *The Theory of Literature* (New York, 1956), p.221; in Paul Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 45.

19 *quattro quadri di notte e di fuochi, molto belli...e una Nativita di Cristo finta di notte, molta bella; e sono alcune altre cose di simil fantasie, delle quali era maestro. Ma perche costui si adopero solamente in simili cose, e non face cose grandi, non si puo dire altro di lui.* Giorgio Vasari, *Le Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori*, ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence, 1906), VI. 507; and *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. Gaston du Vere (Toronto, 1996), II. 471.

worthy than the secular paintings of night and fire scenes.

In another example of mixed categories of secular and sacred, figural and landscape, Federico Borromeo (1564-1631) grouped his extensive collection of paintings in such a way that landscapes were listed in the same category with panels showing the Madonna and Child in a garland of flowers.[20] He put these two subjects together because both sorts of works were typical of Flemish production, and both were to be enjoyed for their detail, variety, and bright colors. Borromeo's divisions tell us about subject and audience; works that were to be enjoyed similarly are grouped together. What these instances point to is that a careful reading of how sixteenth-century viewers used and categorized landscape paintings will expand our historical knowledge of the genre. In order to undertake this analysis, however, we must abandon our own prejudices about what landscape signifies.

David Summers, in his book *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, writes that to fully understand Renaissance art, we must adjust "our notion of style to include more than self-expression and characteristic individual, geographical, and chronological difference. Certain aspects of style as the Renaissance understood it were conscious and consciously related to themes and programs."[21] In other words, although Renaissance authors were aware that individual artists expressed personal stylistic traits, there was a definite tendency to relate different "themes," or modes of depiction, with the style appropriate to that mode. As Borromeo's grouping of his collection shows us, the subject of landscape was associated strongly with a detailed, colorful, feminine style, and the way the genre was addressed verbally reflects this association. Thus, as a subject, landscape in the Renaissance was *expected* to embody a certain decorum related to the style with which it was linked. This dissertation explores the far-reaching and long established literary and artistic traditions that audiences associated with the mode of landscape depiction. To borrow Alpers' notion of genre, it is an attempt to determine the "inner form" of landscape

[20] Pamela M. Jones, *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth Century Milan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.105.

[21] (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), p.455.

painting as betrayed through the responses of Renaissance viewers.

Thus, to more fully understand the various resonances landscape would have had for its Renaissance audience, we must go back in time. In literature as well as the visual arts, educated audiences were surrounded by landscape representations well before the sixteenth century. Ernst Curtius reminds us that "from the first century of Empire to the time of Goethe, all study of Latin Literature began with the First Eclogue of Virgil."[22] Every schoolboy learned his initial grammar from these poems, and therefore all literate souls were steeped from childhood in images such as the shepherd Tityrus, lying "under...spreading beech's covert, wooing the woodland muse on slender reed," while Meliboeus counseled him:

amid familiar stream and sacred springs, you shall court the cooling shade...the hedge whose willow blossoms are sipped by Hybla's bees shall often with its gentle hum soothe you to slumber...under the towering rock, the woodman's song shall fill the air; while still the cooing wood-pigeons, your pets, and the turtle-dove shall cease not their moaning from the skyey elm.[23]

Thus, from their earliest exposure to literature, the educated were conditioned to think of the natural world as an assemblage of sensually delighting details. The vernacular poetry of the courts continued this tradition. Lists of natural charms were so often recounted in Renaissance poetry that in 1552, a volume of burlesque poems was printed whose preface declares the authors to be overwhelmed and fatigued by pastoral delights:

avendo le petrarcherie, le squisitezze e le bemberie anzi che no mezzo ristucco e 'nfastidito il modo, per cio che ogni cosa e quasi ripieno di fior, frond'erb'ombre, antri, ond'aure soavi. [imitation of Petrarch and Bembo and excessive poetic refinement have half-sated and bored the world because everything is replete with flowers, foliage, grass and shadows, caverns and billows and sweet breezes.][24]

Texts describing the charms of nature represented more than just abstract literary

---

[22] Ernst Ludwig Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages* (1953; rpt. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p.190.

[23] *Tityre, tu patulae recubans sub tegmine fagi / silvestrem tenui musam meditaris avena.* 1.1.-2 and *hic inter flumina nota et fontes sacros frigus captabis opacum...vicino ab limite saepes / Hyblaeis apibus florem depasta salicti / saepe levi somnum suadebit inire susurro; /...sub rupe canet frondatur ad auras: nec tamen interea raucae, tua cara, palumbes,/ nec gemere aeria cessabit turtur ab ulmo.* Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, 1-6*, trans. H.R. Fairclough (Loeb Classical Library, 1986), 1. 51-58.

[24] Antonfrancesco Grazzini, *Il primo libro dell'opere burlesche* (Florence, 1552); trans. in Robert Rodini, *Antonfrancesco Grazzini: Poet, Dramatist, and Noveliere: 1503-1584* (Madison, 1970), p.18.

ideals, however. They were also interpreted concretely as prescriptions for living the leisure part of life. Alberti, discussing villa life in *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, relates how he spends his days at a villa retreat by quoting an epigram once attributed to Martial; "How in the country do I pass the time? / The answer to the question's brief / I lunch and drink, I sing and play, / I wash and dine, I rest. Meanwhile, / I Phoebus quiz / and Muses frisk."[25] Villas, he continues, should have "Meadows full of flowers, sunny lawns, cool and shady groves, limpid springs, streams, and pools...none of these should be missing, for their delight as much as their utility."[26] Alberti has obviously absorbed from the poetry of Virgil and his scores of imitators what should be placed in a man-made pleasance, and he takes these conventions very seriously. The *locus amoenus* is more than just a literary conceit for him; he wants its poetic details to be taken into account in architectural planning.

The elements of the pleasance were displayed in entertainments and the decorative arts as well as in literature, architectural planning and garden design. Throughout the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, court life was arrayed with the delights of landscape in various forms: troubadours singing the green world; wall hangings painted with verdure; and festal processions accompanied by costumed shepherds and shepherdesses are but a few examples. From the elaborately conceived and executed swags of greenery, flowers and fruits that graced Renaissance occasions to humble vases of blooms, Italians brought actual verdure inside in many ways. In garden rooms, loggias and villas, the floors were sometimes strewn with flowers and fragrant herbs. Petrarch visited one such *casetta* that he approvingly describes as *lontan da la gente*. Adding to the pastoral charms of its rustic isolation, he relates that greenery was strewn on the floors [*di verdi frondi ingiuncha.*][27] In a later example, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* describes how the flowery meadow was brought indoors at a banquet by spreading a carpet of blossoms on the hall floor.

---

[25] Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), 9.2.295. The epigram is falsely ascribed to Martial, see: *Anthologia Latina*, ed. Bucheler-Reise (Leipzig, 1884), I.I, p. 98 no.26, II.I,7,4.

[26] Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 9.2.295.

[27] quoted in Peter Thornton, *The Italian Renaissance Interior: 1400-1600* (New York, 1991), p.66.

Ladies and gentlemen also might feast outdoors in entire rooms made of verdure and flowers. A banquet at the villa of Lucrezia d'Este took place in such a "building"-- four rooms and their furnishings all created from foliage and flowers.[28] Huizinga notes how much of this ephemera is lost to historians, saying:

> Of all the handiwork of the masters of the fifteenth century, only a portion of a very special nature has survived...of secular work...scarcely anything is left...How much more we should know of the art of the fifteenth century if we could compare the bathing and hunting pieces of Rogier van der Weyden and Jan van Eyck with their *Pietas* and Madonnas.[29]

As with many secular paintings, most of the above listed "pastoral" trappings were fragile and impermanent, and they are forever lost to us. We must rely on documents to describe courtly pageantry.

Luckily, written accounts do exist and they inform us that, in addition to the actual delights of verdure, the well-to-do were often surrounded by decorative and ornamental works representing aspects of the natural world. For instance, the Guinigi inventory tells us that in 1430, the ruler of Lucca owned *uno panno d'Arasso verde fiorito...con figura d'una donna con arco e d'un homo ferito* [a panel of Aras [tapestry] with a green floral ground with a figure of a woman with a bow and a wounded man.][30] Without large figures, such hangings were called *verdura* or *verzura*, *herbaria*, or *boscagia*, and they generally showed clumps of flowers on a green ground. As the least expensive type of tapestry, these *verdura* were very popular.[31] Lorenzo di Medici owned a much more expensive tapestry showing *una chaccia del Duca Borghona*. The work, which represented the Duke of Burgundy hunting in a vast forest setting, was twenty braccia in length and six braccia tall. In the inventory of 1492, it was valued at one hundred florins, which made it the third most expensive item in Lorenzo's household.[32] The much cheaper equivalent to such tapestries were painted linen hangings, often used in the warmer

---

[28] Thornton, p. 261.

[29] J. Huizinga, *The Waning of the Middle Ages* (Dutch, 1919; English, 1949; rpt. New York, 1989), p.247.

[30] quoted in Thornton, p.49.

[31] Such hangings can be seen in Ghirlandaio's *Birth of St. John the Baptist* fresco in S. Maria Novella.

[32] Thornton, p. 48.

months, which, more often than not, depicted images of the outdoors. Lorenzo is also known to have owned a set of these, described as *panno lino depintovi l'istoria Bacho*, which were used in a summer residence of the Medici, their villa at Fiesole.[33]

Thus, wall hangings, which ranged from very expensive imported woven tapestries to lightweight painted fabric panels, surrounded the middle and upper classes in their homes with landscape imagery. In addition, certain other elements of home furnishings brought vistas indoors. In the fifteenth century, intarsia *vedute* made with painstakingly-fitted pieces of colored wood were much admired for cabinetry or wall panels. Furniture, also, could be adorned with painted landscapes.[34] Such works, most of which no longer exist, and which would generally be considered examples of the decorative arts rather than paintings, were among the items that represented the details of the *locus amoenus*.

All this is not to say that knowledgeable sixteenth-century critics made no distinction between a tapestry and a panel painting. However, like these other manifestations of landscape imagery, the genre of independent landscape painting emerged in the context of private works. They were often either small-scale, anonymous, imported images or mural decorations that were created to dress large areas of wall in relatively unimportant parts of the home. Vasari's quote about the fantastic landscape painter Girolamo da Brescia speaks volumes. Vasari writes: "since he [Girolamo] occupied himself only with things of this kind, and executed no large works, there is nothing more to be said of him." Vasari was not interested in writing the history of artists who *only* created small, private, decorative works. As the following texts will show, the history of landscape as an academic genre cannot be separated from landscape as a minor ornamental art. Amateur Renaissance collectors who write about landscape often do not make a distinction between the decorative arts, furnishings, and paintings. Even sixteenth-century theorists who discuss landscape in their treatises on art generally do not differentiate between the landscapes which were painted solely as outdoor views and those which were

[33] from the 1498 Medici inventory, quoted in Thornton, p. 48.

[34] for an illustration of a day bed [*lettuccio*] painted with a landscape image, see: Maddalena Trionfi Honorati, "A proposito de 'lettuccio,'" *Antichita Viva*. XX.3 (1981), p. 45.

produced to adorn other subjects. Thus, as stated, to truly understand the cinquecento attitude towards such depictions, twentieth-century notions of "pure" landscape need to be put aside.

One aspect that a Renaissance viewer would have strongly related with the *locus amoenus* is its association to mental and physical health. The undeniable connection made in the Renaissance between the pleasures found in landscape and those pleasures' link to health has not before been elucidated. Thus, in Chapter One, "The Sensual Justification for Landscape," I explore the "salutary doctrine." The salutary doctrine, which was used to justify sensual pleasure, held that good spirits were key to physical and spiritual fitness, and allowed for the use of certain enjoyments both to maintain and to restore good health. My analysis shows how the salutary doctrine could justify a non-didactic art like landscape and the pleasure it brought beholders, and establishes that even prior to the acceptance of an autotelic aesthetic philosophy (Gombrich's "art for art's sake"), there was an approval of sensual stimulation directed towards pleasure. The argument is broken down into two parts. The first is the medical justification, which gives a background history of Renaissance medicine and its humoral theory in order to explain how "high spirits" originated as an actual, physical diagnosis. It was believed that meditating on the beauties of nature, be they actual or represented in literature or art, raised the spirits and improved the "complexion" or humoral balance, thereby aiding either in maintaining health or in curing certain specific illnesses. The second justification can be called the recreational justification. This argument held that work, which was the moral purpose in life, depleted the body and the spirit, and that pleasurable activities, including visual stimulation, acted like food to the weary soul, replenishing it, "re-creating" it, and thus allowing for even more honest labor.

Chapter Two, "The Feminine Language of Landscape," demonstrates that *as a subject* landscape was addressed as a feminine form. This chapter examines how the detail of landscape was associated on the one hand with the ornamental, which was considered to be non-rational and effeminate, and on the other hand with the material and quotidian, also

linked to women. This gendered approach to the art manifested itself in many ways, most famously, perhaps, in Michelangelo's quotation that Flemish landscapes appealed to women because women have "no sense of true harmony." Landscapes appealed to these irrational viewers, Michelangelo said, because such images "fool the exterior eye" with bounteous details of color and texture revealed in mimetically presented cloth, masonry, verdure, trees, water, and architectural detail.[35] He is expressing the attitude that women were drawn to landscape because it mirrored their feminine (and generally negative) qualities. Michelangelo's conclusion is that the virtues landscapes lack are masculine attributes--reason, symmetry, proportion, boldness, and vigor--the very perfections that women themselves cannot achieve.

Beyond appealing to women, my analysis of Renaissance texts shows that landscapes themselves were addressed in the same vocabulary that was used in poetic and rhetorical descriptions *of* women; a vocabulary of intense subjectivity. The language employed implies that the beauty found in the observed (woman or landscape) can only be known through its effects on the viewer. The resulting catalog of responses tends towards descriptive disunity, with the observed reappearing in poetic invention as a catalog of delights for the viewer's (and reader's) delectation. In my examination, landscape emerges as an art that was thought to exist solely to provide pleasure through mimesis, color and lavish detail. I highlight the gendered vocabulary of these texts in order to show how landscape and the style associated with it came to be considered the "other" in cinquecento art theory.

Justification for the Renaissance marginalization of landscape was found in Antique texts as well, as the chapter "Parerga and the Renaissance Theory of Landscape" reveals. For example, in his 1521 commentary on Vitruvius, Cesare Cesariano wrote that there were two modes of painting: *megalographia*, solemn works he described as *cioe*

---

[35] Francisco de Hollanda, *Four Dialogues on Painting*, trans. Aubrey F. Bell (Westport, 1949), pp.15-16.

magnifica seu magna pictura, and *parerga*, typified as landscape and pastoral scenes.[36] "Parerga," a Greek word that can be literally translated as "beside the work," was adopted in the sixteenth century as a term for landscape depictions. An historical analysis of the term parerga, which has not before been undertaken, uncovers that the word has been applied to the sensually-deceptive, pleasurable, detailed, *virtuoso* embellishments of art since Antiquity. More importantly, in the Renaissance, this Antique meaning of the term was kept, but often these qualities were specifically applied to landscapes, whether they were painted as the backgrounds to narrative works, or created to be viewed independently, as autonomous paintings of minor importance. Exploring this history shows how Antique texts incorporating the term parerga were logically related in the Renaissance to the genre of landscape painting, which was understood as a mimetic, non-purposeful art showing artistic virtuosity.

The final chapter determines Giorgio Vasari's attitude towards landscape. My approach, a careful reading of the *Lives of the Artists*, the most important and fully realized contemporary exegesis of Renaissance art, reconstruct the author's opinions about the practice of landscape painting. Though Vasari never sets forth a concise critical statement of his views on landscape painting, "Vasari's Theory of Landscape" shows that he was favorably disposed to the charms of painted nature. This investigation discovers that there are certain types of artists, grouped by their artistic output, their style, their geography, and/or their personality traits that Vasari often considers to be proficient at landscape depictions. In addition, by evaluating Vasari's written description of a variety of landscapes, I set forth the attributes of landscape that attract Vasari's attention, including mimetically depicted details, convincing depth shown through atmospheric perspective, topographically accurate and recognizable locations, and unusual light and weather effects. In some ways, this last chapter functions as a case study for the previous three. Vasari is proven to believe in the "re-creative" powers of landscape, and to condone the pleasures

---

36 Vitruvius, *De architectura libri deci traducti de latinio in vulgare*, trans. Cesare Cesariano (Como, 1521), f. cxvii; quoted in Summers, p.455.

that the beauty of landscape could bring. His descriptions of landscape are remarkably similar to his descriptions of women, and he associates the same decorative, pleasing rather than challenging style with depictions of each. Finally, his writing reveals the paradox of landscape--that it was held, at the same time, to be an ornamental, "parergal" subset of painting, *and* to be the branch of painting that could best display the skills of the painter.

Chapter One
The Sensual Justification for Landscape

Joy: "I enjoy the most delightful leisure."

Reason: "You should say 'I use the most delightful Leisure.' Here on this Earth nothing can be enjoyed, but many things can be used--thus says the salutary doctrine."

Petrarch, *Remedies for Prosperity* [37]

Little though it may seem we need a justification for pleasure in our contemporary world, every American knows the aphorism *all work and no play make Jack a dull boy.* In earlier centuries, the anxiety caused by pleasure was even more acute. The literary and visual arts were seemingly sanctioned only by Horace's dictum that they instruct as well as delight. Landscape painting, however, which arose as a named genre in the late fifteenth century, is the category of depiction with the least pretense to having a moral purpose outside itself. Becoming defined in an era when the generally-accepted purpose of art was to teach, there seems to have been little ethical ground to defend landscape's overtly sensual pleasures, pleasures which had no validating moral attached. Because of this, attempts are often made to link the dawning conception of landscape as a separate genre to an awareness of "art for art's sake."[38] Depictions of landscape occurred well before such a notion, however, and those depictions' delights were justified not as ends in themselves, but as means towards the greater goods of health, longevity, and a recreated spirit.

This chapter will address the two valid ends that aesthetic pleasures in general and appreciations of nature or natural representation in particular were thought to serve. The first of these ends is the power of sensual pleasure to heal or prevent specific maladies. The second is its ability to act as a "recreator" in restoring of energy diminished by mental or physical labors. Introducing the discussion of these two justifications, I will establish the need for such validations through a brief overview of Western attitudes towards sensual

37 *Petrarch's remedies for Fortune Foul and Fair*, trans. Conrad H. Rawski (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), I. 62.

38 for examples, see Gombrich, 110; or Kenneth Clark, *Landscape Painting* (New York, 1950), p.54.

pleasure and a discussion of how these convictions shaped prevailing Medieval and Renaissance literary theory, the source of much of its artistic theory. Because the salubrious effects of artistic and literary pleasure were thought to arise from both the sensual stimulation of the works themselves, and (often) from their verisimilitude to Nature, the ability of texts and images to act as convincing replacements for Nature through mimesis will also be briefly explored. Throughout, a particular emphasis will be placed on texts that show how visual perceptions of natural beauty were thought to affect health. The texts discussed range from antiquity through the Renaissance, but all would have contributed to the Renaissance understanding of how pleasure in art could be sanctioned.

The Western Attitude Towards Nature

A few examples taken from texts spanning thousands of years, from Ancient Greece to the Early Renaissance, will suffice to show the critical attitude towards nature that runs as a constant thread through Western thought. While Plato may seem an unlikely reveler in the sensuous joys of the natural world, Socrates and Phaedrus walk outside the walls of the city, finding the roads "less fatiguing than the [city] streets." Once underway, Phaedrus reveals that he has Lysias' speech on Love to share with Socrates and suggests that they sit under a tall plane tree, saying "there is shade there and a moderate breeze and grass to sit on, or if we like to lie down on." Socrates agrees, adding:

> By Hera, it is a charming resting place. For this Plane tree is very spreading and lofty, and the tall and shady willow is very beautiful, and it is in full bloom, so as to make the place most fragrant; then, too, the spring is very pretty as it flows under the plane tree, and the water is very cool, to judge by my foot. And it seems to be a sacred place of some nymphs and of Achelous, judging by the figurines and statues. Then again, if you please, how lovely and perfectly charming the breeziness of the place is! and it resounds with the shrill summer music of the chorus of cicadas. But the most delightful thing of all is the grass, as it grows on the gentle slope, thick enough to be just right when you lay your head on it.[39]

We believe Socrates is charmed by the spot. However, after Socrates enumerates its pleasures with seeming wonder, his companion remarks that the philosopher seems like a stranger being guided around an exotic land. Socrates replies that he *is* a stranger to such

---

[39] *Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler, Loeb Classical Library, 1914. 230 BC. Achelous is a River God.

places; he doesn't leave the city because "the country places and trees won't teach me anything, but the people in the city will."

The reader is surprised, having been lured into enjoying the described *locus amoenus* and then rebuked. It seems Plato sets forth the tantalizing beauties of the countryside in all their splendor only so his protagonist can emphatically disavow that these pleasures, which add nothing to intellectual experience, have any virtue.[40] The unease Plato feels in the irrational countryside, where there are no other men's thoughts against which he may hone his intellect, betrays a larger fear that pervades much of Western thought.[41]

This suspicion of the material world evidenced by Plato continues unabated with the rise of Christianity, and can be seen even more baldly in certain religious writings. The Augustinian monk, Thomas á Kempis, writing two thousand years after the Greek philosopher, takes a harsh view of Nature: "Nature is bent unto the world, unto the flesh, unto vanitie, and to vagaries; but Grace allureth unto God, and unto wel dooing; biddeth al creatures fare-wel, flieth the world, abhorreth the desires of the flesh, abstaineth from idel

---

[40] The reader of these lines, which deny the appeal of the *locus amoenus* at the same time that they set them forth with loving detail, feels an internal tension in the text. This tension is underscored later in the dialogue [241E], when Socrates says, "Did you not notice my friend, that I am speaking in hexameters, not mere dithyrambs, even though I am finding fault with the Lover? if I begin to praise the non-Lover, what kind of hymn do you suppose I shall raise? I shall surely be possessed of the nymphs to whom you have purposely exposed me." When Socrates says that he may be possessed by the nymphs of the place, to whom Phaedrus has deliberately *exposed* him, he is essentially personifying (as women) the sensual beauties of the place, concretizing the lures which may influence or possess the unwitting beholder. This quote also tells us that the "nymphs of the place" would without a doubt be on the side of the Lover, and that (as later becomes apparent) so is Socrates. His confession that he is using hexameter, the heroic meter, tells us of his ultimate regard for the Lover. Thus, the very setting of a *locus amoenus* seems to Plato to be the place of the Lover. One must wonder if Plato, being in sympathy with the Lover, is not also somehow be in sympathy with the Lover's setting.

[41] Plato's fear of the temptations of sensual matter is more strongly asserted in the *Republic*, his ideal governance, from which he so famously bans the Poet. Plato does this because he believes the natural world is a mere shadow of a concealed truth. Poetry about it, therefore, becomes a deceit about a deceit, and leads people even further from the truth.Plato's variable attitude towards poetry and his own poetic leanings have been discussed by many. Michael O'Laughlin, in his *Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired Leisure,* points out that even the Republic is not consistent in its championing of the active, civic life. According to him, an "undercurrent of isolation pulls strongly against what is ostensibly the main theme of the book." This "subversive" thread is most evident in the end of the *Republic*, when Er's vision of the underworld is related. Er saw the dead choosing their next mode of existence. Tellingly, Odysseus makes the unique, and presumably the wisest, choice of "the life of a private man who has no cares." (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp.38-39.

gaddings, and blusheth to be seene abroad."[42] For Thomas, Nature was corrupted with Man's fall from Grace, and since then "the motion left vnto it tendeth alwaies vnto euil."[43] Both he and Plato see the material world as a collection of corporeal enticements clamoring to divert man's mind from the true path, be that path the virtue of the Polis or the mystery of Grace. This anti-sensualist thread ties together Western thought, from Platonism to Christianity, and has affected not only the reception of Nature, but also of all worldly pleasures.

In the passage from Petrarch's "The Remedies of Fortune" quoted at the beginning of this chapter, Reason rebukes Joy for saying that leisure is entertaining. "You should say 'I use the most delightful Leisure,'" asserts Reason, continuing "'Here on this Earth nothing can be enjoyed, but many things can be used--thus says the salutary doctrine.'" This is a bald statement giving name to the justification for pleasure--the salutary doctrine. In this doctrine, enjoyments are *used*, not relished. Petrarch, well-known as a lover of Nature, undoubtedly took great pleasure in the sensual beauties of nature and their representations in art, but the enjoyment he felt was always clouded by guilt and misgivings. In this tension, Petrarch forms a bridge between the reviling of material pleasure and the need to justify it by giving its representation a valorous end. The well-known vignette the poet reports about climbing Mount Ventoux just for the view perfectly exemplifies this tension. He writes that upon reaching the top, he pulled out his text of St. Augustine and was struck by the passage which reads: "men go about wondering at the height of mountains and the great waves of the sea and wide flowing rivers and the girdle of the ocean and wheeling of the stars--and to themselves give no heed."[44] Thus rebuked for enjoying worldly things and forgetting his soul, he climbed back down a humbled man. But not before he had taken in the view, which he lovingly describes.

Petrarch's ambiguous relationship with the sensual world is also made evident in

---

[42] Thomas á Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ*, trans.Thomas Rogers (London, 1584), p.255.
[43] ibid, p.259.
[44] quoted in Thomas G. Bergin, *Petrarch* (Boston, 1970), p.47.

his dialogue *Remedies for Prosperity,* in which Joy expresses the satisfaction that can be found in Nature's beauties. Reason warns Joy that without careful vigilance, such charms will incite one to lust:

> I admit gladly that, now and then, they [green groves and arbors] bring honest pleasure, but not infrequently, the pleasure they afford is dishonest. Thus you find that both people devoted to learning and sensuous pleasure-lovers enjoy the shadowy dells. These places incite the mind of some to remorseful meditation, of others to incontinence and lust. It is with good reason that the greatest of Orators, when he accused a dangerous defendant of adultery, described as incitements to the crime the pleasant surroundings in which it was committed. Therefore you should not seek pleasure in green places, but in your mind, provided it knows how to put to good use any and all places.[45]

Petrarch seems to be seeking a middle ground, associating the *locus amoenus* with the ethical pleasure of creative power as well as with uncontrolled license. He will not deny that honest enjoyment may be found in nature by people devoted to learning, but he warns that the undisciplined will only use natural delights to satisfy lust. For Petrarch, the sensual stimulation found in the green world, if used at all, should be put to the task of engendering creative thought.

Thus it can be seen that a fear of material pleasure colors writings from Plato to Petrarch to Thomas á Kempis. These sanctions against sensual enjoyment obviously went further than just disallowing the appreciation of Nature's beauty. All entertainments were suspect and needed to be accounted for by some greater end. In spite of such strictures, secular pleasures have always existed, uneasily validated by sayings such as the Medieval one that a bow kept always taut will become over-stressed and unable to respond. Thus, just as the most tightly strung bow must be regularly loosened in order to function properly, the busy and virtuous man of affairs must relax his mind periodically in order to stay vigorous.

The Renaissance Justification for Pleasure in Art

Our current philosophy of aesthetics causes us to understand that receiving pleasure from a work of art (painted, composed or written) is in itself a philosophic good.

[45] I. 174, Rawski's commentary (II.253) says the orator referred to is Cicero, and the man he accused of being inflamed to lust by his pleasing surroundings is probably either Verres (*In Verr.*, iii, 76, 176, *Fam.* xx, 1, 10) or Mark Antony (*Philip*, ii).

Earlier ages had no such self-justifying notions about the enjoyment of art. An examination of arguments proffered by Medieval and Early Renaissance authors for pleasurable (which will hereafter mean non-didactic) texts, particularly those of the light romantic or lyric sort, shows these men struggling to defend the pleasures of the text by offering various excuses for their existence and use.[46] Enjoyment of a text was not itself enough; literary theory demanded that art serve a greater human goal.

Medieval Christian literary thought followed Horace's rhetoric of pleasure and profit, which separated content from form, with the former being the repository of ideas and truths and the latter containing the story and style.[47] Dante makes these hierarchies of pleasure very clear:

> the goodness and beauty of any discourse are separate and distinct from each other, because the goodness lies in meaning while the beauty lies in the adornment of the language; and while both the one and the other are accompanied by delight, it is the goodness which is to the greatest degree delightful.[48]

Horace's distinction between works which delight and works which profit was often intensified by quoting him only in part. His line 333 *Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae*, "Poets aim either to benefit or to amuse," was many times excerpted without Horace's synthetic corollary *aut simul et iucunda et idonea dicere vitae* "or to utter words at once both pleasing and helpful to life."[49] This selective quoting makes the delineation between *prodesse* and *delectare* in art seem like an either/or proposition. Knowledge of Plato's *Republic*, with its allowance of didacticism as the only permissible

---

46 Glending Olsen, *Literature as Recreation in the Late Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982).

47 Olsen, p.22. Two articles that are concerned with the distinction between profit and pleasure in art theory are: Tony Hunt, "*Prodesse et delectare*: Metaphors of Pleasure and Instruction in Old French, "*Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*, 80 (1979), 17-35. and Phillips Salman, "Instruction and Delight in Medieval and Renaissance Criticism," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 32 (1979), 303-32. Hunt discusses the association of pleasure and profit with biblical exegesis and the borrowing of such commonplaces for the defense of vernacular works. Salman analyzes pleasure and profit as actual processes understood through faculty psychology.

48 "Convivio," *Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri*, trans. Robert S. Haller (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973), II. 11. 4. 71.

49 Horace, *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Loeb Classical Library, 1971, ll. 333-4.

form of poetry, furthered this polarizing trend.[50]

Throughout the first half of the sixteenth century, Horace's *Ars Poetica* was the most influential antique theoretical model for critics, and its message of *utile et dulce* was the pervading justification for artistic production. This viewpoint, which valorizes only art that takes didacticism as its ultimate goal, differs from what Aristotle's autotelic mimesis had proposed--a fusion of form and content.Though translated into Latin by Giorgio Valla in 1498, Aristotle's *Poetics* did not make its way into Renaissance poetic theory until Antonio Minturno's 1559 *De poeta* and Julius Caesar Scaliger's *Poetices libri septem* of 1561. Instead, the earlier sixteenth century attempts at poetic theory, including the treatises of Girolamo Vida (1527) and Bernardino Daniello (1536) were Horatian in character. What the continuation of the Horation schism prompted was the urgent need for the justification of the literatures of pleasure--lyric poetry, romance, and fable.

As has been shown repeatedly, theory in the visual arts often took its cue from earlier literary theory, and Horace's treatise, which makes constant reference to the similarities between poetry and painting, was adopted as the main rationalization for the visual arts as well.[51] It is certainly the case that in reviling some "lower" genres of painting for their ornamentality, critics looked to denunciations of light verse on which to model their arguments. Even positive discussions of the "lower modes" of painting took many of their theories from discussions of such literature. Thus, the non-didactic enjoyments found in landscape were justified theoretically in ways similar to the vindications of pastoral or bucolic verse and romance, landscape's literary counterpart, the lower modes of literature.

The Delights of Mimesis

Although landscape painting was likened to the more humble styles of literature, it

---

[50] *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, eds. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p.912; *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, eds. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 79. The *Republic* was first translated into Latin by Manual Chrysolarus in 1400.

[51] The most complete discussion of this remains Rensselaer W. Lee's "Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting," *Art Bulletin*, 22 (1940), 197-269; rpt. New York, 1967.

was also recognized to be a visual approximation of the natural world. This meant that the sensual benefits found in Nature could also be found in her painted representation. These two receptions of painted landscape, the literary and the mimetic, were held simultaneously. The following discussion of what was thought to constitute delight in the reception of art will clarify the way that landscape could be reacted to with both natural reality and literary precedent in mind. As we have seen, Horace's *Ars poetica* was the major source of poetic theory until the late sixteenth century.[52] Horace says that texts can either amuse or profit or both.[53] Interestingly, when discussing texts whose aim is pleasure, he writes that they delight through mimesis: *ficta voluptas causa sint proxima veris, / ne quodcumque velit poscat sibi fabula credi* [fictions meant to please should be close to the real, so that your play must not ask for belief in anything it chooses.][54]

Theorists used this text from Horace as well as Averroes' commentary on Aristotle's *Poetics* to support the notion that textual pleasure comes from verisimilitude.[55] From the influence of the latter, literary *delectatio* can be related to the Renaissance Aristotelian-influenced concept of faculty psychology. The faculties of mind which could be moved by a literary or visual text were: sense, imagination, memory, emotions, intellect and will.[56] Delight, for Aristotle, could be derived merely from the functioning of one of these faculties.[57] Mimesis only engages the first four (lower) faculties, but their movement still arouses delight in the beholder. A text, written or visual, causes the senses to respond in essentially the same way that they would to the thing represented, the only difference being the mediation of an artist between the receiver and the created world.[58] Thus,

---

52 *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, p.912; *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, p. 79.

53 Horace, l. 343.

54 ibid., ll. 338-9.

55 See *Poetics*,1448b 16-20, where Aristotle says that we learn from imitations by putting them in mental categories and abstracting from the particular to the general, and that this process is itself pleasurable.

56 Salman, pp.303-32.

57 ibid., pp.307-8.

58 ibid., pp.315-16.

beholding a text (literary or painted) was seen to function as any perception would, and this act had the power to delight alternately the sensitive or the rational soul.

Delight (*diletto*), a word we will find used over and over again in reference to art and to nature, is not an innocent word. Although it is sometimes employed to address the pleasures brought about by the exercise of the intellect or the will, it is more often used to describe sensual enjoyments, those which move the sense, imagination, memory or emotions. The Latin *delectatio* comes from *delicto,* "to allure from the right path, to seduce." *Delicto* comes from *lacere*, a cognate with *laqueus*, a noose or snare, or a subtlety.[59] Thus, the delights of art were generally thought to be the aspects of a text or image that attracted an empathetic response from the senses, and in the sixteenth century, such delights were spoken of as causing the viewer or reader to "wander" from one sense-pleasing detail to the next.[60] This attraction was thought, as we have seen, to have a dangerous power, the ability to entice beholders away from reason and goodness towards licentiousness.

In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, literature (apart from the literature that gladdened because learning was enjoyable) was thought to please for two reasons.[61] The first reason was because the ear was delighted by the words, rhetorical devices, meter or rhyme. The second reason texts were thought to provide enjoyment was because the Aristotelian theory of mimesis held that perceiving convincing re-presentations was enjoyable. Landscapes, as will be shown, were valued (or derided) for providing these same delights. They were understood to deceive the sense of vision by replicating nature, and to delight the eye by their variety and their colors; both of these qualities follow the

---

[59] Alois Walde and J.B. Hoffman, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Worterbuch* (Heidelberg,1938), I. 744-5.

[60] In an etymology related to the connection of mimesis with pleasure, the word " illusion," a deceit or a false vision, comes from the Latin *ludere*, "to play," thus underscoring the enjoyment that comes from deceptive appearances.

[61] Olsen, pp. 31-2.

literary model of the enjoyments of mimesis and style.[62] Thus, a painted landscape was like literature in the way it pleased, and it served as a substitute for nature in its effect on the senses.

Enjoyment in the Decorative versus the Fine Arts

As the following texts will make clear, when an author recommends a work of art merely for the positive sensual stimulation it gives, little differentiation is made between the decorative and the fine arts. Thus, we will find that when artistically-rendered landscape elements are prescribed for their mental and physical benefits, Medieval and Renaissance authors often do not make a distinction between, for instance, a painted garden loggia, a floral tapestry, or an illustrated manuscript. It has been pointed out that frequently in the Renaissance "there was but a vague distinction between furniture and collections: musical instruments, sculpture, medals, gems, paintings, engraving, intarsia, tapestry, arms and books."[63] Thus, in his remarkably catholic advice on how a gentleman's villa should be furnished, Sabba da Castiglione waxes as rhapsodic over Spanish tooled leather as he does over Donatello's head of St. John the Baptist, and he thinks both are superseded in ingenuity by intarsia panels showing landscape views.[64] This should remind us that though

---

[62] Too much dependency on the charms of coloring was often decried as one of landscape's weaknesses. Colors might appeal to the senses in ultimately beneficial ways, but they, like delight, are etymologically associated with deceit. The Italian word for color comes from the Latin *color*, which had the original sense of "a covering" and stems from *celare* "to hide." Thus, the theorists who held *disegno* as the highest aim of art thought that rather than teaching the viewer by appealing to the rational mind, landscapes appealed only to the sense of vision, hiding their fraudulent and pointless illusionism under the trumpery of color.

[63] *Italian Art: 1500-1600*, p.23.

[64] Sabba di Castiglione, *Ricordo* 109, *On the Decoration of a House* (Venice, 1560), fol. 56r to 60v; trans. in Klein and Zerner, pp.23-24. Two hundred years before Sabba's advice to gentlemen, the chapters in Petrarch's Trecento *De remediis utrisque fortunae* dealing with painting and sculpture show the same disregard for the distinction between the fine arts and other enjoyments. In the dialogue *Gaudium* speaks with *Ratio*. *Gaudium* is pleased with all manners of sensual delight, and likes painted furniture and statues and paintings seemingly indiscriminately. *Ratio* is concerned about Gaudium's unbridled enthusiasm. As Michael Baxandall points out: "painting and sculpture, like health, chess, friendship, books, and many other things [are] matters of good fortune is therefore not in question. What [Petrarch's] dialogue is concerned with is how to keep a proper moderation and poise in one's approach to this good fortune." This temperate approach is the one that we will see most Renaissance writers take. All things, provided that they can be proven to be of some utility, are justified in moderation. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350-1450* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,1971), p.53.

in the sixteenth-century critics such as Ludovico Dolce and Benedetto Varchi were grappling with issues like the *paragone* between painting and sculpture and the chief aims of art, many viewers were judging works with a less stringent critical apparatus. For most consumers, a painted table or a carved peach pit could be just as engaging and "pretty" (i.e. delighting the senses and giving pleasure) as a Raphael. As Sabba reminds us, some painters "are perhaps more agreeable for the intellectuals than they are appealing to the eyes of those who understand less."[65]

Part I. The Medical Justification: The Indissoluble Link between Spirit and Flesh

Thomas of Chobham, in his *Summa confessorum*, distinguishes among three sorts of performers, the first two of whom are always damnable in the eyes of God. The third sort, performers who play and sing for the delight of others, are also denounced if they move their listeners to licentious behavior. If, however, they sing of saints and heroic deeds or they "bring solace to people in their illness or their mental discomforts," they are acting in accordance with God's wishes.[66] Friar Thomas Docking agreed, approving entertainers who created *solacium contra iram, tristiciam, tedium et accidium, vel contra infirmitates corporales* (solace to combat anger, sadness, tedium, or sloth, or to combat bodily infirmities).[67] Literary or visual art could provide a moral exemplum, but beyond that the sensual pleasures of song, poetry, pleasant conversation, the visual arts, and the enjoyment of nature were praised for centuries as facilitating both continued or renewed

---

65 quoted in Klein and Zerner, p.23. Richard de Bury notes in his *Philobiblon*: "Not all take the same pleasure in learning...most men inconsiderately fling away the nut before they have broken the shell and reached the kernel" (*The Love of Books: The Philobiblon of Richard of Bury*, trans. E.C. Thomas [London, 1925], pp.83-4). This quotation is a recapitulation of the commonplace that certain works were to be read on two levels, *scientiam et ludam.* The wise man could look through the external decoration for the wisdom hidden beneath, while the fool only took the work at its surface, finding *ludum and solacium* (from John of Capua, quoted in Olsen, p.28).

66 *Summa confessorum*, Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensis, ed. F. Broomfield (Louvain and Paris, 1968), Art. VI, Dist. IV, q. 22, 25, pp.291-93; quoted in Olsen, p.73. Thomas' exemption for those who sing of saints or heroic deeds reminds one of Plato, who in the *Republic* made an exception for poets who "sing hymns to the Gods and encomia of famous men." *Republic*, 10.607.

67 quoted and translated in David L. Jeffery, *Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975), p. 218, n. 36.

health and zealous work.

Pietro Aretino wrote a famous letter to Titian including a vivid description of a Venetian sunset. The missive relates that Aretino was confined to his rooms by Quartan fever, an illness that disallowed him to take pleasure either in company or in the taste of his solitary supper. The author describes how he paced disconsolately, feeling ill and bored and unable to achieve any mental or physical peace. Finally, he was at least temporarily cured of his ills by the sight of a glowing Venetian sunset over the canals which held him transfixed as long as it lasted.[68] Likening the work to one of Titian's landscapes ("Oh with what beautiful strokes the brushes of Nature pushed the azure into the distance, setting it back from the buildings the same way that Titian does in his Landscapes!"), and describing the scene in literally *picturesque* terms, Aretino at last finds a respite from his illness in the scene's beauty.[69]

Aretino would have believed that the beautiful landscape he drank in and the happiness it effected in him could actually result in a physical and concrete amelioration of his illness. In the Renaissance, mental and physical health were thought to be inextricably entwined--indeed, they were not distinguished. Prevailing medical theory in the Middle Ages and Renaissance held that both the naturals (the four bodily humors and the *spiritus*) and the non-naturals (things external to the body) influenced health. [70]

The non-naturals were traditionally six in number, but depending on the author the list of what could be considered a non-natural was variable. Lists almost always contained the six main external factors of air, food and drink, motion and rest, sleeping and waking,

---

[68] Aretino writes that, until the Titian-like sunset "diverted" him, he was "sated with despair," and "like a man bored with himself who does not know what to do with his mind or his thoughts." Petrarch, though a much more sober fellow than Aretino, writes of appreciating some of Plautus' comedies in very similar terms to Aretino's enjoyment of the sunset: "Recently I was reading some charming stories by Plautus for the sake of fleeing boredom and relaxing my mind, and thereby for a short moment with the help of the ancient poet avoided the heavy cares of life." *Rerum familiarium libri,* I-VIII, trans. Aldo S. Bernardo (Albany: SUNY Press, 1975), V.14.267.

[69] *Lettere sull'arte*, 4 vols, eds. Flora, Pertile, and Camesasca (Milan,1957-1960), II. 16-18; quoted and translated in Klein and Zerner, pp.54-55.

[70] Olsen, pp.42-43. The *res naturales* and the *res non naturales*. There were also the *res contra naturam*, definitively bad externals that caused disease.

repletion and evacuation, and the emotions or movements of the soul, but they could also be expanded or sub-divided to include factors such as climate, season or sexual contact. Arnold of Villanova (Montpellier, 1235-1312), for instance, in his *Introductionum medicinalium*, agrees that there are the six "principle" non-naturals, but adds seven secondary ones: the seasons, locale, sex, occupation, play, bathing and habit.[71]

Such medical ideas came from Antiquity and the East. Around the twelfth century, Western Europe began to benefit from Latin translations of Arab works from authors such as Aristotle, Hippocrates (Greek, 5th century. B.C.), Galen (Greek, 130-200 A.D), Haly Abbas (Arab, d. 994 A.D.), and Avicenna (Persian, 980-1037 A.D.) Avicenna was the author of *The Canon of Medicine,* the most widely read and influential medical treatise of all time.[72] He wrote of the human "spirit" as an admixture of the absolute qualities of hot, cold, dry, and moist. Inanimate things, having but one of the qualities, are not complex enough to maintain life. The complexity of the human spirit was closest in nature to, though not as perfectly balanced as, the blended harmony that comprises the life of the celestial spheres.[73]

The human spirit was thought to be the seat of the passions--joy, sorrow, fear, and wrath. These passions are both *dispositio* and *potentia* .[74] By this theory, every person has an inborn humoral balance that is more disposed to certain passions, but passions can also be conditioned. Once a certain emotion is experienced, the spirit becomes accustomed to receiving that passion, and it is more easily felt again.

The spirit *suffers* (the literal meaning of passion) as a result of external or internal causes. Delight, for instance, effects the spirit by causing it to increase in quantity and improve in quality. The spirit's expansion diffuses to the rest of the body and the body's overall complexion is improved by lightening. This increased lightness makes the body's

71 ibid.,p. 42.

72 Avicenna's work was first translated into Latin by Gerard of Cremona (d. 1187). By 1500, there were twelve translations of the text, eleven in Latin and one in Hebrew.

73 Ruth E.Harvey, *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance* (London: The Warburg Institute, 1975), p.25.

74 ibid., p.25.

complexion more similar to the heavenly spheres.[75] Abundance of spirit, as well as its proper movement, was thought to be a key to good temper and health. If the movement of the spirit and the humors was too slow or quick, ill-health would ensue.

In a few concrete examples of "spirit" diagnoses, convalescents and the elderly were thought to have a depleted spirit (to be "low-spirited), women were of erratic spirit, while melancholics' spirit was thick and sluggish. The physically ill of all types had spirits of bad complexion (meaning that their four humors were mixed in an insalubrious ratio); their specific illness was based on what the ratio was. Thus all of these types were prone to sorrow and corresponding ill-health.[76] For the melancholy with slow-moving spirits, Bartholomaeus de Montagnana in his *Consilia* advised stimulating the emotions to stir them up. To this end, he recommended "delightful stories that might expand the *spiritus* and move bodily substances." (*historias delectabilis que dilatent spiritus et mouent materias.*)[77]

A practical applications of humoral theory held that since a certain non-natural caused an illness, an opposing one would heal it, as this middle English treatise tells us: "And sykness that cometh of angir and of sorrow ben heled with joy and murth."[78] Leonardo da Vinci, although himself quite skeptical about the abilities and medicines of most doctors, addresses this very subject in a letter :

You know that medicines when well used restore health to the sick: they will be well used when the doctor together with his understanding of their nature shall understand also what man is, what life is, and what constitution and health are. Know these well and you will know their opposites; and when this is the case you will know well how to devise a remedy.[79]

The Healthful Climate

---

[75] ibid., p.26. For a further discussion of Avicenna's concept of spiritual "lightness," see Harvey, pp.22-26. Delight and joy were particularly beneficial emotions to feel because they moved the body's internal heat "slowly and gently" to the outer parts. Anger also drew off the body's heat, but it did so suddenly and the abrupt movement was harmful or even fatal to the body.

[76] ibid., p.26.

[77] *Consilia Magistri Bartholomei Montagnane* (Venice, 1499), ff. 83_v, 15_v; quoted in Olsen, p.61.

[78] British Library MS Sloan 3489 ff. 31-32v; quoted in O'Laughlin, p.44.

[79] *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. Edward MacCurdy (New York, 1958), p.1143.

From this brief survey, it can be seen that taking pleasure was thought to ensure good health. Importantly, the tangible attributes of beautiful scenes that gave spiritual pleasure and therefore ensured continued good health were also the very real physical, climatic attributes of place that contributed to healthfulness. Thus, the enjoyment of Nature's beauties was psychologically a joy, but the very elements of landscape that were thought to be sensually pleasing were *also* those that signified a salubrious geography, further validating the visual pleasures by a concrete link to physiological health. Take, for example, Lorenzo de'Medici's definition of paradise as "nothing other than a most agreeable garden, abounding with pleasant and delightful things, with trees, with apples, with flowers, with fresh and flowing waters, songs of birds, and in effect, all the amenities that the heart of a man can think of."[80] The elements in this typical *locus amoenus* listing are not only those beauties most aesthetically-pleasing, they are also the things most desirable in a region for health. The region's fecundity of fruit and flower prove its climate to be temperate. Lorenzo's passage describes Spring, the most hygienic of the seasons. Flowing waters as opposed to stagnant ones were considered important for both potability and the avoidance of miasma, as well as being thought calming in their sound. Thus, the literary and visual conceit of the aesthetic enjoyment of a spot corresponds closely to what was considered a healthful environment.

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Robert Burton compiled an enormous and entertaining compendium of medical advice entitled *The Anatomy of Melancholy* which recapitulated medical opinions from Antiquity onwards. He divides his work up by the non-naturals.[81] In his section on the non-natural "aire," which includes the temperature, breeziness, moisture level, noise, smell and visual aspect of a location, Burton quotes Galen as saying "I will teach them what temper of ambient aire they shall make

---

80 *...non vuole dire altro che uno giardino ammenissimo, abundant di tutte le cose piacevole e dilettevoli, d'arbori, di pomi, di tori, e acque vive e correnti, canti d'uccelli, e in effetto di tutti le amenita che puo pensare el cuore dell'uomo. The Autobiography of Lorenzo de Medici the Magnificent: A Commentary on my Sonnets*, trans. James Wyatt Cook (Binghamton, 1995), pp.88-9.

81 Robert Burton, (Democritus, Jr.), *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 2 vols. eds. Nicolas K. Keissling, Thomas C. Faulkner, and Rhonda L. Blair (Oxford, 1989). Originally published in 1621.

choice of, what winde, what countries they shall choose, and what avoid."[82] The ideal location would have air "temperate, serene, quiet, free from boggs...all manner of putrefication, contaigouse and filthy, noysome smels."[83] As we shall see, if a person's dwelling place lacked these things, he could artificially produce them.[84]

Burton quotes Galen as insisting that people think carefully about what region to inhabit, based on climate and geography. These variables have always been thought to be some of the main determiners of health. The idea that some climates might be healthier than others is such a received notion that to mention it might seem superfluous. However, an analysis of just how linked the Western notion of the beauty of a place with its healthfulness is will firmly link the traditional aesthetic attributes of the pleasance with salubrity. We have seen that a good complexion (and therefore a likeness to the celestial harmonies) was brought about by the the correct mix of hot, cold, moist and dry. These qualities were taken literally, and climate was thought to greatly effect health and temperament. A person could moderate his internal tendencies towards hotness, coldness, dryness, or moistness by inhabiting a place where the climate either augmented or diminished these qualities. Renaissance texts such as Alberti's *della Famiglia* are quite concerned with air and location and discuss at length appropriate climate as well as its importance for health. Concerning where to settle one's family, Alberti writes: "Salubrity is to be considered first, and, consequently, I should look for a place where the air and everything else is conducive to health."[85] Again, as Burton and Avicenna remind us, air is

---

[82] ibid., II. 2.3.1,p. 58, ll. 14-15.

[83] ibid., II, 2.3.1.,p. 58, ll. 24-5.

[84] When Archduke Maximilian was imprisoned in Bruges in 1488, Gerard David was summoned to paint outdoor scenes on the "wickets and shutters" of his prison. These scenes were to lighten the spirits of the Duke, saddened by his loss of freedom. Huizinga, p.247.

[85] *The Alberti's of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's* Della Famiglia (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971), p.191, see also pp. 130-33, 178-79, and 189-92. In his remarks, Alberti is following, among others, the tradition of Vitruvius, whose chapter I, Book VI explores "The Influence of Climate on Architecture." Vitruvius (VI.c.1.2) writes that "Thus we may remedy by art the harm that comes by chance."[*Ita, quod ultra natura laedit, arte erit emendandum.*]. He goes on to remark on the various regions of the earth and how the inhabitants have to adapt to excesses or deficiencies in the four humoral qualities. When building, he suggests architects try to counter-balance these extremes. Such remarks are typical and inform most Antique and Renaissance city-planning (*On Architecture*, 2 vols., trans. Frank Granger, Loeb Classical Library,1931).

a very broad category that commands many aspects of a locale, including the visual scene it presents. As we shall see, art could help to create artificially a healthy air for those whose real environment did not offer it.

The Rhetorical Origins of the Pleasance

Early origins of the literary description of nature can be found in the traditions of both forensic (legal) and epideictic (descriptive) rhetoric.[86] Epideictic oratory, with its rules for *inventio*, is the most important source for the development of the poetic *locus amoenus*. [87] Of things to be praised in epideictic oratory, places stand as their own category. Quintilian agrees that places form one of the groups of things to be eulogized, and that they can be praised for their beauty, their fertility, or their healthfulness.[88] This list of possible praises points out both how important healthfulness was when describing natural landscape, and how, for centuries, the notions of the beauty, fertility and healthfulness of landscapes were connected.

Ekphrasis, a rhetorical exercise stemming from the tradition of epideictic oratory, consists of describing a subject so vividly that it seems present to the listener's senses. This exercise, which often used the *locus amoenus* as its subject, solidified the tradition of the "pleasant place," and helped to dictate what (with certain variation) would make up the pleasance for centuries. The *Progymnasmata*, a set of rhetorical exercises constructed by Hermogenes of Tarsus in the second century that was used in both Byzantium and the West through the fifteenth century, advises "Ekphrasis is an account with detail; it is visible so to speak, and brings before the eyes that which is to be shown. Ekphrases are of people, actions, times, places, seasons and many other things...."[89] Thus sanctioned by the

[86] Curtius, p.193. In forensic rhetoric, the rhetorician can defend his point with either inartificial or artificial proofs. These latter argumenti must be of his own devising, and such artificial proofs come from loci, or categories of either the person or the things. The loci of the thing (argumenta a re or attributa) include the answers to questions such as why, when, where, and how. Each of these questions is further divided. Answering where results in an argumentum a loco, which describes the setting in which the event in question occurred. The encyclopedic listing found in the literary locus amoenus may come from the argumentum a loco.

[87] ibid., p.194.

[88] *Institutio Oratoria,* trans. H.E. Butler, Loeb Classic Library,1920, III. vii. 27.

[89] quoted in Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.85.

rules of rhetoric, the tradition of bringing places so vividly before listeners or viewers that their senses were actually stimulated into "beholding" the healthfulness, beauty and fecundity of the spot described had a long pedigree and firmly cemented notions of salubrity with loveliness.

It is not surprising that the canonical literary *locus amoenus* which arose from the rhetorical tradition of sensually appealing descriptive praise included all three of the qualities Quintilian had said a spot could be lauded for: beauty, fertility, and healthfulness. A *locus amoenus* is, always and by definition, healthful. In many mythic paradises, one aspect of the described landscape, apart from its beauty, fecundity, and comfort, is its gift of everlasting youth and health, free from pain and without suffering. It is as true for Homer's Syria as for Virgil's Arcadia and for the Christian Eden; all places that share "Golden Age" characteristics are temperate and healthful *loci amoeni*. So Lorenzo's definition that Paradise is nothing other than a fecund garden in eternal Springtime is not a novel one, but draws on centuries-old conventions of what the beauties of nature were, how they should be set forth, and what they signified for the beholder.

A continuation of this antique tradition, we find that in Renaissance literature and the visual arts, the representation of what makes up a beautiful landscape corresponds to the medical notion of what will ensure good health. Underscoring this is the medical theory that included the visually-appealing attributes of a landscape among the healthful characteristics of its "aire."As stated, the healthful non-naturals that composed the "aire" of a location were canonically included in the rhetoric of the *locus amoenus*, or pleasance; the accepted verbal way of setting forth landscape. Thus, a landscape's beauty and its healthfulness could not be considered separately; they are inextricably entwined. The beauty of a scene was one of its criteria *for* healthfulness for two self-referential reasons: the aspects of a healthy environment became the criteria for a location's beauty, and the sensual stimulation found in this recognized beauty was itself salubrious.

The Hygienic Principle and the "Re-Creative" Value of Pleasure

A landscape's natural beauty implied its healthfulness, and the act of enjoying it

was in itself hygienic because enjoyment led to cheerfulness, or "light spirits," a mood seen as a desirable part of a healthy life. Aldobrandino of Siena's *Regime du Corps*, written in the thirteenth century but widely circulated through the fifteenth, advises one to "be joyful and happy and associate with cheerful people and read pleasant and unusual things."[90] Leonardo wrote a sixteen-line rhymed poem on maintaining health that offers this same advice, beginning with the recommendation *Se voi star sano, osserva questa norma*. The list of health hints that follows, which range from how to chew to when and how much wine to drink, ends with the lines *el capo ti posa e tien la mente lieta,/ fuggi lussuria, e attenti alla dieta.*[91]

If one was not so blessed as to naturally *tien la menta lieta*, "keep your mind cheerful," there were various prescriptions for how to do this. It is striking how many doctors and theorists thought the "aesthetics" of their patients' surroundings could in large measure affect their spirits, and how many of them advised partaking of moderate sensual pleasures, including looking at beautiful things, to ensure continued healthfulness. Medical *therapy* (the Greek word for treatment) was unpredictable; it was better to keep a patient in good health than to undertake the uncertain task of curing him. Because of this, *hygienic* (the Greek word for the science of healthy living) advice abounds. This means that in the Renaissance, medical care consisted as much if not more of preventative measures, in the form of proposed regimens for health, as it did of treatments for maladies. The doctor's task was to preserve physical fitness by monitoring and adjusting the non-naturals of diet, exercise, rest, environmental conditions, and psychological well-being in order to keep patients in good "complexion." Such adjustments literally "re-created" the patient's complexion and lifted his spirits. Regimens were proposed for groups who would be

---

[90] *Prendre ioye et leesse et hanter gens ioyeuses et lire choses et estranges.* quoted in Olsen, pp.56-57.

[91] trans. MacCurdy, p.1175. Leonardo, in urging most strongly rest, a light spirit and a careful diet, was probably responding to the most famous of all Medieval regimens, the *Regimen sanitatis salernitanum*. In its fourth and fifth lines, it advises *si tibi deficiant medici, medici tibi fiant / Hec tria: mens leta, requies, moderate dieta*, "Should you lack physicians, these three doctors will suffice: A joyful mind, rest and a moderate diet." "A Salernitan Regimen of Health," trans. Patricia W. Cummins, *Allegorica*, 1, no. 2 (1976), pp.82-3.

exposed to the same non-naturals, and thus need equivalent preventative measures.[92]

The *Secretum*, a letter purported to be from Aristotle to Alexander, which existed in a Latin verse translation by Johannes Hispaniensis, was one such prophylactic regimen. It advised that seeing beauty and precious things would lift and gladden Alexander's spirit. A light spirit would promote his continued health, while heaviness and sorrow might make him sicken. The (pseudo) Aristotle further advised that a light spirit would make him quick in his deeds and more able to attend to his offices. Specifically, Alexander is told to: "beholde beuteuos parsonis, and delectabil bookis, and hear pleasaunt songis, and be in cumpany of such as a man louith, and to were goode clothis, and to be annoyntid with swete oynementis.[93] Aristotle's list is the sort of enumeration we read over and over again in discourses on health.

Robert Burton, in his collection of medical advice from Antiquity through the sixteenth century, also relates the gladdening effect that the beauties of art and architecture can have. Furthering the notion that little distinction was made between the actual beholding of an object or place and the apprehension of it through a painted or written text, he quotes Pausanius that to read descriptions of such visions is almost as salubrious as to behold them with one's own eyes:

> The inspection alone of those curious iconographies of Temples and pallaces, as that of the *Lateran* Church in *Alburtus Dürer*. That of the Temple of *Jerusalem* in Josephus, *Andricomius* and *Villalpandus:* that of the *Escuriall* in *Quadrus*, of *Diana* at *Ephesus* in *Pliny*, *Neros* golden palace in *Rome, Justinians* in Constantinople...*St. Markes* in *Venice* by *Ignatius*, with many such: *priscorum artificium opera* (saith the interpreter of Pausanius) the rare workmanship of those ancient *Greekes* in Theaters, Obelisks, Temples, Statues, gold, silver, ivory, marble, Images, *non minore ferme quum leguntur, quam quum cernuntur, animum delectatione complent*, affect one as much by reading almost, as by sight.[94]

Thus, merely reading ekphrases of beautiful objects might divert and lighten the spirits, thereby maintaining good health.

---

[92] Nancy Siraisi, *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp.120-1.

[93] Middle English translation quoted in Olsen, p.53.

[94] Burton, II. 2.4.1, p. 76, ll.12-21.

Beyond prophylactic measures, however, the senses could also be stimulated to cure illnesses. Certain sicknesses, many of which we would classify as mental illnesses, were thought to respond to a treatment of altering and/or enhancing the patient's surroundings. The Persian physician and medical encyclopedist Rhazes (ar-Razi, 865-925 A.D.), author of an influential medical compendium known in the west as the *Almansor*, divided his work up by the body part to be treated. Melancholy, for example, was listed under diseases of the head. This sort of classification was adopted by Renaissance physicians and is relevant to the Renaissance understanding of psychology: "The materialist psychology associated with the concept of complexion and humoral qualities ensured that, in the *Almansor* and similarly arranged treatises, mental complaints (frenzy, melancholy) were interspersed among other afflictions of the head."[95] Other illnesses thought to respond to the stimulations of sensual pleasure which we will look at are erotomania, insanity, insomnia, and senescence.

Melancholy

As joy was the mental state linked with robust good health, it is not surprising that melancholy was thought to lead to maladies such as "depression, epilepsy, palsy, lethargy and what we would today call anxiety complexes," and could even in its more severe forms lead to death.[96] Though the list sounds dire, melancholy was not without benefits. It was supposed that genius coexisted with the disease, a thought engendered by no less a personage than Aristotle himself, who expressed the allure of the Saturnine temperament: "All extraordinary men gifted in philosophy, politics, poetry, and the arts, are evidently melancholic."[97]

Galen had noted that melancholy was caused by an excess of black bile. In the Middle Ages, although writers were not unaware of the more positive associations

[95] Siraisi, p. 131.

[96] Margot and Rudolph Wittkower, *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution* (Norton,1963), p.102. For the complex history of attitudes towards Melancholy, see Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (New York, 1964).

[97] Aristotle, *Problemata*, XXX, I.

Aristotle had made with this imbalance, melancholy was regarded largely as a physical ailment to be cured.[98] It was Marsilio Ficino's *de Vita Triplici* (1482-1489) that re-established melancholy as the temperament of geniuses, and by the sixteenth century, it was *de rigueur* for all men aspiring to a position in the arts or letters to claim the disease.[99]

Even during the Renaissance vogue for melancholy, however, remedies were sought against its negative physical associations. Ficino's book gives lengthy recommendations on diet and regimen and suggests the arts and music as powerful antidotes to the physical corrosion associated with the saturnine temperament.[100] He took the disease and its repercussion quite seriously, as this quote from his chapter entitled "The Most Careful Remedy For Black Bile" attests:

[until] Now really we have been dealing with lighter matters [headaches, runny noses, coughs, foggy visions and nausea], so let us return again to something that is most dangerous, that is, black bile. When it abounds and rages, it weakens the whole body, especially the spirit, which is the instrument of thought, and thought itself, and judgment...[101]

Ficino's late-fifteenth century assessment of the severity of the affliction shows that remedies were indeed needed. Most of them were quite pleasant. In the thirteenth century, doctor and teacher Taddeo Alderotti advised that his patient, a sick and melancholy Marquis, avoid worry and sadness by doing things that he found enjoyable: "His cheerfulness, gaiety and solace should be prompted by taking walks at times, by *seeing things that are beautiful and delightful to him*, by hearing songs and instruments he likes, by being told about and promised great yields from profitable markets, or by some other means."[102] Another thirteenth century *consilium*, written by Gentile da Foligno,

---

98 Wittkowers, p.102.

99 Wittkowers, pp.102-104.

100 Wittkowers, p.106.

101 *The Book of Life: Liber de Vita or De Vita Triplici,* trans. Charles Boer (Irving: University of Dallas Press), 1980. I. xviii.26.

102 *Inducatur gaudium et letitia et solatium eundo spatiatim, vivendo es pulchras et delectabiles sibi, audiendo cantilenas et instrumenta sibi placentia, et annuntientur et promittantur sibi magna lucra de mercationibus lucrativas, vel alia modo.* Taddeo Alderotti, "Consilia," ed. Giuseppi Michele Nardi (Turin, 1937), I.55. italics mine. See also Nancy Siraisi,*Taddeo Alderotti and His Pupils.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

suggests that the ill or melancholy take a change of scenery, so that the unusual and fresh view may lift their spirits and renew their vitality.[103]

Ugo Benzi (the philosopher and physician Hugh of Sienna,1367-1439) recommends conversations in pleasant places (*in locis pulchris et amenis*) to shake off unhealthful melancholy.[104] To a young nobleman sick to death with persistent melancholy, Benzi gives a more precise prescription:

There should be the most diligent effort to instill liveliness and good hope in him, and to shift his thought on one day to some delightful and fitting thing, on another to something else. Such things include *looking at various beautiful and entertaining decorations*; hearing music and songs; reading something not too difficult, like a narrative or some other work that he likes; perfuming and selecting clothes for himself; preparing houses, pleasure gardens and estates; and other similar activities.[105]

In the first book of his *De Vita Triplici*, entitled *On Caring for the Health of Men of Letters*, Marsilio Ficino writes a tenth chapter called "Why Black Bile Must Be Avoided." To assuage the bitterness of a preponderance of the melancholy-causing black bile, Ficino advises:

I recommend the frequent sight of shining water, the sight of red or green colors, the use of gardens or woods, walks and rivers. Take strolls through beautiful meadows, go horseback riding, travel in carriages and go sailing. Above all, I recommend easy occupations, diverse enjoyments that are not a bother, and the constant companionship of gracious men.[106]

In Chapter eighteen, *The Most Careful Remedy for Black Bile*, Ficino continues his prescription: "*Those things which are pleasant should be seriously looked at*, listened to, smelled and contemplated. Those things which are not pleasant should be kept away."[107]

Burton records that, "The most pleasant of all outward pastimes is that of

---

103 *...et mutatio de terra in terram.* quoted in Olsen, p.59.

104 *Consilila Ugonis Senensis saluberrima ad omnes egritudines* (Venice, 1518), f. 4v; quoted in Olsen, p.60.

105 *Sed sit diligentissimum studium in dando sibi alacritatem et bonum spem et permutando cogitationes suas quadem die ad vnam rem delectabilem et honestam, alia die ad aliam. Et hoc aut vedendo diursa ornamenta pulchra vel inculatoria, aut audiendo sonos et cantilenas, aut in legendo aliquid non difficile sed vel hystorium vel aliam rem sibi caram, vel odorando vel; ordinando sibi vestes, vel aptando domos et viridaria et possessiones et allias modis similbus.* quoted in Olsen, p.60. italics mine.

106 Ficino, I. x. 20.

107 ibid., I.xviii.26.

...deambulatio per amoena loca, to make a pretty progresse."[108] He describes how useful such pastimes will be to those who are sick, quoting St. Bernard:

A sicke man sits upon a greene banke...and *feeds his eyes* with a variety of objects, hearbes, trees, to comfort his misery, he receaves many delightful smells, and fills his ears with that sweet and various harmony of Birds: good God what a company of pleasures hast thou made for man?"[109]

If one must stay inside, however, artificial stimulants can be sought. A very lengthy quote from Burton addresses the uses of the representational arts in banishing melancholy:

But amongst those exercises, or recreations of the minde within doores, there is none so generall, so aptly to be applied to all sorts of men, so fit and proper to expell Idleness and Melancholy, as that of *Study*....What so full of content, as to read, walke and see Mappes, Pictures, Statues, Jewels, Marbles, which some so much magnifie, as those *Phidias* made of old, so exquisite and pleasing to beheld, that as *Chrysostome* thinketh, *if any man be sickly, troubled in mind, or that cannot sleepe for griefe, and shall but stand over against one of Phidias Images, he will forget all care, or whatsoever else may molest him in an instant?* There be those as much taken with *Michel Angelos, Raphael de Urbino, Francesco Francias peeces,* and many of those Italian and Dutch painters, which were most excellent in their ages, and esteem of it as a most pleasing sight, to view...artificiall workes, perspective glasses, old reliques, *Roman* antiquities, variety of colours. A good Picture is a *falsa veritas & muta poesis,* and though (as Vives saith) *artificiala delectant, sed mox fastidimus*,[110] artificiall toyes please but for a time; yet who is he that will not be moved with them for the present?[111]

Even if one must remain indoors, Burton writes, one can still experience visual pleasures. One can walk through a gallery of pictures, or even have them brought before the mind's eye in written descriptions ("to read, walk, and see...pictures"). Burton takes it for granted that the purpose of such viewings is to have beautiful things represented as substitutes for the real. This is clear from his statement that a picture is a *falsa veritas* --a false truth. He quotes Vives as saying that the false pleasures of mimetic representation will please only for a little while, but he counters this by noting that though the illusory effect may not satisfy forever, it does genuinely move the spectator. To back up this claim, he tells how Achilles' spirits were lifted by Thetis' famous gift:

When Achilles was tormented and sad for the losse of his deare friend Patroclus, his

[108] Burton, ll. 23-4.

[109] ibid., II, 2.4.1, (p. 73), ll. 9-14.

[110] *De Anima*. 3.

[111] Burton, II. 2.4.1, (p. 84).

mother Thetis brought him a most elaborate and curious buckler made by Vulcan, in which were engraven Sunne, Moone, Starres, Planets, Sea, Land, men fighting, running, riding, women scolding, hils, dales, townes, castles, brookes, rivers, trees, &c. with many pretty landskips, and perspective peaces: with sight of which he was infinitely delighted, and much eased of his grief.

Continuo eo spectaculo captus delenito moerore
Oblectabatur, in manibus tenens dei splendida dona.[112]

Who will not be affected so in like a case, or to see those well furnished Cloisters and Galleries of the *Roman* Cardinals, so richly stored with all moderne Pictures, old Statues and Antiquities? *Cum se____spectando recreet simul & legendo*, to see their pictures alone and read the description, as *Boissardus* well addes, whom will it not affect?[113] ...Or in some Princes Cabinets, like that of the great Dukes of Florence...to see such a variety of attires, faces, so many rare, and such exquisite peeces, of men, birds, beastes, &c. to see those excellent landskips, Dutch-workes, and curious cuts of *Sadlier of Sprage, Alburtus Dürer, Goltzius, Vrintes, &c.* such pleasant peeces of perspective...[114]

Notably, in the passages above, landscapes are often cited as images that one would want to have convincing copies of indoors. Burton takes it for granted that "excellent landskips" will attract the viewer's attention. Indeed, in his description of Achilles' famous shield, he claims (mistakenly) that the landscape elements decorating it are what delight the warrior and distract him from his grief over Patroclus' death. Who, he asks, would not similarly be "recreated" (*recreet*) by such viewings today?

Erotomania

Landscapes are quite traditionally supposed to bring solace to the grief-stricken. The fifteenth-century French poet Alain Chartier, in his day compared to Petrarch, writes of curing his own love-inspired melancholy in such a way:

To forget melancholy
And to cheer myself,
One sweet morning I went out into the fields
On the first day on which love joins
Hearts in the beautiful season
[I enter]...a charming meadow, where nature
Strewed flowers on the verdure
White, yellow, red and violet....
It looked like a painting,
So many various colors were there.[115]

[112] *Iliad.* 19.

[113] *Topogr. Rom.* part 1.

[114] Burton, ll. 16-36, (p. 85), ll.1-19.

[115] quoted in Huizinga, pp.281-283.

Nothing is unique in Alain's verse. Similar poems exist in Italian, Latin, German, Greek and Spanish. It stems, of course, from the *locus amoenus*, a rhetorically-rooted poetic conceit that goes back at least to Ancient Greece. There is also nothing new in the concept of the lovelorn poet writing about seeking solace for erotically inspired melancholy in a radiant glade--a continuous history of examples from antiquity onward again could be traced. Two things are interesting to note, however. First, Alain is cheered by a landscape that he specifically claims is picturesque, pointing out that in order to cheer himself he chooses to walk in a field that *looked like a painting* because of the multitudes of colorful flowers. Second, there is a medical tradition behind these poetic measures.

The emphasis Petrarchan verse placed on the pining Lover obsessed with the image of his Beloved was not a mere poetic conceit. Love sickness, or *erotomania*, was a cataloged and treatable medical illness. Plutarch wrote of erotomania in his much-cited *Amatorius*, and was credited (erroneously) with having coined the term.[116] He likens it to a fire that is difficult or impossible to quench, one that burns the image of the Beloved into the mind of the Lover.[117] Many medical texts discuss passionate love, or *amor hereos*, as a physical disease and list the suffering Lover's symptoms.[118] Dino del Garbo, a fourteenth-century physician and the author of a commentary on Guido Cavalcanti's

116 "Of Love,"*Plutarch's Morals*, 4 vols., trans. W.W. Goodwin (Boston, 1874), IV.280. Unlike later authors, Plutarch is willing to admit that women as well as men can suffer love. Boccaccio, too, in his *Elegy of the Lady Fiammetta*, has his heroine suffer almost exactly the symptoms that Plutarch describes. In the later Renaissance, however, the Lover becomes almost always a man and the beloved object is a woman. On the absence of women from Renaissance discussions of Love, Ruth Kelso notes: "most of the books on love are written for man, and oddly enough almost all completely ignore the woman's part in what might be supposed to be necessarily a two-sided business. In these at best the woman is assigned a wholly passive role....It is easier to see the Lover than the Beloved." *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p.137.

117 Plutarch distinguishes between the Lover's constant dreaming of his/her Beloved, which he calls "poetical fancies" and dreams that occur in sleep. The latter he says are like visions seen in water, they slip away quickly and are hard to distinguish. The Lover's poetic fancies, by contrast, are "impressed upon the memory of the Lover in fiery characters, just like encaustum [sic] paintings." So important were the eyes in transmitting love that Boccaccio said the blind were incapable of love because they could not transmit images to the mind. see Kelso, p.143.

118 Siraisi, p.131. For a lengthy discussion of *Amor Heroes* and how it was thusly named in a conflation and confusion of the terms *hereos*, *eros*, and the Latin *herus*, see: John Livingston Lowes, "The Loveres Maladye of Hereos," *Modern Philology*, 11 (1913-14), 491-546, particularly section V, 521-24.

poetry, wrote that Love was properly discussed as one of the non-naturals. Writing about Guido's "Donna mi Prega," Dino gave three proofs of this: Love comes from outside the body, it can come and go, and it is an appetite of the soul, like the other emotions, not a substance like the humors.[119] Even in the seventeenth century, the Neapolitan physician Marco Aurelio Severino (d. 1656) wrote that Love was properly discussed in the realm of medicine and *not* philosophy: "I believe it proper to discuss...what love is: and leaving aside for the time being the ways of the Platonists and all other Philosophers, I will follow the physicians, who are more sensible."[120]

Haly Abbas' *Regalis dispositio*, or *The King's Book*, which was published in translation in Venice in 1492, followed Rhazes' *Almansor* in breaking down illnesses into categories according to which part of the body was afflicted. Thus, in Book IX which deals with the brain, Haly Abbas wrote about Melancholy and one of its varieties, erotomania. The disease of love effects the brain by causing a "mental fixation of *cogitatio* on the loved object."[121] Showing that they considered erotomania to be a form of melancholy, Aristotle and Galen had noted that desire causes an increase of heat in the body, which in turn makes the malignant humors of the body, particularly black bile, proliferate.[122]

As to how one might cure such illness, Haly Abbas says that the best medicine for the passions is to avoid care and envy at all costs and to seek out joy.[123] Suffering Lovers must moisten their dryness (caused, as Plutarch noted, by their literally burning passion). Haly Abbas suggested that the Lover's dryness be relieved with oil of violets and his melancholic spirits raised with pleasant company. Other typical recommendations included

---

119"The *Canzone d'Amore* of Cavalcanti According to the Commentary of Dino del Garbo," trans. and commented on by Otto Bird, *Medieval Studies*. 2, 161 (1940),178-9.

120 quoted in Massimo Ciavollela, "Eros and the Phantasm of *Heroes,*" *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Tradition of Love in the Renaissance*, eds. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavollela (Ottowa: University of Toronto Press, 1992), pp.76-77.

121 Harvey, p.20. Guido Cavalcanti was in agreement with this placement of the illness of love. In one of his canzoni, commented on by physician Dino del Garbo, he proved that the brain was the seat of love as well as memory, because memory stores the image of the Beloved. Ciavollela, p.77.

122 Ciavolella, p.79.

123 Harvey, p.20.

distracting the Lover with conversation, walks in green meadows, and music.[124] The 1418 treatise *Philonium* by the Portuguese physician Valescus of Taranta suggests thirteen cures for love, of which the fifth is:

Quinto iuuat incedere per prata cum sociis et dilectis viridaria et nemora: et par iardinos floridos vbi cantant aues et resonent philomenae...vbi flores et serta et gaudis perparentur: ut unus homo saluetur: et ista ab eius consortio cum conuenientia et dei reuerentia suscipiantur tam in gurgitatione voluptatum quae multum deo displicent.[125]

Such diversions continued to be prescribed for centuries; in 1545, Duke Philip I of Mecklenburg's erotomania was treated with walks, games and happy pastimes, music and song.[126]

Lorenzo de Medici also saw love as a humoral imbalance or illness, albeit a desirable one. In his *A Commentary on my Sonnets* he takes pains to address the medical reasons behind the symptoms of love. The Lover, whether happy or unhappy, cries because the passions rise up into the brain and compress it into itself. The brain, "being by nature moist and compressible like a sponge full of water...distills through the eyes a part of that moisture."[127] The lover sighs when he is near his lady because his joy is so great at being in her presence that "all...powers and vital spirits [are] occupied" (*tutti le forze e spiriti vitali*). [128] Thus, breathing is arrested, and the heart, overheated by the inflamed spirits, comes near to suffocating. A sigh is necessary to circulate a great draught of cooling air around the ailing heart.[129] Sighs and tears, however, are the least of the Lover's worries. Lorenzo reminds us that, "It is the nature of the melancholy, as we have said

---

124 Ciavollela, pp.80-81.

125 quoted in Lowes, p.506. This article quotes many treatises recommending just such pleasant places as cures for erotomania.

126 Erik H.C. Midelfort, *Mad Princes of Renaissance Germany* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994), p.15.

127 *Autobiography*, p.103.

128 With relation to love's power to arrest bodily functions, Lowes quotes an Arabic treatise, the *Hayat al-Hayawan* by Ad-Damiris which relates that in love "the mind is diverted from the sensual energies, and the lover is prevented from eating and drinking...and also from thinking, remembering, imagining, and sleeping...in which state there is no room left in the mind of the lover for anything but the picture of the object of his ardent love" (p.517). Lorenzo couldn't have known this treatise, but certainly knew others like it.

129 *Autobiography*, pp.109-11.

lovers to be, not to seek any other remedy for sorrow but the accumulation of sorrow [itself] and to hate and flee every kind of solace and consolation."[130]

Nature's beauties are Lorenzo's favorite source of solace. In the commentary to his second sonnet, he explains how he came to write it, inspired one April day when he was walking alone in a glade, thinking of his dead Beloved: "This most excellent Lady died in the month of April, in which time the earth is customarily clothed in various colors of flowers, very appealing (*vaghi*) to the eyes and restorative (*recreazione*) to the mind (*animo*)."[131] He took such a recourse to the pain of grief because, as he writes in the commentary on his fourth sonnet:

Whoever feels excessive sorrow commonly tries to diminish it in two ways...therefore...I went seeking either some place solitary and shady, or the amenity of some green meadow...either I placed myself near some clear running water or in the shadow of some lovely green tree.[132]

He emphasizes these sentiments in a verse of his *Sonnet Twenty-one*, which reads:

Un verde praticel pien di bei fiori,
un rivolo che l'erba interno bagni
uno uccelletto che d'amor si lagni,
acqueta mollto meglio i nostri ardori.[133]

A small, green meadow filled with lovely flowers,/ a little brook that bathes the plants around, / A little bird lamenting his love, / Much better these our burning ardors ease.

Lorenzo's Petrarchan expression of the pain of love, as described in his poems and his commentary, shows how inextricably intertwined material and spiritual suffering were thought to be. The fires of passion that burn the lover literally suffocate his heart and constrict his brain, so that enjoying the cool loveliness of a watery glade is an actual relief to his symptoms. Moreover, Lorenzo's awareness of the beauties of April, as revealed to

---

130 *E natura de'melancolici, come abbiamo detto essere gli amanti, nel dolore non cercare altro rimedio che accumulazione di dolore e avere in odio e fuggire ogni generazione de refriggerio e consolazione. Autobiography*, p. 69.

131 *Mori questa excellentissima donna del mese d'aprile, nel quale tempo la terra si suole vestire di diversi colori di fiori, molti vaghi agli occhi e di grande recreazione all'animo. Autobiography*, pp.62-3.

132 *Che sente excessivo dolore, comunemente in due modi fa pruova di mitargli...pero...andavo cercando o qualche luogo solitario e ombroso o l'amenita di qualche verde prato...o mi poneva presso a qualche chiara e corrente acqua o all'ombra di qualche verde arbruscello. Autobiography*, pp.70-73.

133 *Autobiography*, p.166.

him in his walks and rendered by him in his poetry, is telling. The delights, he says, are *vagi* to the eyes. That is, they let the eyes wander [*vagare*] and be charmed in their travels. This "recreates" [*recreazione*] the anima or soul. Thus, *recreazione*, our word recreation, as Lorenzo understood it, literally means re-creating the spirit by shifting the humoral balance. These shifts occur through the pleasurable contemplation of Nature's beauty. Lorenzo would have also believed that poetic representations of nature, such as he himself rendered, were also sources through which the spirit could be recreated through pleasure.

Insanity

Sometimes, as Lorenzo admits, melancholy becomes so severe that the sufferer abandons himself to it and longs for death. At this point melancholy becomes madness. Indeed, madness was most often thought of as an extreme case of melancholy.[134] It was taken for granted that such severe mental deviances were caused by acute humoral imbalances, either inborn or resulting from some external circumstance. They were thought to be treatable, however, and often were acted upon with the same remedies we have seen for erotomania and slighter melancholies.

As might be expected, attempts were made to lift the spirits of the mad and thus balance their humoral complexion. Generally the treatment was to surround the patients with beautiful objects and amuse them with pleasing games and pastimes. In the chapter of Boccaccio's *De genealogiis deorum gentilium* devoted to a defense of poetry, the author notes that lighter verse and fables have been proven useful in quelling the madness of the insane.[135] The non-naturals that effect complexion can also be manipulated. Duke Johann Wilhelm of Julich-Cleves-Berg's hereditary madness was systematically treated in such a manner. His physician attempted to regulate each of the six non-naturals that would effect the Duke. The first, the air in his rooms, was altered by making sure that the light and temperature were moderate and the atmosphere perfumed with apple peels and citrus bark.

134 Insanity literally means "unhealthiness." The underlying etymological meaning of madness is "changed," reflecting the ancient idea that mental illness was caused by a humoral shift. It was recognized that mental imbalance could also be caused by such non-melancholic causes as a blow to the head.

135 *In Defense of Poetry*, trans. and introduced Charles G. Osgood (New York, 1956),14.9.3.

Also grouped under the non-natural of air was the suggestion that hanging "simple tapestries with pictures of fruits and flowers would encourage good cheer."[136] Somewhat later, at the turn of the seventeenth century, another physician attempted to treat Johann Wilhelm's insanity in a similar fashion. His treatment record notes that the Duke's regimen included "exercise and recreation with painting, riding and walking."[137]

Insomnia

Another illness thought to be relieved by light verse, the contemplation of beautiful objects, or meditations on natural beauty was insomnia. The *Tacuinum sanitas*, or *Tables of Health*, written in the eleventh century by the Christian Arab physician Ibn Butlan and translated into Latin in the thirteenth century, relates that insomnia is caused by indigestion, which releases heat vapors to the brain. It is dangerous to health, he writes, because "sleeplessness dries out the body, harms the members and the brain, confuses the sense and prompts acute illness."[138] Pleasant conversation in the form of story-telling is recommended. Ibn Butlan suggests that this treatment will work because it engages the senses without any physical movement, and the senses in turn engage the imagination, which excites reason and eventually tires it out.[139] Sensual stimulation through fiction does not require the stimulating persons, events or things to actually be present; their verisimilitude in text is enough to engage imagination and eventually exhaust reason. Sleep is induced, and if the stories told were "delightful, with a fitting verbal adornment" sleep will be deep and with pleasant dreams.

Don Juan Manuel, a fourteenth century Castilian nobleman and author, wrote that because he was burdened with cares, he had trouble falling asleep. Eventually, his health began to fail because of his insomnia. He began to have stories read to him, to distract him

---

136 Midelfort, p.105. To keep his fluids moving, it was suggested that they also be stimulated with "games and honest jokes."

137 Midelfort, p.122.

138 *quod non dormire corpus dessicat, membris et cerebro nocet, sensum* [ed. *sensus*] *permiscet, acutas aegritudines commouet.* from *Tacuinum sanitas* (Strasbourg, 1531) p. 29; quoted in Olsen, p.81.

139 *Tacuinum sanitas*, pp. 29-30; ibid.

from his troubles and restore him to normal sleep habits and better health.[140] In a later example, in Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess*, a character with insomnia knows the health risks of his illness and thus fears that his condition will kill him. Then his problem is compounded--fear of dying depresses him and he becomes melancholic. Finally, after eight years, he reads the myths of Ovid and falls asleep immediately, his mind filled with wonder and moved to pleasant thoughts: "A romaunce, and he it me tok / To red, and drive the night away / For me thoughte it beter play / Than play either at ches or tables.[141]

In his dialogue *Remedies for Adversity*, Petrarch has Reason and Sorrow discuss insomnia. Reason suggests that insomniacs follow Augustus Caesar's example, as reported by Suetonius, and "send for readers or story tellers and restore your sleep."[142] "Sleep" says Reason, "must be brought back, not by force, but by some form of pleasant inducement...Don't strain; do something different, relieve your head, relax your mind, and sleep will come by itself. When your mind is free from cares, and your body is sufficiently tired, sleep will gently steal upon you." Petrarch quotes Virgil, saying that cares break slumber and therefore must be set aside.[143] The readings would have to be the least "thoughtful" types in order to free the mind from all troubles.

Paintings of the lightest sort were also thought to restore health and sleep. Leon Battista Alberti, in one of the most interesting and complex Renaissance comments about landscape, writes that there are various modes of painting and all have their suitable function and place:

Cumque pictura et poetica varia sit: alia quae maximorum gesta principum dignissima memoratu: alia quae privatorum civium mores: alia quae aratorium vitam exprimat. Prima illa quae maiestatem habit publicis at praestantissimorum operibus adhibebitur. Ultima hortis maxime conveniet, quod omnium sit es eadem

---

[140] Olsen, p.84.

[141] quoted in Olsen, p.85.

[142] *Si interruptum somnum reciperare, ut evenit, non posset, lectoribus aut fabulatoribus.... Remedies* , II.202; from Suetonius, ii, Aug. 78. 2.

[143] *frondibus et victu pascuntur simplices herbae,/ pocula sunt fontes liquida atque exercita cursu / flumina, nec somnos abrumpit cura salubris. Georgics*, III. 528-530. Virgil connects the line about moving rivers and clear springs to the one about healthful sleep. This is probably not an accidental association, given insomnia's link to dryness. See the Alberti quote below.

iucundissima. Hilarescimus maiorem in modum animus cum pictas videmus amoenitates regionem, et portus, et piscationes, et venationes, et natationes, et agrestium ludos, et florida et frondosa. [since painting like poetry can deal with various matters--some depict the memorable deeds of great princes, others the manners of private citizens, and still others the life of the simple farmer--those first, which are the most majestic, will be appropriates for public works and the building of the most eminent individuals; the second should adorn the walls of private citizens; and the last will be particularly suitable for *horti*, being the most lighthearted of them all. We are particularly delighted when we see paintings of pleasant landscapes or harbors, scenes of fishing, hunting and bathing, or country sports and flowery and leafy views][144]

Like Lorenzo, Alberti takes it for granted that all people take pleasure in "pleasant landscapes...and leafy views." Apart from the obvious delight the genre provides, this passage also makes it clear that Alberti thought landscape was the "lowest" mode of painting, one that was linked in its categories with rustic verse, and one that affected merely the senses and not the intellect. Though such works did not bestir the mind to the contemplation of higher things, they were not without redeeming qualities.

After listing the modes and decorums of the different genres of painting, Alberti's passage on the ideal ornament for a villa continues, and he discusses the tangible physical benefits certain sorts of images can bring:

Paintings of springs and streams may be of considerable benefit to the feverish. It is possible to verify this: if some night as you lie awake in bed, unable to sleep, you visualize in your mind the clearest springs and streams you have ever seen, that dryness of insomnia will be quenched immediately, and sleep will steal you away into the sweetest slumber.[145]

Thus, landscape is not just decoration for Alberti, but a "non-natural" that has definite psychological and physiological benefits.[146] Alberti no doubt formulated his views on the salubrious benefits of painting from notions of the medical uses of sensual pleasure such

---

144 *De re aedificatoria* (Florence, 1485); trans. from *On the Art of Building in Ten Books* , pp. 299-300. It is hard to say whether there were a great many loggias such as Alberti discusses were being painted in the fifteenth century.We have documents for a few. In 1484, for instance, Vasari says Pintoricchio painted for Pope Innocent VIII *una loggia tutta di paesi; e vi ritrasse Rome, Milano, Genova, Fiorenza, Vinezia e Napoli, alla maniera de'Fiamminghi; che, come cosa insino allora non piu usata, piacquero assai* [he painted a loggia full of landscapes, depicting there in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice, and Naples, after the manner of the Flemings; and this, being a thing not customary at the time, gave no little satisfaction.] Vasari-Milanesi, III.498; du Vere, I.573-4.

145 Alberti, 9.4.162-164.

146 Gombrich (p.111) discusses this passage, saying that for Alberti, landscape "in its effects on the human mind ... is linked with music, in its categories with poetry."

as the ones being discussed here.[147] We have seen elsewhere that insomnia is a result of a dry complexion.[148] Alberti could have read about cures for insomnia in Ovid, who suggested that the sleepless read some pleasant author, or have a basin beside their bed into which water continually dropped, or to try to nod off within earshot of running water.[149] In the Renaissance, the "psychological" benefits of landscape representations were the same as those which came from the contemplation of actual nature or other pleasing visions. That Alberti believed this is shown when, to prove his point about the efficacy of paintings of water soothing bodily dryness, he asks that the reader *imagine* cooling streams in order to feel the effect. If conjuring up a mental image could counterfeit the actual sensual experience to a medically-helpful degree, then there is no doubt that the actual representation of such a scene could provide benefits.

Senescence

Insomnia was not the only bodily ill caused by a dry complexion. The four ages of man were each accompanied by a corresponding humoral and qualitative emphasis. Old age was thought to occur because the body's complexion was slowly drying out and diminishing in spirit, and thus its predominant quality was dryness.[150] Since this change, though inevitable, was a humoral affliction, certain non-naturals could help ward it off.

---

147 Writing one hundred years after Alberti, Lomazzo also emphasized painting's power to effect the human passions and inspire certain physical responses. He wrote: "So a picture artificially expressing the true naturall motions [motions of the spirit, or emotions] will (surely) procure laughter when it laugheth, pensiveness when it is grieved, etc. And, that which is more, will cause the beholder to wonder, when it wondreth, to desire a beautifull young woman for his wife, when he seeth her painted naked: to have a fellow feeling when it is afflicted; to have an appetite when he seeth it eating of dainties; to fall asleep at the sight of a sweete-sleeping picture." In this passage, hunger, lust, and sleepiness are not engendered by thinking about the meanings of the works, but merely by feeling a sympathetic response to visual stimuli. Though he is not discussing landscape painting, Lomazzo is affirming that theorists believed purely physiological responses could be elicited from images. G.P. Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge, Carvinge, Buildinge*, trans. Richard Haydock (Oxford, 1598), II. 1.

148 In a Petrarchan dialogue where Reason attempts to help Sorrow overcome the botheration of the clamorous city, Reason suggests: "Imagine in your mind that you are listening to the sound of waters rushing over rocks." He goes on to list six specific spots known for their moving waters as pleasurable fantasies. Obviously, water was widely thought to be a calming and relieving stimulation. *Remedies*, II. 209.

149 *Lectio jucunda, aut sermo, ad quem attentior animus convertitur, aut aqua ab alto in subjectam pelvim delabature, aut lene sonatus aquae.*

150 Olsen, p.45.

Laurent de Premierfait, who translated the *Decameron* for the Duke du Berry, mentions that pleasure can lengthen life. His dedicatory letter to the novel explains how three profits can arise from the pleasures found in reading or listening to such works. Laurent writes that the second and third profits are:

Second, after difficult or burdensome work, whether physical or mental, it is natural that everyone restore his energy either through the help of food or through some proper pleasure in which the soul takes delight. Third, since you and other earthly rulers represent divine power and majesty, I say that just as joyful and happy praise from the heart should be sung or spoken before the heavenly and omnipotent Lord, so it is proper before Lords that stories be told in an agreeable way with proper language in order to gladden and cheer peoples' spirits. For in order to be more worthy in the eyes of God, rulers and all men may prolong their lives in any rational way consonant with God and nature.[151]

Laurent claims profit arises from pleasure because energy is restored to the hearer, and his spirits are lifted. This increase in spirits will replace those lost with age, and the ruler's life span will be lengthened. In this way he can become even *more* worthy before God for taking steps to prolong his life. Laurent is expressing the idea that pleasure which "gladdens and cheers spirits" is agreeable to God because anything (rational and natural) that prolongs life makes men *more* virtuous in God's eyes.

The second book of Ficino's *de Vita Triplici* is called "How to Prolong Life," and in it we find that Ficino agrees with Laurent about pleasure's ability to lengthen youth. He writes that: "They [the aged] should find music again, if they ever abandoned it, and they should never abandon it again. They should recall the games and habits which they once played...[and] always pursue a variety of amusements."[152] The most beneficial of these pleasures will be the pleasure of taking recreation in Venus' realm, a *locus amoenus*.

---

151 *Secondement, selon ordre de nature aprez griefues et pesantes besonges traictees par labour corporel ou par subtillite d'engin il afiert que chascun homme refreschisse ses forces ou par confort de viandes ou par aucune honeste leesse en quoy l'ame prengne delectacion. Tiercement, puisque vous et autres princes terriens portez la representacion et figure de puissance et magest diuine, je di que ainsi comme deuant dieu celest et tout puissant doiuent estre chantes ou dictes loanges de couer ioieux et esbaudi, aussi deuant les princes licitment peuent estre racomptees nouuelles soubz gracieuses manieres et honnestets paroles pour lesser esbaudir les espiritz des hommes. Car pour plusamplement meriter enuers dieu il est permis aux princes et aussi a tous hommes alongner leurs vies par toutes voies consones a dieu et a nature acompaignee de raison.* Bibliotheque Nationale MS f. fr. 129, f. 2v. Ed., with errors in transcriptions; quoted in Attilio Hortis,*Studi sulle opere latine del Boccaccio*, (Treiste, 1879), pp.745-746.

152 The following discussion is from Ficino, II.4-20.

Ficino says that Venus signifies youth, and thus the way back to youth is through her gifts: the pleasures of song, love, dance and flowers.[153] Chapter Fourteen of Book Two is entitled "The conversation of old people should be under Venus in a Green Garden" and begins with the exhortation: "But I want to call you old people away from those heavier Gods, and, little by little, get you back to Venus through gardens and meadows. I summon all of you to nourishing Venus."

In Ficino's mind, Venus is most manifest in Nature. It is not surprising then that the Goddess' color is green and that this representative color should be youth-enhancing:

> Venus... send Nature, with its green things, to bloom everywhere, not just to make us alive, but younger, giving us our healthy humor back, and making us ever flow with a lively spirit. The frequent smell and sight, and use of them, and living among them, pour a youthful spirit into us.[154]

So smelling and seeing and playing in Nature promotes longevity. According to Ficino, this is because:

> While we are strolling through all this greenery, we might ask the reason why the color green is a sight that helps us more than any other, and why it delights us so wholesomely. We find that the sight of Nature is bright, a friend of light, though it is fickle and easily dissolves away....It is by nature afraid of darkness, its enemy and it flees from darkness...[155]

Ficino goes on to say that Green is like mirrors or water in its ability to hold and focus light, and in addition, green, like water is tender and soft and "sweeten[s] the liquid rays of the eyes" with its own qualities.[156] Perhaps aware that he is veering into obscurity, Ficino continues:

> So what? You may ask. Well, we might know that the frequent use of green, a use that supposedly refreshes the spirit, remakes the animal spirit, because green is foremost for the

---

153 ibid., II.14.52.

154 ibid., II.14.61. In the Middle Ages and Renaissance, Venus' color, green, was widely recognized as the color of amorous passion, as this fifteenth century song attests: *Il te fauldra de vert vestir, C'est la livree aux amoureux.* (You will have to dress in green, it is the livery of Lovers). quoted in Huizinga, p.271.

155 Ficino, II.14.61-62.

156 Alberti recommended that painters identify colors with the elements of nature. By his system, green corresponds to water. Leonardo also followed this correspondence, see Martin Kemp, *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat.* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 266 and 268.

animal spirit. We should remember that the color green, because it is the middle step in colors, and the most temperate, is so good for the animal spirit, its temperate qualities are even more useful for providing the natural and vital spirit in nature, as well as much else in life.[157]

Ficino proves green's health-giving properties by reminding the reader that as heaven is the most temperate thing of all, human bodies are the most temperate thing on earth, and the spirit is the most temperate part of the body. The spirit diminishes with age, but temperate things external to it (non-naturals) can refresh it. In this way, the spirit can be artificially stimulated to conform more closely with the heavens. Aristotle's statement that green was the median of all the colors would have lent credence to Ficino's championing of green's temperance.[158]

The color green had long been considered salubrious. Central to all non-alimentary medieval gardens was the *viridarium*, the "green" as we would call it today, a geometric plot of carefully tended and cropped grass, bisected by smooth paths so that its lushness could be easily enjoyed.[159] Indeed, *viridarium* became a synecdoche for the entirety of a pleasure garden.[160] Discussing green as the "golden mean" of colors, another Quattrocento author, Girolamo Manfredi, underscores Ficino's belief in the life-enhancing qualities of the color green:

Why our vision is better with green colors than with whites and blacks: Every extreme weakens our perception, whereas the moderate and temperate strengthens it, since extremes effect the organ of perception immoderately. Thus white has an expansive effect, while intense black has an excessively concentrating effect. But a moderate color, like green, has a temperate effect, not expanding or concentrating too much; and therefore it strengthens

---

157 Ficino, II.14.62.

158 "Parva naturalia," *Minor Works*, trans. W.S.Hett, Loeb Classical Library,1936, I.245; for a discussion, see Kemp, pp. 264-5, and fig. 499, p. 275.

159 Jerry Stannard, "Medieval Gardens and their Plants," *Gardens of the Middle Ages*, eds. Marilyn Stokstad and Jerry Stannard (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press,1983), p.56.

160 It is hard to over-estimate the resonance that the green, natural realm has in literature, whether it is in Ariosto's enchanted garden or in the Hypnerotomachia's magic glade. Such places often serve the purpose of otherworldly spots, free from the rules governing the rest of the existence. Northrup Frye, in his essay "The Argument of Comedy," coins the phrase the "green world." For him it signifies the literary tradition of the outdoor realm, apart from the city, a place of magic which is opposed to the "normal" world: "Thus the action of the comedy begins in a world represented as normal, moves into the green world, goes into a metamorphoses there in which the comic resolution is achieved, and returns to the normal world." *English Institute Essays*, ed. D.A. Robertson, Jr. (New York, 1949), p.58.

our vision.[161]

Robert Burton agrees with Ficino on the importance of light and greenness to good health, saying that in winter or indoors, one should "make artificiall aire," and "behold greene, red...and by all means to have light enough, with windowes in the day, and wax candles at night.[162]

Ficino ends his book on avoiding age by listing what the Gods other than Venus have given to prolong life. Bacchus sent the open hills, the wine from the hills, and the freedom from care that come with the wine. Phoebus added to these the green grass, sunlight, and in the shade from the sun, the pleasures of lyre and song.[163] It is apparent that to Renaissance medicine, being cheered through sensual stimulation was essential to good health, and therefore not a negligible good.

---

161 Girolamo di Manfredi, "Albertus Magnus," *El libro chiamato della vita, costumi, natura dell'omo* (Naples, 1478) p. lxxvii r.

162Burton, II. 2. 3.1, p. 64, ll.5 and 18-19.

163 Ficino, II. 20.81. Ficino had begun *de Vita Triplici* by dedicating his book to Lorenzo de Medici and claiming the tutelary deity of the work to be Bacchus: " This [writing] must not be done in a heavy and serious style, but free and joyful, once we have become aroused. [though perhaps medicine should be done under Apollo]...Bacchus heals, perhaps even more healthfully with some of his happy carefreeness than Apollo does with his herbs and charms." [I, intro. 1] This dedication to Life's Bacchic joys is reiterated in the final pages of the text, where Ficino urges "O my friends, live your lives happily, far from narrowness. Live happy." Ficino (final letter), p.191. Assuming the salubriousness of verdant scenes, Michelangelo, whose disregard for landscape painting will be discussed below, wrote that such paintings were made up of the "green grass of fields" which might, if nothing else, "cheer you." Hollanda, pp.15-16.

Part II. Recreation and Sensual Pleasure

Nature's Pleasures as an Aid to the Creative Process

As we have seen, enjoyment of beauty and pleasure not only ensured health, it also "re-created" man's spirit. Certain pleasures were often likened to nutrition--like food, they fueled the energies of those exhausted by unrelenting work. This refreshment could act as a spur to the creative process. We recall Plato's poetic description in the *Phaedrus* of a shady pleasance, with its plane trees, fragrant blossoms, cicada-song, beautiful waters, cool breezes, and soft grass, which he repudiated as an impediment to mental improvement. Soon enough, however, the Greek Pastoral poets were contradicting the philosopher's statement that the "country places and trees" could not teach anything, claiming instead that the retreat to such havens re-created the mind, thereby allowing poetic inspiration.

Seventeen hundred years after the *Phaedrus*, in the *Defense of Poetry,* Boccaccio drew on this later tradition when he wrote that "the lovely handiwork of nature" was an aid to poetry itself.[164] In pleasant places, according to Boccaccio:

> ...the beeches stretch themselves, with other trees, towards heaven: there they spread a thick shade with their fresh green foliage; there the earth is covered with grass and dotted with flowers of a thousand colors; here, too, are ardent brooks that fall with a gentle murmur from the mountain's breasts. There are gay songbirds, and the boughs stirred to a soft sound by the wind, and playful little animals; and there the flocks and herds, the shepherd's cottage or little hut untroubled by domestic cares; and all is filled with peace and quiet. Then, as *these pleasures possess both the eye and ear, they sooth the soul; then they collect the scattered energies of the mind, and renew the poet's genius*; if it be weary, prompting it, as it were, to long for contemplation of high themes, and to yearn for expression.[165]

Plato's catalog of the respites to be enjoyed far from the tiring polis is without a doubt a literary ancestor of Boccaccio's *locus amoenus*, and yet the two men arrive at opposite conclusions. While Plato rejects the idea that sensual stimulation can offer anything to the life of the mind, Boccaccio feels vindicated in enjoying natural beauty. For the latter, exchanging the indoor life of the city for the country's pleasance is essential to revivifying his intellect.

---

164 Boccaccio,14.7.1.

165 ibid,14.9.11. italics mine.

We might compare Boccaccio's words about what happens in such a spot with Ibn Butlan's passage in the *Tacuinum Sanitas* concerning how stories induce relaxation and beautiful dreams. Boccaccio says nature's pleasures *possess the eye and ear, they sooth the soul, then collect the scattered energies of the mind.* Ibn Butlan, as we recall, had written that the words of a story delighted the ears which in turn engaged the imagination. The imagination made Reason marvel, relaxing it enough that it released cares and worries and went to sleep, primed by art for sweet dreams. Boccaccio's understanding of what happens to the poet in nature is similar; pleasure has a concrete effect on mental processes. Instead of sending the poet to sleep, however, the sensual delights of nature entertain his senses and refresh his intellect, causing him to forget mundane worries and focus his reason on creation.

"To Play in Order to Work"

Although Boccaccio was engaged in validating both natural and literary pleasures, it should be remembered that whenever he suggested them, such enjoyments were never promoted as ends in themselves. Natural beauty was to aid the poetic process; and the end result of the poet's work, in turn, was designed to bring relief and recreation to readers. Boccaccio is following Thomas Aquinas, who championed recreational activity when he wrote *quies autem animae est delectatio*, or "pleasure is rest for the soul." Aquinas found ancient sanction for this in the writings of Aristotle, who he quoted as saying that men should from time to time refrain from physical labors and rest their minds through amusements: "To play in order to work is the correct rule according to Anarchis. This is because amusement is a kind of relaxation that men need, since they are incapable of working continuously. Certain relaxation *is not an end*, for it is taken as a *means to further activity.*"[166]

Many Renaissance texts show that recreation is valued as enabling the ongoing concerns of life. The image of the bow, which, if always kept taut, will be unable to respond when needed, figures this advice. At the same time, recreation by definition is a

166 *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. and commentary C.I. Litzinger (Chicago, 1964) X, 6. italics mine.

withdrawal from one's practical and moral work life.[167] This paradox, the repudiation of the "main" concerns of life in order to greater facilitate them, can be made in general about most types of recreation.[168] Anyone familiar with pastoralism and the cluster of ideas attached to it will recognize in its manifestations a parallel with this paradox (in some Bucolic verse and in the ideals of villa life, for example). The idea that such brief reposes were invigorating was very much a commonplace, and the following texts will make it clear that the natural repose could be taken in a real setting, or in a fictive one of poetry or paint.

Necessary Recreation for "Busy Men of Affairs"

In the brief history of Renaissance medicine sketched above, it was noted that hygiene and therapy were often prescribed by group. For example, a certain regimen was prescribed for women and children under seven, another for Monks, another for soldiers. Aside from the natural predisposition of different genders or ages to different complexions, it may be presumed that this is partly because groups based on gender, age or occupation were beset by the same non-naturals. We recall that some treatises considered occupation to be a non-natural.[169] The "loosening of the bowstring" by means of recreation was most often recommended for men of letters, princes, and other "busy men of affairs." The latter was a catch-all phrase including merchants, diplomats or anyone constantly trafficking with business and worldly events. These groups were thought to be the most mentally taxed.[170]

---

167 O'Laughlin, p. 15; see also pp. 166-188.

168 In " Trickery, Gender and Power: the *Discorsi* of Annibale Romei," Werner L. Gundersheimer argues that recreational activities, of both the active sorts like hunting and hawking and the more contemplative kinds, had an unstated benefit to office beyond merely renewing vigor. Such activities, and the ability to partake in their leisure, as well as the implied need for respite from the cares of office, underscored the gravity and importance of the office and therefore the power of the "busy man of affairs." *Urban Life in the Renaissance.* eds. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F.E. Weisman (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989), pp.121-141.

169 Some texts on landscape point to that genre as being particularly attractive to women. This may have been because women were thought to lack the faculty of reason, either in large part or entirely. Thus, they were attracted to art which offered the most sensual stimulation. This may also be why we don't tend to find, except in certain cases of love melancholy, the same sensual stimulation prescribed for women as for men.

170 Princes and businessmen also represent the portions of the populace most likely to have the economic means to partake in recreational activities, and were therefore most in need of reasons to enjoy them.

Maino de' Maineri's fourteenth century treatise on health, states that: " in regard to *gaudium* and tranquility of mind, you should know that a moderate cheerfulness belongs to a regime of health because it is one of the means of strengthening bodily energy...Cheerfulness is especially appropriate to those who worry a lot and are worn down with troubles and frequently harassed."[171] Either physical or mental work could actually proceed more smoothly if a regime of pleasant activities was scheduled at regular intervals. Arnold of Villanova agreed, saying that over-worked people should "take time out for cheerfulness and proper recreations, so that their minds may flourish anew and their spirits be reinvigorated."[172]

Boccaccio's *Defense of Poetry* contains many claims for the ability of poetry and fiction to sharpen wits dulled either through overuse or inactivity. He notes that stories and poems can restore the strength and spirits of men of action whose constant engagement with the world has worn them down.[173] Conversely, the pleasures of such pursuits can engage the mentally inactive, enticing them towards study and improvement; in such a manner "minds slipping into activity are made active."[174] To support this latter claim, he offers the story of Robert, the King of Sicily and Jerusalem, who was a "dullard" but whose tutor lured him to learning with stories from Aesop.[175]

In the dedication to his translation of Boccaccio, we recall that Laurent de Premierfait had written to the Duke du Berry (quoted in full above), that "after difficult or burdensome work, whether physical or mental, it is natural that everyone restore his energy either through the help of food or through some proper pleasure in which the soul takes delight." For the author pleasure is a non-natural as essential and revivifying as food.

---

171 *De gaudio autem et mentis tranquilitate sciendum quod gaudium temperatum competit regimen sanitatis ex eo quod est vnum de confratantibus virtutem...et maxime gaudium competit hiis qui multum currant et solicitudinibus destruuntur et crebo punguntur.* quoted in Lynn Thorndike, "A Mediaeval Sauce-Book," *Speculum.* 9 (1934), pp. 183-90.

172 *...gaudio sepe vacare debent et honestis solatis vt animus refloreat et spiritus recreentur.* quoted in Olsen, p.49.

173 Boccaccio,14.9.3

174 ibid.

175 ibid.

Anyone left depleted mentally or physically from labor would do to refresh body and soul with nourishment, be it victual or verse. Princes, however, have an even greater responsibility than others when it comes to keeping themselves healthy and able to function. As the heavenly Lord is the recipient of "joyful and happy praise" that lifts the worshipers' souls, earthly Lords should hear stories and verse that "gladden and cheer people's spirits."[176] Laurent is suggesting that not only will the Duke himself receive pleasure, but by allowing what is fitting in reverence of him, he will give pleasure to his subjects. Thus, he will be increasing his own and his subjects' health and life. He should be encouraged to do this because "in order to be more worthy in the eyes of God, rulers and all men may prolong their lives in any rational way consonant with God and nature."

Proper use of relaxation could also help a Prince perform his duties with more vigor. We recall that in the *Secretum*, purported to be written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great, the author proposed that the Ruler's light spirits would help him attend to his offices with energy, and that he might obtain these spirits by looking on beautiful things. Even his clothes should be selected with an eye towards delight because:

...beaute and preciousenes of the clothis litenith and gladdith the spiritte of man, which gladnes of spiritte is a cause of continuance in helth like as heuynes of spiritte and sorow inducith sikenes. Hit causith also a man to be more quick in all his deedis, and bettir to execute all that perteynith to his office.[177]

Princes and nobles, as Robert Burton notes, are not required by their station to engage in any physical labor, and therefore especially need to distract their minds with pleasant sights and exercise their bodies. They might, he suggests, "dig in the garden" and enjoy the sight of green things growing. They can also fish, which will allow for a "wholesome walk to the Brooke side, pleasant shade, by the sweet silver streames...good Aire, & sweet smels of fine fresh meadow flowres...[and] the melodious harmony of Birds."[178]

Thus the ruler can lengthen his life by eschewing the stress of the city for the calm

---

176 Hortis, pp. 745-746; quoted in Olsen, p.76. text cited in full above.

177 *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions*, ed. M.A. Manzalaoui (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp.8-9.

178 Burton, II. 2.4.1, p. 71, ll.19-20; p. 72, ll. 7-9.

of the country's charms. The princely Lorenzo the Magnificent often complained of being worn down by the cares of his office.[179] Not surprisingly, in his Sonnet *Twenty-one* he wrote about how the calm of nature can soothe the soul. In a commentary on the work, he writes:

one should note that against pomp and great buildings and other things described with grand and magnificent words, are opposed all things small and described by diminutives, like "a small meadow," a "little brook," and "little birds" to better prove that if the aforesaid great things are accompanied by a thousand hard thoughts and by a thousand sorrows, these small ones on the contrary must lead to calmer and more tranquil thoughts.[180]

In the sonnet, Lorenzo contrasts words like *le pompe, gli alti onori,* and *gli edifizzi magni* with *un verde praticello, uno uccelleto* and *una acqueta.* He explicitly states that these smaller things are the ones that bring happiness and tranquility. In this analysis, he offers more confirmation that the "minor modes" of poetry, not the ones concerned with narrative and the strife of men's lives, are the ones that give solace and promote health. We have seen a similar sentiment in Alberti, who likened landscape to the lowest form of verse, and recommended it for lightening the heart.

The Scholar's Need for Sensual Pleasure

Thomas Aquinas wrote that just as physical labors require rest in order to be renewed, mental fatigue is combated with pleasure, with "words and deeds in which nothing is sought beyond the soul's pleasure [which] are called playful or humorous (*ludicra vel jocosa*), and it is necessary to make use of them at times for solace of soul."[181] Logically, scholars were thought to be at risk for mental strain, and texts often enjoin them to get out of their dark studies and refresh themselves with green pleasures. "How little," wrote Petrarch, "count intellect, or knowledge, or eloquence, if one has no

---

179 Lorenzo's Grandfather Cosimo is recorded by Machiavelli as having shrugged off his generally wise and grave demeanor to engage in lighthearted frolics such as riding out in his carriage, sporting with jesters and other childish pastimes. So wholeheartedly did he pitch himself into his amusements that it was as though there were "two distinct persons in him:" *Hominibus facetis, & ludis puerilibus ultra modum deditus, adeo ut si cui in eo tam gravitatem, quam levitatem considerare liberet, duas personas distinctas in eo esse diceret.* quoted in Burton, II.2.6.4, p. 119, ll. 21-26.

180 *Autobiography*, pp.166-70.

181 *Summa theologica*, 60 vols., Blackfriars texts and trans. (New York, 1964), II-II. 168. 2.

remedy for the maladies torturing his mind!"[182] A scholar's occupation made him a likely candidate for melancholy, a point Ficino makes in Book One of his *Vita triplici*, entitled "On Caring for the Health of Men of Letters."

One form of interruption often espoused was the retreat into nature. A 1481 treatise written for students at Heidelberg, the *Manuale scholarium*, reports on two young and overworked students who exhausted themselves with diligent pursuit of their studies. One day, one of them persuades the other to set aside his books and walk outside the city walls in the grassy fields. The student who was at first reluctant to leave his rooms is won over by the beauties around him: "The flowing of the brook greatly refreshes me and it delights the eye to see the fishes dart hither and yon." He decides he should bring his books out into nature, where he thinks the natural setting will improve his mind.[183] The respite they had avoided for fear of lost time buoyed their flagging health and restored their energies and they were thus able to resume their studies with renewed zeal.[184]

The boys are refreshed by their springtime sojourn in the fields. In the winter, however, they would have had to resort to artificial "air" to bring them the same recreational benefits. This would be possible thanks to art's verisimilitude. Pleasure comes from mimesis, and mimetic art stimulates the senses as actual stimuli would. Thus, the ekphrastic commonplace about art's ability to supersede nature by bringing forth Spring out of season can be seen as both a paean to the artist's skill and an excuse for the pleasure of the work. In a quote from George Puttenham's *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589), we read how the art of poetry can perfect nature. Like the gardener, the poet can bring forth perfect species even out of season. Like the "phisition by [his] cordials, who can "not onely restore the decayed spirits of man...but also to prolong the term of his life many years ouer and aboue the stint of his...naturall constitution... the poet does things which

---

182 "Secretum," *Prose*, II. 78.

183 *The Manuale Scholarium*, trans. Robert Francis Seybolt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), pp.50-53.

184 O'Laughlin, p.117.

nature alone cannot do."[185]

Akin to Puttenham's poet, the painter was also credited with the power to out-do nature. In the mid-fifteenth century, Guarino Guarini's pupil, Leonard Giustiani, gave to the Queen of Cyprus a painting and explained his gift by writing that the painter's creative powers were like the poet's: "the force and power of Nature is limited in various respects; so that, while Nature produces flowers only in the Spring and fruits only in the autumn, the art of painting may produce snow under a blazing sun and abundant violets, roses, apples and olives even in winter tempests."[186] Giustiani is repeating a commonplace about painted landscapes and still-lifes that proclaims their value because they can effectively extend one season into the next. Through art, the flowers of a perpetual springtime can be visited even in deepest winter. Since the seasons and their attendant beauties were thought to be non-naturals affecting health, the ability for viewers to experience springtime in winter was a powerful recommendation for art's salubrious effects. Instead of taking Guistiani's commonplace as being merely praise for an artists mimetic powers, we can extend it to read as an advocacy for the sensual stimulations of art.

•••••

As we have seen, beautiful things were thought to have the ability, in a medical and concrete sense, to "lift the spirits," but this did not necessarily engage the intellect. Such pleasurable visual arousal is alluded to in Michelangelo's famous disparagement of Flemish landscape, for it is the only use he can see for the genre: "In Flanders they paint with a view to deceiving sensual vision, such things as may cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill....the green grass of fields, the shadow of trees and rivers and bridges, which they call landscape."[187] Michelangelo is saying, in essence, that Flemish landscape has no appeal to the inner eye, the intellect or rationality, but merely acts on the senses. In this manner, it works on the body like a non-natural, like food or climate, something that

185 George Puttenham, *The Arte of English Poesie,* Eds. G.D. Willcock and Alice Walker (Cambridge, 1936), pp.303-4.
186 quoted in Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.97.
187 Hollanda, pp.15-16.

need *not* be perceived intellectually in order to effect humoral balance and therefore health.

A word often used to denote such sensual appeal is *vaghezza*, or charm. *Vaghezza* in relation to art has been defined as "sensory attractiveness, generally assimilated with the pleasures given by colors, [and]... opposed to the more intellectual values of good design, anatomical science, perspectives, and the beauties of proportion."[188] Landscape, which by nature included few of the above-listed 'intellectual values," was believed to afford an immediate, unreasoned and effortless effect on the senses and emotions and therefore, on the body's well-being. We recall Lorenzo's quote about the April landscape that provided *vagi* for the eyes, which led to *recreazione* for the *anima.*

"Much of that which we possess," wrote Boccaccio, "is of the very highest value, though not useful in the ordinary sense: this applies to nature's products as well as the products of man." He lists the beauties and fitting enjoyments that come from well-built temples and palaces, as well as the humbler adornments afforded by nature, such as the luxuries of rich tresses or a bird's gay plumage. He does not think it is wrong to enjoy these things. In support of this he quotes Augustine writing that God has given us such things merely for their beauty.[189] We have seen that many theorists (and physicians) agreed with Boccaccio, and that sensual pleasure found in beauty was justified in the Renaissance. This pleasure was not autotelic, however, but was a means to a greater end of continued health and increased productiveness. The ends were moral, and thus it was ethical to pursue the pleasures that engendered them.

It might be argued that by the time of Titian's mid-sixteenth century Venice, the theoretical attitude had shifted, or at least expanded to allow another opinion. For Lodovico Dolce, in his *Dialogue on Painting*, *delectare* has become *prodesse*:[190] "the painter should not limit his pursuit of praise to one element alone, but extend it to every one of the

---

188 Klein and Zerner, p. 58. n.2.

189 Boccaccio,15.1.

190 I am paraphrasing Robert J. Clements and Joseph Gibaldi, who said that Cervantes made this leap to pleasure as its own good. *Anatomy of the Novella: The European Tale Collection from Boccaccio and Chaucer to Cervantes* (New York: New York University Press, 1977), p.12.

elements which are involved in painting, and more especially, those which afford the greatest pleasure. Painting was invented primarily to give pleasure."[191]

Dolce denies that learning is the principle enjoyment found in art, and to prove his point he asks: "Is there a man, who, just because Dante's writings are full of so much learning, denies his highest esteem to the great delicacy of Petrarch? Indeed, the majority of the people even prefer the latter."[192] Dolce has obviously moved away from the ethical understanding of beauty towards an autotelic appreciation of the*vaghezza* and *grazia* found in painting. He prizes art most for its ability to arouse the imaginative delight of spectators. To this end, he appreciates and describes with approval observer-involving effects, reveling in the optical and the sensual: palpable atmosphere, texture, and luminous details.[193]

Although Dolce is prepared to embrace pleasure as the aim and end of painting, one hundred years later we find that Edward Norgate is still having to defend the genre of landscape from its detractors by pointing out its healthful potentials. In *Miniaturia, or the Art of Limning*, (c.1650) he calls the creation or appreciation of painted landscape a "harmless and honest recreation that diverts and lightens the mind."[194] The defensiveness of this remark is underscored by its author's need to state that the recreations of landscape painting are *harmless* and *honest*. He adds that it is "of all kinds of painting the most innocent, which the Divill himself could never accuse of Idolatry." Thus, even into the great age of Baroque landscape painters, Norgate knew that there were those who would claim landscape to be nothing more than a sinful array of alluring colors, deceptive enticements with nothing to redeem them. He still must present a healthful end to justify

---

191 Roskill, *Dolce*, p.149.

192 ibid., p.89.

193 Underscoring this attitude, Paul Barolsky's article "Play, Pleasure and Fantasy in Italian Renaissance Art" explores the pleasurable uses of the ornaments (or *parerga*) of painting in relation to the subjective "play" that they allowed their audiences. He points out that Vasari referred to paintings as *piacevolissimo inganno*, or "pleasing tricks." In view of the tradition we have been tracing, paintings can be seen to intentionally and pleasurably "fool" viewers through their mimesis. see *Gazette des Beaux Arts*, 6:126 (1995), 13-26, esp. 13.

194 quoted in Roskill, *The Languages of Landscape,* p.80.

the means of pleasure.

Chapter Two
The Feminine Language of Landscape

Detail has long been viewed negatively by Academic art theory, in the realm of both literature and the visual arts. This adverse reception is due in large part to the link of detail with the feminine.[195] Art criticism throughout history has set up (feminine) Detail as a foil to the (masculine) General and Ideal in literature and painting, and much of this gendered commentary can be fruitfully brought to bear on the history of landscape painting. This is because, like detail in general, landscape is often associated with the frivolous and the ornamental, as well as the everyday and the feminine. Oppositions to landscape painting have historically been grounded in these associations, and much of what might be called the "fear of landscape" has arisen from them. An analysis of the language employed in landscape description makes the gendered nature of these ideas and attitudes clear.

Lorenzo de Medici is among the first to give a name to the subset of painting called landscape, writing that some audiences prefer paintings showing

di cose allegre, come animali, verzure, balli e feste simili; altri vorrebbono vedere battaglie o terresti o maritime e simili cose marziali e fere; altri paesi, casamenti e scorci e proporzioni di prospettiva [cheerful things, like animals, verdure, dances and similar festive events; [while] others like to see battles on earth and sea and similar fierce, martial scenes; others landscapes, buildings, foreshortenings, and measured perspectives.][196]

Lorenzo takes it for granted that there are paintings executed for patrons who prefer to see images of the natural world. Enjoying landscapes was one of the many choices audiences of his time could express.[197]

A quarter of a century later, in 1521 Antonio Michiel describes Cardinal Grimaldi's

---

195 Naomi Schor writes: "To focus on the detail and more particularly on the detail as negativity is to become aware...of its participation in a larger semantic framework, bounded on the one side be the ornamental, with its traditional connotations of effeminacy and decadence, and on the other, by the everyday, whose "prosiness" is rooted in the domestic sphere of social life presided over by women." *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine* (New York, 1987), p.4. Italics the author's.

196 *Opere,* ed. Simioni, II. 68. my trans.

197 Ludovico Dolce was in agreement with Lorenzo, writing that different humoral types of personality naturally gravitated towards different types of art, be it agreeable, inspiring, charming, or full of splendor and majesty. Roskill, *Dolce*, p.159.

collection, noting that the Cardinal owns *molti tavoletti de paesi.*[198] Michiel does not bother to define this word; obviously, he expects his readers to have an understanding of the sort of painting he is denoting. By 1550, mentions of landscapes abound, and the genre is commonplace. As Vasari notes: "there is not a cobbler's house without a German landscape."[199]

The named genre of landscape could be so easily absorbed into Italian art theory because a place was already prepared for it.[200] Antique and Renaissance treatises on art and literature had conditioned learned audiences to expect artistic renderings of nature, and had given these audiences the critical apparatus for understanding such descriptions. Texts make it clear that even viewers without a background in the visual arts seemed well able to apply what they knew about poetic response to painting.

This understanding of landscape, however, was never delivered in any concise text. There is no explicit statement of the criteria for good landscape, or even for how landscape could be defined. Since the word for landscape enters artistic parlance as though it were already commonly understood, the aim of this chapter is to try to piece together the sorts of sources and ideas that a Renaissance viewer might have associated with the new genre, and, in so doing, to understand the "fear of landscape" that its detractors betrayed. This analysis will show that landscape was demoted both for being too ornamental and licentious and for being too realistic and quotidian. Thereby, it was also, in overt and covert ways, linked negatively to the feminine.

These seemingly disparate complaints will be explored by working backward's through landscape's history. First, landscape's place in the Academy will be assessed, then anti- and pro-landscape texts will be discussed. Finally, the language historically used to discuss landscape in poetry, prose and art theory will be analyzed and compared with the vocabulary of feminine description. This analysis will expose how landscapes were

198 quoted in Gombrich, p.109.

199 In a letter of February 12, 1547 to Benedetto Varchi, in *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris*, 3 vols., eds. Karl Frey and Hermann-Walther Frey (New York, 1923-40), I.188.

200 See Gombrich, and also the discussion of his article in the introduction.

esteemed by the time academic art theory was codified, what previous attitudes contributed to this ranking, and how still-older attitudes to the decorative and the sensual had prepared the ground for such ideas to take root. Thus, a partial context for the birth of "landscape theory" will be established.

This latter part, the discussion of the vocabulary of landscape and its derivation from "feminine" sources, is influenced by the ideas of Elizabeth Cropper. In her article "The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," Cropper uncovered the visual transcription of the verbal idioms of courtly love and lyric verse in idealized Renaissance portraits of women.[201] She is also responsible for the interest in sixteenth-century treatises on feminine beauty and how their rhetoric helped to shape the new sixteenth-century notion of artistic beauty. I am particularly indebted to Cropper for her observations about the importance of non-narrative literary sources for feminine portraiture. She writes that "the painting of a beautiful woman, like the lyric poem, may become its own object, a subject being necessarily absent."[202] The implications of this for landscape, which is linked in rhetoric to femininity and is often taken to be either subjectless, or dependent on a narrative, cannot be overemphasized.

Philip Sohm's 1995 article "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia" addresses the assigning of non-neutral gender implications to different styles by Renaissance art criticism.[203] While much of what Sohm says is valid and important, issue must be taken with his conclusion that: "The feminine styles [as embodied in gendered criticism] are characteristic of the artists, not embodied in the form of a particular figure or subject."[204] There can be no question that the tradition of *ogni dipintore dipinge se* has colored art history, and there are certainly artists who

---

[201] Elizabeth Cropper, "The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture," *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago,1986),175-90.

[202] Cropper, "The Beauty of Women," p.181.

[203] Philip Sohm, "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia," *Renaissance Quarterly*, XLVII.4 (1995), 759-808.

[204] Sohm, p. 796.

Renaissance authors negatively depict as feminine.[205] I will argue, however, that as a *subject* landscape was addressed as a feminine form.

Part One: The Material and Textual History of Landscape

Oil Paint and the Rise of the Landscape Genre

Many material and historical factors contribute to the sixteenth-century boom in landscape depiction. By 1550, artists and consumers had become increasingly aware of the history of art and the variety of styles available with which they could express their personal desires, desires that were often at odds with the theoreticians' insistence that the value of art was in its intellectual content. This caused a split between the theoretical admiration for large-scale, narrative, public works, and a private taste for the elegant refinements of art, for novel or "bizarre" experiments, or for virtuoso handling.[206] Vasari recognizes this schism, saying that while Michelangelo concentrated on painting's highest goal, the reproduction of the human figure, other artists have followed *questa altra via*, "the other method," of painting by using "a variety of tints and shades of coloring with various new and bizarre inventions."[207] Color and novel invention were the two main components of successful landscape painting, the mode of painting that was already in the mid-sixteenth century recognized as "the other."[208] It is interesting to note that landscape became an independently recognized genre in the face of prevailing artistic theory, which was shifting from the quattrocento emphasis on execution to an emphasis on conception.

The virtuoso handling of pigment appreciated by art buyers in the sixteenth century was often facilitated by oil painting, widely in use by the turn of the century, although still a young medium. The great champion of landscape, Leonardo, had shown that oil painting

---

205 See for example Giorgio Vasari's biography of Andrea del Sarto, where that painter is accused of having overly-loved his wife and therefore having let her feminine influence strip his work of manly boldness and *virtu*.

206 Klein and Zerner, p. xvi.

207 *la varieta di tinte ed ombre di colori, ed con bizzarre, varie e nuove invenzioni.* Vasari-Milanesi, VII.211; du Vere, II.691. The entire passage is quoted below on p. 84.

208 Sohm notes that in the Renaissance, Venice, traditionally the "other" in standard art criticism, was seen as feminine. It was also thought to be the Italian origin of the effeminate and sensual medium of oil paint. p.773.

was ideally suited to landscape depiction, and his experiments in perfecting atmospheric perspective were eagerly followed by many painters who created names for themselves with their *paesi*.[209] Oil paint also lent itself to the smaller-scale, sumptuous works of private commissions; the sort which earlier had been executed in tempera with much harder and drier results. Oil pigments could be worked rapidly, and could also be reworked and changed, requiring less laborious planning of figures and composition and less time in the actual application of pigment on panel.[210] The translucence of pigment suspended in quick-drying seed or nut oil allowed for brilliant color and luminosity, while the new medium's acceptance of blending allowed for the softness of atmospheric perspective.

Vasari, writing about the discovery of oil painting in the *Life of Antonello da Messina*, said that painters restricted to tempera painting:

sebbene conoscevano gli artefici, che nelle pitture a tempera mancavano l'opere d'una certa morbidezza e vivacita, che arebbe potuto arrecare, trovandola, piu grazia al disegno, vaghezza al colorito, e maggior facilita dell'unire i colori insieme: avendo eglino sempre usato di tratteggiare l'opere loro per punta solamente di pennello. [recognized clearly that pictures in distemper [tempera paint] were wanting in a certain softness and liveliness, which, if they could be obtained, would be likely to give more grace to their designs, loveliness to their colouring, and greater facility in blending the colours together; for they had ever been wont to hatch their works merely with the point of the brush.][211]

Oil paint allowed all these improvements. Vasari describes the qualities of the newly-discovered medium thusly: "This style of coloring kindles the pigments so that nothing else is needed except diligence and devotion because the oil in itself softens and sweetens the colours and renders them more delicate and more easily blended than do other

---

209 Of note for the discussion of women and Renaissance painting, Mary Garrard argues for Leonardo's pro-female philosophical position in "Leonardo da Vinci: Female Portraits,Female Nature," *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York, 1992), 59-85.

210 In this regard, the techniques oil paint allowed arose as a direct threat to the Florentine *disegno* technique which espoused hours of laborious planning and drawing. Venetian artists such as Titian and especially Tintoretto began to carve out their composition directly on the canvas.

211 Vasari-Milanesi, II.563-4; du Vere, I. 424. Vasari here is making a distinction between tempera paint, which allowed gradations of color only through the laying-in of minute amounts of pigment side by side, and oil paint, which gave the artist the freedom to blend infinite, subtle combinations of color and tone.

mediums."[212] He knew that oil paint was the medium of choice for landscape, saying as much in the *Life of Paolo Uccello*:

...he [Uccello] was the first of the old painters to be acclaimed for his landscape, which he executed far more skillfully than previous artists had done, although he was surpassed by those that came later. And this was because, despite all his efforts, Paolo could never impart the softness and harmony that we find in the oil painting of our own time. He was content to go on following the rules of perspective and drawing and foreshortening his subjects exactly as he saw them, painting everything in view...in that hard dry style of his.[213]

Vasari sees Uccello as having valiantly attempted to break new ground in painting landscape. He could not succeed completely, however, because he lacked the proper medium, oil paint, which was not yet used in Italy. Oils permitted the style most appropriate to landscape, one of soft, blended gradations of "wet" color that correctly modeled the forms and the space of landscape. Vasari obviously does not approve of linear perspective as a method for showing space in a landscape.[214]

Because of the facility with which oil pigments could be modeled and blended, however, Vasari quotes Michelangelo as saying that oil paint is a medium for women and layabouts.[215] Although there is no question that Vasari appreciated the intensity of color that oil paint allowed, he discusses the medium as though being good at it showed attention to detail but not genius. This attitude becomes apparent when one realizes how frequently he writes of the diligence and finish of oil paintings. As Vasari wrote, the oil paint was so easily applied and blended that "nothing was needed but love and diligence."
Indeed, it was a common notion among some sixteenth-century commentators that oil paint made colors so bright, pleasing and easy to blend that no marked talent was required

---

[212] *Vasari on Technique*, trans. Louisa S. Maclehose (New York, 1960), p.230. The last phrase can be read alternately as: "the oil in itself renders the coloring softer, sweeter and more delicate and makes it easier to attain a unified and sfumato style than the other media, particularly fresco."

[213] This is an important quotation, because it shows that Vasari was conscious of the long-standing recognition of landscape painting. For the Italian to this passage, see below, p. 184.

[214] for a discussion of "realistic" vs. "mathematic" space in landscape, see Clark, *Landscape Painting* (New York, 1950), pp.20-25.

[215] *il colorire a olio era arte da Donna e da persone aggiate et infingarde, come fra' Bastiano.* Vasari-Milanesi, V.584. Michelangelo here is accusing his onetime pupil, the Venetian Sebastiano del Piombo, of laziness.

to make beautiful pictures.

The Feminine Language of Color

Because oils were easier to work with, these bright, blended colors had much to do with the increased "grace" of Vasari's third manner of painting. Vasari needed a vocabulary with which to address this novel beauty, and he looked to treatises on feminine beauty to fill this demand.[216] Vasari also used this vocabulary to address the newly defined genre of landscape, which was inextricably linked to color. As he specifically states in the *Life of Paolo Uccello*, harmonies of color were the appropriate way to show outdoor spaces; and oil paint was the medium linked directly to this *vaghezza di colori*, or "charm of colors," a phrase encountered over and over again in relation to landscape descriptions.

One finds repeatedly that Vasari includes landscape in the lists he compiles of the many ornaments third-manner artists devised and perfected to please their viewers. For instance, in the preface to the third part of the *Lives*, Vasari enumerates "the abundance of beautiful, clothes, the imaginative details, charming colors, many kinds of buildings and various landscapes in depth." Here, as is frequently the case, landscape is listed and linked with pleasant colors and various other imaginative details like clothing and architecture, showing that viewers connected these aspects of painting to the same subset of ornament. In another example, describing Piero di Cosimo's *Liberation of Andromeda* (fig. 16), Vasari writes:

Quivi fra 'l timore e la speranza si vede legata Andromeda, di volto bellissima; e qua innanzi molti genti con diversi abiti strani ...Il paese e bellissimo, e d'un colorito dolce e grazioso; e quanto si puo unire e sfumare colori, condusse questa opera con estrema diligenzia. [Here we see the bound figure of Andromeda torn between hope and fear, with a most beautiful countenance, and there in the foreground are many people all wearing all kinds of strange costumes....The landscape is most beautiful, and the coloring soft and graceful, and he executed the whole work with tremendous diligence to achieve the

---

216 See Cropper, Op. cit. Analyzing Varchi's *Trattati d'amore* in relation to contemporary artistic theory, Leatrice Mendelsohn proposes a similar thesis. see *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezzione and Cinquecento Art Theory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980).

utmost harmony and gradation of colors.][217]

In this single passage, Vasari refers to the beauty of women, of clothing, and of landscape, and alludes to the medium through which the charms of these components are best brought forth, oil paint. Modeled color shows the softness of flesh, the texture of fabric, and the boundless space of atmosphere and landscape to much greater effect than would their depiction with harsh line. Time and again, the ornaments of landscape, color and diverse apparel, (descriptions of which can include, among other things, head-dresses, armour, antique or exotic garb, and shot or sheer fabrics) are all addressed together. Color and clothing were specifically identified with rhetorical sophistry. Style and its embellishments adorned or "clothed" rhetorical arguments in the same way that color was thought to decorate a painting's subject.[218] Both were seen as applied surfaces that were external to the central argument and served to seduce the beholder through their sensual attraction, the ignorant more frequently than the wise.[219]

Landscape, which can also be seen to "'adorn' the body of invention," was logically understood as a counterpart to decorative garb and pleasing color. As the main decorative *and* substantive element of landscape, color associated the genre with pure ornament, as, in rhetorical usage, the "colors" of an argument are its stylistic elaborations.[220] Color also implies deceit and illusion. Good ornament, as set forth by Quintilian, is "bold, manly, and chaste" not smooth and falsely-hued.[221] Thus, the ornament of brightly colored clothes and blended landscape, made smooth by the

---

217 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.139; du Vere, I.656. It is interesting that in questioning the attribution of *The Liberation of Andromeda* to Piero di Cosimo, Mina Bacci says that the work has the feeling of a "costume tableau," and that this "decorative" quality" detracts from the narrative. Reading Vasari's exhaustive description of the work, it is obvious that the ornate, costumed quality of the painting is what he values most highly. *L'Opera Completa di Piero di Cosimo* (Milan, 1976) p.124.

218 Sohm, p.781.

219 ibid.

220 The implication here is obviously that landscapes are *without* structure.

221 Quintilian, VIII, iii, II.

application of oil paint, was, to some, feminine and suspect. [222]

The Academy's Ranking of Landscape

When the Academy ranked landscape among the canonical genres, it placed it at the bottom of the genre hierarchy with still-life painting. Antique critical categories had preordained this: theater was divided into Tragedy, Comedy, and Satyr plays; poetry was broken down into the Epic, Georgic and Bucolic. Thus, the genre of landscape was linked with the more humble literary modes. Vitruvius had directly established landscape painting as being the lowest sort, useful only for pleasure, and had banished it to the garden.[223] Pliny underscores landscape's lesser status by addressing the genre in a separate section he introduces by saying, "for it is proper to append the artists famous with the brush in a *minor* style of painting."[224] Here Pliny writes of the painter Studius, saying that he was greatly talented at depicting pleasurable landscape details, and was much in demand for his works. Pliny warns, however, that no landscape painter can achieve lasting fame because the commissions are too private and too few people will see his work.

The low academic ranking of landscape can also be attributed to its association with the feminine. The standards disseminated by the Academy brought the phallocentric value system of the prevailing cultural order to bear on the visual arts.[225] This normative aesthetic in the Academy was deployed most transparently in the rigid categorizing of the genres. The genres--history, portraiture, still-life and landscape--descended in order of importance the further they were removed from focused attention to the human figure, more

---

222 For a discussion of women's association with coloring in French Seventeenth Century art literature, see Jacqueline Lichtenstein,*The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age,* trans. Emily McVarish (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993); for an investigation of sixteenth-century Italian texts associating matter with color and with women, see Patricia Reilly, "The Taming of the Blue: Writing out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory," *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History*. eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard (New York, 1992), pp. 87-99. Reilly, discussing the feminization of color, notes that Leonardo was color's champion, assigning the superiority of painting over sculpture to painting's ability to show "all visible things...[which] sculpture with its limitations does not, namely, the colors of all things in their varying intensity and transparency of objects." pp.88-89 .

223 Vitruvius, V.2. quoted in full in Chapter 3.

224 Pliny, XXXV, XXXVII. 111. italics mine. quoted in full in Chapter 3.

225 Schor, p.4.

specifically to the *male* human figure. History painting, showing the important deeds of Gods and heroes, was far and away the most important genre for three reasons: the importance of the attached literary content; the conceptual skill the artist was forced to display in rendering such content; and the reason and understanding that both the literary content and the artist's skill demanded from the viewer.

Thus, the Ideal in painting was to be reached through a conceptual rather than a perceptual process.[226] This meant that the highest art was attained when the artist produced his work from a perfect (and perfected) mental image, a conception. Perceptually created art, on the other hand, stemmed from the copying of visual data from the sensual world. The remove of the "conceptual" process from actual matter privileged it over what was seen as the mere mimicry of copying directly from the natural world.[227] In other words, a history painting portraying imagined representations and using other painter's figures or antique sculptural models to depict historical or literary events had more artistry, perfection and refinement than a scrupulously observed still-life or an idyllic landscape.[228] The critical bias towards an "intellectualized" product discriminated by its very precepts against an art form whose subject matter was comprised of natural details, no matter how imaginatively or pleasingly they were recombined.[229]

Adding to its appeal, the complete understanding of well-executed conceptual art was thought to be limited to the *cognoscenti*, the knowing viewers who could recognize the difficulty inherent both in the artist's composition and style, and in his quotations from

---

226 "The Ideal is a construct arrived at by conceptual rather than perceptual means." Schor, p.16. These two words are expressed in Italian by the concepts *imitare* and *ritrarre*, respectively.

227 In 1567, Vincenzo Danti wrote that "copying things...is much easier than imitating. Because the artist who wishes to copy this or that object with no reasoning or elucidation concerning the being of the object, only tries to remember what he sees with his eyes....the artist who uses imitation uses the powers of intellect, treading in this pursuit along the most noble and perfect paths of philosophy....and this is what enobles and has ennobled our art. Barocchi, *Trattati*, I.246-7; translated in Klein and Zerner, p. 183.

228 In the beginning of the *Life of Titian*, Vasari expresses a version of these thoughts in his discussion of Giorgione's slavish devotion to living models. see du Vere, II.781.

229 Vincenzo Danti wrote that architecture was the art of the most artifice and perfection precisely because it did not model itself on the actual world. Barocchi, *Trattati*, I.336; translated in Klein and Zerner, pp.101-102.

other sources. The praise for difficult art can be linked to the humanists' desire to be rhetorically challenging. While earlier rhetorical theory had demanded that rhetoric be clear and understandable to the masses, Renaissance humanists deliberately inverted this stance; they were dedicated to a classicizing, elitist style which proved its rarefied status by the inability of most people to understand it.[230] A landscape, however, was not thought to be easily be misapprehended; it has no content, and the style deemed appropriate to it was one of pleasingly-colored, idealized naturalism.[231] Certain Renaissance theorists and writers betray the belief that while any viewer (even an animal) is qualified to judge how well an artist has counterfeited natural appearances, a process that appeals only to emotion and sensual memory, only learned viewers can appreciate an artist's inspired conception. Setting this in terms of landscape, painted natural details were suspected of being both too easy to render and too easy to appreciate--so easy, in fact, that they were charming even to women.

Women and Irrational Sensuality

Adding to this attitude we are outlining, an attitude strongly tied to the distinction between rational and sensual apprehension, is the fact that in science, philosophy, and religion, not to mention popular thought, women were linked closely to the natural world and its irrational sensuality.[232] Woman's purported love for gaily colored landscape followed from this assumed lack of reason, which made her more akin to uncultured nature than man and correspondingly placed her in greater reliance on the unaided judgment of her senses.[233] In the continuum between unformed matter, the verdant earth,

---

230 Baxandall, *Giotto*. p.59.

231 Though I would argue that Paolo Uccello, whose landscapes are certainly witty, was trying to imbue his works with a humorous content. In the sixteenth century, the mysteriously-figured, elegiac landscapes of the Venetians, which have so long frustrated iconographers, can also be understood as trying to rise to the complicated and highly artificial style and content of pastoral verse. for the latter, see Philipp P. Fehl, *Decorum and Wit: The Poetry of Venetian Painting: Essays in the History of the Classical Tradition* (Vienna, 1992), pp. 18-29.

232 For an overview of the topic of the connection made between women and nature in the Renaissance, see Ian Maclean, *The Renaissance Notion of Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), esp. Chapter 3, pp.28-46; Chapter 4, pp.47-67; and the bibliography, pp.102-111.

233 see Lichtenstein, Op. cit.

animals, and man; woman was a creature somewhere between reasoned Man and the irrational beasts.

A glimpse of the view of women's imperfections as compared with men, in both her physical being and her mental and spiritual state, can be seen in the following remarks from artistic treatises. Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, in his *Craftsman's Handbook* of 1395, offers the perfect proportions for the male form, and then adds: "those of a woman, I will disregard, for she does not have any perfect proportion." [*quelle della femmina lascio stare, perch non ha nessuna perfetta misura.*][234] Cennini follows this statement with one that seems to relegate women to being only perceptually, not conceptually, portrayed in painting: "I will not tell you about the irrational animals, because you will never discover any system of proportion in them. Copy them and draw them as much as you can from nature." Cennini, who found women to have no perfect proportion, presumably included women in the list of irrational creatures. [235]

One hundred and fifty years later, the lower status of women is still being discussed; this time in the context not of women's physical imperfections, but of their more corrupt nature. Paolo Pino's conversants in his *Dialogo di Pittura* discourse about whether women should be considered painters.[236] Lauro thinks that the art is debased by allowing such inferior creatures to participate. Fabio, however, vindicates women's participation in the art, saying that those who paint are like hermaphrodites, because they partake of the masculine. He says they:

deserve to be appreciated as women who, seeing their own imperfection, attempted (by departing from their own nature) to imitate the nobler being, man. The converse, an effeminate man, is a disgraceful thing, but in women such perfection rarely appears, and it is considered a natural miracle.[237]

---

234 Cennino d'Andrea Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook:* "Il Libro dell'Arte," trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. (New York, 1960), p.81.

235 Cennini, p.83.

236 Frederika Jacobs, in her article "Woman's Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguisola," (*Renaissance Quarterly*. 47 [1994], pp. 74-101) explores the many prejudices held against women artists.

237 Paolo Pino,"Dialogo di Pittura:" *A Translation with Commentary*, Mary Pardo (Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Pittsburgh, 1984), pp.322-3.

Michelangelo's Theory of Landscape

In Pino's opinion, women who struggle against their imperfect character are "natural miracles," and therefore very rare. Most women are content to remain mired in their irrational, sensual natures. Michelangelo condemned landscape for its supposed attractiveness to this latter group of women. To say that Michelangelo ever consciously developed a theory of landscape would be an overstatement. However, through contemporary critical reactions to his style and his commentary on his own work, it is possible to understand one aspect of the sixteenth-century response to landscape. Michelangelo's art held a position similar to that of Dante's poetry, and was taken to be an exemplar, a sort of synecdoche, for a particular theoretical attitude. As might be imagined, the stance that heroized Michelangelo was not one that privileged landscape. A well known quotation that Francisco de Hollanda attributes to Michelangelo has relevance here:

> Flemish Painting...will...please the devout better than any painting of Italy....It will *appeal to women*, especially the very old and the very young, and also to monks and nuns and to certain noblemen who have *no sense of true harmony*. In Flanders they paint with a view to deceiving sensual vision or such things as might cheer you and of which you cannot speak ill, as for example saints and prophets. They paint stuffs and masonry, the green grass of the fields, the shadow of trees and rivers and bridges, which they call landscapes, with many figures on this side and many figures on that. And all this, though it pleases some persons, is done without reason or art, without symmetry or proportion, without skillful choice or boldness and, finally, without substance or vigor.[238]

Landscape's sensual pleasure, Michelangelo says, will fool (and thereby delight) only the external eye. The distinction between the external and the internal eye goes back to antiquity. Aristotle, in his *Nicomachean Ethics* (1096b), wrote that sight is to the body as reason is to the soul.[239] Thus, the body sees with the sense of sight and the soul "sees" with the gift of reason. Lomazzo later echoed Michelangelo in writing that those who judge

238 Hollanda, pp.15-16. italics mine. It should be noted that in this passage, Michelangelo has no trouble naming a work with "many figures" a landscape. His disparaging remarks are amplified by a statement from Svetlana Alpers, who writes: "To say that an art is for women is to reiterate that it displays not measure or order but rather, in Italian eyes at least, a flood of observed, unmediated details drawn from nature." from "Art History and its Exclusions: The Example of Dutch Painting," *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*, eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard (New York, 1982), p.195.

239 For a fuller discussion of the concept of the inner eye and its prevalence in Renaissance thought, see Summers, pp.332 and 550.

only by sense are led by the *vaghezza esteriore di colori.*[240]

Giovanni Battista Armenini also wrote that the masses used just the "exterior eye" when assessing art, and that explains why they favor *vaghezza di colori.*[241] If this were all there was to painting, he says, "it would be easy indeed to judge the works of this art." For Armenini, however, such works are not to be honored with the name painting. In his chapter "What true painting is and what the true painter must be," he writes:

By painting, I do not mean a space of plank or wall covered with lively and varied colors without any consideration for other aspects that go beyond mere beauty and the charm of the colors themselves, as many fools believe who do not know of any other beauty in painting...this part has never been much esteemed by good craftsmen. Therefore, in order to come to the true definition, it must be understood that true painting is nothing other than imitation...and that the painter is none other than an imitator, since the form of something, whether tangible or intangible, is always represented. If this is lacking, then the painting does not deserve to be called by this name, but rather a work and composition of colors, just as he who painted it shall be called a gilder and maker of backgrounds rather than a painter.[242]

Flemish landscapes, Michelangelo had stated, are created without the manly attributes of reason, symmetry, proportion, substance, vigor, or boldness. Thus, by the definition quoted above from Armenini, these works are not even to be considered paintings. In Armenini's description, landscapes, which are lively and varied colors assembled on a plank, are not paintings, and those who create them are "makers of backgrounds," not painters. In addition, Armenini added that those who like such works are "fools." Women, who according to Michelangelo enjoy thoughtless visual dazzle over

240 Lomazzo, *Trattato dell' arte de la pittura* (Milan,1584); in *Scritti sulle arti.* 2 vols. ed. R. Ciardi (Florence, 1973), p.300. There was an earlier tradition of such disparagements, as well. Leonello d'Este (d. 1450) is the speaker in a dialogue written in 1462 by Angelo Decembrio called *De Politia Litteraria* . In the dialogue, Leonello says: "What I am saying about the clumsiness of painters, who make quite as many mistakes as scribes and copyists, is true not only of wall paintings, but also of those tapestries from Transalpine Gaul. Certainly there is much skill, but the weavers and designers are much more concerned with opulence of color and frivolous charm...than they are wit the science of painting, pandering to the extravagances of Princes and the stupidity of the crowd." quoted in Michael Baxandall, "A Dialogue from the Court of Leonello d'Este," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 26 (1963), 316.

241 Giovanni Battista Armenini, *De' veri precetti della pittura* (Ravenna, 1587); translation, *Precepts of the Art of Painting,* trans. Edward J. Olszewski (Renaissance Studies in Translations Series, 1977), p.96.

242 Armenini, 96. See also Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo in cui della pittura, e della scultura si favella* [Florence, 1584], which reads: *L'arte non esser altro che un abito intelletivo.* quoted in Paola Barocchi, *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*, 3 vols. (Milan-Naples,1971-76), I.46-52.

intellectual content in painting, must in this opinion number among the fools, as they lack "soul-sightedness," or rationality.[243]

The body of visual evidence left behind in Michelangelo's art supports the idea that Michelangelo's statement relates the artist's actual attitude towards landscape. Vasari's comment on Michelangelo's Pauline Chapel frescoes summarizes much of Michelangelo's art nicely:

> Michelangelo concentrated his energies on achieving absolute perfection in what he could do best, so there are no landscapes to be seen in these scenes, nor any trees, buildings or other embellishments and variations; for he never spent time on such things, lest perhaps he should degrade his genius.[244]

So Michelangelo, who had little time or patience for rendering the female form in a feminine manner, let alone for depicting details such as fields, flowers and birds, became the symbol of one critical stance.[245] His name is invoked to stand for the epic, tragic, heroic, terrible, moral, important, difficult and masculine in art; and he is the contrast to the bucolic, comic, light, charming, sweet and feminine.

Dante was the poetic equivalent to the critical stance for which Michelangelo was the exemplar in the visual arts. Giovanni Battista Gelli, a frequent lecturer at the Academia in Florence, considered that Dante wrote beautifully as well as with strength and moral purpose. In his 1556 *Letture sopra lo Inferno di Dante*, Gelli contrasted Dante to poets who were more interested in delighting than edifying their audience, writing only with *leggiadria* (grace or charm, a word about which more will be said later). Readers who preferred such charms over Dante's substance were, in Gelli's opinion, like those viewers who appreciated Flemish art over the nobility of Michelangelo's work; they sought only the *vaghezza de'colori e per la varieta de paesi che sono in quelle.* (the charming colors

---

243 He is implying that excessive amounts or certain sorts of piety will also strip a person of reason.

244 du Vere, II.696.

245 Michelangelo's works are not without ornament. As the youths in the background of the *Doni Tondo* or the Sistine's *Ignudi* show, Michelangelo's ornamentation is the twisting, nude, male form. Michelangelo also designed elaborately inventive grotesques for his architectural ornament. He probably allowed these latter details because of their antique pedigree, as well as their reference to *fantasia*. However, Vasari cites Michelangelo as prohibiting carved foliage for adornment around marble sculptures, saying that such embellishments degrade the figure. see du Vere, II.703.

and the varied landscapes that are in these)[246] Gelli is essentially saying that while some consume art only for sensual gratification, other more enlightened viewers and readers seek to be edified with reason and morality.

Vaghezza in the sense that Gelli uses it means charms that appeal merely through their sensual matter. As we have seen, the tints in Flemish landscape were thought to exemplify this term and were characterized as assemblages of colored pigments that appeal in and of themselves, not through the finesse with which they are applied. Such comments hearken back to Alberti or Vasari decrying the "Gothic" art that dazzled with its use of precious materials rather than with the infinitely more valuable but also more subtle good of artistic virtuosity. They also allude to the concurrent debate between the Florentines and Venetians, in which the Florentines accused the Venetian painters as being appealing only for the colors of their paintings, not for any underlying reason or artistic skill--in other words, for appealing only to base sensuality. Gelli adds that art and nature both are much greater for making man than for making a "landscape or tree or meadow." This second criticism points out the privileging of the human form, specifically the male human form, over depictions of nature.

Of particular note here is Gelli's explicit comparison--the *leggiadria* and *vaghezza* of lighter verse is likened to landscape painting because both please only with their sensual appeal. Gelli's discussion of painting occurs within a lecture on poetry, and Gelli seems quite comfortable with his audience's ability to extrapolate from a criticism of a type of painting to a genre or school of poetry. Further, Gelli's use of a poet's style to describe a mode of painting is not unique. Ludovico Dolce, writing against the Florentine preeminence of Michelangelo, compares Michelangelo to Dante and Raphael to Petrarch, with Raphael this time coming out the winner.[247] These examples underscore the idea that some of the attitudes towards landscape were extracted directly from attitudes towards certain sorts of poetry. Such attitudes do not merely express differing aesthetic opinions,

[246] G.B. Gelli. *Lettere inedite*, I, 330; quoted in Summers, p.550. my trans.
[247] Roskill, *Dolce*, p.89.

however. The anti-landscape, anti-"light" poetry camp could appeal to a much more important good--the soul's salvation. As Pico della Mirandola put it when discussing the perfectibility of Man's nature: "Thou canst grow downward into the lower natures which are brutes, thou canst grow upwards from thy soul's reason into the higher natures which are divine...[if a man cultivates] the seeds of sensation, he will grow into a brute." [248]

Vasari makes some relevant comments about the separate skills of painting with *terribilita* and painting with *vaghezza* and *leggiadria*. For instance, in his discussion of Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*, he writes:

bastandogli satisfare in quella parte; nel che e stato superiore a tutti i suoi artefici; e mostrare la via della gran maniera e degli ignudi, e quanto e'sappi nelle difficulta del disegno; e finalmente ha aperto la via alla facilita di questa arte nel principale suo intento, che il corpo umano; ed attendendo a quest fin solo, ha lassato da parte le vaghezze de'colori, i capricci e le nuove fantasie di certe minuzie e delicatezze, che da molti altri pittori non sono interamente, e forse non senza qualche ragione, state neglette. Onde qualcuno, non tanto fondato del disegno, he cerco con la varieta di tinte ed ombre di colori, e con bizzarre, varie e nuove invenzioni, ed in somma con questa altra via *farsi luogo fra i primi maestri. Ma Michelangelo...ha mostro a quelli che sanno assai, come dovevano arrivare al perfetto.* [Michelangelo] being satisfied with justifying himself in that field in which he was superior to all his fellow-craftsmen, and to laying open the grand manner in the painting of nudes, and his great knowledge in the difficulties of design; and, finally, he opened out the way to facility in this art in its principle province, which is the human body, and, attending to this single object, he left on one side the charms of colouring and the caprices and new fantasies of certain minute and delicate refinements which many other painters, perhaps not with some show of reason, have not entirely neglected. For some, not so well grounded in design, have sought with variety of tints and shades of colouring, with various new and bizarre inventions, and, in short, *with the other method*, to win themselves a place among the first masters; but Michelangelo...has shown to those who know enough how they should achieve perfection.[249]

This quote again contrasts Michelangelo's style, one that succeeds in the depiction of nudes, painting's chiefest province, to *questa altra via*, "that other method," the one that embraces the refinements of painting. It also points out that Michelangelo's style is very profound, and cannot be understood by everyone. The words Vasari uses to describe the aspects that Michelangelo's painting *do not* include--novel, bizarre, capricious, varied in

248 Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man,* trans. Charles Glenn Wallis, et al. (New York, 1940), p.5.

249 Vasari-Milanesi, VII.210; du Vere, II. 691-2. italics mine.

color, charming, minute, delicate, refined, fantastic--are words we will encounter again and again in relation to landscape. Vasari uses these words to denote "the other method of painting," the one that is opposite to Michelangelo's, the one that provides superficial beauty and entertainment. He refers to the "easy" style again when he writes "those who, delighting little in the highest and most difficult forms of art, love things that are seemly, simple, gracious and sweet."[250]

But the critical stance associated with Michelangelo's art,which espoused his difficult, focused, terrible style over more pleasing ones, did not arise with that artist; it was much older. As has been shown many times, rhetoric and poetry are disciplines that provided theory models for the liberal art of painting. An analysis of such texts as Gelli's shows that a naturalistic style and a highly contrived, decorative and "flashy" style (one that uses visual tricks and novelties to delight the eye) become linked in antique critical theory and remained so throughout the Renaissance.[251]

Both of these styles, the highly contrived and the highly naturalistic, are linked to femininity. Ancient orators unfavorably compared over-wrought, decadent and meaningless Asiatic rhetoric to stoic, pure, and moral Greek rhetoric, and called the foreign style effeminate and the Greek one masculine.[252] When the origins of the notably artificial genre of pastoral poetry began to be speculated upon in the sixteenth century, theories arose that it was brought to the Greeks from some external oriental source. Obviously, it seemed beyond comprehension that the pure-minded Greeks could have given birth to such a

---

250 Vasari-Milanesi, V.166.

251 This notion is supported in Vasari's *Life of Piero di Cosimo* where Vasari praises the complex , illusionistic rendering of the reflections on the golden balls belonging to St. Nicholas. He says that the way the spheres gleamed and cast light back and forth showed men the *stranezza* of Piero's mind. For Vasari, *stranezza* was a trait that allowed an artist to work in a highly contrived and/or illusionistic style. for elaboration, see Summers, pp.214 and 550.

252 See Quintilian [*Institutio oratoria*, 9.4.142] for a disparagement of this *effeminatam et enervem compositionem.* See also Petronius,*The Satyricon* [1.2], where the speaker bemoans the state of rhetoric and poetry in his day as being composed of only appealing ornament ["purple patches and bombast"] and having no content or strength ["vigor or voice"], then adds that the same thing has happened in painting, since the vices of the "Egyptians" have allowed Greek painters to take shortcuts in their work.

decadent style.[253]

Both Gelli and Michelangelo (via Francisco de Hollanda) discussed naturalistic Flemish landscape painting as feminine. Flemish painting was considered feminine because of the viewers it purportedly attracted through its stylistic traits, including the *vaghezza* of its colors, its naturalism, and its tendency to diffuse objects across its surface.[254] Its style, however, was feminine not only because it attracted women but also because it served as the foreign *other* to the masculine Florentine or Roman style. The color, naturalism and sensuality of Venetian painting made it an easy substitute for the Flemish manner, and it is obvious that the two schools were lumped together by the Florentines.[255] Academician Sir Joshua Reynolds states this view explicitly two hundred years later, saying "The Venetian school...may be said to be the Dutch part of the Italian genius."[256] In other words, the "feminine" style of Northern naturalism or Venetian colorism was considered foreign by the Florentine academicians, just as highly colored rhetoric or poetry was thought to have been both feminine and foreign by the ancients.[257]

As we have seen, appreciation of the "superior" masculine style, the style for which Michelangelo was the Renaissance exemplar, had the added benefit of conferring honor on its beholder. While the artist had to be a man of intellect in order to create in the severe manner that was appreciated for the rational truths it betrayed, rather than for the senses it attracted, the viewers who appreciated this art had to be men of learning in order to "see with their soul's reason" what was set before them. Thus, Renaissance "difficult" art was to be seen with the brain rather than with the eyes; it was an art of exclusion.

The Champions of *Questa Altra Via*

253 Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 31.

254 Sohm, p. 783.

255 Sohm discusses this transference thoroughly, pp.783-784.

256 *The Literary Works*. 2.13; quoted in Schor, p.20. Reynolds also writes that "the elegant school of ornamental art" [Venice] loses to "the grand and noble school of sublime art" [Rome] because it parades "sensuality over reason, dazzle over effect, color over line and ornament over severity." quoted in Schor, p.19.

257 Sohm discuses the "otherness" of the Venetians and the *oltrimontani*, pp.783-784.

Although even in his own lifetime the shadow of Michelangelo loomed large over art theory, there were other styles available and alternate critical opinions being espoused. Even Armenini noted that Michelangelo's exalted manner was not appropriate for all commissions or all themes. While it was suitable for the highest princes, private persons wanted and deserved less demanding and more decorative paintings: *Conociosia che la piu gente naturalmente brama di vedere una bella varieta di colori, et di cose piacevole, che tanta compositione di nuda, et di tanta muscoli in ogni luogo.*[258] In 1546, Sabba da Castiglione of Faenza wrote his *Ricordi*, which contained a section on appropriate home decor. He said that "some decorate it [their homes] with the works of Pietro del Borgo, or of Melozzo da Forli, who for their perspectives and their artistic secrets are perhaps more agreeable to the intellectuals than they are appealing to the eyes of those who understand less."[259] What Sabba really thinks are the best choice, it turns out, are the intarsia *vedute* of Fra Damiano da Brescia. This quotation shows that consumers were aware of choices when it came to decorating their homes. Certain challenging styles were appreciated only by intellectuals, while the average art buyer would probably prefer cheerful views (in Sabba's case, views that showed the elaborate craftsmanship inherent in inlaid woodwork.) Even Vasari, though he holds up Michelangelo as the apex of perfection in art, believed that there was a place for the more ornamental branches of painting.[260]

Vasari was a man of moderate, undogmatic tastes who did not censure artistic license and who appreciated that there were different decorums associated with different commissions. Indeed, the few guarded criticisms he levels at the divine Michelangelo

---

258 "One knows that most people naturally would rather see a beautiful variety of colors than compositions all of nudes and of muscles in every place." quoted in Summers, p.584. my trans.

259 "On the Decoration of a House," *Ricordo* 109; quoted and translated in Klein and Zerner, p.23.

260 It should be stated here that, like Vasari, most art buyers and moderate critics had what might be called a "modal" appreciation for different types of art, realizing that art was made up of many styles and for many tastes. As long as the decorum called for by the subject of the work, the audience, and the intended setting were met, most critics allowed for many "perfections" in the arts. For Renaissance comments on varied taste, see the quotation from Lorenzo de Medici above. Also, Paolo Pino quotes Cicero on the topic, saying: *Sono vari li giudici umani, diversi l e complessioni, abbiamo medesmamente l'uno dell'altro estratto l'intelletto nel gusto, la quale differenzia cause che non a tutti aggradano equalmente le cose.* Dolce is here justifying different preferences in art based on humoral complexion. quoted in Roskill, *Dolce.* p.18.

concern that master's refusal to soften or adorn his figured works with anything but marble-like flesh.[261] We have already read Vasari's description of *The Last Judgment* discussing Michelangelo's single-minded obsession with the nude, which says that there are "charms of coloring and the caprices and new fantasies of certain minute and delicate refinements which many other painters, perhaps not without some show of reason, have not entirely neglected." In the *Life of Raphael*, when chronicling the various styles Raphael assimilated, Vasari writes that Raphael, knowing he could never depict the nude as well as Michelangelo, "reflected, like a man of supreme judgment, that painting does not only consist in representing the nude human form."[262] These two remarks are examples of Vasari's opinion that while the nude might be the highest good, the "pleasantries" of art had an important place in painting as well.

Such pleasantries, which by the sixteenth century had become the secondary task of painting, had in the preceding centuries been the apex of art. Prior to the mid-quattrocento, another rhetorical tradition had been favored, one that championed a painting style of lavish details, color and naturalism.[263] This ekphrastic Greek tradition, drawing on the descriptive conventions of the *locus amoenus* and courtly love poetry, held sway over the humanists' rhetorical descriptions which both illustrated and helped determine the then-reigning style in the visual arts. We can trace these same descriptive sources in the love poetry of Petrarch and in the fifteenth-century revival of pastoral poetry. Underscoring the fact that this style of description influenced humanist tastes, it should be noted that Pisanello received more written accolades in the first half of the fifteenth century than any other artist, and thus was really the favorite quattrocento "humanist" painter.[264] It would be a more comfortable fit with accepted notions of Renaissance progress if humanists had recognized and lavished

261 Not only does Michelangelo confine himself to figural representation, he is almost always painting men. His women, in their masculinity, offer another "subtextual" refusal of landscape.

262 du Vere, I. 742.

263 See Michael Baxandall's *Giotto and the Orators* for an argument about how the move to a Ciceronian, unified rhetorical style drove out the florid rhetoric and art of the earlier fifteenth century. The following discussion of the quattrocento move from a Greek to a Roman rhetorical manner is indebted to his book.

264 Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.91.

praise on Masaccio or Piero della Francesca instead of Pisanello, who was one of the foremost exponents of the International Gothic style.[265] Be this as it may, early humanists delighted in Pisanello's highly contrived paintings, which combined raised and gilded gesso ornament with exhaustively naturalistic detail.

It is no coincidence that in literature humanists were just as admiring of the sorts of ekphrastic exhortations that lovingly, if somewhat erratically, listed all the pretty details of a scene. In addition, the stock phrases of artistic praise they most often borrowed from antiquity were the ones that claimed verisimilitude--for example, figures that seemed to breathe, that appeared about to speak, or details so mimetically painted that they fooled beasts or men.[266] Partly because this was the type of antique description early humanists strove to emulate, the painters they admired were the naturalists Jan Van Eyck and Rogier van der Weyden and the International Gothic luminaries Gentile da Fabriano and Pisanello. All four were artists who painted each tree, bird, and flower with care and attention; and who made sure that their jewel-toned colors spread across the entire surface of the canvas.[267]

Fifteenth-century humanists who preferred the more detailed courtly art of these artists were by and large those whose rhetorical style was influenced by the influx of Greek texts into Italy at the beginning of the fifteenth century. [268] One of the modes of description this Greek influence engendered was "a sort of generalized enumeration," an approach that valued lavish lists of things to be seen and sought out in works of art.[269] This approach

265 Furthering this misconception, Roskill's recent book claims that Masaccio and Piero della Francesca "typified" the style of Italian painting in the fifteenth century. Roskill, *Landscape*, p.60.

266 Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.53.

267 Bartolommeo Fazio, in the section of his book *De viris illustribus* entitled "De pictoribus," wrote that these four were the finest painters of his time. quoted in Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.99.

268 One major source for this "new" Greek learning was Manual Chrysolarus. Manual came from Byzantium to Italy in 1395, bringing classical texts with him. At that time, Italy was hungry for antique texts, and there was not yet evident the disdain for later Byzantine sophistic writings that was eventually to develop. Manual was very influential, teaching in Florence and Lombardy and writing a Greek grammar (the *Erotemata*) that was to remain the standard text into the sixteenth century. Baxandall says that Manual's teaching's were the "main source and stimulus for the curiosity about Greek things that became one of the most expansive elements in Quattrocento humanism." *Giotto*, p.79.

269 quoted in Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.81.

was widely disseminated by Guarino da Verona, who wrote with enthusiasm about Pisanello's mimetic ability:

...you equal nature's works, whether you are depicting birds or beasts, perilous straits or calm seas; we would swear we saw the spray gleaming and heard the breakers roar. I put out a hand to wipe the sweat from the brow of a laboring peasant; we seem to hear the whinny of a war horse and tremble at the blare of trumpets...If you paint a winter scene everything bristles with frost and the leafless trees grate in the wind. If you set the action in spring, varied flowers smile in the green meadows, the old brilliance returns to the trees, and the hills bloom; here the air quivers with the song of birds.[270]

Guarino follow the rules of ekphrasis in making his description come alive to his readers' senses--he solicits their ears and sense of touch as well as their eyes to involve them viscerally with the scene.[271] Such passages and the paintings they addressed were unabashed in their attempts to engage sensually and delight their audience. Guarino's passage is modeled largely on Virgilian vocabulary and the Medieval Latin convention of the *locus amoenus.* [272]

Though perhaps the most popular mode of artistic description until 1450, this flowery style was not without its detractors. In 1435, George of Trebizond published *De Rhetorica libri V.* In this book, the first comprehensive humanist rhetorical treatise, George critiqued the style of Guarino da Verona, who had been his Latin teacher. He found Guarino's sentence structure "bad, disjointed and weak."[273] As an exercise, George took some of Guarino's brief sentences and wove them together into longer periodic ones. Thus, we can see a stylistic move from Guarino's lavish but not tightly composed visual exhortations, whose short sentences skipped from one part of the work to another, towards longer, more restrained compositions that depended for ornament on internal juxtaposition--*varieta* and not mere *copias*; *compositus* and not *dissolutus.*[274]

---

270 Guarino was the pupil of Manual Chrysolarus.

271 As Guarino is addressing Pisanello's skills in general and not attempting verbally to bring to life one particular painting, he is not writing a strict ekphrasis.

272 Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.94.

273 *Compositione nihil fere viriliter colligatur, ac ideo supina quaedam, et futilis oratio sit. Georgii Trapezuntii Rhetoricum libri V etc.* (Venice, 1523), 68 a-b; discussed in Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.138.

274 Baxandall, *Giotto*, p.139.

The Anxiety of Detail

While it seems apparent that around 1435 (the date of Alberti's *della Pittura*), writers and theorists began to appreciate another type of writing and another type of painting, the florid older style was not driven out. It existed still, but not in place of theoretic primacy. It was relegated to a framing role; it became the ornamental art of private palaces, of women's bridal chests, of men's more feminine or romantic verse. Detail as found in detailed art, poetry and rhetoric did not disappear, but was shifted from the center of the theoretically-espoused canon. The shift occurred when artistic theory, just then being codified for the visual arts from the model of literary theory and antique treatises on art, began to show fear and disdain for such works. Detail caused anxiety through its characteristic inclination to disrupt the hierarchical ordering of a work's composition which would plainly make the peripheral ornament subservient to the central meaning, and would clarify the foreground from the background.[275]

This tendency only increased in the sixteenth century when much artistic theory moved further away from the "it lived" type of praise, from the praise of detail, and from the conception of art as a sort of natural science that could magically re-present the world.[276]

Detail, which comes from the French *detailler* and means literally "to cut into pieces," requires a movement of the viewer away from the central subject. The danger of detail, the power it has to "cut off" the viewer from the appropriate response, is told in Strabo's story of the painter Protogenes who was commissioned by the city of Rhodes to paint an image of a Satyr. When Protogenes had finished his painting, showing the Satyr beside a column on top of which stood a life-like male pheasant, the work was displayed in the town square. The townspeople gathered around, exclaiming over the verisimilitude of the bird. The painter was troubled, and got permission to take the work back home, where he painted out the bird so that viewers would not be led astray by it and focus on the wrong

275 Schor, p.20.

276 Klein and Zerner, p.3.

part of the painting.[277]

Franciscus Junius, recounting this tale in the seventeenth century, says that Protogenes took appropriate action, because the *parergon*, or ornament, of a work must never be so beautiful either in material or skill that it detracts from the work's *ergon*, or main purpose ("must wee never be so inconsiderate in our judgment, as to prefer the by-worke before the worke".)[278] The more serious and moral the main subject, the less decorous it is for detail to move the viewer's eyes away from it. In other words, the more we see of the incidental detail, the less we see of the true "whole."

In the eighteenth century, Sir Joshua Reynolds, the heir to the academic tradition, wrote:

> In a composition, when the objects are scattered and divided into many equal parts, the eye is perplexed and fatigued, from not knowing where to rest, where to find the principle action, or which is the principle figure....The expression which is very often used on these occasions is that the piece wants repose, a word which perfectly expresses a relief of the mind from that state of hurry and anxiety which it suffers...[279]

This quotation should be examined in light of George of Trebizond's criticism of Guarino. Just as there are paintings that move the viewer hurriedly across the surface, delighting the eyes, perhaps, but hiding the meaning in profusion, there are "bad, disjointed and weak" passages that layer word on word in short sentences, ignoring composition, and causing the reader to make staccato jumps from one brief unconnected thought to the next. As we shall see in the following section, the art of landscape, composed in such a way that ornament lures the viewer or reader from one delight to the next, is praised and condemned in markedly similar vocabulary--a vocabulary that denotes scattered movement as well as feminine flightiness.

Part II: The Feminine Language of Landscape

We recall Lorenzo de' Medici's comment that "paradise means nothing more than

277 Strabo, *Geography,* 14.2. 5-6. This anecdote is analyzed below, see chapter 3.

278 *The Painting of the Ancients*, 2 vols. eds. Keith Aldrich, Philipp Fehl, Raina Fehl (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), I.311.Parerga, from the Greek *par*, meaning "beside," and *ergon*, meaning "work," is a word defined as "extras, decorations, or byworks." The term is addressed below, see ch. 3.

279 Reynolds, *Discourses,* VIII.147; quoted in Schor, p. 18.

an exceedingly agreeable garden." He continues this passage by saying that paradise was also found "wherever a lady so beautiful was, because there was the fullness of every amenity and sweetness that the gentle heart can desire."[280] In other words, for Lorenzo, a beautiful woman and a garden are the same; they each exist as an earthly paradise for man, providing for him all the "amenities" he might desire. Both function to give him an array of sensual pleasures.

Women have always been linked with nature, and there exist many other examples in literature where poets use similes of nature to make their Lady's charms sensually explicit. One might think of the *Song of Songs* where the bride's belly is likened to a heap of wheat set about with lilies. Such simile is continued in innumerable Petrarchan conceits about, for instance, a beloved's lips being like cherries.[281] One of Petrarch's *Rime Sparse*, "Di pensier in pensier, di monte in monte," makes woman's identification with nature even more explicit. In this lyric poem, the Lover sees his lady in the details of the landscape he traverses. His yearning mind (*la mente vaga*), which unceasingly seeks his Beloved, whose love he is denied, forces him to leave civilization and seek solace in nature. There, he hopes that "between two peaks in a shady valley" (*fra duo poggi siede obbrosa valle*) his soul will be quieted. He is both tormented and soothed, however, when, for instance, "Where a tall pine or a hillside extend shade, there I sometimes stop, and in the first stone I see I portray her lovely face with my mind" (*Ove porge ombra un pino alto od un colle / talor m'arresto, et pur nel primo sasso / disegno co la mente il suo bel viso.*) Though he knows he is only seeing an illusion, he keeps seeking out the beautiful in nature, in which he can perpetuate the vision of her beauty. This is because in such places, he says, "I feel love so close by that my soul is satisfied by its own deception; in so many places and so beautiful I see her, that, if the deception should last, I ask no more." (*sento Amor si da presso / che del suo proprio error l'alma s'appaga;/ in tante parti et si bella la veggio /*

---

280 *Autobiography*, p.88-9.

281 for the influence of such verse on depictions of women, see Elizabeth Cropper, "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, *Petrarchismo*, and the Vernacular Style," *Art Bulletin*, 58 (1976), 374-94.

che se l'error durasse, altro non cheggio.)[282]

Petrarch's poem expresses the common lyric conceit of the charms of nature at once underscoring and, paradoxically, soothing the Lover's ardor by their link to the many beauties of his Beloved. In a very illuminating and risqué pastoral *ballo* (dance song) by Lorenzo de' Medici, however, the equation of woman with a landscape to be sensually enjoyed becomes *literally* explicit through the poem's extended metaphor:

In mezzo d'una valle e un boschetto
con una fonte piena di diletto.

Di questa fonte surgon si dolci acque,
che chi ne gusta un tratto, altro non chiede:
io fui degno gustarne, e si mi piacque,
ch'altro non penso poi, per la mia fede,
questa dolcezza ogni altro dolce eccede,
pur ch'altri sia a tanto bene eletto.

Gia non voglio insegnarvi ov'ella sia,
che qualche animal bruto non vi andassi;
son ben contento di mostrar la via,
onde, chi vuole andarvi, drizzi i passi.
Per duo cammini a questa fonte vassi,
chi non volessi far certo tragetto.

Vassi di sopra per un gentil monte,
che quasi par di bianca neve pieno;
truovasi andano dritto verso il fonte
da ogni parte un monticello ameno,
e in mezzo d'essi un vago e dolce seno,
che adombra l'uno a l'altro bel poggetto.

Seguitando il cammin di mano in mano,
si passa per un vago monticello,
un'erta ch'e si dolce, che par piano,
e'l poggio e netto, rimunito e bello:
nascon poi duo vallette a pie di quello
e in mezzo a queste e il loco ch'io v'ho detto.[283]

---

282 *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics*, trans. Robert M. Durling (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp.264-5.

283 *Tutte le Opere*, 2 vols., ed. Paolo Orvieto (Rome, 1992), II.734-735. The editor notes with scholarly restraint that "Piu che probabile un sottostante doppio senso sensuale." Jean Toscan, in his study of Burlesque poetry, shows that such works frequently sustain two levels of signification. see *Le carnaval du langage. Le lexique erotique des poetes de l'equivoque du Burchiello a Marino (XV-XVII siecles)*, 4 vols. (Lille, 1981), I.140.

[Deep in a valley, with a copse around, / A fountain of delight is to be found.
Out of this fountain such sweet waters flow/ That none would chose to taste another spring: / To taste I was thought worthy and it so / Pleased me that now you see me hankering / For those sweet drops, sweeter than anything. / The elect alone drink on that wooded ground.
If I should give directions where it lay / Some savage animal might visit it,
But happy I shall be to show the way; / You must take two roads if you have the wit / (Unless of course you like the opposite / Journey to where another valley's found.)
You travel first over a soft incline / That seems to be a field of dazzling snow / And, making for the fount in a straight line, / Between the two gentle hillocks you must go; / And as you move across the smooth plateau / The way is shaded by each charming mound.
Feeling your way below them you may revel / In all the purity of a broad hill / Swelling so gently that it seems quite level; / Across its face you travel on until / Two valleys meet, and there you drink your fill / In that deep fountain with a copse around.][284]

In this extraordinary poem, the Lover/Poet invites the reader to "wander" over his paramour's body. The destination is stated at the outset and, as is common in love poems, is a fountain.[285] Here the lover is refreshed "Deep in a valley, with a copse around" where "A fountain of delight is to be found." One must proceed between the lady's breasts (two dazzlingly white hillocks), which cast gentle shade on the path to her "well-tended" pudendum, and then into the "copse." There is also a "back way" not as explicitly described.

The poet's words paint the beloved's body as a *locus amoenus*: shady, sheltered, free from wild beasts. The centerpiece of this pleasance is its fountain, whose waters are so entrancing that the poet says since tasting them, he has been unable to think of any other. Here, a woman's body is presented quite literally as a sensual playground for her lover and whichever elect friends he chooses to let "trespass." If they are allowed to partake of the delightful fountain, they must take the poet's instructions and journey alone to the refreshments of that spot. The notion of the poet/lover withdrawing alone from civilization

284 trans. John Adlard, quoted in *The Literary Companion to Sex*, ed. Fiona Pitt-Kethley (New York, 1992), p.112. Adlard's translation is poetic and loose. For instance, the last stanza might more literally be rendered: "following the path hand by hand, you pass a charming little mountain, the slope of which is sweet, seeming (to be) level ground, and the hill is clean, well-provided [rewarding] and beautiful: Hidden then at the base of this are two valleys and in their center is the place about which I have told you."

285 For the frequency of the image of the fountain in both Petrarchan verse and the humorous burlesque verse modeled on it, see: Deborah Parker, "Towards a Reading of Bronzino's Burlesque Poetry," *Renaissance Quarterly*, L.4 (1997),1032-33.

into nature in order to be inspired has a comical relevance in the double meaning of the poem. The nature which refreshes and inspires, being a woman's body, is indeed outside of rational, male civilization.

Important for our discussion here is the way Lorenzo presents his lover's body. She is a landscape that can only be appreciated by wandering from one charming detail to the next. The lover is lured from the snowy whiteness of her breasts to her smooth stomach. She becomes a journey of scattered beauties, each more compelling than the rest, until at last the lover is led to her most secluded "copse." The seduction unfolds for the reader as a list of pleasures that entice him forward until he shares in the discovery and conquest of the hidden *fonte piene di diletto*, a pleasure that is found both in the revelation of the work's sly meaning and in the salacious prize he vicariously shares. Lorenzo is not concerned with the morality of this "landscape's" varied delights. However, his identification of the enjoyments of the natural pleasance with the seductive, lust-inducing charms of a woman's body shows how commonplace such metaphors were. It is not hard to imagine that the shared charms could be condemned by less libertine audiences.

In composing his *ballo*, where the lover's journey is nothing but a catalog of sexual pleasures, Lorenzo is inverting the Petrarchan conceit of the tormented lover, who wanders in nature to find respite from the tortures of love.[286] It was a trope Lorenzo was well aware of. We have seen him invoke it when commenting on his own sonnets. The similarities between the two poems are striking. Both poets wander in the wilds, looking for some satisfaction from their Beloved. Lorenzo notes *da ogni parte un monticello ameno,/ e in mezzo d'essi un vago e dolce seno, / che adombra l'uno a l'altro bel poggetto* [Between two gentle hillocks you must go; and as you move across the smooth plateau, the way is shaded between each charming mound.] Petrarch hopes that *fra duo poggi siede obbrosa valle* [between two peaks of a shady valley] he will find solace. They differ, of course, in

286 Paul Barolsky explores the picturesque ways that the burlesque poems of both Lorenzo and Michelangelo invert the refinements of Petrarchan verse, creating a nexus between woman and nature that expresses in visual terms the unrefined and grotesque rather than the delightful. see Paul Barolsky, *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), pp.61-2.

their aims--Lorenzo's of sexual gratification, Petrarch's of spiritual union, but each uses the vehicle of landscape to express the charms of woman.

Both Lorenzo's burlesque and Petrarch's lyric poem found their original inspiration in the antique conventions of the eclogue. Eclogues concern the loves of shepherds in idealized settings and were the "slightest" of the antique poetic modes. Arising from Alexandrian origins in the third century B.C. with the *Idyls* of the Greek poet Theocritus, the pastoral was continued most famously in Virgil's *Eclogues*.[287] The pastoral or idyllic form was continued through the Middle Ages in the courtly love tradition. Petrarch spurred the genre forward, and his poems, informed by both Medieval and Antique traditions, were greatly admired and imitated for centuries.

The vocabulary that Petrarch and his fellow poets used when writing of their ladies' charms is the same as the words that were appropriated for discussing landscape. One of these oft-used words which we have already encountered is *vaghezza,* a term denoting the charm and sense-pleasing loveliness that a woman or a well-painted field should have.[288] *Vaghezza* is an adjective communicating, as we shall see, the spur towards wandering. Other adjectives commonly used in poetic descriptions of women as well as in landscape description (and in the description of artistic ornament in general) also imply the "movement" of the beholder. We shall examine *vaghezza*, *capricci*, *leggiadria,* and *diletto* all of which express the detail of art and the "cutting to pieces," or fragmenting, of the viewer's attention.[289]

Vaghezza

Vaghezza is a word that Vasari and other Renaissance commentators are wont to

---

287 The visual nature of such poems is underscored by their Greek name. The idyll, as a short, descriptive poem, gets its name from the Greek *eidyllion*, or "little picture."

288 For the use of *vaghezza* in literary, particularly poetic, sources, see: Angela Castellano, "Storia una parola letteraria: it. vago," *Archivio glottologico italiano*, 48 (1963), 126-69.

289 These words were the vocabulary also used to describe female painters, as when Lomazzo describes Lavinia Fontana as an *instupende coloratrice* with a style that possesses *vaghezza e leggiadria.* In a related tone, Malvasia wrote that Lavinia's works were "so gentle, diligent and tender that they enamor us." (Lomazzo, *Trattato* [1584], p.367; and Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice,* I:177-178; both quoted in Sohm, pp.800-801). Malvasia's comment echoes what Vasari wrote about oil painting--that it required no talent, just diligence and love, to master.

use when describing a pleasing landscape. The word is particularly suited to that subject because by the sixteenth century, *vaghezza* was strongly associated with the sensual pleasures of color.[290] It comes from the Latin *vagus* "wandering or undecided," and is a relative of our words vagabond, vague, vagary and vagrant. It alternately means desire, longing, charm, beauty or vagueness. Stemming from the Italian word *vagare*, to wander, ramble, rove or roam, related words include: *vagheggiamento*, longing, yearning or cherishing; *vagheggiare*, to long for, woo, court, look lovingly at; *vagheggiatore*, a man in love or courting swain; and *vagheggino*, a dandy, fop or lady-killer.

In his 1542 treatise *Dialogo della bellezza delle donne, intitolato Celso*, Angelo Firenzuola wrote that of the six qualities that pertain to feminine beauty, the first three relate to visible qualities: *vaghezza, leggiadria* and *grazia.Vaghezza*, he says, had come to mean *bello, e vaghezza bella*, in *commun parlare.* [291] He continues:

> but nonetheless in this particular way, that *vaghezza* signifies that beauty, that has in itself all those parts, through which whoever sees it, necessarily becomes *vago*, that is desirous; and desirous of it, to seek it and enjoy it, he is always on the move at heart, traveling in thought, and with his mind becomes a vagabond.[292]

Angelo is saying that whenever something possesses *vaghezza*, it has a peculiar beauty that is composed of many different details, but is apparent equally in all these disparate parts. *Vaghezza* in an object causes desire which spurs the beholder to *vagare*, to travel, both through vision and mentally in appreciation to find the scattered beauties. *Vaghezza* is a term that in reality applies to the subject more than the object. That indefinable charm that women possess, that *non so che*, as the poets call it, forces back on the subject the meaning of *vaghezza*--only through its effects on men can feminine *vaghezza* be traced. *Vaghezza* reflects the indeterminacy of woman's beauty; non-rational, it cannot be apprehended or transcribed by words and must be known through its effects on the (male) viewer. From

---

290 Klein and Zerner write that "*vaghezza*, or sensory attractiveness, generally assimilated with the pleasure given by colors, was opposed to the more intellectual values of good design, anatomical science, perspective and the beauties of proportion. For true Tuscans, an excess of *vaghezza* would bring a kind of discredit to the painter." p.58, n.2.

291 First published in 1548.

292 Angelo Firenzuola, *Opere*, 2 vols., ed. D. Maestri (Turin, 1977), I. 55-56.

this, we understand the word's association with courtly love poetry, where the lover falls in love with the vision of his beloved, the lady possessing *vaghezza*. The seeming perfection of all her disparate parts, which in his vision, his mind and his poem he at length contemplates, amaze him, and spur his mind to seek lofty comparisons.[293]

In landscape, too, the *vaghezza* of the separate elements and colors causes the viewer to stop and ponder the work. As in love poetry it is the scattered charms of the beautiful woman that cause her lover's eyes and thoughts to wander over her; in landscape it is the varied delights. Sohm writes that "the wandering qualities of charming *vaghezza* marked the seductive powers of women and certain styles of coloring that attract the (male) viewer."[294] The Petrarchan poetic convention of dismembering the object of desire into scattered beauties to be enjoyed one at a time becomes (indeed, almost necessarily must be) the form for the literary presentation of painted landscape.[295] Thus, the appropriateness of the term *vaghezza,* implying both wandering charm and the charms of wandering, becomes apparent. Cropper points out that this Petrarchan contrivance of separation is the exact opposite of the famous allegory of idealization, the five maidens of Croton gathered by Zeuxis to distill into one unified and perfected vision.[296] Thus, it seems that landscape becomes the manifestation of a stubborn and lingering opposition to the supposed Renaissance ideal of unified harmony.

We remember the meaning Angnolo Firenzuola derived from *vaghezza* and its related verb *vago* --he described how the scattered parts that make up beauty entice the viewer to *vagare* in heart, thought and mind. This is the way Lorenzo obviously understood the word; in his poem defining a woman through the details of the *locus amoenus*, he uses *vago* both in the verbal sense of "wander" and in the adjectival meaning of "attractive or charming." The delights of the "landscape" over which he and his reader

293 Vaghezza is discussed in relation to courtly love in Summers, pp.168-169.

294 Sohm, p. 761. parentheses his.

295 Cropper, "The Beauty of Women," p. 183. For a discussion of Petrarch's fragmentation of women, see N.J. Vickers, "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme," *Critical Inquiry,* 8 (1981), 265-279.

296 Cropper, "The Beauty of Women," p. 183

travel are varied and ever-increasing in pleasure. The poem revels in each new snowy mountain or gently rounded hill.[297]

Vaghezza is not an unmitigated good, however. We recall that a *vagheggino* can be a dandy or fop--in other words, a man who has demeaned his masculinity through the appropriation of (weakening) female manners and ornamentation. Again *vaghezza* is linked to femininity.[298] This becomes more apparent in the sixteenth century, when the pleasures of *vaghezza* and its tendency to cause the mind to meditate on feminine attributes or the ornaments of landscape details began to be viewed with more suspicion. A dislike of details in the form of charms rendered and consumed for their own sake was voiced in criticism of both the literary and the visual arts.

Paolo Pino makes this mounting disdain clear in the section of his *Dialogo di Pittura* concerning charm and speed in painting. Lauro and Fabio, the conversants in the dialogue, are discussing painting. Fabio is the sober, rational Florentine voice, and Lauro is the misguided Venetian looking for advice. Lauro asks "How do you like a charming painter *(il pittore vago)*?" Fabio answers that he likes *vaghezza* very much and it is the relish of painting, but then he proceeds to redefine *vaghezza* away from the sensual pleasure of color that "just dazzles ignoramuses" and says that "true"*vaghezza* is in decorum and harmony of proportions, and the painter's *disegno.*[299] Fabio is trying to remove *vaghezza* from the subjective delight of the viewer and redefine it as the objective pleasure that can be found by those who know in the image itself.

By attempting to claim the ultimate *vaghezza* for painting, but move its definition away from mere sensual apprehension, Pino was replying to Benedetto Varchi's decision

---

297 While thinking about this extraordinary poem, we should consider another word Lorenzo enlists to convey the charms of his sexually charged landscape,*dolce*. Dolce is a word often deployed in accounts of women *and* landscape in Italian poetry and artistic description. The Italian *dolce* has several specific applications to nature. It is used particularly in descriptions of fresh, potable water (as Lorenzo used it) and in characterizations of mild weather, gentle inclines and soft breezes. These uses expand the connection between women and landscape.

298 For a list of examples in Renaissance art literature where images of women are described as *vaghezza*, see Sohm, p.768, n. 23.

299 quoted in Klein and Zerner, pp.58-59.

that sculpture was the most noble art. Varchi wrote that in matters of *vaghezza* and delight the sculptor bows to the painter, qualifying this by writing:

that is, with respect to the allure of the colors, and of those perfections of finish (*ultime perfezzione*) which sculpture cannot attain--features which, however, more properly reside in the accidents than in the substance; so that perchance intellectual men are afforded more *vaghezza* and delight by sculpture, though in truth painting may exhibit much greater resemblance, and surpass it in power of deception. Nevertheless, one sees that the majority--provided they are *ingegnosi*...prefer sculpture to painting.[300]

Varchi is saying that painting seems to the untutored to show more *vaghezza* in its revelation of all the colorful accidents that animate the surface of objects. The *cognoscenti*, however, who look at paintings with an eye to getting intellectual rather than sensual pleasure, will prefer the more abstract, permanent and absolute enjoyments that sculpture offers.

Capricci

In the *Life of Piero di Cosimo,* Vasari describes a painting of Mars and Venus as:

una Venere ignuda con un Marte parimente, che spogliato nudo dorme sopra un prato pien di fiori: ed attorno son diversi amori che chi in qua chi in la traportano la celata, i bracciali e l'altra arme di Marte. Evvi un bosco di mirto, ed un Cupido ha paura d'un coniglio: cosi vi sono le colombe di Venere e l'altre cose d'amore.[301]

Having listed this array of the *cose d'amore*, Vasari adds: *Questo quadro e in Fiorenza in casa Giorgio Vasari, tenuto in memoria sua da lui perche sempre gli piacquer i capricci di questo Maestro.* Vasari obviously enjoyed the work, which he recounts in all its pleasing and humorous details, and says that he keeps it in memory of Piero, whose *capricci* always delighted him. Capricious, a word which is associated with reckless, unreasoned frivolity, had a more positive value when applied to light pastoral verse or

300 quoted in Pino, pp.259-60. Pardo shows that although Pino's dialogue comes out in 1548, a year before the publication of Varchi's inquiry, Pino would have known Varchi's views from the 1546 lectures and the actual inquiry in 1547.

301 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.140.

inventively painted landscape.[302] It held the notion of a brief written composition, a minor painted decoration or the by-work of a painting that delighted in its ingenious innovations.*Capricci* could be short amorous verses, pleasing landscape backgrounds, framing devices of grotteschi, or staffage in the form of composite creatures or exotically dressed figures.

Capriccio, in the Renaissance, was linked etymologically with *capra*, or goat, thereby defining capriciousness as "to become goat-like," and likening the erratic, surprising element of capriciousness with the goat's nimble skipping. Joining *capriccio* with the genre of short pastoral poetry, Petrarch had formed an earlier and related false etymology which derived the term eclogue from *aix* or goat and *logos* (speech), so the eclogue was thought to be a "goatherd's tale."[303]

By these definitions, an eclogue *would* be a caprice--goat-herd's words delivered in a goat-like, skipping, erratic manner. And, as stated, *capriccio* is one of the favorite words deployed for any sort of imaginative artistic ornament or any work in a minor mode. The goat, being the favorite animal of the pastoral shepherd, is uniquely suited to define such inventive, minor novelties.[304] Goats pulled the chariot of Love as well as the chariot of Bacchus, God of the woods and of women. Goats are emblematic of lust, and the goat-human mixes found in Pan and his Satyrs are the most salaciously amorous creatures of all. The goat was a Christian symbol of the Damned at the Last Judgment, and thus was a just emblem to the licentious types of painting and poetry least likely to be freighted with any redeeming moral message. As the goat is pure lust, and his keeper, the Goatherd

---

302 For Vasari, *capricci* were works showing a high degree of *fantasia*. *Fantasia* can be described as the intellectual faculty that the artist uses to recombine sensate experience into the visible formation of never-before-seen ideas. *Fantasia*, associated with the corruptible senses because it relies on material information to construct its conceptions, must be controlled by the higher faculty of reason (see Summers, pp.104-5, 109, 112-13). In artistic description, *fantasia* and *capricci* both denote works of high imagination and originality.

303 Dante furthered this misconception by popularizing its spelling as *aeglogue*. It actually comes from *eklegein*, "to choose," and denotes a "choice" poem, edited to its briefest and most apt form.

304 It is telling that when describing the painter Bronzino's burlesque poetry, Vasari says that Bronzino is the best such author of his time, with no one writing better bawdy verse or *ne cose piu bizarre e capricciose de lui*. Vasari-Milanesi, VI.237.

immortalized in Pastoral verse, is himself "workless," existing only to loll about singing and making love, no better animal could form the etymological stem of words such as eclogue or caprice, words which denote art forms whose only reason for being is pleasure. Indeed, when part of a larger work, capricious passages will "cut to pieces" the audiences' attention, scattering their focus, luring them with sensual delights.

This latter association, that *capricci* divert an audience's attention, relates *capricci* to *vaghezza*, the charm so alluring that it causes the beholder to wander over the work's various parts. As in the related word "caper," which goes back to "capra," for goat, and means "to jump about without direction," *capricci* of all sorts were thought to cause their audience to become frisky like goats, darting from one pleasure to the next. Both *vaghezza* and *capriccioso* imply the fracturing of attention and both describe this fracturing as the result of sensual lures.

Capricci takes both an adjective and a noun form. As a noun, it describes insubstantial ornaments that surprise and delight with their novelties, be they beautiful or grotesque. As an adjective it means variable and unpredictably multi-faceted. In the period we are discussing, it can be a term of censure for fickleness or of praise of inventiveness. It is a word Vasari uses frequently, but he never uses it as a term of highest praise. Instead, as might be expected, he employs it to relate the pleasant and diverting, not the epic and moral. Indeed, Vasari uses it as a sort of catch phrase for all the embellishments that are *not* the main point of a work, including landscape.

While in the Renaissance men could be seen to display capriciousness (Piero di Cosimo is characterized by Vasari with just that trait), women were more strongly associated with that habit of mind by nature. Ludovico Dolce speaks to this when he describes women by saying that "their thoughts are flighty, less ordered."[305] The notion of "changeable woman" has a long history. Aristotelian physiology presented women as undefined and indeterminate, without discernible proportion and measure. By the

305 Dolce [1545]; quoted in Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models*, (Ithaca and London, 1990), p.69.

Renaissance, these qualities of body were transferred to become emblems of an unstable and fickle psychology, coming from an irrational and unfocused mind.[306]

There was a long artistic tradition of presenting women as capricious as well. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil immortalizes this supposed trait with the line *varium et mutabile semper femina.*[307] Poliziano echoes Virgil's sentiments, writing in his *Stanze* that woman "is ever flightier than a windswept leaf, and she wishes and unwishes an thousand times a day: she pursues the man who flees, hides from the one who desires her, she comes and goes like waves upon the shore."[308] Thus woman, like waves or the wind, is a being always in motion, and is best described by words of wavering which mirror her capricious indecision and indeterminacy.

Leggiadria

Leggiadria is a feminine noun used time and again poetically to describe female charms. In art, it is employed to describe the lighter modes of depiction. It means prettiness or comeliness, grace or charm. The adjectival forms are *leggero* and *leggiero*, meaning light, nimble, quick, slight, fickle, volatile, frivolous, flighty, or thoughtless. In Poliziano's poem likening a woman to a windswept leaf, he wrote that women are *sempre e piu leggier*, which the translator renders as "ever flightier than." Even without Poliziano's use, the equation of *leggiadria* with women cannot be questioned; Angelo Firenzuola wrote:

> Grace and charm (leggiadria) are nothing other than...an observation of a silent law, as others have said and according to the intent of the word itself [here obviously Angelo is playing on the word's similarity to *lege,* law] given and promulgated by nature to you women in your movement, comportment, and use of your body as a whole and its particular members.[309]

---

306 Sohm, p. 761. For a discussion of the medical justifications for Renaissance notions of the instability of female psychology, see Maclean, Ch.4; for a survey of ancient views on women and relevant bibliography, see Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves Women in Classical Antiquity* (New York, 1975).

307 Virgil, *Aeneid,* IV.569. Earlier still, Sophocles had written "A woman's vows I write upon the wave." *Unknown Dramas*, frag. 694.

308 *Che sempre e piu leggier ch'al vento foglia, / e mille volte el di vuole s'asconde, / segue che fugge, a chi la vuol s'asconde, / e vanna e vien, come alla riva l'onde. The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano*, trans. David Quint (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979), pp.8-9.

309 Firenzuola, p. 753.

Leggiadria, a word used for light-weight art and for women's charm, is again a word of motion, of fractured attention, implying the dis-unified, or scattered, pleasure to be had by the (male) audience. Angelo thought that leggiadria "is neither known by reason, nor can it be produced by reason."[310] This reminds us of *vaghezza*, the irrational charms a woman has, numberless and without measure, whose impact can only be gauged by their effect on the admiring (male) subject.

The happiness found in observing one's beloved is expressed by Pietro Bembo in his 1505 *Gli Asolani*, where he writes of observing his paramour walk through a flowery meadow, then stop with her companions "singing and dancing in a circle...filling, *leggiadrissima*, with beauty, all the circle."[311] Bembo's passage continues, expressing his wish to keep his lady always before his eyes, to be able to follow her charming movements as she now wanders through gay fields, now dances, moving with other maidens in a seamless rhythm of graceful femininity. Bembo's passage resonates pictorially with images like the *Three Graces*, or Botticelli's *Primavera*. *Leggiadria* is the appropriate way to describe the wandering innamorata whose movements compel the male gaze to follow, and it is adopted as the correct term for the feminine charms of the landscapes she graces.

The use of *leggiadria* as a word denoting a certain feminized style in painting is made explicit in Ludovico Dolce's 1554 or 1555 description of Titian's *Venus and Adonis.* Dolce says that in the body of Adonis, Titian has conveyed "a certain pleasing beauty which, partaking of the feminine, does not, however, depart from the masculine."[312] This "difficult and pleasing manner which in a woman would suggest something of the man, and in a man a touch of the beautiful woman" is expressed through Adonis' movement, which is at the same time *leggiadria* and *gagliardo.*[313] A word that means vigorous, sturdy or virile, *gagliardo* is usually employed to denote a masculine action. By showing

---

310 ibid., pp. 753-754.

311 *carolando e danzando...leggiadrissimo empiendo di vaghezza tutto il cerchio. Gli Asolani*, text in *Opere in Volgare*, ed. M.Marti (Florence, 1961), pp.102-3.

312 Dolce, *Lettere* (1559); quoted in Roskill, *Dolce*, pp.212-217.

313 Roskill, *Dolce*, pp. 212-217.

the two conflicting styles of movement in one motion, Titian is uniting opposites and employing a very difficult style. Dolce here expects his reader to understand that a movement of *leggiadria* is surprising in a male, and yet appropriate to the extraordinary circumstances of Adonis' still soft youth and his congress with the loveliest and most changeable of all women.

Diletto

The verb *dilettare* means to amuse, delight or charm, while the noun *diletto* means delight or pleasure (*diletto* can also be translated as beloved one.) As adjectives, *dilettavole* means pleasant, pleasing, agreeable or delightful, and *dilettoso* means delightful, enchanting or charming. *Dilettare* comes from the Latin *delicia*, "delight," which in turn originated from *de*, meaning "away" and *lacere,* "to lure or deceive." Thus, when visual or aural delights are added to a work of art, these (feminine) embellishments are (again) "details" which can "cut to pieces" the beholder's attention and subvert the (masculine) central meaning of the work.

Dilettare was juxtaposed in the Renaissance with *giovare*, to be of use or to do good.This juxtaposition of delight with utility was a canonical part of Renaissance art theory, stemming as it did from Horace's famous dictum: *Aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae*, "Poets aim either to benefit or to amuse."[314] Ludovico Dolce, who prepared a translation of the *Ars Poetica* in 1535, decides in favor of the latter of these aims and claims inciting delight as the highest goal of art. He writes *Se il poeta non partorisce lo effeto del dilettare, egli non e poeta.*[315]

Perhaps following Philostratus, who wrote in the introduction to his *Imagines* that the work was addressed to anyone "who wants to know in principle and to embrace imaginatively all the elements that can serve as a source of pleasure" in painting, Dolce was much more appreciative of the catholic, and, as he says, "Petrarchan" art of Raphael than

314 Horace, l.333.

315 *Osservationi* (orig. 1550, 1554 ed.), p.182; quoted in Roskill, *Dolce*, p. 52, n. 57.

of the inexorably masculine manner of Michelangelo.[316] In his *Dialogo della Pittura*, Dolce argues for the painter's cultivation of those talents which bring pleasure to the viewer, and therefore fame to himself:

Bisogna, che voi sappiate, che'l Pittore non dee procacciar laude da una parte sola, ma da tutte quelle, che ricercano alla Pittura, e piu da quelle, che piu diletta noi. Percioche essendo la Pittura trovata principalmente per dilettare, se'l Pittor non diletta, se ne sta oscuro e senze nome. [You need to grasp the fact that the painter should not limit his pursuit of praise to one element alone, but extend it to every one of the elements which are involved in painting, and more especially to those which afford the greater pleasure. Painting was invented primarily to give pleasure; by this token then, if the artist fails to please, he remains unnoticed and devoid of reputation.][317]

The dialogue clearly states that delight, which for Dolce is the highest aim of art, is brought about either by depictions of feminine beauty, or by depictions that model themselves on the charms found in feminine beauty. Dolce repeatedly makes his points about the ideal in art through instances of loveliness in women, often using Petrarch's descriptions of Laura as illustrations. For example, he states that art should not be too finished, but rather like Laura's hair: *Negletto ad arte, innanellato, e hirto* [Untouched by art, curly and quite unkempt].[318] Again, when trying to define the undefinable term *venusta*, which fills viewers with *infiniti diletti*, he says it was the quality in Laura that moved Petrarch to write the lines:*E un non so che ne gli occhi, che in un punto / Po far chiara la notte, oscuro il die, / E'l mele amaro, e addolcir l'ascentio.* [And in her eyes an indefinable power / To lighten night in a trice and darken day / To sweeten wormwood and turn honey sour.][319]

For Dolce, as for many sixteenth-century commentators, desirable traits in women became the medium through which what was pleasing in art could be understood. In the end, Dolce judges Raphael as being superior to Michelangelo even in the depiction of nudes, because his figures *dilettano maggiormente* through their *atti piu temperati e piu dolci* and through their *pulitezza* and *delicatezza*. --they give greater pleasure through

316 quoted in Roskill, *Landscape*, p.15.
317 Roskill, *Dolce*, pp.148-9.
318 ibid., pp.157-8.
319 ibid., pp.176-7.

their temperate and sweet actions and their refinement and delicacy.[320] In other words, the Venetian Dolce likes Raphael's style better than Michelangelo's because it is a manner of greater femininity, and thus it gives more delight.

Like the other words we have investigated, delight has the root meaning of movement, here as before movement caused by the lure of sensual pleasure. It is used to describe the emotions aroused in the beholder by sensual pleasure. We recall that in Lorenzo's poem, the object of the journey for the wanderer and his ultimate purpose in moving from one beautiful landscape element to the next, was the lure of the womanly "fountain of delight." As in this poem, delight in painting is a response defined by the beholder. He is led on to experience the details of the depiction, be it woman or landscape, and he "travels" from one scattered charm to the next, seeking nothing beyond his own pleasure.

•••••

Vaghezza, *capriccioso*, *leggiadria*, and *dilettare,* are linked to similar "wandering" words of imagination, pleasure and poetry like *trovatore*, *stravagante*, and *pellegrino*.[321] More than these others, however, the four we have analyzed are directly linked both to the feminine and to descriptions of the less serious in art. When landscape arose as an identifiable type of painting, theorists adopted a feminized vocabulary, drawn from poetry, literary criticism and treatises on women, to describe it. The same terms that are used again and again in descriptions of women become, by a seemingly unreflected critical consensus, the language of what Vasari calls "the other manner" of painting, the detailed and embellished style that embraces landscape.

There are many reasons why landscape appeared to theorists as a feminine genre. On a technical level, landscape painting was strongly associated with the newly-discovered

320 ibid., p.172.

321 In a related but later example, Lawrence Goedde presents seventeenth-century Dutch images of landscape as compositions of conventional but naturalistically represented details that engage the viewer by inviting him or her to enter into the scene and "move" from one delight to the next. see"Naturalism as Convention: Subject, Style, and Artistic Self-Consciousness in Dutch Landscape," *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*, ed. Wayne Franits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 133.

medium of oil paint. Oil paint, with its tie to modeled (not drawn) color, and its potential lack of rigorous design, was a foreign medium, and it was linked to colorful, irrational and sensual depictions. All these traits "feminized" the medium, and it was even castigated as being an art for women due to its ease of application.

The compositions of landscape denied the unifying, hieratic impulse that governed the ordering of much High Renaissance narrative art. Such diffuse compositions ensured that the reception of landscapes had to be a fractured, additive absorption of a variety of detail spread across a surface. This lack of linear constraint was likened to the changeability of feminine nature.

The literary precedents for landscape depictions also played a role in "feminizing" the vocabulary applied to landscape. Pastoral verse followed the enumerative model of listing one pleasure after another, thus driving the reader to move from one unconnected delight to the next. Such verses provided stylistic elements for landscape (flowers, cool waters, green fields, shady trees), but gave no ennobling content. This same lack of content had linked landscape painting in antiquity with the lower literary genres of satyr plays and bucolic verse, genres of sensuality and erotic love. Landscape was also thought to only appeal to the senses, and thus both to imitate and to interest irrational women. Finally, the *locus amoenus* surroundings that landscapes physically manifest were also the settings of Petrarchan and courtly love poetry, verses that existed to objectify and minutely describe the ideal attributes of women.

Portrait images of women in the Renaissance became so idealized that their connection to a referent outside themselves was tenuous, and they pointed largely to the skill of the artist.[322] Such portraits were the visual equivalent of the fragmenting gesture of Petrarchan verse, lyric poetry that exalted the Poet / Lover's descriptive powers more than the actual Beloved. Such verse forms gave the model for visual descriptions of female beauty; they also, as we have seen, provided the literary models for landscape. This common ancestry is appropriate because both idealized images of women and landscape

322 Cropper, "The Beauty of Women," p. 190.

are objects of delectation, visions that invite the beholder to wander across their surface, but not pierce their depth, and the terms chosen to describe such works point to the act of consuming the image rather than to any fixed or measurable perfections inherent in the work itself.

Writers like Dolce point to this critical shift in art theory. By the mid-sixteenth century, there was a much greater acceptance of the viewer's subjective desires in defining the value of art, a change that had as part of its purpose the justification of visual pleasure.[323] This "aesthetic" versus ethical or formal concept of beauty valued art that aroused imaginative delight in spectators. From such a critical standpoint, colorful, mimetically painted images of the flesh of women or the delights of nature were the most pleasurable forms that paint could convey. In the Florentine, "Michelangesque" school of criticism, art was judged on ethical principles thought to be held immutably in the forms themselves. In Dolce's theory there is no good inherent in the work except whatever pleasure it brings the viewer. Whether the critic was pro- or anti- landscape, however, the vocabulary used to describe the genre was a feminine one, and remained freighted with words implying lesser virtues.

323 In the introduction to his translation of Dolce's dialogue, Roskill notes this theoretical shift, see pp. 12-14; 44-45. This change was by no means unheralded. We have seen, for instance, in the late quattrocento quote from Lorenzo that begins this chapter, an awareness that personal taste factored into the appreciation of beauty.

Chapter Three
Parerga and the Renaissance Theory of Landscape

In his 1521 commentary on Vitruvius, Cesare Cesariano identified two modes of painting,*megalographia*, solemn paintings of great importance, and *parerga*, paintings of landscape and shepherd scenes. The Greek word Cesare uses for landscape, *parerga*, comes from a combination of the Greek words *para*, meaning "beside," and *ergon*, meaning "work." The Oxford English Dictionary defines *parerga*, the plural of *parergon*, as "things subordinate or accessory, especially ornamental embellishments; a subordinate activity or work; or work taken in addition to one's main employment." Twentieth century criticism might prefer the definitions "supplement, frame, or appendage."[324]

The word has a long history in art criticism, having been used as a term to describe art since late Antiquity. Then, its definition was either subsidiary ornament that an artist added to a work to show off his skill or minor works of virtuoso execution that had no important content. When the term was revived in the Renaissance, *parerga* carried these same connotations but was most often associated with the then-nascent genre of landscape painting. A history of the term *parerga* and its modern uses has not been undertaken previously. In this chapter I will analyze Antique and Renaissance texts concerning parerga and landscape so that I may show how in struggling to categorize the new genre of landscape painting Renaissance writers arrived at their own definition of parerga as mimetically painted, varied landscape ornament.

Part One of Jacques Derrida's book *The Truth in Painting* is entitled "Parergon."[325] Here, Derrida revives Emmanuel Kant's discussion of parerga. For Kant, a parergon is the liminal space between the inside, the work, and the outside, its frame or surrounding ornament. A parergon is appropriate to its ergon only if it effects its mediating intervention through its form (*durch seine form*). If it lapses into adornment by attracting attention through sensual display inorganically linked to the ergon, it deteriorates and does a

[324] *Critical Theory Since 1965*, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986), p.348, n. 14.
[325] Jacques Derrida, *La Verite dans la Peinture* (Paris, 1978).

disservice to the ergon.[326] Derrida points out the essential reliance of Kant's argument on the ancient notion of form versus matter. As parergon, the material is controlled by relegation to boundary areas of framing ornament, and is shackled to the service of the form or idea of the ergon. Its potential to break bonds with the ergon, however, causes the material, irrational parergon to be feared for the license of sensuality.

Derrida's concern is what binds the "frame" to the work, and where the distinction between the two is. He describes the impossibility of truly wrenching the parergon--the *hors-d'oeuvre* of art, the *nebensgeschafte*, the secondary business--from what it both supports and circumscribes. The ergon is the thesis which cannot stand without its prosthesis; the nexus between these two is a liminal space that cannot easily be pinned down. This uneasy relationship is necessary but dangerous; the parerga satisfy a lack in the ergon, but must be kept in check. If not, de-centering occurs and the central (masculine) form loses valor and attention to its ornaments, which, if superfluous and material, exist only to call attention to themselves and not to support and illuminate the central idea.

Derrida's preferred interpretation of parerga is the term "frame," though for him this frame may be understood as the actual frame of a painting or the painted backgrounds of a work. Although his understanding of the word is a logical outgrowth of its history and past usages, Derrida adopts the term from Kant in order to discuss notions of superfluity and the problems of textual interpretation; he is not concerned with the term's continuous history in Western writing. It is a history that has not been explicated fully, and this chapter will do so by exploring the pre-and early modern understanding(s) of parerga through the early seventeenth century.[327]

Part I: The Textual History of Parerga

326 Before Kant, Leonardo had similar notions about the frame's duty to the ergon. According to him, the frame served to show the *virtu* of a painting, both materially and morally. cited in Richard Trexler, *Public Life in Renaissance Florence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p.92.

327 For recent art historical uses of the term, see Meike Bal's "Derridean" exploration of light in painting as a parergon that is inextricable from the subject it illuminates ("Light in Painting: Disseminating Art History,"*Deconstruction in the Visual Arts*, eds. Peter Brunette and David Wills [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994], pp. 49-64, esp. p.56); and Suzanne Preston Blier's adaptation of Derrida's use of the word as an ahistorical theoretical term for the understanding of African art. *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

Ancient Uses of the Term Parerga

The earliest Greek uses of the word parerga do not place the term in the context of the visual arts. Plato uses it in the sense of an accessory, Philodemus as an adverb meaning transiently, and Euripides as a secondary purpose.[328] Around the first century B.C., however, the meaning of parerga seems to undergo a shift. It begins to be used in relation to the arts of rhetoric, sculpture, mechanics and painting to refer to ornament that exists to call attention to the skill of the author or artist rather than to serve a useful function.

The Roman author Vitruvius, an engineer for Augustus, wrote his magnum opus *On Architecture* before 27 B.C.. He includes the word parerga in a discussion of the Alexandrian inventor Ctesibius, a man Vitruvius considers to have had both a fertile imagination and a penetrating understanding of the workings of nature.[329] Ctesibius is credited by Vitruvius as having first understood hydraulics, the nature of wind-pressure, and the principles of pneumatics. The son of a barber, from his youth Ctesibius had been marked by his talent (*ingenium*) and his industry, and was known for his especial delight (*delectare*) in mechanical contrivances (*artificiosis rebus.*).[330] Many of Ctesibius' inventions had a practical purpose, but those that displayed the most ingenuity were his automata. Vitruvius records Ctesibius' clever uses "of water power in making automata and many other curiosities" (*Item aquarum expressiones automatopoetasque machinas multaque deliciarum genera.*)[331] In Vitruvius' text, these automata and other mechanical wonders are contrivances which exist solely to bring delight. Paraphrasing Ctesibius' description of how to construct a water-clock and its attendant ornaments, Vitruvius relates how the water-driven, cogged wheels of the clock also animate "various kinds of movement; therein figures are moved, pillars are turned, stones or eggs are let fall,

328 Plato,*Timaeus*, 38d, 21c; *Phaedrus*, 274a; *Leges*, 793e; Philodemus, *de Musica*, p.39K; Euripides, *Orestes*, 610.

329 Vitruvius writes that Ctesibius' knowledge of natural principles was so thorough that any architect wishing to read his treatise will not be able to understand it until he has first been versed by the philosophers in *de rerum natura*, which he says the Greeks call *physiologia*. Vitruvius, I.i.7.

330 Vitruvius, IX.c. VIII.2.

331 ibid., IX.c.VIII. 4.

trumpets sound, and other side-shows (*parerga.*)."[332]

Having discussed Ctesibius' water clocks in Book Nine, Vitruvius goes on to explain in Book Ten how Ctesibius built fountains, ending the discussion by saying:

> Nor is this the only remarkable device of Ctesibius which is current. There are many others of various kinds which are driven by the pressure of the water. The pneumatic pressure will be shown to produce effects borrowed from nature, both notes of blackbirds by the motion of water, and walking *automata*; little figures which drink and move; and other things which flatter the pleasure of the eyes and the use of the ears. Of these I have chosen those which I judged the most useful and serviceable. In the last book I spoke about clocks; in this we had to deal with water-pumps. The other things which are not for service, but for the purpose of our delight, can be found in the commentaries of Ctesibius by those who have a special wish for such ingenuity.[333]

It is obvious from Vitruvius' discussion of Ctesibius that he admires the engineer's facility of invention in creating mechanical reproductions of the effects of nature: birds singing, walking figures, turning pillars, sounding trumpets, and the various other parerga for which pneumatic or hydraulic forces can be used. These wonders do not have a practical purpose and so Vitruvius does not go into detail about how to make them; as he point out several times, the use of such devices is not service, but simply the pleasure they provide (*quae non sunt ad necessitatem sed ad deliciarum voluntatem*).

Vitruvius considers a water-clock's moving figure or dropping egg, which is animated by the same mechanism that enables the clock's main function of telling time, to be a parergon. The figure or the egg has nothing to do with the important purpose of the clock. It is merely an expression of *ingenium* designed to produce wonder in the viewer with its imitation of natural movement, as well as to reflect on the clock-maker's skill and creativity. Vitruvius' understanding of the term parerga as impractical but wonder-producing mechanics, with its emphasis on inutility, verisimilitude and artistic ingenuity, is

---

332 *varietatesque motionum, in quibus moventur sigilla, vertuntur metae, calculi aut ova proiciuntur, bucinae cannunt, reliquaque parerga.* Vitruvius, IX.C.viii.5.

333 *Nec tamen haec sola ratio Ctesibii fertur exquisita, sed etiam plures et variis generibus ab eo liquore pressionibus coactae spiritus efferre ab natura mutuatos effectus ostendentur, uti merularum aquae motu voces atque* angubatae, *bibentiaque et eadem moventia sigilla ceteraque, quae delectationibus oculorum et aurium usu sensus eblandiatur. E quibus quae maxime utilia et necessaria iudicavi selegi, et in priore volumine de horologiis, in hoc de expressionibus aquae dicendum putavi. Reliqua, quae non sunt ad necessitatem sed ad deliciarum voluntatem, qui cupidiores erunt eius subtilitatis, ex ipsius Ctesibii commentariis poterunt invenire.* Vitruvius, X.C.vii.4-5. italics the translator's.

an understanding that many authors in the following centuries will continue.

One of the first ancient uses of the term parerga that links it to painting, and the most important passage for the Renaissance understanding of the word, is found in Pliny's *Natural History*, a work finished in A.D.77. In a discussion of the painter Protogenes, Pliny states:

When he was decorating with paintings, on a very famous site at Athens, the gateway of the temple of Athene, where he depicted his famous [image of the state flagships the] Paralus and Hammonias, which is by some people called the Nausicaa, he added some small drawings of battleships in what painters call the 'side-pieces,' [*parergia*] in order to show from what commencement his work had arrived at the pinnacle of glorious display.[334]

In Pliny's quote, the little warships, or parerga, are appropriate to the central subject of Athen's two flagships, the *Paralus* and the *Hammonias*, but are included mainly to document the artist's skill. According to Pliny, Protogenes had been a ship painter until the age of fifty, and the incorporation of the little ships in his works underscored the heights to which the painter had risen from his lowly first occupation (*ad arcem ostentationis opera sua pervenisset*).[335]

The word parerga seems to have had a derogatory meaning in many contexts, as in Quintilian's use of the term to describe an oratorical fault (see below). These two texts from Pliny and Vitruvius, however, do not carry the censure that some authors imply with the term. Both use the word parerga to mean ornamental additions that refer to the skill of the artist, and not necessarily directly to the work's meaning. In this context, it is appropriate that Pliny gives the coining of the term *parergia* [sic] to painters themselves, who he says use the word to denote ornaments of a painting that call attention to an artist's talent. Galen also seems to have understood parerga as additions to a work that have the sole purpose of referring to an artist's skill and inciting wonder at his talent, writing

334 *quod cum Athenis celeberrimo loco Minervae delubri propylon pingeret, ubi fecit nobilem Paralum et Hammoniada, quam quidam Nausicaan vocant, adiccerit parvolas naves longas in iis, quae pictoris parergia appellant, ut apparertet, a quibus initiis ad arcem ostentationis opera sua pervenisset. Natural History*, 10 vols., trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 1968. IX.XXXV.xxxvi.101-102.

335 The fact that Pliny the historian finds such telling biographical evidence in Protogenes' painting could in fact be seen as a literary parergon, an embellishment added by Pliny to dramatically illustrate Protogenes' rise to fame.

Good workemen used to make some Parergon or by-worke for a document of their Art, upon the bolts and shields: oftentimes also doe they make upon the sword hilts and drinking pots, some little image *over and above the use of the worke*, expressing Ivy branches, Cypresse trees, tendrels of a Vine, and other such like devices. [336]

Pliny's definition of the word parerga is significant in relation both to the notion of parerga as self-referential displays of skill and to the term's alternate and contradictory meanings in late Antique texts. He says that the parerga of the painting, the additional little ships, showed that Protogenes "work had arrived at the pinnacle of glorious display." This "glorious display" is the translation of *ostentatio*. *Ostentatio*, like our word ostentation, usually bears a negative connotation, what we might identify as a self-important lack of decorum.[337] In Pliny's text, however, the negative meaning is absent. Instead, the term *ostentatio*, or a conspicuous display of skill, functions to underscore Pliny's approving use of the word parerga. Thus, both *ostentatio* and parerga, depending on an author's bent, can be used to condemn an artist for vainglory or to praise him for ingenuity.

Emphasizing the notion of parerga's dual definition, Quintilian finds indulging in parerga to be unambiguously wrong. In a chapter of his *Institutio Oratoria* dedicated to the subject of ornament, Quintilian relegates his discussion of parerga to the list of oratorical faults. He writes:

There is also a fault entitled parerga, which I may perhaps translate by superfluous elaboration, which differs from its corresponding virtue much as fussiness differs from industry, and superstition from religion. Finally, every word which neither helps the sense nor the style may be regarded as faulty.[338]

The "corresponding virtue" from which parerga differs is appropriate and decorous ornamentation. Quintilian approves of ornament, the component of rhetorical exercise where he feels the orator can allow himself more indulgence (*indulget*) than any other.[339]

---

336 *De usu partium.* XI.13.897; quoted and trans. in Junius, I.310.

337 J. J. Pollitt links the term *ostentatio* in this context to *audacia*, or bold displays of skill. *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 415-16.

338 *Est etiam, quae* [parerga rendered here in Greek] *vocatur, supervacua, ut sic dixerim, operositas, ut a diligenti curiosus et a religione superstitio distat. Atque, ut semel finiam, verbum omne, quod necque intellectum adiuvat neque ornatum, vitiosum dici potest.* Quintilian, VIII.iii.55.

339 Quintilian, VIII. iii.1.

He says that no great learning is needed for either the invention (*inventio*) or arrangement (*dispositio*) of orations. These talents, in any case, are only in the service of the matter at hand. Ornament, however, which requires the most expertise, works to draw attention to the skill of the orator as well as to the subject being orated.[340] Quintilian writes:

whereas his [the orator's] other accomplishments appeal to the considered judgment of the learned, this gift [ornament] appeals to the enthusiastic approval of the world at large, and the speaker who possesses it fights not merely with effective but with flashing weapons (*fulgentibus armis*).[341]

To exemplify this statement, Quintilian discusses Cicero's defense of Cornelius. He says that had Cicero stuck merely to "the interests of his case" he would have received no "thunders of applause." But Cicero went beyond content, and his ornament drew acclaim so wild that Quintilian surmises:

In my opinion the audience did not know what they were doing, their applause sprang neither from their judgment nor their will; they were seized with a kind of frenzy and, unconscious of the place in which they stood, burst forth spontaneously into a perfect ecstasy of delight.[342]

Even though Cicero's rhetorical ornament drove his listeners wild and beyond reason with delight, Quintilian approves of its use both for the service of a just cause and for the purpose of drawing admiration to the orator. He records Aristotle as saying that "the excitement of admiration should be one of our first aims."[343] Ornament must, however:

be bold and manly and chaste, free from all effeminate smoothness and the false hues derived from artificial dyes, and must glow with health and vigor. So true is this, that although, where ornament is concerned, virtue and vice are never far apart, those who employ a vicious style of embellishment disguise their vices with the name of virtue.[344]

Quintilian further expounds on this differentiation between "healthy" and "sick"

340 ibid., VIII.iii.2.

341 *et in ceteris iudicium doctorum, in hoc veri etiam popularem laudem petit, nec fortibus modo, sed etiam fulgentibus armis proeliatur.* Quintilian, VIII.iii.2.

342 *Atque ego illos credo, qui aderant, nec senisse quid facerent nec sponte iudicioque plauisse, sed velut mente captos et quo essent in loco ignaros erupisse in hunc voluptatis adfectum.* Quintilian, VIII.iii.4.

343 Quintilian, VIII.iii.6.

344 *virilis et fortis et sanctus nec effeminatam levitatem et fuco ementitum colorem amet, sanguine et viribus niteat. Hoc autem adeo verum est ut, cum in hac maxime parte sint vicina virtutibus vitia, etiam, qui vitiis utuntur, virtutum tamen iis nomen imponant.* Quintilian, VIII.iii.8. Note that here Quintilian links the feminine with color and deception.

ornament with the analogy of a farm. If a friend shows him a farm that contains only lilies, violets and fountains, that farm, though beautiful, is decadent and misused because the proper work for a farm is raising crops. If, however, a farm is planted with fruit trees, it is most appropriate that those trees be placed in a pleasing order and pruned becomingly, for not only do these ornaments add beauty to the orchard, but they also help the trees yield more fruit and ease the of harvesting of their crops.[345]

These passages tell us much about Quintilian's attitude towards ornament. Key is his statement that where ornament is concerned, virtue and vice are never far apart. This phrase shows that the uneasy relation of ornament to the work it adorns was recognized in antiquity, and it helps us to understand the contradictory meanings a word like parerga could imply. For Quintilian, well-used ornament is in the service of something outside itself. But the dangers of ornament are also apparent in his text--he writes that one does not need ornament to appeal to the learned and thoughtful but to the populace at large. Cicero's use of ornament drove his listeners, excited beyond judgment or will, into a frenzy. If ornament has this very great power, to make people take leave of their senses, then it is obvious why the orator must keep it firmly in control and in the service of good. Quintilian wrote that parerga stood in relation to proper ornament as superstition stood to religion.[346] This analogy also speaks to the power parergal ornament was thought to have. Superstition could be understood as the trappings and rituals of religion supporting no justified object. Ornament in this service, with its great powers of deception and persuasion, could be very dangerous indeed.

This Greek word also appears in the texts of other Latin writers. Nonius and Allus Gellius record a no longer extant work on farming by Lucius Accius called *Parerga*.[347] One of Hyginus' *Fabulae* which concerned the extra labors Hercules undertook beyond the canonical twelve was also entitled *Parerga.* [348] What is striking about the use of the

[345] Quintilian, VIII.iii.8-10.
[346] ibid., VII.iii.55.
[347] Nonnius, 61.19-24; Gellius, praef.8.
[348] Hyginus, fab. 31.

word is that it does not seem a comfortably accepted part of the Latin language; its Greek ancestry sets it apart as a technical word of very specific use. Authors are not prone to employ it more than once in a given text; it exists as itself an ornament to their argument, a proof of learnedness.

Late Antique and Early Christian Uses of the Term Parerga

The word parerga continued to be used into the fifth century by Christian and non-Christian writers alike, and there was still no consensus as to whether the word was positive in meaning or not. St. Jerome (c. 420) uses the term in a letter, writing: *tam parvam epistolam scribo, quod...alio opere detentus hoc quasi parergio me occupare nolui.* [I write such a brief letter because, having been worn out by another work, I do not want to be occupied by a parergon.][349] This sentence declares a parergon to be an additional work, one taken on in addition to a main employment. Jerome is not negating all interest in his epistolary responsibilities by calling his letter a side work, but he is bringing to his correspondent's attention the fact that other matters are more worthy of his labor.

Writing at the same time, but with a different understanding of parerga, author Martianus Capella enshrined "Periergia" as the handmaiden to Philology.[350] Martianus, like many late Latin African writers, was fluent in Greek and "Asiatic" in style, fascinated by obscure uses of archaic terms and prone to make compound words, or latinized forms of Greek words.[351] His understanding of rhetoric was gleaned from rhetorical handbooks, which have been summed up as "a grand concoction of Cicero and Quintilian mixed with the subtleties, often imperfectly understood, of the First and Second Century Greeks."[352] Given this mixed heritage, perhaps it is not surprising that Martianus' understanding of

---

349 *Epistulae* 32; cited in *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, Vol. X (Leipzig, 1986), 1 fasc.III (paratur-pars), p.385. my trans.

350 active 410-429 A.D.

351 Scaliger called him "Barbarus Scriptor." *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts,* Vol.I, *The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella,* Vol. II, *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury.,* Trans and commentary by William Harris Stahl, Richard Johnson and E.L. Burge (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), I. 43.

352 David A.G. Hinks, *Martianus Capella on Rhetoric* (Ph.D. Dissertation: Trinity College: Cambridge, 1935), pp.4-5.

parerga is one of the most singular. Martianus' text lived on after him, however, and he became "one of the most pillaged of late Latin authors," giving inspiration to those writers with a penchant for "unusual vocabulary, orthography, coinages and usages."[353]

Martianus' magnum opus,*The Marriage of Philology and Mercury*, is an extended allegory of the Liberal Arts. A mixture of prose and verse, the lengthy work is conceived as a romance.[354] Mercury is unwed and it is decided that his bride should be Philology, the maiden who "embraces all knowledge."[355] The first two books of the work describe the preparations for the marriage and the ceremony, and it is here that "Periergia" first makes her appearance. The eve of the wedding is far advanced, and Philology has stayed awake making an unguent to save herself from being burned upon her apotheosis. While she is busy with this, far into the wee hours:

[111] her attendant Periergia, whether sent by the maiden's mother or by her own concern (for she was her foster sister) perceived what she was doing.
[112]When she peeped through the chinks of the door and saw Philology making these arrangements, she began to rebuke another of her handmaids--whose name was Wakefulness [Agrypnia] and who acted as a guard within the bedroom--because she had not allowed the maiden even a little sleep to preserve her beauty, although Wakefulness herself was able to do all these things if Philology commanded her.
[113] For she claimed that she had already gone round to many places...[here follows a lengthy account of the scattered members of the impending ceremony, and all the nuptial preparations to which they are attending]...She added innumerable details of this kind, which she had noted by diligent scrutiny."[356]

In this passage it is at first somewhat ambiguous who the actors are. Who in the last section is she "that had already gone round to many places?" With careful reading, it must be Periergia, for Philology's night activities were the subject of the preceding lines, and Wakefulness had stood constant guard within the bed chamber.

This interpretation of Periergia as the prenuptial scout who had "noted innumerable details by diligent scrutiny" is borne out by Martianus' later characterization of Philology's

353 Capella, I. 31.

354 His style and choice of romantic frame owe much to Apuleius, and to a lesser extent, to Ovid. Capella, I.42 & 54.

355 A detailed account of the work and its impact on later European literature and literary theory can be found in Curtius, pp.38-9.

356 Capella, ll.111-113 (p. 38).

handmaiden. In his description the wedding procession, Philology is carried on a palanquin borne in the front by Labor and Amor, and in the rear by Wakefulness and Epimelia (Application.) The muses and their companions go before the bridal chariot, while "Periergia followed, accompanied by Philology's other servants and her bridal attendants, carefully examining and investigating everything."[357] In both instances, Martianus has Periergia observantly recording all the peripheral details that might be missed by the main participants.

As the handmaiden and adopted sister of Philology, Periergia must be assigned a positive interpretation in the allegory. She seems to be a helper in chronicling exhaustively accurate and expansive records of the events that take place alongside Philology's "embracing of knowledge," details that may or may not actively contribute to a final central meaning, but that are rendered with verisimilitude through her diligent scrutiny and careful examination. In the context of the extended allegory, which is the union of eloquence (Mercury) and wisdom (Philology), parerga stand as a helper to the gathering of knowledge. This notion of parerga is unique, but is connected both to the Antique notion of parerga as "extra" ornament and to what we shall see to be the Renaissance reinterpretation of parerga as centerless ornament of delight and illusion.

Renaissance Uses of the Term Parerga

From the two fifth-century uses of the term parerga, one Christian and the other Pagan, we must skip ahead over a thousand years to find the word in Francesco Colonna's masterpiece, a pseudo-classical romance entitled the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, published in Venice in 1499. Colonna's work is a treasure trove of Antique *topoi* and was thought for centuries to be archaeologically accurate. It is also, like Martianus' fifth-century romance, self-conscious in its use of "Hellenized Latin." As the term occurs in the ekphrasis of a fictive work of art, however, the most probable locus for Colonna's use of the word is Pliny's passage on Protogenes. Widely read in Italy from the time that Petrarch discovered the *Natural History* in the fourteenth century, Pliny's section on art and artists

357 ibid., ll.143-146 (pp. 49-50).

was a major source for emerging Renaissance art theory.

In the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the term parerga appears in an ekphrasis describing a painted frieze which is said to show: "the exquisite parerga: waters, fountains, mountains, hills, woods, animals, the changing of coloring with distance and differing light, the harmonious reflections...with not a little emulation of diligent nature."[358] Colonna has absorbed from Pliny the notion of parerga as the decorative details of a painting, but he narrows the understanding of the term to encompass only the visually-pleasing elements found in a landscape. He also discards the etymological meaning of the work; rather than skillfully painted details that stand beside (par) a main subject (ergon), the work he describes is a landscape with no discernible subject, the parerga being the sum total of the work.

As in Pliny's use of the term, in Colonna's passage parerga continues to refer to artistic skill. Colonna writes that an "emulation of diligent nature" is shown both in the artist's use of atmospheric perspective, which records variations of color according to distance, and in his attention to how different surfaces react to light. These are praises for the artist's mimetic exactitude. Colonna commends the techniques that were essential to good landscape painting: facility with color and light, and space, atmospherically not mathematically described, all in the service of illusionistically-accurate, visually pleasing art.

Two of the words Colonna uses, *exquisiti* and *solerte* [diligent or careful], which both imply a certain painstaking verisimilitude, underscore the mimesis he is praising in the fictive painting. These terms point to what will become the commonplace association of landscape with *ritrarre* rather than *imitare*, with "counterfeiting" appearances rather than idealizing and perfecting them. The ability to render landscape scenes in this illusionistic

---

358 *cum gli exquisiti parergi, aque, fonti, monti, colli, boschetti, animali, di pravato il coloramento cum la distentia et cum il lume opposto, et cum gli concinni reflexi nelle plicature dille vestimente et nelle altre oprature, non cum poca aemulazione dilla solerte natura.* quoted in Rezio Buscaroli, *La pittura di paesaggio in Italia* (Bologna, 1935), p.56. In this passage Colonna offers the literary equivalent to painted parerga (as Pliny understood the term).The *bravura* ekphrastic description quoted in part above is in itself a parergon, a display of Colonna's descriptive talent embedded within the main text.

manner was strongly associated with Northern oil painting. When Colonna notes that the painting was particularly striking for its "harmony of reflections," he is praising the artist's ability to render the quality of light striking varied surfaces, an aspect of depiction he obviously associates with landscapes. Northern artists were thought to convey such qualities of reflected light particularly well.

Antonio Francesco Doni, a Florentine living in Venice, wrote that Flemings could paint silks and velvets better than any other painters because they excel at subjects that do not require *disegno*. This predisposition, he says, accounts for the proverb *che gl'hanno il cervello nelle mani*--they have their brains in their hands.[359] Silks and velvets are not landscape elements, but what Doni's statement points to is the belief that depicting certain (decorative) objects is merely the emulation of surface appearance, which requires manual dexterity (*solerte*), while figure drawing requires mental effort. Northerners (and North Italians) were thought to render landscapes well for this same reason.

Proving the link between the accurate depiction of surface textures and landscapes, the proverb Doni quotes about fabric depiction is repeated in relation to landscape in a verse from the pen of Northern writer Domenicus Lampsonius. In a poem written to accompany a series of Dutch and Flemish painters' engraved portraits, Lampsonius writes that Italians excel at showing men and Gods, and Northerners at landscape painting because Italians have their brains in their heads and Northerners in their hands.[360] Lampsonius, Doni, and Colonna all appreciated the naturalistic, colorful beauty of landscape, and the particular sort of talent that excelled at such painting. As a skill associated with manual rather than mental dexterity, however, landscape painting was destined to be looked down upon by many Italian art theorists as an inferior branch of painting.

The inferiority of landscape is again alluded to in a description of Dosso Dossi's

---

359 quoted in Walter S.Gibson, *"Mirror of the Earth:" The World Landscape in Sixteenth Century Flemish Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p.40. Written in 1549.

360 quoted in Gombrich, p.115. The series was published in 1572. Lampsonius' quotation of the proverb must be read in relation to another extant text of his regarding landscape, however. In a 1564 letter to Vasari, Lampsonius claims that landscapes are much harder to paint than figures. see du Vere, II.862-867. discussed below, p. 190.

work by Vasari's good friend Paolo Giovio.[361] Although the following quotation, written in 1527, is glowing in its description of the beauties of landscape, Giovio also betrays the lesser status accorded to outdoor scenes, which he calls parerga. He writes that:

The urbane wit of Dosso of Ferrar is esteemed in his proper works, but most of all in those which are called parerga. For devoting himself with relish to the pleasant diversions of painting, he used to depict jagged rocks, green groves, the firm banks of traversing rivers, the flourishing work of the countryside, the gay, hard toil of the peasants, and also the far and distant prospects of the land and sea, fleets, fowling, hunting, and all that genre so pleasing to the eyes in a lavish and festive style.[362]

Giovio clearly follows Colonna in relating *parerga* to landscape, a type of painting he typifies as being made up of pleasing details. At the time Giovio was writing, paintings focusing on landscape were (in theory) a newly-recognized genre. Descriptions of painted landscapes were conditioned by literary description, and Giovio is no doubt aware of verbal "illustrations" like the one in Colonna's romance or those that could be found in such poetry as Sannazzaro's *Arcadia.* [363]

The most widely accepted justification for painting in the first half of the sixteenth century, gleaned from Antique rhetorical and literary traditions, was that the art be profitable as well as pleasing, using visual delight to lure viewers towards a moral message. The only use for landscape was pleasure, however, and this in part determined its

---

361 Giovio was a close friend of Vasari, and Vasari at one point shared Giovio's positive estimation of the Dosso brothers' talent. This is shown by the fact that in Vasari's 1550 edition of the *Lives*, the brothers are given their own separate and positive biography. By the 1568 edition, however, the Dossi's biography is combined with a group of "various Lombard artists," and Vasari critiques their work harshly. Perhaps influencing Vasari between the two editions, in 1557, Dolce's *Aretino* had attacked the Dossi's art, and had criticized the poet Ariosto for immortalizing them in verse.

362 *Doxi autem Ferrariensis urbanum probatur ingenium cum in justis operibus, tum maxime in illis quae parerga vocantur. Amoena namque picturae diverticula voluptuario labore consectatus, praeruptas cautes, viventia nemora, opacas perfluentium ripas, florentes rei rusticae apparatus, agricolarum laetos fervidosque labores, praeterea longissimos terrarum marisque prospectus, classes, aucupia, venationes et cuncta id genus spectatu oculis jucunda, luxurianti ac festiva manu exprimere consuevit.* from *Fragmentum Trium Dialogarum*, Pauli Jovii Episcopi Nucerini; reprinted by Girolamo Tiraboschi, *Storia della letteratura italiana*, VII-4 (Florence, 1824), XIII.2444-2498; see also Chreighton Gilbert, "On Subject and Not-Subject in Italian Renaissance Pictures," *Art Bulletin*, 34 (1952), 204.

363 Jacapo Sannazzaro's popular work was essentially contemporaneous with Colonna's, and was similar in being very pictorial. It offered its readers landscape passages such as this one, which describes a frieze painted above a temple door: "We saw painted over the door various groves and most beautiful hills, with thick hoary trees and a thousand sorts of flowers, among which were to be seen many flocks which wandered about, grazing and scattering through the green meadows." *Arcadia*, ed. Portirelli (1806), p.28; quoted and trans. by Gilbert, p. 212.

placement as the lowest of the genres. Thus, it is not surprising that Paolo Giovio borrowed the word parerga from antiquity. By using this classical word to describe Dosso's landscapes, Giovio is at once lending theoretical sanction to the new genre *and* firmly placing that genre at the bottom of the hierarchy. The term parerga, both etymologically and through glosses of its use in ancient texts, defined the status of landscape as "by-works" to the main subject of a work and, consequently, to the medium of painting in general. A variety of Antique texts would have conditioned the Renaissance understanding of parerga as centerless works of many details rather than a main subject, and as paintings that pleased the senses through color and paint handling rather than edifying the intellect through moral content.[364] Giovio writes that Dosso is more successful with his landscapes than with his *justis operibus*, or proper works. This shows that Giovio considered landscape painting a minor sidelight of the art of painting and not one in which an important artist would specialize. From Antique theory, he has absorbed not only a specialized vocabulary, but also a system of ranking genres.

The Renaissance Connection of Parerga with Antique Landscape Descriptions

The rank of the different genres of paintings was made clear in the few ancient descriptions of landscapes available to Renaissance readers. Though limited in number, Antique texts discussing painting were avidly read, and in addition to borrowing the term *parerga*, Giovio and Colonna also borrow their manner of landscape description from these passages. Thus their Renaissance characterizations of landscape are remarkably similar to ones such as Pliny's passage on the works of the Roman scene painter Studius, of whom Pliny writes:

He was the first to introduce the extremely attractive feature of painting room walls with representations of villas, porticoes and parks, groves, copses, hills, fishponds, straits, rivers, shores, as anyone could wish. And there he painted all kinds of people walking or going by ship, riding by land towards the villages on donkey's backs or in carriages, also people fishing and hunting or even gathering the vintage. His works include splendid villas approached by roads across marshes, men tottering and staggering along carrying women

364 "By-works" is the definition arrived at by seventeenth-century English translators of the word parerga.

on their shoulders for a bargain, and a number of humorous drawings of that sort besides, extremely wittily designed. He also introduced using pictures of seaside cities to decorate uncovered terraces, giving a most pleasing effect, and at a small expense. [365]

The similarity between this text and Giovio's is explicit. In his discussion of Studius, Pliny instructed his Renaissance readers not only how to describe but also how to rank landscape painting.[366] Though he is not opposed to the great pleasures [*amoenissimam*] that landscapes bring, Pliny cautions that no scene painter of private homes will achieve the highest fame because such works are impermanent and without civic purpose. The Greek painters, who in Pliny's text are superior to Roman ones, were wiser because they avoided painting such frivolous works, and painted only for the public good.

The way that Pliny categorizes Studius' biography within his history of painting also points to the lower status of landscape painting. Pliny deliberately sets his discussion of Studius apart from the rest of the section on painting, saying it is proper that he add an appendage to the chapter to include painters who worked in a "minor style." He calls this appendage a *subtexi*.[367] Included in the same section is Piraeicus, a *rhyparographos*, or "filth painter." Piraeicus, the first known painter of still-lifes, was to be "ranked below few painters in skill." He painted "barbers' shops, cobblers' stalls, asses, viands, and the like"

---

365 *qui primus instituit amoenissimam parietum picturam, villas et porticus [or portus] ac topiaria opera, lucos, nemora, colles, piscinas, euripos, amnes, litora, qualia quis optaret, varias ibi obambulantium species aut navigantium terraque villas adeuntium asellis aut vehiculis, iam piscantes, aucupantes aut venantes aut etiam vindemiantes. sunt in eius exemplaribus nobiles palustri accessu villae, succollatis sponsione mulieribus labantes trepidis quae feruntur, plurimae praeterae tales argutiae facetissimi salis idem subdialibus maritimas urbes pingere instituit, blandissimo aspectu minimoque inpendio.* Pliny, IX.XXXV. xxxvii, 116-117. The similarity between the texts of Giovio and Pliny has been noted by, among others, Gombrich, pp.113-114; and Gibson, 48. Pliny credits Studius with being the first painter to undertake large-scale mural landscapes. It is interesting to note that Dosso was also one of the earliest painters of the Renaissance period to execute large scale wall frescoes of pure landscape, such as the now-lost paintings executed between 1523-1525 for the Duchess of Mantua. These works are discussed in Victor Lasareff's "A Dosso Problem" (*Art in America.*, XXIX [1949], 137).

366 Pliny himself was probably influenced by earlier descriptions of landscape by authors such as Cicero, who, in describing the bounty, variety and perfection of the earth, writes that it is "...clothed with flowers and grass and trees and corn, forms of vegetation all of them incredibly varied and diverse. Add to these cool fountains ever flowing, transparent streams and rivers, their banks clad in the brightest verdure, deep vaulted caverns, craggy rocks, sheer mountain heights, and plains of immeasurable extent." *De Natura Deorum*, trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Classical Library, 1967, II. XXXIX. p. 219; see also Pliny the Younger's description of his Tuscan villa (*Letters*, Bk. V.6).

367 *Namque subtexi par est minores picturae celebres in penicillo.* IX.XXXV, xxxvii.

which gave "exquisite pleasure" [*consummatae voluptas*] and commanded high sums despite their low subjects.[368] Serapio is also included in this section; he was a painter who could cover vast areas with his "scene painting" [*scaenas*], but could not paint a human being. Callicles and Calates painted small pictures with scenes taken from comedies. Antiphilus was the originator of a funny figure in an absurd costume named "Gryllus" (or "Grasshopper"). Afterwards, Pliny says, all such absurd and comic figures took this name to become known as "Grylli."[369]

The catalog of painters in the minor style ends with a long discussion of Studius, and a homily about how older times were better, when painters like Protogenes and Apelles would not paint such pictures for private homes, but instead "their art was on the alert for the benefit of cities."[370] Thus, within the context of Pliny's history of painting, the creator of landscape is a proclaimed afterthought, lumped in with scene and low-life painters, artists who rendered works that brought sensual pleasure to private citizens but served no public, moral good.

Giovio certainly read Pliny's text on the minor art of landscape painting, and it informed his opinion that Dosso's landscapes were not his "justis operibus" but his "parerga." Another ancient author that Renaissance theorists read in order to construct their landscape theory was Vitruvius, previously discussed for his use of the term parerga. In his treatise on architecture, Vitruvius analyzes the ornament appropriate to different sorts of buildings. After advising that *megalographia* ("great painting," or images of Gods and famous deeds) should not be placed in winter dining rooms where they will become soot-damaged, Vitruvius describes the ancient Greek enjoyment of landscape painting.[371] He says:

in covered promenades [*ambulationibus*], because of the length of the walls, they used for ornament the varieties of landscape gardening, finding subjects in the characteristics of

368 The list of painters that follows is found in Pliny, IX.XXXV.xxxvii.112-114.

369 Grylli was a word that in the Renaissance came to be applied to grotteschi.

370 *omnium eorum ars urbibus excubabat.* IX. XXXV.xxxvii.118.

371 VII.c.iv-v. In the Loeb edition, the text reads *melographia*, which the note (p.100, n.1) amends to *megalographia*, and gives the Greek.

particular places; for they paint harbors, headlands, shores, rivers, springs, straights, temples, groves, hills, cattle and shepherds.[372]

Vitruvius writes that unlike the Romans of his time, who decorate their homes with fantastic creatures and things that could never exist in nature, the Greeks had followed appropriate decorum with their mural landscape painting, showing simple, natural elements. The list of landscape scenes Vitruvius catalogs will be familiar, for they are the same views Pliny said Studius had painted. Vitruvius suggests that these scenes were appropriately set in long porticoes. For reasons we will explore more closely later, landscapes were thought to be particularly suitable to placement in open walkways, the peripheral parts of a private dwelling. Thus, in Vitruvius' ideal house, landscapes function essentially as parerga--ornaments that lighten the less important, transitional areas of the building.

Vitruvius' treatise was widely-read and, along with Pliny, it informed Renaissance theorists about the low ranking of landscape painting in Antique art theory. Making the ideas of Vitruvius even more accessible, in 1450, Leon Battista Alberti re-wrote Vitruvius for the Renaissance, recapitulating the Roman author's understanding of landscape painting. While Alberti allows that landscapes are pleasing to the eye and may have the same salubrious effects as the lighter modes of poetry or music, he reminds that painting, like poetry, can deal with three types of subject. In descending order of importance, these subjects are: the deeds of princes, the manners of private citizens, and the life of the farmer. These three modes of paintings should be executed, according to the rules of decorum, in fitting places; the first in public buildings or palaces of princes, the second in homes of esteemed citizens, and the last and least important in *horti*, or gardens. Appropriate to this latter type of subject matter, which he deems the most "lighthearted," are "pleasant landscapes or harbors, scenes of hunting, fishing, bathing, the games of shepherds, flowers

372 *ambulationibus vero propter spatia longitudinis varietatibus topiorum ornarent a certis locorum proprietatibus imagines exprimentes; pinguntur enim portus, promunturia, litora, flumina, fontes, euripi, fana, luci, montes, pecora, pastores.* VII, V.c.v.2.

and verdure..."[373] In this passage, Alberti conflates Vitruvius' passage on garden painting with his observation that the scenery for the lowest type of play, the satyr play, should include "trees, caves, mountains and other country features, designed to imitate landscape."[374]

We recall that in his 1521 commentary on Vitruvius, Cesare Cesariano delineated two modes of painting, *megalographia* and *parerga*. These categories reflect the Renaissance genres of history and landscape painting. Although Vitruvius does use the term *megalographia* twice in his discussion of painting and sets this type of painting against the shepherd scenes that are appropriate to gardens, he does not explicitly use the word parerga to describe painting. He says that *megalographia* should not be placed in winter dining rooms, because such important paintings must not become smoke damaged. In the next chapter, after he lists what sorts of details can be painted in a landscape, he uses *megalographia* again, writing "In places, some have also *megalographia*, the anatomy of statues, the images of gods, or the representations of legends; further the battles of Troy and the wanderings of Ulysses over the countryside."[375] Essentially, Vitruvius describes as *megalographia* what Cesare knew to be *istoria*, the valorous subjects of art. In this latter passage, Vitruvius also defines *megalographia* against the pleasing but subjectless paintings of countryside details (which he calls *topiorum*). From these juxtapositions, it is easy to see how Cesare, aware of Pliny's use of the word parerga in the context of subjectless, ornamental additions, could decide to place the two Latinized Greek words in

---

373 *On the Art of Building*, IX.iv.299-300. This text is quoted entirely above, pp. 50-51. In Giovanni Battista Armenini's *On the True Precepts of the Art of Painting*, a similar loggia and its pleasing effects on the viewer are described: " ...while traveling through Lombardy I saw loggias which, where they are open, have a vista of mountains, scenery, and beautiful walks....On the wall opposite the pilasters are simulated the same orders of columns and arches as the real, and in these spaces are simulated prospects with palaces, forests, and fountains with mountains and most beautiful villages all around. The effect is cheerful and pleasing to the eyes, since on the one side one sees real mountains and forests, whereas on the other artificial ones, different and cheerful. Thus, the eye and the mind delight in a double view." trans. Edward J. Olszewski, (Renaissance Studies in Translations Series, 1977), III.ix.250.

374 *...satyricae vero ornantur arboris, speluncis, montibus reliquisque agrestibus rebus in topeodi speciam deformati.* V.C.vi.9.

375 *Nonnulli locis item signorum melographiam* (see note 368) *habentes deorum simulacra seu fabularum dispositas explicationes, non minus troianas pugnas seu Ulixis errationes per topia..* VII.c.v.2.

opposition.

Paragone Lists and the Ornaments of Painting

Though landscape paintings were marginalized theoretically as the parerga of art, they were also, paradoxically, held forth as the main example of how the art of painting could best sculpture in imparting mimesis. For instance, Vasari says that after Raphael realized he could never outrank the sculptor Michelangelo in depicting the nude, "like the judicious man he was, he reflected that painters are not confined to making numerous studies of naked men, but can range over a very wide field."[376] Along with devising interesting, well composed historical scenes, Vasari says:

> as Raffaello was well aware, may be added the enriching those scenes with a bizarre variety of perspectives, buildings, and landscapes, the method of clothing figures gracefully...[and] an endless variety of other things, such as the adornment of draperies, foot-ware, helmets, armour, women's head-dresses, hair, beards, vases, trees, grottoes, rocks, fires, skies turbid or serene, clouds, rain, lightening, clear weather, night, the light of the moon, the splendour of the sun.[377]

Vasari ranks Michelangelo supreme in *megalographia*, but concedes that Raphael bested him when it came to the perfections applicable only to painting, the pleasing details that ornament the backgrounds of works (what Vasari elsewhere calls "the other mode of painting"--not *megalographia*). Cesare's definition of parerga as the opposite of *megalographia* thus bears some resemblance to this assessment of the opposing skills of Raphael and Michelangelo--an assessment that results in Raphael being ranked the more catholically-skilled painter. This is not to say, however, that Vasari thought Raphael to be a landscape painter, but rather that he thought Raphael excelled at depicting the elements suitable only to painting, and not to sculpture. The list Vasari gives of the natural marvels that Raphael could bring to life with paint is similar to ones encountered over and over in Renaissance treatises on painting, and is often invoked in the service of the paragone

[376] du Vere, I.742. Leonardo had earlier said the same thing: "he is but a poor master who makes only a single figure well....Do you not see how many different kinds of animals there are, and also of trees and plants and flowers? What variety of hilly and level places and of springs, rivers, cities, public and private buildings...of divers costumes, ornaments and arts--Things which should be rendered with equal facility and grace by whoever you wish to call a good painter." *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. Edward MacCurdy (New York, 1958), pp. 880-881.

[377] du Vere, I.742-3.

argument about the superiority of painting to sculpture.

The ancient source for these "paragone lists" is the introduction to Philostratus' *Imagines*.[378] In what will become a commonplace, Philostratus declares that the Gods were the first painters. He writes that "on earth all the designs with which the seasons paint the meadows, and the manifestations in the heavens" give witness to the Gods' painterly abilities.[379] In defending the superiority of painting to the plastic arts, Philostratus says that not only can painting reproduce light and shade [modeling], but also "the gray eye, the blue eye, the black eye are known to painting; and it knows chestnut and red and yellow hair, and the color of garments and of armor, chambers too and houses and groves and mountains and springs and the air that envelopes them all."[380]

According to Philostratus, these pleasing things can only be counterfeited through paint. Leonardo, in a more fully articulated discussion of the superiority of painting, lists with much greater optical detail similar painterly triumphs:

This art [painting] comprises and includes within itself all visible things such as colors and their diminution which the poverty of sculpture cannot include. Painting represents transparent objects but the sculptor will show you the shapes of natural objects without artifice. The painter will show you things at different distances with variations of color due to the air lying between the objects and the eye...he show you the rain which discloses behind it clouds with mountains and valleys...he shows streams of greater or lesser density; he shows fish playing between the surface of the water and its bottom; he shows the polished pebbles of various colors lying on the washed sand at the bottom of the rivers, surrounded by green plants...and thus he achieves innumerable effects which sculpture cannot obtain.[381]

Elsewhere, Leonardo wrote a passage entitled "The Painter is Lord of All Type People and Things." In it, he claims the signorial power of the artist, who can create the universe as he wishes, all through paint.

...if he wishes to produce inhabited regions or deserts, or dark and shady retreats from the heat, or warm places for cold weather, he can do so. If he wants valleys likewise if he

378 "Paragone lists" is the term I use to denote the rhetorical enumeration of things which painting bests sculpture in depicting. As the following examples show, a variety of Renaissance authors take Philostratus' list as the ancient *locus* for their argument in favor of painting.

379 Philostratus the Elder, *Imagines,* trans. Arthur Fairbanks, Loeb Classical Library, 1931, Bk. I, 294K.6-10.

380 I.294K. ll. 25-29.

381 quoted in Klein and Zerner, p.8.

wants from high mountaintops to unfold a great plain unfolding down to the sea's horizon, he is lord to do so; and likewise if from low plains he wishes to see high mountains or from high mountains he wishes to see low plains and the seashore. In fact, whatever exists in the universe, in essence, in appearance, in the imagination, the painter has first in his mind and then in his hands; and these are of such excellence that they are able to present a proportioned and harmonious view of the whole that can be seen simultaneously, at one glance, just as things in Nature.

Thus, Leonardo's conception of the power of the painter is very tied up in his ability to reproduce the natural world. These passages tracing the painter's mastery over all the world, with their emphasis on both the optic minutia of colored pebbles in a stream and the vast commanding gazes from mountains to seas, extol the painter's ability to ape God by re-presenting or indeed creating a painted reality that rivals nature.

In the *Courtier*, Castiglione also has his conversants discuss the relative merits of painting and sculpture. Castiglione is not a painter and he is not nearly either as informed or as passionate on the subject as Leonardo. He contents himself with a graceful paraphrase quite obviously drawn from Philostratus. In the dialogue, Count Ludovico da Canossa speaks of the world as God's canvas and remarks on the painter's similar creative powers:

And in verie deed who so esteemeth not this arte, is (to my seeming) farre wide from all reason for so much as the ensigne of the world that we behold with a large skye, so bright with shining starres, and in the middest, the earth, enviorned with seas, severed in partes with hilles, dales, and rivers, and so decked with such divers trees, beautifull flowers and herbes, a man may say it be a noble and great painting, drawne with the hand of nature and of God: the which who can represent in mine opinion he is worthie much commendation....Thinke you it againe a trifling matter to counterfeit natural colors, flesh, cloth and all other colored thinges? This can not nowe the graver in marble doe, ne yet expresse the grace of sight that is in the blacke eyes, or in azure with the shining of those amorous beames. He cannot shew the colour of yellow haire, nor the glistring of armor, nor a darke night, nor a sea tempest, nor those twincklings and sparkes, nor the burning of a Citie, nor the rising of a morning in the colour of roses, with those beames of purple and golde. Finally hee can not shewe the skye, the sea, the earth, hilles, woodes, meadowes, gardens, rivers, Cities, nor houses, which the painter doth all.[382]

Paolo Pino, in his *Dialogo di Pittura* of 1548, makes similar remarks on the superiority of the painter. He writes that sculpture can only embody a figure with its form, which is its essential being, while painter can also ornament it with integral being

382 Baldassare Castiglione,*The Courtier,* trans. Sir Thomas Hoby (New York, 1956), p.78.

(*l'orniamo del ben essere integramente*).[383] Like Philostratus and, later, Castiglione, Pino also cites the painter's ability to distinguish hair and eye color, and continues "we render the sunrise or rainy weather visible; and in feigning artificial things we will make armor, silk or linen draperies."[384]

Ludovico Dolce's 1557 *Dialogo della Pittura* again takes its cue from Philostratus' list. Dolce has Aretino recount how the ancients took pains with their coloring:

in order that their products should imitate reality. And certainly coloring is so important and compelling that, when the painter produces a good imitation of the tones and softness of the flesh and the rightful characteristics of any objects that there may be, he makes his paintings seem alive, to the point where breath is the only thing missing[385]

Like Pino, Dolce sees that only paint can imbue figures with more than their essential form, adding to them the accidental details that truly breathe life into the figures. Thus, painters of his own day should work hard to achieve perfection in coloring, not just of flesh, but also of:

the color of draperies, silk, gold, and every kind of material so well that hardness or softness seems to be communicated to the greater of lesser degree which suits the quality of the material. One should know how to simulate the glint of armor, the gloom of night and the brightness of day, lightening flashes, fires, light, water earth, rocks, grass, trees, leaves, flowers and fruits, buildings and huts, animals and so on, so comprehensively that all of them posses life, and never surfeit the admirer's eye.[386]

Lomazzo's *Idea del Tempio della Pittura* includes a chapter entitled "Of the Necessity of Colouring" that also shows its indebtedness to the "paragone lists" here analyzed:

Surely without it [color], painting can in no sorte attaine to perfection: insomuch as it addeth a kinde of true spirite and life, to all such thinges as are first artificially drawne,

383 Pino, p.360.

384 ibid.

385 *perche le cose loro imitassero il vero. E certo il colorito e di tanto importanza e forza, che quando il Pittore va imitando bene le tinte e la morbidezza delle carne, a la proprieta di qualunque cose, fa parer le sue Pitture vive, e tali, che lor non manchino altro, che'l fiato.* Roskill, *Dolce*, pp.152-3.

386 *il colore de'panni, la seta, l'oro, & ogni qualita cosi bene, che paia de veder la durezza, o la tenerezza piu e meno, secondoche alla condition del panno si conviene. Saper fingere il lustro delle armi, il fosco della notte, la chiarezza del giorno, lampi, fuochi, lumi, acqua, terra, sassi, herbe, arbori, frondi, fiori, frutti, edifici, casamenti, animali, e si fatte cose tanto a pieno, che elle habbiano tutte del vivo, e non satino mai gliochhi di chi le mira.* Roskill, *Dolce*, p.155.

which receave so much the more grace and perfection, by howe much the more nearlie they bee coloured. For by the helpe of colours thus indiciouslie [sic: "judiciously"] disposed, the eies of those mournefull will looke pale....The like differences will appeere in hearbes, plantes, fruites, living creatures, stones, garments, hayre &c....proper colours...will enable us to counterfeit all things most properlie, as the Sun-beames, the starres, the night and the dawning of the daie, thunder, lightening, clouds, comets, the evening, faire weather, windes, tempest at sea, and whatsoevere else beeing first delineated by the painter.[387]

Lomazzo follows the earlier theorists in assessing the benefits of color. Pigment shows the colors of eyes, as well as their emotional aspect. It differentiates among the types of verdure. It allows for the different textures of objects to be recognized. Through it, hard, rough stone is distinguished from warm, yielding flesh. Without color, the changing lights and moods of nature could not be reproduced and discriminated: dawn from night, starlight from the moonbeams, tempest from mild weather. Much beauty is held in these transitory, mutable elements, and only paint can capture them. The skills Philostratus, Vasari, Pino, Dolce, and Lomazzo all claim for the painter alone are those Angelo Doni and Domenicus Lampsonius asserted Northerners were better at depicting because they had their "brains in their hands."

The items listed which theorists claim rely on colored paint are those which Vasari repeatedly calls *bizzarie* or *capricci* in his descriptions of paintings. For example, in his introduction to the third part of the *Lives*, Vasari addresses the advances made by third-manner painters unknown to artists who worked in the second style: "They also lacked our abundance of beautiful costumes, our great number and variety of bizarre fancies, loveliness of coloring, wide range of buildings, and distance and variety of landscapes."[388] From the preceding texts, it can be seen that landscape is considered an ornament to painting, not unlike a woman's head-dress or the reflections of an intricately portrayed suit of armor. Paolo Pino makes this even more explicit when he writes that to be a consummate painter, one must not only excel at the figure but also be "learned as a

[387] Lomazzo, *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge, Carving, Buildinge*, III.2.97.
[388] du Vere, I.618.

landscapist and skilled in other caprices." (*pratico in alter bizzarie).*[389] Still, the landscape and its composite elements, including weather effects and times of day, appear in the paragone lists as the most important and fully explicated of these ornaments.

As these texts show, when authors are claiming painting as a superior art to sculpture, they often portray God himself as a landscapist. The human figure, crafted by God, can also be sculpted, but a sculptor cannot carve a landscape. Lomazzo credits color with giving "life" to what has previously been mere artifice: "it addeth a kinde of true spirite and life, to all such thinges as are first artificially drawne, which receeve so much the more grace and perfection [with color]." The intellect is where design originates for both arts, but Pino says that peculiar to painting is the ornamenting of a work *integramente*, wholly or fully. *Integramente*, in English "integrally," comes from the Latin *integrare*--"to make whole," from *in*, "in" and *tangere*, "to touch." In other words, the ornaments made possible by colored paint make the work tangible, believable and apprehendable by the senses.

Mimesis, Landscape, and Parerga in Antiquity and the Renaissance

The texts we have looked at specifically addressing landscape painting from Vitruvius, Pliny, Alberti, and Giovio are all in agreement that paintings of views are a great pleasure, but not a very important or admirable facet of the medium of painting. These authors also all pointed to the fact that the pleasures of landscapes lie in their internal variety of ornament, sensually and believably portrayed with respect to color, texture, reflection and atmospheric perspective. The "paragone lists" just considered follow their ancient source, Philostratus, in agreeing that it is just these same qualities that give not form but life to painting. Given such associations, we can see that mimesis, *ritrarre* and not *imitare*, was the main (and manual) skill associated with landscape depiction.

---

389 Pino, p. 371; discussed by Pardo on p.275. Pardo writes that Pino is saying "that landscape and 'other fancies' belong to a common genus." Sabba di Castiglione may be implying the same thing when he writes "Others decorate them [their houses] with new, fantastic and bizarre but ingenious things from Levant or Germany." He is discussing what sort of art may be chosen by a gentleman, and though he does not specify it, he is probably talking here about landscape. quoted in Klein and Zerner, p.24.

We have already examined the Renaissance expectation that landscapes be mimetic, as well as the genre's link to the imported, Northern style of oil painting. It is enough to say here that the barbarity associated with Flemings and Germans influenced the reception of landscape as a foreign "other," and one finds that even landscapes painted by Italian painters are imputed to have Northern irrationality and illusionistic dazzle.[390] Michelangelo's famous condemnation of Flemish painting sums up this attitude. He complains that Northern landscape painters simply mimetically reproduce a variety of earthly details which delight only with their deception of the senses. Being rendered without preparatory drawings, these works display no rationality in either their execution or their choice of what to represent. They do not, therefore, stimulate the intellect, but only please the senses.

Counter-reformation author Giovanni Andrea Gilio seems to have agreed with this low assessment of the virtues of Northern landscape. In his 1562 *Errors of the Painters*, he wrote that Flemish landscape painters were following the Ancient Roman landscape painter Studius in their poetic license.[391] Gilio is concerned that such artists are using their works only to represent sensual delights. Above all else, the Northern-influenced genre of landscape was characterized as mimetic. As Michelangelo's statement suggests, the ability to accurately reproduce visual effects was thought to cause enjoyment in viewers by tricking the eye. Italian painters of landscape were also judged, either positively or negatively depending on their critic's theoretical slant, for their ability to render reality convincingly. Lomazzo, for example, begins his book on color with a brief historical outline of how colors make paintings "beare the true and naturall resemblance of the *Life.*" [392] He relates several stories from antiquity about how animals and men have been tricked by painting, then discusses artists from his own time:

Barnazano, an excellent Lanskip-worker, counterfeited Strawberies so livelie uppon a wal

390 Read, for instance, Vasari's biographies of Pintoricchio, Dosso Dossi, and Pontormo.

391 *Dialogho*; cited in Paolo Torresan, *Il dipingere di Fiandra: La pittura neerlandese nella letteratura artistica di Quattro e Cinquecento* (Modena, 1981), p.103.

392 Lomazzo, III.1.93. italics the translator's.

in a Landskip, that the Peacockes (supposing them to bee naturall) pecked at them. Who likewise (in a table donne by *Cesar Sestius* where hee had painted Landskipes) drewe certaine birdes sitting upon the hearbes with such arte, that the table being set abroad in the sunne, other birdes came flying about them.[393]

Finding landscape so firmly linked to mimesis, it is not surprising that parerga is as well, in both Renaissance and Antique texts. As we have seen, in Antique texts, parerga is often used in the context of skillfully-rendered artifacts, images, or parts of images that dazzle with their verisimilitude. We recall that Vitruvius used the word parerga to describe the tricks of automata, mechanical wonders that imitated life with "effects borrowed from nature." Vitruvius designates the purpose of these marvels as delight, being made to "flatter the pleasure of the eyes and the use of the ears." We also have already looked at Strabo's story of the satyr Protogenes painted for Rhodes' sacred precinct.[394] The painting was ornamented with an image of a partridge so life-like that it drew away all the viewers' attention, and, as Strabo says: "when Protogenes saw that the main part of the work had become subordinate [parergon], he begged those who were in charge of the sacred precinct to permit him to go there and efface the partridge, and so he did."[395] In other words, though the partridge stood as testament to Protogenes' skill as an illusionist, he believed it was better for his fame if, as the Elder Seneca phrased it in discussing a similar story, viewers praised "what was best in his picture [the ergon], not what was most like [the parergon]."[396]The following ancient texts from Philostratus and Plutarch all use the term parerga to express mimetically rendered details of works. They also all underscore parerga's lesser status in art.

Philostratus, in the *Imagines*, left an account that speaks for the importance of

393 Lomazzo, III.1.94. For Vasari's version of this same story, see below, p.185.

394 born c. 64 B.C.; Lomazzo relates this story.

395 Strabo, *Geography,* 8 vols., trans. Horace L. Jones, Loeb Classical Library, 1934. 14.2.5-6.

396 *quod melius erat in tabula, non quod similius. Controversiae*, 10.5.28. A story similar to the one about Protogenes' satyr is told by Lucian, describing a work of Zeuxis. Zeuxis painted an image of a Centaur mother nursing twin babies while the father looked on. Upon displaying the work, all the praise went to the novelty of the subject, and not to the "precise drawing of the lines, the careful color-mixing...the right use of shadow, perspective, proportion and harmony." This displeased Zeuxis, who wanted his modeling praised, not his novel invention, and he removed the work from display. Lucian writes that this misplaced admiration made Zeuxis' technique the parergon of the work (trans. of parerga passage: "the accuracy of detail was taking second place"]. *Zeuxis,* 3-7, C1253C; P2.10.4.

"liveliness" in the parerga of a painting.[397] In an elaborate land and seascape description of a painting showing the Bosphoros, Philostratus writes:

I have yet to speak of the fishermen, as I promised when I began. Not to dilate on small matters, but only on points worth discussing, let us omit any account of those who fish with a rod or use a basket cunningly or perchance draw up a net or thrust a trident--for you will hear little about such, and they will seem to you the mere embellishments [parerga] of painting--but let us look at the men who are trying to capture tunny-fish.[398]

Relating the details of this same painting, Philostratus had earlier said:

As you go on to other parts of the painting, you will meet with flocks, and hear herds of cattle lowing, and the music of shepherds' pipes will echo in your ears; and you will meet with hunters and farmers and rivers and pools and springs -- for the painting gives the very image of things that are, of things that are taking place, and in some cases of the way in which they take place, not slighting the truth by reason of the number of objects shown, but *defining the real nature of each thing* just as if the painter were representing some one thing alone.[399]

The author values the overall mimetic accuracy of each of the painting's innumerable details, all of which appeal to the varied senses. He states, however, that these parerga do not need to be exhaustively addressed, as they exist only to ornament the work. Again, the "parerga" that decorate the sea-scene--a variety of fishermen using different techniques--are listed rather than described, just as the flocks and springs and farmers of the landscape are listed. It is enough to say what is there, and assure the reader that these things are rendered with fidelity to their outward appearances.

Plutarch tells a similar story about parerga. His narrator reports of a Delphic tour that he and several others gave to a young visitor.[400] The group encountered a remarkably life-like bronze rendering of a palm tree, around whose roots were clustered a group of seemingly-alive frogs and other water creatures. Several far-fetched allegories and other interpretations were proffered by the group to explain the curious work, but the narrator rejected them all, and said that the work was merely a parergon.

---

397 born c. A.D.190.

398 1.13, 313K.35-314K.5. What the Loeb edition translates as "mere embellishments of painting," Franciscus Junius renders "the sweete seasonings of a picture." see Junius, p.310.

399 I.13., 313K.19-27. italics mine.

400 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 15 vols., trans. F.C. Babbitt, et. al., Loeb Classical Library, 1922, 400C.

Plutarch's narrator considers the whole sculpture a parergon to the *oeuvre* of the artist's works. This is reminiscent of the point of view Paolo Giovio had about Dosso's landscapes--that Dosso's paintings of landscapes were different from his *justis operibus.* Plutarch goes on to advise: "We consider the by-works [parergon] of workemen but slenderly, for they study only to be pleasant in many of them; neither doe they alwayes avoyd in them what is to small purpose and superfluous."[401] He further states that parerga are usually the work of elegant, witty and refined artists, but such artists do not always avoid mere mechanical additions to a work, and that too much artifice can make a work overwrought and off-putting.

Part II: Parerga and the Actuality of Renaissance Landscape

The Relationship between Northern and Southern Landscapes

Strabo tells of an illusionistic pheasant that fooled other birds, but drew attention away from the work's main purpose, and calls this ornament a parergon. Philostratus explains that numerous fishermen, all realistically-portrayed catching fish in different ways, were just the "sweete seasonings" [parerga] of the painting. Plutarch describes how a curious, life-like sculpture of bronze frogs caused marvel, but warns that such "parergal" works should only be briefly pondered, because they are executed solely to please. These texts all represent parerga as mimetically painted, lesser art. Reading such Antique uses of the word parerga encouraged Renaissance authors to employ it as a blanket term to define the various sorts of landscape produced in their era. In arriving at a critical stance concerning landscape painting, theorists had to take into account both Antique texts from Vitruvius and Pliny, which discussed the genre as large-scale mural painting relegated to walkways and gardens, and the reality of landscapes in the sixteenth century, the majority of which were small oil panels imported from the North and landscape backgrounds in the service of history painting. The seemingly quite disparate manifestations were reconciled and discussed in very similar terms because both exhibited the qualities seen to belong to the parerga of art.

---

401 translation in Junius, pp.310-11.

The Northern landscapes Italians knew were cheap, colorful and plentiful.[402] Vasari's famous quote, that there was "no cobbler's house without its landscape, because one becomes attracted by their pleasant view and the working of the depth," attests to this.[403] Some Northern painters were known by name and avidly collected. For example, Isabella d'Este was anxious to procure any painting by Jan van Eyck, whatever the subject; and various collectors were familiar with and eager to own a Dürer.[404] Many if not most Northern artists, however, were anonymous. For instance, in 1535, Matteo del Nassaro, a painter and art dealer, offered Isabella d'Este's son Federigo Gonzaga three hundred Flemish landscapes. Federigo bought one hundred and twenty of these authorless works.[405] The anonymity of such paintings point to their lesser status.

Sometimes Northerners came to live in Italy and adapted their landscape talents to fresco painting.[406] Often, however, the large mural works inspired by Antique texts on landscape were executed by Italian painters. One of the first large-scale landscape series was painted in 1480 by Pintoricchio in the Vatican's Belvedere Loggia. Vasari writes that these works pleased because Pintoricchio painted them in the German manner, which was at that time a novelty.[407] Dosso Dossi was also commissioned to execute large-scale frescoes of pure landscape for the Duchess of Mantua between 1523-25. This type of architectural decoration continued to be increasingly popular throughout the century, culminating in such illusionistic *tour de forces* as Veronese's 1561 landscape frescoes in the Villa Barbaro at Maser .

Italian landscape frescoes were more idealized than Northern panel paintings,

402 For more information on these imports, including an account of their influence on fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italian painting, see Gibson, Chapter 3, "'In Every Cobbler's House': The Reception of the World Landscape in the sixteenth century," pp.37-47.

403 from a 1547 letter to Benedetto Varchi, quoted in Gibson, p.39.

404 Gibson, p.38.

405 Surprisingly few such works survive. This may be because many of them were executed in a medium known as *waterwerf*, a pigment mixed with a water-soluble binder, and painted on linen. The resulting image was very fragile. see Gibson, p.106, n. 5.

406 Antonio Francesco Doni records that the Villa Priuli had its walls frescoed with Flemish landscapes. Gibson, p.41.

407 These scenes were topographically-accurate views of cities that were politically important to the Papacy. For the importance of topographical accuracy in landscape depiction, see Chapter 4.

sharing more, stylistically, with the Venetian "classicizing" naturalism of Giorgione and Titian. The Italian works also tended to be rendered in a brushy, illusionistic style rather than the Northern mode of tightly-painted mimesis. The Northern panels and the classically-inspired murals, however, share varieties of detail, scattered compositions of many pleasing and colorful vignettes, and convincing depictions of atmosphere. Both types were, in other words, scenes designed to engage the senses through delight, whose purpose was to provide pleasure. These works were also linked by their reliance on the traits peculiar to painting, not to *disegno*--color and light either luminously layered in oils or brushily suggested with *bravura* fresco application. Because their purpose was the same, and because this purpose was achieved with similar stylistic traits, we find that in art literature little distinction is made between the two types of landscape.

The Placement of Mural Landscapes

In his 1550 treatise on Architecture, Alvise Cornaro was recorded as saying that one didn't need a great painter to decorate a villa with landscapes.[408] Indeed, many landscape painters of both panel and mural works remain anonymous to us. Cornaro's statement echoes Plutarch's advice to only briefly consider parerga, as they are "to small purpose and superfluous." Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, suggested as well that there are some pictures that bear close and repeated critical scrutiny, and others that require only a brief view from a distance. He writes that:

A poem is like a picture: one strikes your fancy more, the nearer you stand; another, the farther away. This courts the shade, that will wish to be seen in the light, and dreads not the critic insight of the judge. This pleased but once; that, though ten times called for, will always please.[409]

Parerga theoretically fall into the category of works that a viewer (or commentator) would

408 Gibson, p.40.

409 *Ut pictura poesis: erit quae, si proprius stes, te capiat magis, et quaedam, si longibus abstes. Haec amat obscurum, volet haec sub luce videri, iudicis argutum quae non formidat acumen; haec placuit semel, haec deciens repetita placebit.* ll.361-365. Dolce recapitulates Horace's assessment of what true pleasure in art is (Roskill, *Dolce*, pp.148-9). Horace's words can also be read as a commentary on a loose or *bravura* style, which requires a certain distance to coalesce in the viewer's vision, versus a more highly finished, detailed style. Dosso's "lavish, festive" manner might be seen to be a Renaissance example of the former. It was a style that Italian landscape painters especially exploited.

not spend much time pondering. We remember Vitruvius' remark that landscapes were suitable to covered promenades (*ambulationibus*) because of the length of the walls. Thus, in Antique theory, the suggestions for the physical placement of parergal works shows they were proposed not for extended contemplation, but for brief, strolling amusement.

Vitruvius' text stating that landscapes are suitable to walkways "because of the length of the walls" also underlines the compositional challenges of decorating long expanses of space. Paintings with a central subject are not an option in such spaces. On a hallway or loggia wall, there is no center for the work to be organized around, and there is no vantage point from which a centralized scene can be viewed. The difficulty encountered in ornamenting a broad expanse with an important style is addressed by Demetrius of Tarsus in his treatise *On Style*.[410] Demetrius writes of the painter Nicias, who "didn't want to break his art into small parcels with birds and flowers, so he chose horse-battles and sea-fights so that a wide variety of attitudes may be expressed."[411] What Demetrius suggests is that landscape vignettes were the typical solution to the problem of ornamenting a long expanse, and that these "parcels of birds and flowers" were accorded a lesser status in art theory. All painters and patrons were not so averse to flowery views, however. Landscape, a vast variety of pleasant schemes, none of which is of any greater importance than another, was found by many to be eminently suitable for certain locations.

Giovanni Battista Armenini discusses at length the issue of how to ornament a building appropriately with regard to location and patron. He writes:

> One must also within reason honor the wishes of those who commission works, for...some make use of art for delight, some for embellishment, and others in order to move the soul, according to the painted object....It is not always right to wish to scale the loftiest heights of art, surmounting extreme difficulties.[412]

Later, he describes that certain areas of a private home are suitable only to works which delight:

---

[410] This work has traditionally been attributed to Demetrius of Phalerum (Demetrius Phalereus), who lived during the 3rd Century B.C. It is now, however, thought to be most likely a work from Demetrius of Tarsus, written in the first century A.D.

[411] Demetrius of Tarsus, *De Elocution*, II.76.

[412] Armenini, p. 216.

In open places such as the walls about a garden, porticoes, loggias, and the shelters of fountains, with tribunes and statues about them, and other such refuges and pleasing enclosures, we must simulate subjects which require less effort than those heretofore mentioned. But they must be of cheerful things such as delightful landscapes, with distant cities, castles, theaters, seaports, fishing, hunting, swimming, and games of shepherds and Nymphs. There may be fauns, satyrs, sylvan deities, centaurs, sea monsters, with other aquatic and wild things as imagined in the books of good poets. Above all, there must be nothing that gives rise to melancholy or boredom.[413]

Armenini is explicit: the subjects in less important areas or areas of recreation must "require less effort" from the viewer. These lesser areas in Renaissance buildings, such as loggias, hallways, gardens walls, bathrooms, stairs, were the places of private use or transition, not solemn, public spaces. In sum, both the less-decorous purpose of these rooms and the actual physical limitations that some of them presented the viewer came together to make them the sanctioned location for many mural landscapes.

Elsewhere, of similar subjects painted by Giovanni da Udine in the Vatican, Armenini writes that "Giovanni made them very diverse, but with lighter and very cheerful subjects...He painted all these cheerful subjects in order to relieve mental tedium *at the first glimpse*, rather than for the sake of artifice."[414] In other words, Giovanni did not paint works of high artifice that would require extended cogitation by viewers for comprehension, but rather executed varied and pleasant images that could be enjoyed merely for what their surfaces betrayed. The areas of buildings Armenini mentions are passageways or pleasure enclosures, either places of transition or areas that are exposed to the elements. They are not suitable for serious subjects for three reasons: people do not linger there and have no vantage point from which to view a centralized composition; the intended purpose of the area is recreational, not serious and therefore not of the appropriate decorum for a lofty subject; and the spaces themselves are subject to wear from the elements. With regard to this latter reason, it should be remembered Vitruvius wrote that *megalographia* was not to be painted in winter dining room, where it would be damaged by the fireplace's soot. From this, we can extrapolate that important scenes should not be

[413] ibid., p. 266.

[414] ibid., p.248. italics mine.

painted in semi-open enclosures, either.

Another practical consideration is that landscapes designed to ornament large expanses of wall in less prestigious areas of a building must be inexpensive and quickly rendered. Cheapness and the ability to be executed promptly are traits landscape frescoes share with smaller oil-on-panel landscapes. Of the latter, we recall that Vasari attested to their ubiquity and low-cost, writing that there was not a cobbler's home without one. One reason such panels were so readily available is the increasing popularity of oil paint--landscapes could never have come into their own as a genre so quickly without the oil medium. Vasari, in his preface to the third section of the *Lives*, says that in his day painters can execute many more works than the masters of the second style had been able to: "whereas those early masters took six years to paint one panel, our modern masters can paint six in one year."

In the preceding quote, Vasari is discussing history painting. There is no doubt that landscapes, generally small in scale and executed without laborious preparatory drawings, could be turned out at a much quicker pace than the carefully-planned compositions of *istorie*. A word often used in the sixteenth century to describe landscapes--*macchia*--attests to this promptness in rendering. It might be best translated as "painterly," but it comes from the Italian *macchiare*, "to blot or stain." For example, Dolce describes two landscapes from Titian as *una macchia di paese con certi arbori di sambuco* and *una macchia d'un paese di qualita.*[415] This colorism of paint directly applied and modeled on the canvas was known to its detractors as *empiastrare*, or "smearing," the same word used to describe the making up of faces.[416] In Pino's dialogue, for example, Fabio says "smearing about [*empiastra*] to display skill of hand...is an infamous approach and those

415 Roskill, *Dolce*, pp.191 and 216. Optically, details at a distance in a landscape seem more true to the effects of atmosphere and space if they are merely suggested rather than sharply delineated. Leonardo addresses this, saying: "O Painter, you should make your lesser [i.e. further away] figures only suggested and not highly finished....the object is small because a great space exists between the eye and it. This great space contains within itself a great quantity of atmosphere; and this atmosphere forms of itself a dense body which interposes and shuts out from the eye the minute objects of detail." MacCurdy, p.897.

416 Reilly, p.97.

who follow it show how little they know."[417] In mural decoration, similar shortcuts could be taken. Elaborate preparatory studies and compositional plans were not needed; what was needed was a variety of inventive details.

The Renaissance Connection of Grotteschi with Landscape

Armenini describes the practice of decorating loggias as: "every whimsical invention of cheerful things is suitable on these, provided it is very rich and ornate."[418] There is another type of painting that suits Armenini's description, one that we will find to be linked in many ways with the genre of landscape painting--the painting of grotteschi. On a stylistic level, both landscape and grotteschi are arts of inventive detail and color. They were also both linked theoretically to mimesis. An artist could counterfeit the world around him in order to delight the senses of his viewers, or he could, by using *fantasia*, recombine natural elements to create something at once wholly new and still convincing.[419] Also like landscape, the painting of grotteschi had ancient pedigree. The unearthing of Nero's Golden House made grotteschi's connection to antiquity even more tangible and led to a sixteenth-century efflorescence of interest in the style.

Grotteschi were employed in antiquity because they were inexpensive and quickly rendered.[420] Armenini refers to this when he writes "I have always believed that the sort of pictures painted by the ancients in the fashion of chimeras was invented...only to ornament and add charm to many of their places, where it seemed to the ancients that few other things could be more effective."[421] In the Renaissance, the practice was revived for the same reasons. Like landscape, grotteschi were a practical way to ornament a large area with

---

417 quoted in Klein and Zerner, p.59. This "smearing" is what Dosso was known for in his "lavish and festive style," the style that Vasari derided for showing "over-elaboration in everything."

418 Armenini, p.245. Increasingly in the sixteenth century large scale maps and topographical views came to be painted in such places (see the editor's note on this, Armenini, p.249, n. 5).

419 Landscape and grotteschi share the paradoxical fortune of being on the one hand the area where painters could unleash the full power of their inventive desires, thus showing off their skills both in execution and conception, and on the other hand being considered "lowly" and of appeal only to viewers without critical faculties. For the former reading of grotteschi, see Summers, pp.496-7.

420 Nicole Dacos, *La decouverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques a la Renaissance* (London: Warburg Institute), 1970.

421 Armenini, III. XII.261.

suavity as well as with the cachet of antiquity. They could be fitted onto any size wall, and didn't command a focus, but rather were unobtrusively and ubiquitously ornamental. In his chapter on grotesques, Armenini speaks to this when he writes that modern painters "know that little else, together with the aforementioned ornaments, can be more effective in loggias, libraries, gardens, bedrooms, courts, stairs, baths, conservatories, hallways, and every type of small room."[422] Later, in his chapter on appropriate decorations for country houses and villas, from which we have already read his extensive list of delightful landscape elements, Armenini reiterates this list of what he calls the "minor" rooms and says that landscape and grotteschi--cheerful, not challenging images--are to be painted there.[423]

Although grotteschi required ingenuity on the part of the artist, like landscape they were most definitely considered a lesser light of the craft of painting. Karel van Mander complained that when Northern painters went to Italy, they were relegated to the painting of landscape and grotteschi.[424] Carlo Borromeo lumped grotteschi and landscape together in a counter-reformation condemnation of license in painting, listing these sensual lures under the general heading of parerga. He writes:

Parerga: seeing that painters and sculptors are accustomed to add ornament by means of subject to images, let them not be profane nor devoted to sensual pleasure, nor alluring, nor, in short, anything inappropriate to a sacred picture .... [Not] those things which are vulgarly called *mascaroni* [grotteschi], nor little birds, nor seas, nor flowery meadows, nor anything else of those kind of views or ornaments which are conceived to allure and delight.[425]

We recall Paolo Pino's declaration that a painter must be "learned as a landscapist

---

422 Armenini, III. XII.264. "Small" here should be read as unimportant and requiring less decorum.

423 Armenini, III.xv.268.

424 Karel van Mander, *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const*, 2 vols., trans. Hessel Meidema (Utrecht, 1973), Ch. 1, verse 71, p.94.

425 *Parerga, utpote quae ornatus causa imaginibus pictores sculptoresve addere solent, ne prophana sint, ne voluptaria, ne deliciosa, ne denique a sacra pictura abhorrentia, ut deformiter efficta capita humana quae mascaroni vulgo nominant, non aviculae, non mare, non prata virentia, non alia id generis, quae ad oblectationem deliciosumque prospectum atque ornatum effinguntur.* quoted in Paola Barocchi, *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma,* 3 vols. (Bari, 1960), III. 44. my trans.

and skilled in other caprices" (*pratico in altri bizzarie*).[426] These *bizzarie* include grotteschi. The link between the invention required for landscape and for grotteschi is made clear in Anton Francesco Doni's *Disegno* treatise. He writes that the painter who makes the most *astratte* and *bizzarre* grotteschi will be considered excellent. Doni expounds on the invention of these "bizzarie" by saying that painters, in making a *macchia d'un paese*, will discover grotteschi in the landscape forms they create.[427] Thus, Doni connects the actual creative process of landscape painting, a process that composes in paint on a canvas without preliminary designs, with the inventive *fantasia* of grotteschi.

Although Doni's suggestion that grotteschi may be discovered in the indeterminate, organic forms of landscape is not without precedent, the genre of grotteschi can be linked to landscape in ways not tied as directly to cause and effect.[428] We have already seen that the *capricci* and *bizzarrie* of painting were comprehensive phrases for both landscape, usually defined as a variety of pleasing details, and grotteschi, composite creatures that delighted through their paradoxical mimesis. We have also seen that grotteschi functioned in many of the same ways that landscape did. Like landscape, grotteschi were cultivated embellishments with an Antique pedigree that could be used alone to decorate the minor areas of a building, or could be used as the subsidiary framing devices for paintings with important content. Critically, both were assessed as "fields" (Vasari's term) of painting

---

426 Pino, p.371.

427 Pino, p.275. Vasari tells a related story about the artist Piero di Cosimo, writing that the artist:*Fermavasi talora a considerare un muro, dove lungamente fusse stato sputato da persone malate, e ne cavava le battaglie de'cavagli e le piu fantastiche citta, e gran piu paesi che si vedesse mai: simil faceva de'nuvoli dell'aria.* [sometimes stop to gaze at a wall against which sick people had for a long time been discharging their spittle, and from this he would picture to himself battles of horsemen, and the most fantastic cities and the widest landscapes that were ever seen; and he did the same with the clouds in the sky]. Vasari-Milanesi, IV.134; du Vere, I.652. For other examples of "found" images, see: Aristotle, *De Somniis*, 460b, 461b; Leonardo da Vinci, *Treatise on Painting*, 2 vols., ed. A. P. McMahon (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1956), p.76; and Lorenzo di Medici, *Opere*, 2 vols., ed. A. Simioni (Bari, 1913-14), II.73. Many such sources are discussed in H.W. Janson, " 'The Image Made by Chance' in Renaissance Thought," *De Artibus Opuscula XL. Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky* (New York, 1961), pp. 254-66.

428 In his chapter entitled "The Grotesque and the Pastoral," Paul Barolsky explores this link between the *fantasia* associated with the grotesque and the generative fecundity of untamed nature. Both are representative of the creative psyche of the artist, standing outside the strictures of civilization. see *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), pp. 77-85, esp. p.83-84.

that required invention and painterly ability. However, because each was thought to appeal to the senses and not the intellect, they were ranked low in the genre hierarchy. In other words, landscape and grotteschi were linked as the parerga of painting, whose function was delight, both for the viewer *and* for the painter.

As far back as Pliny's discussion of Protogenes, there is the notion that parerga are added by the painter to call attention to his skill in the medium. Pino insists that the specialty of landscape is "very natural to the painter and a source of pleasure to himself and to others."[429] Giovio's account of Dosso furthers this; Dosso devoted himself "with relish" to the pleasant diversions of painting. Similarly, Lomazzo considered the creation of grotteschi the ultimate test of a painter's invention, and, as such, a pleasure to their maker, saying: "in the invention of grotteschi more than in anything else their runs a certain *furor* and a natural *bizzaria*."[430] Pirro Ligorio agreed that it was the "painter's painter" who could most skillfully execute grotteschi.[431] The ornaments of grotteschi and landscape encompass and express all that is peculiar only to painting, and thus were seen to delight painters with their execution as well as viewers with their copious delights.

•••••

We know that in 1521 Cesare Cesariano used the term parerga to define pastoral landscape scenes. By 1612, Henry Peacham's advice to painters in his *Graphice* is "For your parergas or needlesse graces, you may set forth the same with Farm-houses, Water-mills, Pilgrims travelling, &c."[432] Thomas Blount's *Glossographia* of 1658 defines *Landskip* as: "Parergon, Paisage, or By-work, which is expressing of the Land, by Hills, Woods, Castles, Valleys, Rivers, Cities, &c. as far as may be shewed in our Horizon. All

---

429 Pino, p. 373.

430 quoted in Summers, pp.496-7.

431 Summers, pp.496-7, n. 106. As Summers explores here, certain theorist like Lomazzo and Ligorio tried to rescue grotteschi from the plight of being merely sensually pleasing by speaking of their ability to raise the mind through marvel to the contemplation of higher things, or through their ability to act as a sort of mystical hieroglyph. Counter-Reformation authors made similar attempts to "spiritualize" landscape depictions and thus, by giving them the significance of religious metaphors, to raise their function from the mere titillation of the sense. For the latter, see Jones, esp. pp.130-5.

432 quoted in OED, "parergon," p. 225.

that which in a Picture is not of the body or argument thereof is *Landskip, Parergon, or by-work.*"[433]

These statements show that landscape, whether painted as the background to a more important narrative or standing alone as a separate genre, was through the sixteenth century defined as parerga, and that by the early seventeenth century this had become the accepted definition. The paradox of parerga, both in landscape and grotteschi, was that the obvious delight viewers found in such genres is left largely unjustified by the academic theory developed to validate art. Addressing this same attitude in literature, Robert Clements writes "The rhetorical tradition kept alive in the treatises of Scaliger and Pinciano infiltrated Renaissance poetics to keep the didactic and suasive function in mind. If utility was prominent in theory, in practice Renaissance literature was more hedonistic than didactic."[434] This disjunction between theory and practice is evident in the Renaissance visual arts as well. Although theoreticians said the value of art was in its intellectual content, artists and buyers were becoming increasingly aware of differing styles and the value of personal expression. This caused a schism between the theoretical desire for large-scale public narratives of a moralizing tenor, and the private taste for the pleasures of art, for *capricci* and *bizzarrie* that showed painterly invention and virtuoso execution.[435] By the time Sir Joshua Reynolds headed the Academy, the theoretical, academic view had triumphed to the point that he compared Venice and Rome by saying "the elegant school of ornamental art [Venice] loses to the grand and noble school of sublime art because [Venetian art displays] sensuality over reason, dazzle over effect, and ornament over severity."[436] The truth, of course, is that parerga have never gone out of fashion; though feared, parerga are the sensual license that enliven and "body forth" painting; they are the

[433] Thomas Blount, *Glossographia,* [1656], Scholar Press Facsimile (Menston: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969).

[434] Robert Clements, "Picta Poesis:"*Literary and Humanistic Theory in Renaissance Emblem Books* (Rome, 1960), p.61. More recently, Barolsky makes the same point about the visual arts, writing that even today, theory almost invariably emphasizes the serious aims of art at the expense of its pleasurable uses. see "Play, Pleasure and Fantasy," pp.13-15.

[435] Klein and Zerner, p. xvi.

[436] quoted in Schor, p.19.

accidents of form that make form live and breathe.[437]

[437] Their power is fittingly expressed by Francis Connelly, who writes: "The grotesque and the ornamental were among those elements of physicality and disorder allowed to exist on the edges if controlled by the centrifugal force of the center [the *ergon*]. They were the marginalia to the rational text, the darkness that fell just outside the aureole of the light of reason, the bestial, lusty satyr that by contrast heightened the proportional beauty and sober intellect of the Apollo. They were allowed to exist only in a controlled, subservient role, as an embellishment to the rational structure." *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), pp.13-14.

Chapter Four
Vasari's Theory of Landscape

Vasari's only use of the word *paese* in part one of *The Lives of the Artists* occurs in the biography of Giotto. The shepherd Giotto, so Vasari tells us, was found by Cimabue drawing in the dirt with a stick while tending his flocks. This intimate connection to nature is appropriate, for Vasari claims Giotto as the artist whose naturalism begins the long journey of the arts towards perfection. Given this bucolic start, it seems logical for Giotto to figure in the *Lives* as an innovator in landscape depiction. While still a young man, Vasari records, Giotto painted:

un San Francesco nell'orribile sasso della Vernia, con straordinaria diligenza; perche, oltre a certi paesi pieni di alberi e di scogli, che nuova in que'tempi (a Saint Francis on the tremendous rocks of La Vernia, with extraordinary diligence [with]...certain landscapes, full of trees and cliffs, which was something new in those times).[438]

The setting of *The Stigmatization of St. Francis* is typical of Giotto's talents as a landscape painter (fig.1). Giotto tends to create spare but strikingly sympathetic landscape settings that echo his figures' emotions, and thus the stony surroundings required by the stigmata is ideally suited to his particular skills. In Vasari's narrative, however, Giotto is an artist working at the very dawn of the artistic Renaissance. His considerable talents are engaged in wresting painting from the barbarity into which it had fallen, and returning to it some of the science and perfection that *disegno* could bring. Struggling to show the world how to present form, Giotto could be little concerned with the accidents and delights of painting. Those embellishments would have to wait until Vasari's "third manner" to be perfected, and, though Giotto suggests the tangible space of rocky cliffs, his landscape has none of the *vaghezza*, the color, and the charming detail later discovered by the painters of Vasari's own day.

Even though Vasari nowhere sets forth a concise theory of landscape, the venture towards the "perfect" style of landscape painting is one of the many narrative progressions

438 Vasari-Milanesi, I. 379-80; du Vere, I.101. All references to Vasari in the original language come from: *Le opere di Giorgio Vasari, con nuove annotazione e commenti*, 9 vols., ed. Gaetano Milanesi (Florence, 1906). All reference to translations of Vasari refer to: *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects,* 2 vols., trans. Gaston du Vere (New York, 1996).

told in *Lives of the Artists.* Vasari was writing in the very era when landscape came to be recognized as a named subset of painting, yet no one has analyzed his work to discover his thoughts about the new genre. Perhaps it has been assumed that since Vasari champions Michelangelo's Florentine, figure-privileging manner over the colorism of Venice, his attitude towards landscape is not a favorable one. Vasari's theory of art is more complex than these polarizing reductions, however, and a close reading of the *Lives* shows an author who endorses the charms of landscape.

Vasari, as several references in the *Lives* make clear, recognizes the existence of images we would construe as "pure" landscapes.[439] In Vasari's opinion, however, pure landscapes are not important examples of painting. They may show great displays of skill, but they are generally small-scale private commissions, not vehicles to promote the fame of artists. Moreover, they do not display what Vasari considers the true function of landscape--the adornment of important subjects. The subjects a landscape might appropriately grace could be mythological or religious. They could even be architectural; Vasari often finds landscapes suitable for the embellishment of large-scale building campaigns. This subsidiary role does not diminish Vasari's admiration for landscape. In reading the *Lives*, it becomes clear that the ability to depict ornament well is central to Vasari's theory of art. The ornamental depiction of landscape and its details are the elements of painting, particularly painting with oils, that best exploit the qualities peculiar to that medium. In other words, landscape emerges in the *Lives* as one of the premier vehicles for displaying the skills inherent in the act of applying color to a wall, panel or canvas; it is a subject particularly suited to pigment.

In this chapter I will analyze what Vasari says about landscape in the *Lives* in order to reconstruct his critical stance regarding the genre. In evaluating the *Lives*, my approach is thematic. First, a brief investigation both of Vasari's attitude towards natural beauty and

439 "By the hand of Gian Girolamo Bresciano...there are four pictures of Night and of Fire, which are very beautiful....and there are some other similar works of fantasy, in which he was a master. But, since he occupied himself only with things of this kind, and executed no large works, there is nothing more to be said of him." du Vere, II.471; see n.4 above for Italian. For other examples of Vasari's acknowledgement of"pure" landscape, see: du Vere I.936, II.487, II.801, II.86-64.

of his obvious debt to pastoral literature is presented. Vasari's "three manners" of painting are then analyzed in order to show how the "ages" of painting move in the *Lives* towards perfection in the presentation of landscape. The types of artists Vasari thinks excel at landscape depiction are considered, and the specific attributes of landscapes that attract his attention are examined in his descriptions of such scenes. In conclusion, the vivid and detailed exegeses of three of the author's own landscape paintings are analyzed closely.

Vasari's Love of Nature

One of the more subtle indications that Vasari is sympathetic to landscape painting is his love and praise for the beauties of nature. In his autobiography, Vasari writes that "in order to be free from every vexatious thought, I...bought a house already begun in Arezzo, with a site for making most beautiful gardens...in the best air of that city." (fig.2)[440] Although typically thought of as stolidly bourgeoisie and practical, Vasari's tender side is glimpsed in his love for his garden. A letter Vasari writes in 1553 to Bishop Minerbetti complaining of home-sickness betrays this: "Then there is my garden thirsting for want of me. I know that it put forth fresh buds when it heard I was coming back."[441]

Vasari also writes affectionately of the four summers he spent at the hermitage at Camaldoli, a peaceful alpine retreat where, as he says, *quivi il silentio sta con quella muta loquela sua.*[442] In his autobiography, he recalls his stay there, speaking of the spot's natural beauty as a spur to contemplation. He writes that his artistic studies were furthered much more by the "sweet tranquility and honest solitude" of the mountain than by the "noises" of the cities. Michelangelo had related the same idea; after spending several days alone in the mountains of Spoleto, he wrote Vasari that one could only find true peace in the wilds.[443] Both men may be consciously evoking the convention of the sought-after "man of affairs" who retreats to nature to receive refreshment and inspiration. Vasari,

---

440 du Vere, II.1032.

441 quoted in T.S.R. Boase, *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book* (Bollingen Series XXV, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p.171. The garden is still extant.

442 C. Frey, *Sammlung ausgewahlter Biographien Vasaris,* 4 vols. (Berlin, 1884-87), I.90.

443 letter quoted in Boase, p.254.

however, did return again and again to the Camaldoline hermitage in the hills of the Casentino. His drawings of the hermitage, showing carefully ordered rows of buildings built into the slope of the mountain and surrounded by trees, reveal the charms of the quiet retreat and underscore his genuine affection for the location. (fig. 3)[444]

While in Florence, Vasari enjoyed the Boboli gardens, saying that its variety of trees, shrubs and groves assured a year-long greenness to the place, a loveliness that could not be imagined by any who had not visited the spot.[445] His description of the grounds at Castello, a Medici estate, is elaborate, detailing all the separate gardens and their plantings. He writes that the carefully set out cypresses, laurels, myrtles and box-hedges are so beautiful that they appear to be "a painting done with a brush."[446] Throughout the *Lives*, and indeed in all his writings, Vasari shows an awareness of the appeal of landscape, and over and over again he mentions lovely views from various villa sites, loggias, or hill-top palaces.

Vasari's notion of the "picturesque" landscape, exemplified by his description of the Medici gardens as so lovely that they might have been "a painting done with a brush," is a response conditioned not only by what was shown in idealized painting, but also by images he knew from the literature popular in his day. Bolstering this notion are certain passages of landscape narration found in the *Lives* which have less to do with artistic style than with already existing literary models. These passages are content-driven and the author's knowledge of the ekphraseis appropriate to these subjects is revealed by the fact that the descriptions remain constant, although the artists whose paintings he is describing may follow very different styles. The landscapes that follow this pattern of explication are

444 This retreat also inspired the landscape in at least one of Vasari's works. One of the first landscapes Vasari describes in his biography was rendered during a retreat to the "quiet and freshness" of the mountain monastery of the Camaldoline order. The topography of the place is depicted in an image of the young St. John in the mountains. In this work, Vasari says that he placed the Saint *fra certi scoglie e massi, e che io ritrasse dal naturali di que'monti.* [among some rocks and crags that I copied from Nature among those mountains.] Vasari-Milanese, VII.667; du Vere, II.1032.

445 Vasari-Milanese, II. 373.

442 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 236. Vasari's attention to Castello and the Boboli gardens might be expected since he took over the completion of both these projects after Tribolo's death. He also gives a lovely description of the gardens and views surrounding the Villa Ruciano, owned by Leonora of Toledo. du Vere, I.354-5.

of a pastoral type, and when relating such scenes, Vasari is wont to employ the topos of the *locus amoenus*. This is not to say that he is rendering a verbalization wholly removed from the actuality of the painting, but rather that he knows the subject calls for a specific treatment in prose.

An example of this is found in part one of the *Lives*, where Vasari describes a painting on the wall of the Campo Santo in Pisa executed by Orcagna depicting an earthly paradise, the dwelling-place, as Vasari says, for "temporal Lords." He characterizes this image by saying:[447]

figuro in essa tutti i gradi de'signori temporali involti nei piaceri di questo mondo, ponendogli a sedere sopra un prato fiorito e sotto l'ombra di molti melaranci, che, facendo amenissimo bosco, hanno sopra i rami alcuni Amori...(He represented therein all the degrees of Lords temporal wrapped in the pleasures of this world, placing them seated in a flowery meadow and under the shade of many orange trees, which make a most delicious grove and have some cupids in the branches above...)[448]

He continues, narrating that cupids in the trees are shooting down arrows to inflame some groups of young women with love. The women stand amongst noblemen, all listening to music and song and watching amorous dances. Vasari's description of this landscape, which displays all the pleasures of earthly existence, owes much to conventions of pastoral poetry, where men retreat into the beauties of nature to enjoy themselves and perhaps to receive inspiration from love.

Vasari sums up the scene by saying *In somma, fece con molto diligenza in questa prima parte, per quanto capiva il luogo e richiedeva l'arte, tutte i diletti del mondo graziosamente* (In short, in so far as the space permitted and his art demanded, he painted all the delights of the world with exceeding great grace.) The description could have occurred in any of Vasari's three books. There is nothing here to set the painting off stylistically from works painted hundreds of years later, and we shall see Vasari write

447 An example of this might be when Vasari describes Piero di Cosimo's *Bacchanals* as having *strani fauni, satiri e sylvani*. Ovid, in the *Metamorphoses*, wrote about *nymphae, faunique, satyrique et monticolae silvani*. [Met. I.192-3]. Martianus Capella, who drew heavily on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, detailed a procession of such beasts as *panes, fauni, satyri, silvani* [Capella, II.54]. This is not to suggest that Vasari was deliberately borrowing from these sources, but to show that his descriptions of pastoral scenes were conditioned by such well-known and closely read texts.

448 Vasari-Milanesi, I .596; du Vere, I.180.

about several other pastoral scenes in much the same prose style.

For instance, Vasari's account of Raphael's *Parnassus* follows the conventions established in pastoral literature (fig. 4). In this instance, Vasari seems more attuned to the literary traditions referred to in the painting than its actual visual appearance:

> On the wall towards the Belvedere, where there are the Mount Parnassus and the Fount of Helicon, he made round that mount a laurel wood of darkest shadows, in the verdure of which one almost sees the leaves quivering in the gentle zephyrs; and in the air are vast numbers of naked Loves, most beautiful in feature and expression who are plucking branches of laurel and with them making garlands, which they throw and scatter about the mount.[449]

In truth, there are no Loves flying in the air, and only seven slender laurels, standing immobile in the still air, evenly lit by Raphael's blond lighting. Vasari described these scenes from memory, aided by Raimondi's print made after Raphael's drawings (fig. 5). To Vasari, Parnassus is a pastoral subject and as such it *should* have gentle breezes, flying putti, and restful shade provided by a gracious canopy of trees.[450] Both this passage and the description of Orcagna's work can be placed in the tradition of the literary pastoral, but there is nothing in either passage to alert the reader to stylistic discrepancies between the paintings.

Two of Vasari's own landscapes follow the tradition of the *locus amoenus*. In consultation with a large group of advisors, Vasari oversaw the enormous project of decorating the city of Florence for Prince Francesco de Medici's wedding, and the complex mythological imagery of his designs reflects the epithalamic nature of the celebration. As such, it is no surprise to find pastoral paintings included in the program. The first landscape accompanied a sculpture of Ceres and showed:

> a most beautiful little landscape adorned with an infinite variety of trees, in the most distant part of which was seen an ancient and very ornate little temple dedicated to Ceres...On the other side, in a part somewhat more solitary, Nymphs of the chase could be seen standing about a shady and most limpid font, gazing as it were in marvel and offering to the new

[449] du Vere, I.720.

[450] Vasari's own *Parnassus* (see below) follows this description more closely than Raphael's painting. Patricia Rubin suggests that Vasari and at least some of his readers knew his description was an embellishment of Raphael's work, but accepted his changes as poetic license bringing a fitting verbal adornment to the painting. Rubin's book also offers an excellent bibliography on Vasari. *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), p. 365.

bride the pleasures and delights that are found in their pursuits, in which Tuscany is perhaps not inferior to any part of Italy. In another part, with many countrymen bringing various animals both wild and domestic, were seen many country girls, young and beautiful, and adorned in a thousand rustic but graceful manners, and likewise come--weaving all the while garlands of flowers and bearing various fruits--to see and honour their lady, and the verses which were over this scene as with the others, [were] taken from Virgil.[451]

The other pastoral canvas was related to a sculpture of the Tuscan Apollo presiding over Parnassus:

Under his [Apollo's] feet there was painted on the summit of a most lovely mountain, recognized as that of Helicon by the horse Pegasus, a very spacious and beautiful meadow, in the center of which rose the sacred Fount of Aganippe, likewise recognized by the nine Muses, who stood around it in pleasant converse, and with them, and in the shade of the verdant laurels with which the whole mound was covered, were seen various poets in various guises seated or discoursing as they walked, or singing to the sound of the lyre, while a multitude of little Loves were playing above in the laurels, some of them shooting arrows, and some appeared to be throwing down garlands of laurel.[452]

These descriptions are not remarkable for what they tell us about the styles of the paintings, but rather for the way they elucidate Vasari's familiarity with the conventions of pastoral poetry. The nymphs and rural, fresh-faced girls, the fountains, shady groves and countrymen, the varied trees, laurel garlands and lyric music are all ancient attributes of the pastoral realm of love and poetry, the *locus amoenus*.[453]

Thus, Vasari's attitude towards the visual delights offered by nature was an amalgam. That he found genuine physical and spiritual pleasure in the green, growing world is evidenced by his careful tending of his own garden and his heartfelt enjoyment of the peace and verdant isolation of the mountains. His descriptions of landscape paintings,

---

451 du Vere, II.902-3.

452 du Vere, II.904.

453 Another pastoral description is found in *The Life of Titian*, where Vasari records "a most beautiful landscape" containing "a naked shepherd a and a country girl offering him some pipes." (du Vere, II.785). It might also be considered an allusion to pastoralism when, in the *Life of Pordenone*, Vasari writes that the artist executed "some poetical pictures in the beautiful garden of M. Barnaba dal Pozzo" (du Vere, I.876). Perhaps Vasari did not remember the content of the images, or it could be that he never actually saw them. It may also be, however, that in images painted in gardens, as with images painted in loggias, subject is not as important as appropriateness to setting. A garden should be graced with the light, poetic fancies of lyric verse. Similarly, a loggia is the place for landscapes or similar works with no subject or purpose other than delight. References made to non-specified landscapes in garden or loggia settings include the *Life of Peruzzi*, du Vere, I.811; and *The Life of Perino del Vaga*, du Vere, II.160.

however, show that his perceptions were conditioned by the centuries-old conventions of pastoral literature. Like many of the authors we have examined, from Petrarch to Lorenzo de Medici to Pietro Aretino, Vasari was capable of responding to nature both with an awareness of the forms set forth by literary tradition and with a sincere delight in the beauties of the earth. In most of his analyses of painted landscape, however, Vasari goes beyond these reactions and examines images in terms of what they offer stylistically and technically.

Landscape and Vasari's "Three Manners"

In part one of Vasari's *Lives*, the author describes only a handful of landscapes, and he uses the word *paese* only once. Looking at the dearth of landscape descriptions in the first section in relation to the rest of the *Lives* tells us something about Vasari's estimation of the particular strengths of each artistic age in landscape painting. The few outdoor scenes Vasari specifies, however, begin to let us know some of the aspects of landscape painting that he deems central and will return to repeatedly. Already in part one, for instance, we find that Vasari values naturalism and light effects, as well as topographically-accurate images.

There is much more information about landscape painting in the second part of the *Lives*.[454] Vasari's discussion about the advancements made in this field by painters of the Second period is revealing. He writes that:

Thus they [the painters of the second manner] sought to imitate what they saw in nature, and no more (*e non piu*), and thus their works came to be better planned and conceived; and this emboldened them to give rules to their perspectives and to foreshorten them in a natural and proper form, just as they did in relief; and thus, too, they were ever observing lights and shades, the projection of shadows, and all the other difficulties, and the composition of stories with more characteristic resemblance, and attempted to give more

454 I determined that in order to be considered a landscape description, a passage in Vasari had to actually describe some element of a rendered outdoor scene. I do not include as landscape descriptions Vasari's mention of works whose appropriate setting would be outdoors (i.e. *Christ in the Garden*) unless the author details the setting. In part two of Vasari's *Lives*, Vasari addresses landscape twenty-five times in the following seventeen biographies,with the number of any mention over one being listed in parentheses following the artist's name: Paolo Uccello (5), Fra Angelico, Attavante, Alesso Baldovinetti (2), Benozzo Gozzoli, Cosimo Rosselli [addressing a painting by his young assistant Piero di Cosimo], Don Bartolommeo della Gatta (3), Domenico Ghirlandaio, Andrea Mantegna, Filippino Lippi, Bernardino Pintoricchio, Francesco Francia, Pietro Perugino, Vittore Carpaccio, Cima da Conegliano, Marco Basaiti (2), and Giovanni Mansueti.

reality to landscapes, trees, herbs, flowers, skies, clouds, and other objects of nature, insomuch that we may boldly say that these arts were not only reared but actually carried to the flower of their youth, giving hope of that fruit which afterward appeared.[455]

The progress of the second style towards perfect landscape is an increased mimetic naturalness, *e non piu.* It is verisimilitude--*ritrarre*, and not *imitare*. Yet the brief comment *e non piu* tells the reader that for Vasari increased naturalness was not enough; landscape had further to go to find its ultimate expression. What is more, the passage signals the order in which Vasari ranks the artistic advances of the Second Period: perspective, foreshortening, and relief are more important in this era than an increased ability to portray natural settings with *vaghezza.*

Because Vasari had much more information about the artists of his own era, there are far more biographical chapters in the final part of the *Lives*, a total of seventy-eight, in contrast to the thirty in part one and the fifty-three in part two.[456] The sheer increase in the number of painters discussed means more landscapes are addressed. In addition, by the third age, the technique of oil painting was widely disseminated and, correspondingly, the number of landscapes noted in *The Lives of the Artists* increases dramatically with the medium's establishment. Aside from these practical considerations, however, it is clear Vasari thought the artists of his own day were much more adept at setting forth the graceful charms of landscape.

---

455 *...e tentarono fare i paesi piu simili al vero, e gli alberi, l'erbe, i fiori, l'arie, i nuvoli ed altri cose della natura.* Vasari Milanesi, II.106-7; du Vere, I.254.

456 There are just over one hundred passages addressing landscape in part three of the Lives. The artists in whose biographies Vasari mentions landscape paintings are as follows, with the number of any mention over one being listed in parentheses following the artist's name: Leonardo; Correggio (2); Piero di Cosimo (6); Raphael (5); Guglielmo da Marcilla (2); Timoteo da Urbino [della Vite]; Lorenzo di Credi; Peruzzi (2); Giovan Francesco Penni [Il Fattore] (2); Andrea del Sarto (2); Dosso Dossi (2); Barnazzano; Giovanni Antonio Licinio [Pordenone]; Pomponio Amalteo; Giovanni Antonio Sogliani; Polidoro da Caravaggio (2); Antonio Donnino Mazzieri; Francesco Mazzuoli [Parmigianino] (4); Lorenzo Lotto; Giovan Francesco Caroto, disciple of Liberale (2); Battista del Moro; Francesco Morone; Girolamo, son of Francesco dai Libri (4); Matteo del Nassaro [as a dealer in Flemish landscapes]; Giulio Romano (4); Sebastiano del Piombo; Perino del Vaga (4); Niccolo Soggi; Cristofano Gherardi [Doceno] (3); Pontormo (2); Camillo Montovano (2); Gian Girolamo Bresciano; Ridolfo Ghirlandaio (3); Giovanni da Udine (3); Battista Franco; Tintoretto; Francesco Salviati; Michelangelo [noting that he refused to paint landscapes]; Titian (9); Messer Gian Maria Verdezotti [dilettante gentleman artist]; Giulio Clovio (3); Martin van Heemskerk; Franz Mostaert and his followers Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Brueghel; Jakob Grimmer, Hans Bol and other artists of Antwerp; M. Domenicus Lampsonius; Giovanni della Strada; Vasari (9).

The preface to the third part of Vasari's *Lives* has long been recognized as the most succinct statement the author gives of his idea of perfection in the arts. In this preface, he reviews the advances made by the masters of the second style, and sums up their shortcomings as well, failings that have been overcome by the artists of his own time. Some of the criticism he applies to the earlier style might strictly be read as referring to either architecture or figural sculpture and painting, but they may also profitably be read in relation to landscape depiction.

Vasari says that in all media, the artists of the second style had been too constrained by rule and measure at the expense of pleasing details. This meant that their works lacked the "abundance of beautiful costumes...great number and variety of bizarre fancies, loveliness of colouring, wide knowledge of buildings, and distance and variety in landscapes" that were discovered and executed by third manner artists.[457] Added to these shortcoming, the painting of the second manner was missing a "minuteness of finish."[458] The fact that artists had failed in this was not due to inattention. Indeed, the earlier artists had striven too hard. Over-zealous study, Vasari writes, will not give perfect finish but rather impart a dry manner.[459] Vasari gives a list of the artists guilty of such over-zealousness, and included are many whose landscapes he had discussed in the second part. A labored style caused these artists to execute "things unpleasant to the eye, which were as

457 *Vi mancavo ancora la copia de'belli abiti, la varieta di tante bizzarrie, la vaghezza de'colori, la universita ne'casementi, e la lontananza e varieta ne' paesi.* Vasari-Milanesi, IV.9; du Vere, I.618.

458 This "minuteness of finish" is what Vasari generally terms *diligenzia*, a word he will employ again and again to describe finely finished oil painting. Our current usage has the connotation of "steady effort," but Vasari's meaning is perhaps somewhere between this understanding and the word's original meaning of "loving" from the Latin *diligere* "to esteem highly or love." This word comes from the roots *dis*, "apart" and *legere*, "to choose," combined to mean "to select out or hold apart." From this came its meaning of loving attentiveness or carefulness, a translation that perhaps best encapsulates Vasari's use of it in relating the soft, graceful, lively effects of idealized and highly finished oil painting. Vasari's use of the term, however, also carries with it the notion of an artist using physical dexterity to create a sensual impact rather than employing mental skill or strength of conception to impart a cerebrally-engaging aspect to his painting.

455 *...avvenga che lo studio insecchisce la maniera quando egli preso per terinare i fini in quel modo.* Vasari-Milanesi, IV.10.

painful to see as they were difficult for them to execute."[460] A quotation from Vasari's prolegomenon to the *Lives* further illustrates his meaning. This prefix to the introduction was called by the author his *parte teorica* or the *capitoli delle teoriche*, and, in general, it is more of an exposition of material technique than of aesthetic theory:

> the art [of painting] will always be associated with the grace of naturalness and of delicate charm of colour, and the work [should] be brought to perfection not with the stress of cruel suffering, so that men who look at it have to endure pain on account of that suffering which they see has been borne by the artist in his work, but rather with rejoicing at the good fortune in that his hand has received from heaven the lightness of movement.[461]

The flaws of landscape artists in the second age were not in ability, but in judgment and in available media. Two things can be noted. First, in landscape where all details are revealed with the same intensive focus, the natural diminution that not only accords soft beauty to views but also gives the feeling of atmospheric perspective is lost. Second, for Vasari, landscape is an ornament to painting and its elements should be appropriately chosen to add liveliness, grace and charm. These older artists erred in choosing to show unadorned, unidealized nature. Vasari could appreciate mimetic, bizarre, striking, or even ugly elements added to a work to give it novelty, but unrelievedly difficult or unidealized details were not to his liking.

Although Vasari states that *disegno* is the highest skill in art, it is not in draughtsmanship that these older masters were lacking. Vasari says that "their works were for the most part well drawn and free from errors."[462] What *was* lacking was a "certain resolute spirit" and, more importantly for our purposes, "a sweet harmony of colouring."[463] Vasari reveals in the preface to the third part that this "sweet harmony of colouring" was first seen in the oil paintings of the North Italian painters Francia and Perugino. At the sight of their works, Vasari reports, "people ran like madmen to this new

---

460 *...cercavano fare l'impossibile dell'arte con le fatiche, e massime negli scorti e nelle vedute spiacevoli; che si come erano a loro dure a condurle, cosi erano aspre a vederle.* Vasari-Milanesi, IV.11; du Vere, I.619.

461 *On Technique*, p. 211.

462 *Ed ancora che la maggior parte fussiono ben designate e senza errori.* Vasari-Milanesi, IV.11; du Vere, I.619-20.

463 du Vere, I.620.

and more lifelike beauty."[464] Although Vasari immediately states that their novel approach was quickly surpassed by the work of Leonardo and the divine Raphael, he recognizes that the carefully blended oil paintings of these two artists were the harbingers of the "perfect" style, the style that would reveal, among other things, the true manner of landscape painting. Vasari gives these same opinions in his technical prolegomenon, adding a discussion of what exactly the oil medium, as perfected by Perugino, Leonardo, and Raphael, allowed:

> This manner of painting kindles the pigments and nothing else is needed except diligence and devotion, because the oil in itself softens and sweetens the colours and renders them more delicate and more easily blended than do the other mediums. While the work is wet, the colours readily mix and unite with one another.[465]

With the advent of oil paint, contours softened, space became a continuous, blended matrix of color, and the pleasing regions of the outdoor world could be rendered with convincing depth. A medium well suited to landscape had been discovered, and painting moved beyond the era of harsh linear perspective.

Part I: The Landscape Painters in the *Lives*

An analysis of the *Lives* reveals that Vasari thinks certain "types" of artist excel at landscape depiction. In some instances these congruences are easy to uncover. Vasari informs the reader "I will do my utmost to observe, the most that I can, the order of their [the artists'] manners rather than that of time [chronology]."[466] Thus, he tends to group discussion of artists together if their styles seem to him to be similar. Even across the separate sections of the *Lives*, however, resemblances can be found among the artists that emerge in Vasari's biographies as remarkable landscape painters. These painters fall into five categories. The first group of artists are second-manner painters who made great strides in their minute analyses of nature, but never accomplished the idealizing grace that, for Vasari, landscape must have. The other categories are all artists who achieve success in

---

464 *...ed i popoli nel vederla corsero come matti a questa belleza nuova e piu viva, parendo loro assolutamente, che e'non si potesse giammai far meglio.* Vasari-Milanesi, 11; du Vere, I.620.

465 *On Technique*, p.230.

466 du Vere, I.47.

landscape painting, including: the masters of soft, blended color; the "impresarios" who run large workshops and undertake complicated, multi-faceted decorating commissions; the detail-oriented artists who excel at the naturalistic depiction of flora and fauna and other imaginative and fantastic embellishments; and finally the *oltramontani* artists and their Italian followers.

Some Early Attempts at Landscape

Paolo Uccello receives far more attention than any other painter in the second part of the *Lives* for his landscapes, and Vasari analyzes Uccello's talent in this regard, describing both his strengths and his shortcomings.[467] Landscape is first addressed in the context of Vasari's description of Uccello's love for animals, especially birds, an affection which was so great it resulted in his nickname "Paolo of the birds."[468] Vasari details several extremely realistic paintings Uccello executed of various animals. The initial study for one of these, a foreshortened ox, is in Vasari's book of drawings. Along with the ox, the drawing includes a peasant girl, some life-like shepherds, and *un paese che fu tenuto cose molto bella nel suo tempo* (a landscape that was held to be very beautiful in its time.)[469]

As the biography makes clear, Paolo was known in his own era for skill in executing the embellishments of painting: animal depictions, landscapes, and intricate perspectives. Vasari bemoans the artist's obsession with this latter specialty, saying that Uccello lavished all of his time on perspective to the detriment of a more important talent, figure-drawing. His fame in the decorative adornments of painting explains a comment

467 Vasari's first discussion of Uccello's landscapes is of a mural painting for San Miniato al Monte outside Florence: *Lavoro...di verdeterra ed in parte colorito, le vite de'santi padri: nelle quali non osservo molto l'unione di fare d'un solo colore, come si deono, le storie; perche fece i campi azurri, le citta di color rosso, e gli edificj variati secondo che gli parvi.* [He wrought the lives of the Holy Fathers, chiefly in terra-verde, and partly in colour; wherein he paid little regard to effecting harmony by painting with one colour, as should be done in painting stories, for he made the fields blue, the cities red, and the buildings varied according to his pleasure].Vasari Milanesi, II. 207; du Vere, I.283.

468 Vasari makes note of many artists with a great love for animals. Several also shared Uccello's particular affinity for birds, including Leonardo and Giovanni da Udine, a painter whose biography has much in common with Uccello. Aside from their love of nature, both Uccello and Giovanni were obsessed with certain aspects of art that Vasari considers the decorative embellishments of painting--Uccello with perspective and Giovanni with grotteschi.

469 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 208; du Vere, I.284.

Vasari makes about a work of Uccello's showing the acts of St. Benedict the Abbot. Vasari writes that *despite* there being no *paesi di colori, ne molti casamenti o prospettivi difficili; ma si bene gran disegno, e del buono assai (*landscapes in colour, nor many buildings, nor difficult perspectives, but there is truly great design, with no little of the good.)[470] In other words, this work succeeds admirably *without* any of the embellishments that Uccello both was so fond of and was known for.

In the Creation *and Expulsion of Adam and Eve*, painted for St. Maria Novella, Vasari gives a long exposition on Uccello's place as the preeminent landscape painter of his day. This passage allows Vasari to explore the inevitable failings that beset even the best second-manner landscapists. It is Vasari's fullest statement regarding landscape painting anywhere in the *Lives*, and as such it deserves to be closely read:

in questa opera si diletto far gli alberi di colori, i quali allora non era costume di far molto bene. Cosi ne'paesi egli fu il primo che si guadagnasse nome fra i vecchi di lavorare e quelli ben condurri a piu perfezione, che non avevono fatto gli altri pittori innanzi a lui; sebbene di poi e venuto chi gli ha fatti piu perfetti; perche con tanta fatica non poti mai dar loro a'tempi morbidezza ne quella unione che e stata data loro a'tempi nostri nel colorirli a olio, Ma fu bene assai che Paolo con l'ordine della prospettiva gli ando diminuendo e ritraendo come stanno quivi appunto, facendovi tutto quel che vedeva; cioe campi, arati, fissati, ed altri minuzie della natura, in quella sua maniera secca e tagliente: laddove, se egli avesse scelto il buono delle cose, e messo in opera quelle parti appunto che tornan bene in pittura, sarebbono stati del tutto perfettisimi. (in this work he took delight in making the trees with colours, which the painters of those times were not wont to do very well; and in the landscapes, likewise, he was the first among the old painters to make a name for himself by this work, executing them well and with greater perfection than the painters before him had done; although afterwards there came men who made them more perfect, for with all his labour he was never able to give them that softness and harmony which have been given to them in our own day by painting them in oil colours. It was enough for Paolo to go on, according to the rules of perspective, drawing and foreshortening them exactly as they are, making in them all he saw--namely, plowed fields, ditches and other minutenesses of nature--with that dry, hard manner of his; whereas, if he had picked out the best from everything, and had made use only of those parts that come out well in painting, they would have been absolutely perfect.)[471]

Uccello had the ability to become a perfect landscape painter, but he was hindered by three things: his inability to give landscapes *morbidezza* and *unione* through the soft blending

---

470 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 213; du Vere, I.287.

471 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 209; du Vere, I.284-5.

allowed by oil paint (a shortcoming he had no control over, since oil paint was not yet in use); his inclination to apply linear perspective to landscape; and, finally, his insistence on revealing all the elements of the natural world just as they were, with no editing and no idealizing (fig. 6). In the perfect style of landscape, there are no "plowed fields, ditches and other [displeasing] minutenesses of nature." Thus Uccello, like many second manner artists, falls prey to an unrelieved verisimilitude, making *secca e tagliente* those things which should be charming, sweet, and soft.

Alesso Baldovinetti, that elusive Florentine master, is linked in the *Lives* to Uccello through his naturalism, and Vasari's comments about his landscape skills further illuminate the shortcomings of the second manner. Vasari writes that after abandoning his life as a businessman Alesso *diedi alla pittura; nella quale ebbe questa proprieta; di benissimo contrafare le cose della natura* (devoted himself to painting, in which he showed a peculiar ability to counterfeit very well the objects of nature.)[472] The wording here, rather than Vasari's oft-cited "painting from the life," or "from nature," points specifically to the naturalistic details found in landscape scenes. This reading is underscored later in the biography when Vasari writes that:

Fu Alesso diligentissimo nelle cose sue; e di tutte le minuzie che la madre natura sa fare, si sforzo d'essere imitatore. Ebbe la maniera alquanto secca e crudetta....Dilettossi molto di far paesi, ritraendoli dal vivo e naturale, come stanno appunto. Onde si veggiono nelle sue pitture fiume, ponti, sassi, erbe, frutti, vie, campi, citta, castella, areana ed altre infinite simili cose. (Alesso was very diligent in his works, and he strove to be an imitator of all the minute details that Mother Nature creates. He had a manner somewhat dry and harsh....He took much delight in making landscapes, copying them from the life of nature exactly as they are; wherefore there are seen in his pictures streams, bridges, rocks, herbs, fruits, roads, fields, cities, castles, sand, and an infinity of other things of the kind.)[473]

Like Uccello, Alesso fell short of perfection in landscape because his manner was *secca e crudetta*. Following his assessment of Alesso's manner, Vasari describes Alesso' famous *Nativity* scene (fig. 7) offering an example of his detailed landscape style. Vasari remarks that the viewer can count the stalks and knots of straw in the hut, and see the water and

472 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 592; du Vere, I.429-30.

473 Vasari-Milanesi, II. 595; du Vere, I.431.

frost damage to a ruined stone house in the background. He also notes the climbing ivy which Alesso has painted "just as Nature does," with the leaves different shades of green on each side and the wholly-realistic grass-snake climbing on a wall. Vasari admires the painstaking, technical skill that Alesso brings to bear on the details of this landscape. The reader, however, should keep in mind Vasari's criticisms of the pragmatic, scrutinizing manner both Uccello and Alesso employ. In Vasari's view, the painters of the second manner sometimes became so enthralled with the new-found methods for imitating the realistic minutiae of nature that they forgot the idealizing potential of artifice.

A brief look at the criticism Vasari levels at one of Mantegna's landscapes will serve to underscore this view, and point to Vasari's preference for soft, blended oil painting. Though aided by a sharp intelligence and a great historical interest in antiquity, Mantegna's ornaments entirely lacked the charm and vivacity that later painters would achieve. Not surprisingly, this stiffness was also found in his rendering of living figures, which Vasari says always looked like marble statues rather than soft flesh (as we shall see, there is often a congruity made in the *Lives* between the vivacity and tenderness of a painter's effeminate figures and his ability to paint appealing landscapes.) Vasari describes a *Madonna and Child* (fig. 8) with an unusual landscape, and this account serves to underscore his main criticism of Mantegna--his dry, harsh linearity:

nel campo, che e una montagna, fece centro a certe grotte alcuni scarpellini che cavano pietre per diversi lavori, tanto sottilmente e con tanta pacienza, che non par possible che con una sottil punta di pennello si possa far tanto bene (within certain caverns in the landscape, which is a mountain, he made some [little] stone cutters quarrying stone for various purposes, all wrought with such delicacy and such great patience, that it does not seem possible for such good work to be done with the point of a brush.)[474]

The painting shows an efflorescence of stone rising up behind Mary, its spiky points seeming to radiate around her head. In relation to the size of the stone cutters laboring in the distance behind the Virgin and Child, the towering mountain is impossibly huge. Vasari has chosen what he considers a signature landscape for Mantegna; with its gargantuan rocky outcropping and its most unusual addition of working quarry-men, this view

[474] Vasari-Milanesi, III.401-2; du Vere, I.562-3.

underscores his criticism of the painter's stony manner.

Though Vasari is sometimes impressed by rocky landscapes, his description of the background of Mantegna's *Madonna and Child* should be interpreted as censorious.[475] He writes in the biography that Mantegna refused to recognize the *dolcezza* and *morbidezza* appropriate to the depiction of flesh.[476] These words are repeatedly used by Vasari and other theorists in discussing the benefits of the oil medium in general and in relating the delights of landscape in particular. In this context, Vasari's phrase that Mantegna's landscape "is a mountain" shows that in the areas where a painter must do his utmost to render soft sweetness--landscape and the rendering of flesh-- Mantegna obdurately refused to comply.

The Masters of Oil Paint

The criticisms Vasari made about Mantegna, Alesso and Uccello could not be reiterated for Francesco Francia and Pietro Perugino. These painters were the most accomplished of the second-manner artists in rendering the tender elements of painting with delicate sweetness. According to Vasari, they were among the first artists proficient in the new medium of oil painting, and their biographies form an interesting bridge to those of the third manner. Both are also noted in the *Lives* for their landscapes, a skill that Vasari often attributes to those who can, as he says, "color most diligently in oil."

Although Francia and Perugino are portrayed as pioneers in the field of oil painting, Vasari is at pains to distance their accomplishments from the fame that Perugino's famous student Raphael was to achieve. Vasari says that Francia, upon seeing one of Raphael's paintings for the first time, sickened and died at grief that his own works were so

---

475 He favorably describes, for instance, an unusual stony landscape setting executed by Don Bartolommeo della Gatta, showing a penitant St. Jerome in a rocky landscape that has *un sasso grandissimo, con alcuni altri grotti di sassi; fra le rotture delle quali fece, di figure piccole molto graziose, alcune storie di quel Santo* [an enormous crag, with certain cliffs of rock, among the fissures of which he painted some stories of that saint, with very graceful little figures]. Vasari appreciates this inventive use of landscape, where the crags of the mountain, a setting wholly appropriate to the scene, also provide niches to show less important elements of the continuous narration. Vasari-Milanesi, III.216; du Vere, 1.508.

476 This tendency of Mantegna is discussed at length by Vasari. see Vasari-Milanesi, III.389-90.

inferior.[477] Like Francia, Perugino was also overtaken by the third-manner perfection of Raphael. Vasari's description of Perugino's landscape in his painting of the *Dead Christ* (fig. 9) makes this point: *vi fece un paese, che fu tenuto allora bellissimo, per non si esser ancora veduto il vero modo di fargli, come si e veduto poi.* (he made therein a landscape that was then held most beautiful, because the true method of making them, such as it appeared later, had not yet been seen.)[478] This "true manner," as Vasari's descriptions will show, is a style dependent on oil paint and idealized, novel details. It is also, however, reliant on a certain freedom of expression, a boldness in paint-handling that the "bland" Perugino could not approach.

In Vasari's original 1550 edition of the *Lives*, the second part ended with the *Life of Perugino.* In the 1568 edition, he appends it with a section on Venetian and Lombard painters. Strangely, however, he barely mentions the landscapes of two artists who are currently thought to be seminal to the development of the genre, Antonello da Messina and Giovanni Bellini.

Antonello's biography serves as the vehicle for Vasari's discussion of the advent of oil painting, an important milestone along the path to perfection in landscape painting. In this biography, Vasari states that artists had long been trying to find a better way of coloring than "distemper" [tempera], a method which only permitted hatching with the point of a brush (a limitation Vasari points to in his description of Mantegna's landscape) and not the "softness," liveliness," "grace," and "loveliness" that oil paint makes possible.[479] According to Vasari, Jan van Eyck finally discovered the secret to oil painting and Antonello, upon seeing a panel from the Northern artist in Naples, traveled immediately North to learn the amazing technique from him. Though we would expect some description of the naturalistic paintings Antonello executed, Vasari uses almost the entire biography to discuss advances in media. Beyond the mere mention of the subject or

---

477 du Vere, I. 583.

478 Vasari-Milanesi, III.569; du Vere, I.586.

479 du Vere, I. 424. Alesso Baldovinetti, for one, had experimented with various new methods.

location of two religious paintings by Antonello, Vasari only notes that he was a portraitist.

Giovanni Bellini, the greatest early Venetian landscapist, is another artist who does not receive as much attention for his landscapes as his contributions to the genre would seem to warrant. His biography is combined with those of his Father Jacopo and brother Gentile, and Vasari states that Gentile was the most accomplished of the brothers. Although he mentions Giovanni was extolled for his diligence in coloring, the closest Vasari comes to indicating his landscapes is a note of the "somewhat distant perspective" showing Rome in an image of the meeting of the Emperor, the Doge and the Pope (*qui ritrasse Giovanni Roma in prospettiva alquanto lontana*).[480]

Though it is surprising that Vasari seems not to notice the striking landscapes painted by the most famous late-fifteenth century Venetians, he does comment on that region's prowess in the field of landscape depiction. In the second part of the *Lives* there is a biographical chapter devoted to "Carpaccio and other Venetian and Lombard painters," and in it Vasari notes the landscapes of Northern Italian artists many times.[481] In addition, in an oblique comment on landscape's debt to the Bellini, he states that three of these artists were their followers.

According to Vasari, Vittore Carpaccio, whom he miscalls Scarpaccio, was the first student of the Bellini to make any paintings of importance. An altarpiece in Milan of the *Risen Christ appearing to the Marys* shows: *una prospettiva di paese lontano che diminuisce, molto bella* (a very beautiful view in perspective of a landscape receding in the distance.)[482] This work remains unidentified, but looking at another of his paintings, the *Preparations for the Entombment of Christ* (fig. 10), we can see the vast space commanded by his landscapes. In further comments on Carpaccio's art, we learn he was

480 Vasari-Milanesi, III.161; du Vere, I.492.

481 In this chapter, Vasari also discusses two landscapes by Marco Basaiti. Vasari mistakenly discusses Basaiti as two separate artists; Marco Basarini and Marco Basiti. Of "Basarini" he describes a Christ in the Garden: *Ma quello che piu fu lodato di questa opera, fu un paese con molte figurini fatta con buona grazia.* The work he notes by "Basiti" is *Christ on the Sea of Tiberias*, which discloses: *facendovi un braccio di mare, un monte, e parte di una citta.* Vasari-Milanesi, III.646 and 647.

482 Vasari-Milanesi, III.641; du Vere, I.603.

painstaking in his rendering of trees; his coloring was *molto vago e bello*; and Vasari considered him a *molto diligente maestro*. Vasari also identifies Giovanni Battista (Cima) da Conegliano as a disciple of Giovanni Bellini, and states that he painted an altarpiece including landscapes in perspective--*una prospettiva di paesi* (fig. 11).[483] This painting, depicting *St. Peter Martyr with SS. Nicholas and Benedict*, shows the saints standing in an arch that opens out onto a remote and varied landscape. A curving road leads the viewer back from the green middle ground into the bluish haze of the far-removed mountains. Finally, Giovanni Mansueti who *imitando assai l'opere di Gentile Bellini* (imitated not a little the works of Gentile Bellini) is said by Vasari to have *di diletto molto di contraffare le cose naturali, figure e paesi lontani* (taken much delight in counterfeiting things of nature, figures and distant landscapes).[484]

The common thread running through all of these descriptions of Northern Italian landscapes, aside from the painters' tutelage under the Bellini, is that in each passage Vasari comments on the artists' accomplished rendering of distant space. Vasari consistently describes the views as *lontano*, the Italian for distant or remote, praising the Venetian advances in atmospheric perspective brought about by the use of oil painting.[485] This name for landscapes underscores the fact that viewers valued them for their ability to show depth. [486] By consistently calling the landscapes of the North Italians *lontani*, Vasari is pointing out that particular Venetian genius that we begin to see in the works of Giovanni Bellini, where the crisp outlines of the background diminish and finally dissolve in distance, with all objects blending in a matrix of palpable atmosphere and color. This graceful, poetic style is the beginning of a tradition that has Titian, the greatest landscapist of Vasari's third manner, as its ultimate heir.

483 Vasari-Milanesi, III.545; du Vere, I.604.

484 Vasari-Milanesi, III.648; du Vere, I.605.

485 Paolo Pino, a great champion of Titian, also sometimes calls *paesi* merely *lontani*, or "far-removed distances."

486 In a letter of 1547 to Benedetto Varchi, Vasari himself had earlier admitted to enjoying German landscapes for just this reason. He attributes the popularity of the imported works to the fact that: "one becomes attracted by their pleasant view and the working of the depth" (quoted in Gibson, p.39). This letter survives in two versions, one that refers to *tedeschi* and the other to *fiamminghi*.

The chapter on Venetian and Lombard Painters, with its emphasis on the abilities of Northern Italian painters to portray landscapes with convincing atmospheric perspective, sets this group of painters off from any other in the second section. Vasari is aware that the soft, blended style of coloring indicative of some third-manner landscape painting has its roots in the works of artists from Northern Italy, particularly Lombardy and Venice.[487] The North Italian painter Correggio is the inheritor this coloristic style in the third age, and Vasari greatly admires him, saying: "no one ever handled colours better than he, and...no craftsman ever ever painted with greater delicacy or with more relief, such was the softness of his flesh painting, and such the grace with which he finished works." Because of their dependence on well-applied color, skill at portraying the softness of flesh and the charms of landscape are talents linked together in the *Lives.* Vasari points out that this talent is particularly called for in portraying the tender flesh of women and children.[488]

Indeed, Vasari writes of two paintings executed for Duke Federigo II of Mantua that contain both of Correggio's special skills.[489] These were a naked Leda and a Venus (fig. 12,13). Vasari writes that they were:

...si di morbidezza colorite...che non parevano colori, ma carne. Era in una un paese mirabile; ne mai lombardo fu, che meglio facesse queste cose di lui; e quel che piu grazia donava alla Venere, era una acqua chiarissima e limpida, che correva fra alcuni sassi e bagnava i piedi di quelle, e quasi nessuno ne occupava; onde nello scorgere quella candidezza con quella delicatezza faceva agli occhi compassione nel vedere. [both so soft in colouring...that they appeared to be not colours but flesh. In one there was a marvelous landscape, nor was there ever a Lombard who painted such things better than he... and what lent most grace to the Venus was a clear and limpid stream, which ran among some stones and bathed her feet, but scarcely concealed any part of them, so that the sight of their delicate whiteness was a moving thing for the eye to behold.][490]

In this description, the woman and the landscape literally merge in the figure of Venus. Her feet are immersed in the stream's water but, through the miracle of oil painting, are still

487 This awareness is also evidenced in the *Life of Giovanni Antonio Bazzi*, who, Vasari writes, went to Pisa "with that glowing manner of colouring which he brought from Lombardy." du Vere, II.418.

488 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.9.

489 As a prologue to discussing these paintings, Vasari mentions that Correggio painted many "square pictures and other paintings for gentlemen." This odd reference to the paintings' geometry and patronage probably points to the fact that these works were small-scale, private paintings.

490 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.115; du Vere, I. 648.

visible in all their soft whiteness.

Piero di Cosimo's biography follows directly after that of Correggio, and Vasari introduces him with a reference to the Lombard painter, deliberately setting up a connection between Florence and North Italy.[491] After Titian and Vasari, Piero di Cosimo garners more comments on his landscapes than any other painter in the *Lives*. He is mentioned as a landscapist first in the biography of his master, Cosimo Rosselli, where Vasari discusses the landscape Piero depicted in his master's Sistine Chapel painting of *The Sermon on the Mount* (fig. 14). This view, Vasari writes, *e tenuta la miglior cose che vi sia* (was held to be the best thing there.)[492] With this comment, Vasari is laying the groundwork to present Piero as a master colorist whose landscapes could rival those created by Correggio and Giorgione in the North.

Vasari notes the "very beautiful" Sistine landscape again, at the beginning of Piero's own biography, after having linked him to Correggio and Giorgione. We know from Vasari's own admission that he grouped his biographies by manner and not by chronology.[493] The biographies of all three follow directly after Leonardo, and there is no question that Vasari thinks they are the heirs of his softly-blended, vivacious manner of oil painting; the style Vasari describes as *fumeggiate e finite con quella diligenza estrema* (executed with that gradation of colour, and finished with that extraordinary diligence.)[494] Piero is further linked to Leonardo by his great *fantasia* and his devotion to nature, and to investigations therein.[495]

Piero's invention served him well as an artist, allowing him to ornament his works with unusual and ingenious landscapes--*fantasticherie* as Vasari sometimes calls them.

---

491 Vasari writes "While Giorgione and Correggio, to their own great credit and glory, were honouring the regions of Lombardy, Tuscany, on her part, was not in wanting men of beautiful intellect, among whom, not one of the least was Piero." du Vere, I.650.

492 Vasari-Milanesi, III.189; du Vere, I.499.

493 This notion is furthered by the fact that Ludovico Dolce discusses the work of Leonardo, Giorgione and Correggio together. Roskill, *Dolce*, p.43.

494 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.134; du Vere, I.652.

495 Piero also shares these traits with many other landscapists in the *Lives*, such as Uccello and Giovanni da Udine.

One of these works is *The Incarnation*, which shows Mary surrounded by saints (fig. 15):

e sopra quella e lo Spirito Santo che la illumina. Ne ha voluto che altro lume che quello che fa la colomba lumeggi e lei...oltre che vi fece un paese bizzarro e per gli alberi strani e per alcune grotte. E per il vero, ci sono parti bellissimi; come certe teste che mostrano e disegno e grazie, oltra il colorito molto continovato: e certamente che Piero possedeva grandemente il colorire a olio. (and above her is the Holy Spirit, bathing her with light. Nor did he wish that any other light than that of the Dove should illumine her....Moreover, he made there a landscape very bizarre, what with the strange trees and certain grottoes. And in truth, there are some very beautiful things in this work, such as heads that reveal draughtsmanship and grace; besides the colouring, which is very harmonious, for it is certain that Piero was a great master at colouring in oils.)[496]

Vasari is clearly impressed with the unusual method of lighting the picture, as well as with the singular landscape.[497] His comment that there are many beautiful things in the picture *besides* the coloring is telling, for it shows that Vasari expects and almost does not need to comment on Piero's ability to paint in oils, an ability carefully modeled on Leonardo's example.

For Vasari, Leonardo's influence is most clearly shown in a mythological painting Piero executed depicting *The Liberation of Andromeda* (fig. 16). Vasari's description of the work emphasizes Piero's Leonardesque, *sfumato* style:

Il paese e bellissimo, e d'un colorito dolce e grazioso; e quanto si puo unire e sfumare colori, condusse questa opera con estrema diligenzia. (The landscape is very beautiful, and the colouring sweet and full of grace. In short, with regard to the harmony and gradation of the colours, he executed this work with the greatest possible diligence.) [498]

This quotation again finds Vasari linking beautiful landscapes with blended coloring, as indeed one might if trying to present Piero as Tuscany's answer to Giorgione and Correggio. He also connects skills in landscape depiction to the *fantasia* of ornament. Vasari extols the exotic clothes and musical instruments of the varied figures in this painting. He has particular admiration for the "fierce and bizarre" composite sea monster, claiming it is the best and most frightening he has ever seen. Thus,*The Liberation of Andromeda* is a tour-de-force of painterly delights, a work intended to display novel

496 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.137-8; du Vere, I.655.

497 In her book, *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction, Inventions and* "Fantasia," Sharon Fermor incorrectly states that Vasari's use of the word bizarre to describe the landscape shows his disapproval of the innovative setting. (London, 1993), pp.71 and 181-2.

498 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.138; du Vere, I.656.

invention and charming color. Its description underscores the indubitable relation that exists in Vasari's mind between the ornamental details of painting (including novel light effects and grotteschi-like composite beasts) and the invention they require, as well as the link between such elements and the skills of *colore* rather than *disegno.*

Piero, the master of Vasari's own teacher Andrea del Sarto, may have carried Leonardo's blended style into the third manner of the arts in Tuscany, but the artist who takes this tradition the furthest in landscape is the Lombard Polidoro da Caravaggio. This painter learned how to apply pigment with skill, and he took the brushy, blended manner of bravura landscape painting to its ultimate expression in the *Lives.* Vasari writes that :

Polidoro veramente lavoro i paesi e macchie d'alberi e sassi meglio d'ogni pittore; ed egli nell'arte e stato cagione di quella facilita che oggi usano gli artefici nelle cose loro [in truth, [he] executed landscapes and groups of trees better than any other painter, and it is to him that art owes that facility which our modern craftsmen show in their work."[499]

This glowing praise follows just after Vasari comments on Polidoro's extraordinary landscapes painted in oil on the walls of S. Silvestro al Quirinale (figs. 18). Vasari says that Polidoro executed *storie colorite di Santa Maria Maddalena, nelle quali sono i macchiati de'paesi fatti con somma grazia e discrezione* [two scenes in color from the Life of S. Mary Magdalene, in which the disposition of the landscapes is executed with supreme grace and judgment.][500]

These landscapes are arresting for their "impressionistic" style, a bravura application of color that Vasari calls Polidoro's *facilita.* Vasari's description is striking; if read carefully, the words he uses let the reader know that he is aware of the innovative style being employed, a style that Polidoro must have adapted from antique examples. These paintings are not frescoed but are painted in oil on the walls of the chapel. This fact is alluded to by Vasari when he says that the scenes were "colored" rather than "painted" on the walls. So strong is his association of oil painting with color effects that he conveys the medium by simply using the word *colorite.* Also telling is Vasari's phrase *i macchiati di*

499 Vasari-Milanesi, V.147; du Vere, I. 893.
500 Vasari-Milanesi, V.147; du Vere, I. 893.

'paesi. We recall that *macchiare* and *macchia* are words often employed in the sixteenth century to discuss the brushy, painterly effects of Venetian landscapes (Ludovico Dolce, for instance, employs the words often in discussing Titian's landscapes). Vasari rarely employs the word, and when he does it sometimes carries a negative meaning, as when he describes Giorgione's figure-style as *macchiarle con le tinte crude e dolci.* His use here, however, which might better be translated as speckles, dapples, or even blots, is positive. He is trying to describe the very distinctive, non-linear, hazy brushwork with which Polidoro captures the evanescent qualities of landscape. It is because Polidoro applies his *colore* style to craft a *macchiati di 'paesi* that Vasari approves of it. We have seen that such loose styles, designed to be seen fleetingly and from a distance, were deemed appropriate for the lesser, sense-pleasing ornaments of painting. Vasari could not approve this style for figure depiction.

Although with Polidoro, the *colore* tradition attains new impressionistic heights, the painter who, in Vasari's estimation, is the best colorist of all time is Titian of Cadore.[501] Vasari mentions more landscapes in the biography of Titian than in the *Life* of any other artist excepting himself.[502] Titian began his studies under the Bellini but soon deserted their *secca, cruda e stentata* style. He went then to learn from Giorgione, an artist who Vasari says had abandoned the then-reigning style of the Bellini for a manner *piu morbidezza e maggiore rilievo*--a technique he learned, according to Vasari, from Leonardo. Under Giorgione, Titian learned to paint with vivacity and mimesis, and soon

501 Paolo Pino agreed with this assessment. He declared that landscape painting was a Flemish speciality, but that the two Italian masters of *paesi* or *lontani* were Titian and Savoldo. Pino, pp.274-5.

502 Aside from the works discussed in this chapter, Vasari offers several more descriptions of Titian's landscapes. He notes a *Tobias and the Angel* "with a distant landscape, where, in a little wood, St. John the Baptist is praying on his knees from Heaven, [from] whence comes a radiance that illumines him" [du Vere, II.783]; a "naked shepherd and a country girl who is offering him some pipes, that he may play them, with a most beautiful landscape" [du Vere, II. 785]; a *St. John the Baptist in the Desert,* which shows St. John "among some rocks, an angel that appears as if alive, and a little piece of distant *(lontano)* landscape with some trees upon the bank of a river, all full of grace" [du Vere, II.437]; a *Flight into Egypt,* "full of grace," that shows "a little St. John who is offering to the infant Christ some flowers plucked by the hand of an angel from the branches of a tree that is in the middle of a wood full of animals" [du Vere, II.796]; "some pieces of landscape not very large, but most beautiful." [du Vere, II.801], and a series of engravings taken after landscapes from Titian [du Vere, II.95].

surpassed his master with works such as a painting from the facade of the *Fondaco de'Tedeschi* which showed a *Flight into Egypt.* Vasari writes that this scene was set:

in mezzo a una gran boscaglia e certi paese molto ben fatti...Similamente nel bosco di detto quadro fece molti animali, i quali ritrasse dal vivo, e sono veramente naturali e quasi vivi. [in the midst of a great forest and certain landscapes that are very well done....In the wood in that picture, likewise, he painted many animals which he portrayed from the life; and they are truly natural and almost alive.][503]

Portraying images "from the life" is not an unqualified good in Vasari's *Lives of the Artists.* Vasari criticizes Giorgione for his dependency on this skill. Thus, in order to understand Vasari's assessment of Titian, we must first examine his master Giorgione's place in the *Lives.* We know that Vasari ranked Giorgione along with Correggio and Piero di Cosimo as one of the premier early colorists. Though he lauds Giorgione's art in Giorgione's own biography, Vasari spends a good part of the beginning of Titian's biography critiquing him, desiring to show that Titian soon mastered and then left behind the Giorgionesque style.[504]

Vasari disparagingly describes how Giorgione would paint figures from life with direct application of pigment, saying he would: *contrafarle quanto sapeva il meglio con i colori, e macchiarle con le tinte crude e dolci, second che il vivo mostrava.*[505] As has been noted, the word *macchiare* comes from *macchia,* a stain or blot, and is a word often associated with landscape painting, particularly Venetian. It implies a thick, brushy style that daubs pigments on, building up modeling through color. Though he used the word to approvingly describe Polidoro's landscape style, in the *Life of Titian,* Vasari can not approve of using this manner to paint figures. He claims it is Giorgione's way of hiding

503 Vasari-Milanese, VII.429; du Vere, II.782. This painting was part of a shared commission with Giorgione. The work at the *Fondaco de'Tedeschi* marked Titian's eclipse of Giorgione, and the rupture of their friendship. Vasari says that many who did not know Titian was painting in the same building approached Giorgione and told him how much better his style had become, referring to the scenes Titian had rendered. According to Vasari, Giorgione was so grieved at this that he would never work nor associate with Titian again.

504 In the *Lives*, there is a parallel between the presentation of Titian's relation to Giorgione and Raphael's to Perugino. In both relationships, Vasari seems at pains to distance the younger artists from their early masters, though it is obvious from the works of both Raphael and Titian that the influence of their teachers was considerable.

505 Vasari-Milanese, VII.427.

his ignorance about design behind the *vaghezza* of pigments.

From this passage and others, it becomes clear that within the *Life of Titian* Giorgione functions for Vasari as a scapegoat for all the author's criticisms of the Venetian *colore* tradition.[506] In another biography, Vasari reports that "Venetians like color better than anything else," and this prejudice, he says, blinds them to the truth about artistic perfection.[507] Titian, who was still alive and very much a force in the world of art when the second edition of the *Lives* was published, could not be critiqued strongly by Vasari. Thus, Giorgione, long dead, bears the brunt of Vasari's anti-Venetian bias.

Vasari does lace Titian's biography with a few censorious comments about the artist's own lack of grounding in *disegno*, but he only criticizes Titian indirectly, phrasing his fault-finding comments as quotations he is repeating from other artists. For instance, Vasari reports that Sebastiano del Piombo, a Venetian tutored under Michelangelo, told him that if only Titian would travel to Rome to be influenced by works from Michelangelo, Raphael and antiquity, his work would have equaled theirs:

vedendosi la bella pratica che aveva di colorire, e che meritava il vanto d'essere a 'tempi nostri il piu bello e maggiore imitatore della natura nelle cose de'colori (considering the beautiful mastery that he had in colouring, and that he deserved to be celebrated as the finest and greatest imitator of nature in the matter of colour in our times.)[508]

Later, Michelangelo, visiting Titian in Rome and seeing some of his work, comments to Vasari that "if this man had been in any way assisted by art and design, as he is by nature, and above all in counterfeiting the life, no one could do more or work better, for he has a fine spirit and a very beautiful and lively manner."[509] Thus, Titian functions as the *colore* counterpart to Michelangelo's single-minded obsession with *disegno*. Both artists achieve the highest prize in painting, but in only a single perfection.

---

506 Mark Roskill notes that Vasari was much more kindly disposed to Venetian art in the 1550 edition of the *Lives*, but that his attitude changed in the second edition. This may be because his own work in Venice had been poorly received. intro., *Dolce*, p.47.

507 quoted from the *Life of Girolamo da Treviso*, du Vere, I.887.

508 Vasari-Milanese, VII.431; du Vere, II.783.

509 du Vere, II.791. Vasari contradicts himself in the biography, saying in one place that Titian was invited to Rome but never went, and that he traveled there in 1546. see du Vere, II.786 and 791.

The Ornamenters and "Impresarios"

Another group of artists that Vasari tends to characterize as excellent in landscape might be called the "impresarios." As the name implies, the men in this category were very successful artists who directed large workshops and took on many commissions. In order to please their powerful patrons, it was imperative that these painters could ornament vast areas in both a suave and timely manner.

In part two of the *Lives*, Benozzo Gozzoli is an early example of such a Promethean decorator. Unfortunately, his talents did not extend to facility in *disegno*, and Vasari writes that he could only be considered to have surpassed his peers in his prodigious output. Vasari notes, however, that Benozzo was a practiced master, *di grandissima invenzione, e molto copioso negli animali, nelle prospettivi, ne' paesi e negli ornamenti.* (very rich in invention, and very productive in the painting of animals, of perspectives, of landscapes and of ornaments.)[510] Vasari's understanding of Benozzo is interesting on two counts. First, from the passage quoted above, it is clear that Vasari groups renderings of animals, perspectives, landscapes and ornaments together as "inventions," the embellishments of painting that enrich it with variety in order to give pleasure to the viewer. Second, Vasari links the notion of copiousness with this "decorative" painter's skills. Vasari speaks of Benozzo as an indefatigable artist who, through sheer labor, left behind many paintings, including several large narrative cycles. Vasari's opinion is that though Benozzo's figure skills were lacking, at least his eager ornamentation stood him in good stead. With this talent he could cover expanses of wall with facility, and in so doing leave behind sizable works which were, if not edifying, at least delightful (fig. 19).

Vasari considered the second-manner master Ghirlandaio, like Benozzo, to be famous in part for his vast output. Unlike Benozzo, however, Vasari thought Ghirlandaio achieved fame for his "greatness" (*la grandezza*) as well as for his prowess as a decorator. In other words, Ghirlandaio knew how to ornament his many works with invention and

510 Vasari-Milanesi, III. 46; du Vere, I.461.

beauty, but he was also a master of the figure. In contrast to most of the biographies, Vasari does not mention who Ghirlandaio's teacher was at the beginning of his biography. Instead he presents the artist as an autodidact, and only much further into the life do we find out, as an aside, that Ghirlandaio had included a portrait of Alesso Baldovinetti, "his master," in the St. Maria Novella frescoes.

Perhaps Vasari feels Ghirlandaio had little in common with his teacher. As opposed to what Vasari thinks of as Alesso's over-zealous recounting of each dry detail in a scene, Vasari finds Ghirlandaio's manner of landscape depiction to be unlabored and graceful. He recounts, for instance, the *Death and Assumption of Our Lady* in S. Maria Novella (fig. 20), which is embellished:

con infinito numero d'Angeli, ed infinite figuri e paesi e altri ornamenti, di che egli soleva abbondare in quella sua maniera facile e pratica. [with an infinite number of angels, and innumerable figures, landscapes, and other ornaments, of which he used to paint in abundance and in his facile and practiced manner.][511]

What becomes clear from such descriptions is that Ghirlandaio understands the role of landscape in providing pleasurable ornament. This pleasure is achieved chiefly through appealing color and fresh invention. Everywhere in the biography Vasari extols Ghirlandaio's colors as being vivacious, lovely and charming, which, as we have seen, is even more of an accomplishment for a fresco painter than for a painter in oils.

Thus, in the second part of the *Lives*, Ghirlandaio most closely prefigures the career of Raphael: he ran a large workshop; got many important commissions; and did not overlook the pleasures that viewers want to receive from their paintings. With these same characteristics, but with the additional technical advances of the third manner, including oil paint, Raphael's success far surpassed Ghirlandaio's. Raphael's promise as a landscape painter is evident early on, as Vasari records in a description of a *Madonna and Child* painted by the young artist (fig. 17). Vasari writes that the young St. John and Christ child in the image "are so well-coloured, and executed with such diligence, that they appear to be rather of living flesh than wrought by means of colour and draughtsmanship...and the

511 Vasari-Milanesi, III.259; du Vere, I.523.

foreground, the landscapes, and in short the rest of the work are most beautiful."[512] With works like this, Raphael achieves the status of the catholic, consummate, "perfect" artist of Vasari's *Lives*. He excelled at figures, but did not neglect to expend his *ingegno* on the graceful ornaments of painting. Aside from the perfection of his art, Raphael is accomplished in his character. He is cultivated and gracious, exhibiting all the traits would endear him to his patrons. He epitomizes the courtier artist that Vasari admires so much.

Because of all these superlative qualities, Raphael's success was tremendous, and the number of his commissions vast. Raphael's workshop was a huge machine of under-painters carrying out his conceptions, and his invention of ornaments was prodigious. This was necessary, because, like many such painters receiving large-scale commissions (Ghirlandaio, Perino del Vaga, Giulio Romano and Vasari himself), Raphael was expected to be able to cover spacious walls decoratively, and needed to be proficient in rendering the many varieties of painted embellishments.

Vasari, as we have seen in a few examples already, tends to express the ornaments of painting in long lists. As well as landscapes, these "ornament lists" can include grotteschi and other framing devices such as festoons, armor, flora, fauna, and perspective views. In large decorating commissions, the workshop master would not himself undertake the manual execution of such elements, but his style needed to be evident throughout. Vasari is aware from his own experience that too much delegation of work to assistants can weaken the final product, a result he bemoans in some of the paintings by the workshops of Raphael, Perino del Vaga, and Giulio Romano, as well as in certain of his own commissions. Thus, an impresario must know how to ornament well, and with a signature style that comes from his own conceptions even if executed by others.

One of the most complete "ornament lists" is found in the biography of Raphael. This passage and its introduction are important not only for understanding Vasari's

512 du Vere, I. 713. As in the description of Correggio's seductive Venus, Vasari again links the tenderness of flesh, here infant rather than feminine, with the charms of landscape. Vasari is also struck by the landscape of Raphael's sublime *Foligno Madonna* [fig. 17]. He begins the description by saying "[Raphael] made a Madonna in the sky, with a most beautiful landscape," and closes it with another reference to the landscape, saying that it is "singularly beautiful in its absolute perfection."

estimation of Raphael's success, but also, as we shall later see, for understanding Vasari's justification for his own manner of painting.[513] In Vasari's discussion of how Raphael crafted his own style, he says that the artist realized his early training with Perugino had left him equipped only to paint from life, and that he did not have a firm grounding in design. Thus, Raphael undertook to study anatomy and became "excellent in all the points that are looked for in a painter of eminence."[514] But Raphael knew he would never surpass Michelangelo in figure studies and so he resolved to develop another, competing manner. Raphael reasoned that this alternate style should encompass all the pleasurable aspects of painting that Michelangelo neglected, and so he decided to perfect his manner by learning to embellish his paintings *con la varieta e stravaganza delle prospettive, de' casamenti, e de' paesi* (with a bizarre variety of perspectives, buildings, and landscapes).[515] In addition, he strove to embrace:

il leggiadro modo di vestire le figure...e sopratutto il far in modo nei ritratti somigliar gli uomini, che paino vivi e si conoschino per chi eglino sono fatti; ed altri cose infiniti, come sono abigliamenti di panni, calzari, celate, armadure, acconciature di femmine, capegli, barbe, vasi, alberi, grotte, sassi, fuochi, arie torbide e serene, nuvoli, pioggie, saette, sereni, notte, lumi di luna, splendore di sole, ed infinite altri cose che seco portano ognora i bisogni dell'arte della pittura. (the method of clothing figures gracefully...the knowledge how to depict all sorts of animals, and above all the power to give such resemblance to portraits that they seem to be alive, and that it is known who they represent; with an endless variety of other things, such as the adornment of draperies, foot-ware, helmets, armour, women's head-dresses, hair, beards, vases, trees, grottoes, rocks, fires, skies turbid or serene, clouds, rain, lightening, clear weather, night, the light of the moon, the splendour of the sun, and innumerable other things, which are called for every moment by the requirements of the art of painting.[516]

Thus, through his ornament studies, Raphael achieved an "attainment of a catholic excellence in the other fields of art that have been described."(*un ottimo universale in queste altre parti che si sono racconte.*)"[517]

It becomes evident that for Vasari, Raphael was truly the master of the perfect style,

513 Patricia Rubin has recognized the extent to which Vasari's career aspirations were modeled on Raphael's life. pp. 357-8.

514 du Vere, I.742.

515 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.375; du Vere, I.742.

516 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.375-6; du Vere, I.742.

517 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.376; du Vere, I.743.

one that pleased patrons as well as painters; one that was as adept at revealing landscapes as at demonstrating the human body.[518] A benefit of learning to render all the *varieta e vaghezza* of painting, those things "which are called for every moment by the requirements of the art of painting," was that a repertoire could be called upon to fulfill a patron's any wish. As many, if not most, patrons *wanted* beauty and color above all else, particularly in private commissions, the "impresario" painter needed to be able to deliver these things with enough skill and novelty to set him apart. And since landscapes were the ornament of choice for many patrons with grand buildings to decorate and private rooms to embellish, any artist who aspired to follow in the steps of Raphael, as Vasari himself clearly did, could not fail to deliver in this area.

Raphael transmitted this skill to his pupils. Polidoro da Caravaggio, a Lombard artist who studied in Raphael's Vatican workshop, learned the importance of an embellished style from the master himself and became able to supply inventive ornament in great abundance. We have already seen that Polidoro, very facile with the brush, was a remarkable landscapist (fig. 18). He could also, however, realize a multitude of other inventive adornments. This skill stood him in good stead in the years between the death of Raphael and the sack of Rome, when he was one of the major artists in Rome. His entire biography is filled with lists of these ornaments: varieties of garb, armour, vases, grotteschi, friezes and more. This paean is continued at the end of the *Life*, where Vasari memorializes:

Grande obligo hanno veramente gli artefici a Polidoro, per averla arricchita di gran copia di diversi abiti e stranissimi e varj ornamenti, e dato a tutte le sue cose grazie ed ornamenti: similimente per avere fatto figure d'ogni sorte animali, casamenti, grottesche, e paesi cosi belli, che dopo lui chiunque ha cercato d'essere universale, l'ha imitato. (Great, indeed, is the obligation owed by craftsmen to Polidoro, in that he enriched art with a great abundance of vestments, all different and most strange, and of varied ornaments, and gave grace and adornment to all his works, and likewise made figures of every sort, animals, buildings, grotesques and landscapes, all so beautiful, that since his day whosoever has aimed at catholicity has imitated him.)[519]

---

[518] In his response to Benedetto Varchi's *Inchiesta*, Vasari replied that landscape was an essential ornament of "universal" painting. Pontormo gave the same response. Pino, pp.274-5.

[519] Vasari-Milanesi, V.153; du Vere, I. 898.

Again, animals, buildings, grotesques, and landscapes are put by Vasari into the same category. In his artistic theory, as expressed here, in the passage of Raphael's skills quoted above, and countless other places in the *Lives*, these seemingly minor parts of art are the true tests of a painter's universality and ingenuity.

The Naturalists

Leonardo is one of the great "naturalist" artists of all time. Although his biography abounds with descriptions exclaiming his incredible ability to breath life into his figures and extolling his optical *sfumato* style, Vasari only mentions Leonardo's skill in landscape depiction once. This single landscape description is of a design Leonardo made for a tapestry showing *Adam and Eve in the Garden.* The drawing was executed with a brush and heightened with lead-white. Vasari's description reads:

> a meadow of infinite kinds of herbage, with some animals, of which, in truth, it may be said that for diligence and truth to nature, divine wit could not make it so perfect. In it is the fig-tree, together with the foreshortening of the leaves and varying aspects of the branches, wrought with such lovingness that the brain reels at the mere thought how a man could have such patience. There is also a palm tree which has the radiating crown of the palm, executed with such great and marvelous art that nothing save the patience and intellect of Leonardo could avail to do it.[520]

This passage shows Vasari was aware of Leonardo's ability to mimetically reproduce animals and plants. He certainly knew Leonardo's writings, which abound in descriptions of landscapes, and must have seen some of Leonardo's drawings showing the artist's incredible diligence in scientifically capturing the details of living creatures and natural phenomena. It may be, however, that Vasari only describes one landscape because he does not want to emphasize Leonardo's obsession with such images. In Vasari's opinion, although the perfect artist will know how to render mimetically the natural details of flora and fauna that provide the "scattered beauties" of landscape, such depictions are not the valorous end of art, and are better left to the execution of assistants.

Vasari is aware of these mimetically rendered details, however. Often his comments on landscapes and other ornaments such as garlands or grotteschi take the form of lists of the naturalistic items found in a given painting, with one or two singled out for special attention. Though sometimes reading as mere catalogs of animals, plants, trees, and various other outdoor adornments, Vasari is really commenting on the artist's ability to produce veristic recreations of nature. This style is not neutral in meaning. While catholic

---

[520] du Vere, I.628.

artists like Raphael and Leonardo should have the technical ability to add such mimetic detail to their works if necessary, artists who specialize in painstakingly-rendered animals, birds and plants are not of the highest caliber. Vasari enjoys their talents, but seems to find them most useful when they are attached to the workshops of more powerful artists.

This "hierarchy" of talents served a purpose, however, because all artists did not have the innate ability to achieve "catholicity" in their painting. Vasari writes about one such painter, Bernazzano, who was *eccellentissimo per far paesi, erbe, animali, ed altre cose terrestri, volatili ed acquatici.*[521] Vasari tells the story that Bernazzano *fece in un cortile a fresco certi paesi molto belli, e tanto bene imitati, che essendovi dipinto un fragoleto pieno di fragole mature, acerbe e fiorite.*[522] The carefully-rendered landscapes in these frescoes were so mimetic that they fooled the courtyard's resident peacocks.[523] According to Vasari, however, Bernazzano knew that he would never excel in figures, and so he attached himself to the workshop of Cesare da Sesto. This arrangement was to the benefit of both painters. Bernazzano plays a very minor role in the overall fabric of the *Lives*, but his life is exemplary of many such artists. It will be found that such "background" painters in Vasari's work often have the ability to render with lifelike precision all the "things of the earth and air and sea."

---

521 Vasari-Milanesi, V.101. Vasari says that Bernazzano was from Milan, but criticism now places him as possibly Flemish. see S.J. Freedberg, *Painting in Italy, 1500-1600* (New Haven: Yale University Press,1993), p. 703 n.27; and Gibson, p.41.

522 Vasari-Milanesi, V.102.

523 Another example of a minor artists with a talent in mimesis so advanced that his works could fool animals is from the biography of little-known Veronese artist Girolamo dai Libri. Girolamo is one of the landscape stars of Vasari's third section, with Vasari remarking four times (in a brief biography) on the mimesis of his landscapes.Vasari describes a *Madonna with Child and Saints* painted for a church near Verona which he says is *molto stigmata da tutti, e sopra tutto vi e un bellissimo paese* (much esteemed by everyone, above all for its very beautiful landscape.) Vasari is taken in particular with a tree in this work that forms a backdrop to the seated Virgin. He describes it in detail: *E perche il detto arbore, che pare un lauro, avanze d'assai con i rami la detta sedia, se gli vede dietro, fra un ramo e 'laltro, che sono non molto spessi, un aria chiara e bella, che egli pare veramente un arbore vivo, svelto e naturalissimo.* (This tree, which has the appearance of a laurel, projects considerably with its branches over the [Virgin's] chair, and between the branches, which are not very thick, may be seen a sky so clear and beautiful, that the tree seems to be truly a living one, graceful and most natural.) The tree, continues Vasari, is so true-to-life that birds fly in the open windows of the church and try to perch on it. Vasari then repeats the reports of two brothers of the Order describing this occurrence, and gives brief sketches of their religious background in order to back up their unquestionable veracity. Vasari-Milanesi, V.328; du Vere, II. 46.

Artists who ran vast workshops needed to be able to depend on assistants who could execute decorative details skillfully, as Cesare depended on Bernazzano.[524] Vasari himself had an assistant, Cristofano Gherardi (called Doceno), who defeated Vasari by his own admission in coloring in fresco, but would never apply himself to drawing. Without *disegno*, Doceno remained in the lesser fields of ornament painting. Within these minor, pigment-oriented, areas, however, Doceno excelled. His landscapes were outstanding, and he depicted garlands of fruit with such distinction that he was *superiore a qualunche altro n'ha fatto maggiore e particulare professione* [superior to any other who has ever made it his principle and particular profession.][525] This statement shows that Doceno was considered and considered himself to be a painter of ornament. It shows too that Vasari recognized that there were artists who worked solely in one field of art, one "genre" as he himself calls it.[526]

Like many other painters, Doceno got his start in Raphael's workshop, and it was his execution of "dogs, wolves, hares, and various kinds of birds and fishes" that brought him to that master's attention initially.[527] Giovanni da Udine, who also worked under Raphael, is the prime example in part three of such an "assistant" artist. Giovanni's very personality predisposed him to the background ornaments of art. As a child, he would follow his father into the hunting fields, drawing "all the birds and beasts that came into his hands; which he did in such a fashion that everyone was astonished."[528] His love of animals and the outdoors continued; throughout his entire life, Vasari records, Giovanni loved to be outside, hunting, drawing, and tramping through the fields.[529]

---

524 Another such artist was Camillo Mantovano, who appears twice in the *Lives*. He assisted Girolamo Genga in decorating the palace of Duke Francesco Maria of Urbino, where he is described as *in far paesi e verdure rarissima.* He is mentioned again as painting garlands for the Venetian Patriarch Grimani, where he is identified as *pittore in fare paesi, fiore, frondi, frutti, ed altre si fatte cose, eccellente.* Vasari-Milanesi, VI. 318 and VII.18; du Vere, II. 384 and 564.

525 Vasari-Milanesi, VI. 239; du Vere, II. 326 and 335.

526 *Genere* is a word that Vasari uses in this context, though rarely, see below p.189.

527 du Vere, II. 315.

528 du Vere, II. 486.

529 Vasari even claims that Giovanni was responsible for the invention of a sort of hunting blind made in the form of an ox painted on canvas. du Vere, II. 497.

Seeing Giovanni's facility in drawing, his father placed him under the tutelage of Giorgione. The boy soon longed to go to Rome to learn from the manner of Raphael and Michelangelo, however. Vasari is relieved to report he did so soon enough that no permanent damage was done to his style, "for when a man begins by learning a bad manner, it rarely happens that he can abandon it without great difficulty, in order to learn a better."[530] Once in Rome, Vasari remarks that Giovanni:

in brevissimo tempo seppe tanto bene disegnare e colorire con grazia e facilita, che gli riusciva contraffare benissimo, per dirlo in una parola, tutte le cose naturali, d'animali, di drappi, d'instrumenti, vasi, paesi, casamenti e verdure. [in a short time he was able to draw very well and to work in color with facility and grace, insomuch that, to put it in a few words, he succeeded in counterfeiting excellently well every natural object--animals, draperies, instruments, vases, landscapes, buildings and verdure.][531]

There are a number of man-made artifacts placed in Vasari's list of *cose naturali* that Giovanni could counterfeit with color--draperies, instruments, vases, and buildings all make the list. This shows that for Vasari, "natural things" or even "landscape" could be catch-all phrases for any of the parerga of art, the inventive, painterly items reproduced in art chiefly for delight and vivacity.

Giovanni was taught his mimetic skills by a Flemish artist in Raphael's shop. Vasari describes the interaction between Giovanni and his Northern master:

appreso il quale dimorando un Fiamingo chiamato Giovanni, il quale era maestro eccellente di far vagamente frutti, foglie, e fiori similissimi al naturale, se bene di maniera un pocco secca e stentata, da lui imparo Giovanni da Udine a fargli belli come il maestro, e, che e piu, con una certa maniera morbida e pastosa, la quale il fece in alcune cose, come si dira, riuscire eccellentissimo. Imparo anco a far paesi con edifizj rotti, pezzi d'anticaglie; e cose a colorire in tele paesi e verzure, nella maniera che si e dopo lui ustao, non pur dai Fiaminghi, ma ancora da tutti i pittori italiani. (Living with Raphael was a Fleming called Giovanni, who was an excellent master in depicting fruits, leaves, and flowers with a very faithful and pleasing likeness to nature, although in a manner a little dry and laboured; and from him Giovanni da Udine learned to make them as beautiful as his master, and, what is more, with a certain soft and pastose manner that enabled him to become, as will be related, supremely excellent in some fields of art. He also learned to execute landscapes with ruined buildings and fragments of antiquities, and

530 du Vere, II. 487. Vasari often resorts to such subtle denigrations of Venice. In the *Life of Francesco Salviati*, he reports that Salviati moved back to Rome after he got tired of living among the Venetians, describing the dissatisfied artist "as one who remembered that [way of life] of Rome, and considering that it [Venice] was no place for men of design." du Vere, II.564.

531 Vasari-Milanesi, VI.550; du Vere, II. 487.

likewise to paint landscapes and verdure in colors on cloth, in a manner that has been followed after him not only by the Flemings, but also by all the Italian Painters.)[532]

So Giovanni da Udine honed his skills in naturalism under a Flemish painter. Giovanni added to this Northern mimesis, however, a certain *morbida e pastosa* style, which, though Vasari does not state this, he may have learned from Venetian painters such as his purported early teacher, Giorgione. *Morbidezza*, meaning softness and delicacy, generally describes feminine or effeminate displays of flesh and the yielding forms and subtle, spatial shadings of landscape painting.[533] The term is almost always used by Vasari in the context of oil painting. It is Giovanni's special talent that he could translate this coloristic effect into fresco decoration.[534] *Pastosa* is a word Vasari applies less often, but its connotations of softness or pulpiness further amplifies the *morbidezza* of Giovanni's style, a style that combines the skills of three schools: the painterliness of the North Italians; the mimetic description of the *oltramontani*; and the ultimate school of ornament, Raphael's workshop in Rome. An illustration of this talent, a detail from the *Loggia of Cupid and Psyche* (fig. 21) serves to underscore Giovanni's illusionistic, bravura style of fresco painting. As the sexual pun in this image shows, the naturalism of Giovanni's style did not detract from the obvious license of his ornament

Giovanni combined his various influences to become the supreme master of his chosen "fields of art," as Vasari termed them. He painted a loggia for Pope Leo X *di*

---

532 Vasari-Milanesi, VI.550-1; du Vere, II. 487. The landscapes of "colors on cloth" that Vasari refers to must be the ephemeral watercolor-on-linen landscape paintings [*waterwerf*] popularized by Northerners at the beginning of the 16th century. Vasari notes that Giovanni was taught this technique by a Fleming, but adds that later his style was so perfect that he was emulated by Flemings *and* Italians.This fragile medium is discussed on p. 140, n. 405 above.

533 *Morbidezza* comes from the Italian *morbido*, which means morbid. *Morbido* and morbid stem originally from the Latin noun *morbus*, meaning disease. The Latin adjective and its Italian adjectival counterpart, *morbidus* and *morboso* respectively, mean sickly. In Italy, *morbidezza* and *morbido* mean soft, tender, delicate or effeminate. In relation to art, *morbidezza* in the Renaissance carried the generally positive connotation of a life-like delicacy, but increasingly in later centuries it could also imply an unwholesome effeminacy or sickliness.

534 In the *Life of Francesco Primaticcio*, Vasari writes about the artist's great facility with colors, stating that certain of his frescoes "are coloured in so bright a manner, that in the harmony of the fresco-colours they appear like works in oil" (du Vere, II.772). However, as counterpoint to this seemingly unrelieved enthusiasm for color, it must be pointed out that in the prolegomenon to the *Lives*, Vasari writes that the key to the "masculinity" of fresco is its ability to control coloring.

storiette, di paesi, di fogliami, e varie fregiature, nelle quali fece lo sforzo quasi di tutto quello che puo far l'arte in quel genere [of little scenes, landscapes, foliage, and various friezes, in which he touched the highest level, as it were, that art can reach in that field][535] This passage is a reminder, like the one in Doceno's *Life*, that Vasari is aware a choice can be made to pursue "catholicity," or to follow only one or two of the minor areas of painting. Vasari does not begrudge painters this choice. He only remarks if it seems to him that a painter could have expanded his talents to win fame as a painter of universal excellence, but perversely chose not to.

The "Oltramontani" Artists and their Italian Followers

Giovanni da Udine was gifted from birth with a love of art and an ability to recreate the things of nature. Vasari says he was also, however, aided in these artistic ventures by his tutelage under a Flemish artist. This comment, along with several other passages, show Vasari's awareness that the *oltramontani* were highly regarded by patrons and painters alike for their expertise at depicting fruits, flowers, animals and verdure. His attitude towards this influx of Northern talent is mixed. He disapproves of Italian painters slavishly following the Northern manner of figure painting, but accepts the mimicking of *oltramontani* landscapes.[536] Ultimately, the attitude traced in the above sections on impresarios and their assistants accounts for this view. Italian painters can learn from Northern artists in the minor fields of painting, but must take the lead in the valorous and intellectual pursuit of the figure.

A few examples will suffice to show Vasari's awareness of Northern landscape painting in Italy. Titian could paint the varied elements of landscape so well, reports Vasari, because he had allowed some German painters of landscapes and verdure to live in his house in order to study their manner closely for many months.[537] Obliquely addressing the question of how Northern landscapes arrived in Italy, Vasari relates in the *Lives* that

535 Vasari-Milanesi, VI.553; du Vere, II.489.

536 Vasari admits, in a letter to Benedetto Varchi, that he himself is pleased by the pleasing, distant views that Northern *paese* afforded. Gibson, p.39.

537 Vasari-Milanese, VII.429.

Matteo dal Nassaro traveled to Flanders to oversee the weaving of various tapestries, and brought back to sell "some landscapes on canvas painted in Flanders in oils and in gouache, and executed by very able hands, which are still preserved and treasured in Verona."[538] Between 1550 and 1568, Vasari must have become even more aware of the interest in Northern painting, for at the end of his second edition of the *Lives,* he adds a chapter entitled *Divers Flemings*. Here he lists quite a few artists whose skill in landscape he either knows personally or has had reported to him.[539]

We can see that Vasari is plainly aware artists from Germany and Flanders are prolific and skilled landscape painters. Nowhere in the *Lives*, however, does Vasari declare openly the supremacy of Northern painters in such renderings. Indeed, when he is forced to admit a Northerner taught an Italian something, as was the case in the story of Giovanni the Fleming tutoring Giovanni da Udine in landscape, Vasari is at pains to tell the reader how the Italian pupil quickly surpassed his master. Because he desires the *Lives of the Artists* to be as all-encompassing as possible, however, he cannot ignore the impact of Northern art on Italian landscape depictions.

The first mention of the influence of Northern painting on Italian landscapes is in part two of the *Lives*, in Pintoricchio's biography. Pintoricchio was an artist Vasari disliked, and he is presented as pandering to the unsophisticated tastes of his patrons. His gold-embellished works were quite popular, however, and he received commissions

538 du Vere, II. 68.

539 None of the comments in this chapter are illuminating with regards to Vasari's own theory of landscape, but serve only to underscore his awareness of the Northern proclivities towards that genre. He says that Martin Heemskerk is good at landscape; Franz Mostaert and his pupils Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Brueghel excel in landscape fancies in oil with nights, fires, splendours, devils, "and other things of that kind;" and Jacob Grimmer, Hans Bol, and other painters of Antwerp "are the best at landscape depiction." A particularly interesting inclusion in this chapter is a letter from M. Domenicus Lampsonius of Liege, written to Vasari on October 30, 1564 and rendered in full in the second edition of the *Lives*. Lampsonius says that he learned Italian in order to read the *Lives of the Artists*, and that the book has made him bold enough to try to paint in oils. He reports that he has made some progress with nudes and draperies, but adds "I have not had courage enough to plunge deeper, as for example, to paint things more hazardous which require a hand more practiced and sure, such as landscapes, trees, waters, clouds, splendours, fires, etc. ... although in these things, as also in inventions, up to a certain point, it is possible that in the case of necessity I could show that I have made some little proficiency by means of the reading." Lampsonius has obviously come away from the book with an understanding that the parerga of art are the most difficult aspects to render. Unfortunately, Vasari makes no comment on the letter. du Vere, II.862-867.

requiring him to cover large expanses with ornament. One such commission was a series of landscapes Pintoricchio executed in the Belvedere Gardens, which Vasari describes as:

una loggia tutta di paesi; e vi ritrasse Rome, Milano, Genova, Fiorenza, Vinezia e Napoli, alla maniera de'Fiamminghi; che, come cosa insino allora non piu usata, piacquero assai (a loggia full of landscapes, depicting there in Rome, Milan, Genoa, Florence, Venice, and Naples, after the manner of the Flemings; and this, being a thing not customary at the time, gave no little satisfaction.)[540]

Vasari is saying that in the 1480's, the Flemish style of landscape was an unusual manner, and he grudgingly allows Pintoricchio the compliment of saying that these works were well received for their novelty. Unfortunately, though we find that Vasari recognizes the connection of Northern painting with landscape, he does not amplify this statement with a description of the style.

In the biography of Dosso Dossi, Vasari claims that that artist's fame rested largely on his landscapes (fig. 22), writing:

Ebbe in Lombardia nome il Dosso di far meglio i paesi che alcun altro che di quella pratica operasse, o in muro, o a olio, o a guazzo, massimente dappoi che si e veduta la maniera tedesca (Dosso had the reputation in Lombardy of executing landscapes better than any other painter engaged in that branch of the profession, whether in mural painting, in oils, or in gouache; and all the more after the German manner became known.)[541]

Again, Vasari does not expand on this comment. It is obvious that he links the "German Manner" with landscape depiction. It is not clear, however, whether he is saying that Dosso was painting in the German style, and that was what made his works popular, or whether the general influx of Northern landscapes into Italy caused there to be a greater appetite for the genre.[542]

Vasari laments the painter Pontormo's use of the Northern figure style, which he finds to be *stravaganti* and without *vaghezza.*[543] Pontormo's original figure style, in Vasari's opinion, was ideal. It blended the sweetness and charm of his master Andrea del

[540] Vasari-Milanesi, III.498; du Vere, I.573-4.

[541] Vasari-Milanesi, V.97; du Vere, I. 868.

[542] We do know that Vasari found Dosso's style "over-embellished" in all its details. Vasari, as we noted in the biography of Polidoro, could appreciate a brushy manner if it were used decorously, but he probably disapproved of Dosso's use of an incredibly loose and impressionistic style for all the details of his works.

[543] Vasari-Milanesi, IV.267.

Sarto's technique with a resolute boldness of invention. Vasari doesn't understand, he says, why Pontormo would abandon this "perfect style" for the crude German way of depicting figures.

When Pontormo copied a Northern landscape, however, Vasari is full of praise. He records how Pontormo completed a *Pietá* in which the most beautiful thing of that *molto bel'opera* was a landscape taken for the most part from an engraving by Albrecht Dürer (*ma sopra tutto vi era un bellissimo paese, tolto per la maggior parte da una stampa d'Alberto Duro*).[544] Though this work is lost, another of Pontormo's paintings, his image of the martyred *St. Quentin* (fig. 23), bears a landscape derived from a Dürer print.[545] Vasari does not censure Pontormo for copying a landscape from Dürer because he accepts the fact that Northerners are skilled at landscape depictions.

If Vasari expresses any grievance towards the Northern manner of landscape painting, it is in his comments in the *Life of Giovanni da Udine*. There Vasari says that Giovanni learned from his Flemish tutor the skill of life-like depiction. He then used his Italian talents to correct the Flemish artist's *maniera un pocco secca e stentata*. "Dry and laboured" in this context are best understood as criticisms for the Northern style of hyper-realism in all details and angular, assertive outlines.[546]

Vasari cannot approve of this manner. It is not an idealizing style. More important, such finicky attention to all small things with the same degree of attention does not convey boldness and *sprezzatura*, talents that were paramount for Vasari. His attitude with regard to the importance of a bold and vivacious style in the depiction of ornament is elucidated in a story he relates about Giovanni's execution of some ornamental garlands for the Medici Palace. These paintings:

---

542 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.265; du Vere, II. 354.

545 Philippe Costamagna discusses Pontormo's use of a Dürer print in the landscape of this work, as well as the trend in the second and third decades of the sixteenth century for artists in the circle of Pontormo to use Northern prints as inspiration for the landscapes of their religious works. see: Philippe Costamagna, *Pontormo: Catalogue raisonne de l'oeuvre peint* (Paris, 1994), p. 132.

546 In the *Life of Titian*, Vasari remarks on this displeasing Northern angularity, which he finds in the folds draping Giovanni Bellini's figures in the *Feast of the Gods*, a picture he claims Bellini copied from a Northern painting.

che piacessero a que' pittori che allora erano a Fiorenza, come fatte con fierezza e pratica meravigliosa, e piena d'invenzione terribili e capricciose; peroche erano avvezzi a una loro maniera stentata ed a fare ogni cose che mettevano in opera con rittratti tolti dal vivo, come non risoluti; non le lodavano interamente, ne si mettevano, non ne bastando peravventura loro l'animo, ad imitarle. (pleased the painters of Florence, being executed with boldness and marvelous mastery, and filled with spirited and fantastic inventions, yet, since they were accustomed to a laboured manner of their own and to doing everything that they carried into execution with copies taken from life, they did not praise them without reserve, not being altogether decided in their minds, nor did they set themselves to imitate them, perhaps because they had not the courage.)[547]

This is an unusual passage, one that finds Vasari criticizing his fellow Florentines for relying too much on preparatory drawings. He does not say that Florentine painters were working *from the life*, but *using copies taken from the life* (*con rittratti tolti dal vivo*). His censure calls to mind the use of pattern books, where the same foreshortened horse or identical fruit swag shows up again and again in various decorative arrangements. Elsewhere in the book, Vasari chastises artists for only working from life and not planning their compositions carefully enough, but in such cases he is addressing figure painting. In ornamental works, of which landscape might be considered primary, drawing is not paramount, and invention and painterly boldness are more important.

Part II: Vasari's Landscape Description

The Topographical Landscape

Vasari believes that, where appropriate, a landscape painter should be able to show a distinguishable location. This was a task he often undertook himself. In Vasari's grand commissions for the Palazzo Vecchio there are numerous examples (figs. 25, 26), and on the walls of his own home in Arezzo he painted topographically-accurate landscapes of all the places he had worked. In part two of the *Lives*, the illuminator Don Bartolommeo della Gatta, Abbot of S. Clemente in Arezzo, receives praise for one such work.[548] In Vasari's

547 Vasari-Milanesi, VI.557; du Vere, II. 493.

548 In part one of the *Lives*, Vasari records Starnina's realistic depiction of the city of Pisa: *...fece dipignere dallo Starnina...nella facciata del palazzo della parte Guelfa, un San Dionigi vescovo con due Angeli,e sotto a quello ritratta di naturale la citta di pisa: nel che fare uso tanto diligenza in ogni cosa, e particolarmente nel colorirla a fresco...*[caused him to paint...on the facade of the palace of the Guelph party, a picture of St. Dionysius the Bishop, with two angels, and below him the city of Pisa, portrayed from Nature; in which work he used so great diligence in everything, and particularly in colouring it in fresco]. Vasari-Milanesi, II.9; du Vere, I.226.

estimation, Bartolommeo rose in status as an artist when he took the time offered by a plague retreat to master *disegno*, and thus extend his range to include "large figures" on panels.[549] One of the first large-scale works Bartolommeo undertook, appropriately enough, was an altarpiece of St. Roch, the plague saint, which showed a view of Arezzo in the background (fig. 24). In this work, Vasari says the painter *ritrasse la citta d'Arezzo nella forma propria che aveva in quel tempo, molto diversa da quello che e oggi* (portrayed the city of Arezzo exactly as it stood at that time, when it was very different from what it is today).[550] Vasari the historian particularly approves of this painting because it serves as an historic document, recording for posterity the way his home town looked many years past.

The number of topographic landscapes increases dramatically in the third part of the *Lives*. Such large-scale mural scenes were much more in vogue in the sixteenth century, a fact Vasari points to when he discusses Pintoricchio's Vatican loggia frescoes.[551] Vasari also notes, however, many realistic views of cities and terrain executed on smaller panels and canvases.

In the *Life of Andrea del Sarto*, Vasari reports that his master began the cartoons for some paintings to go on the balconies of the Florentine Piazza. The designs were to include allegorical figures representing the quarters of the city, but also veristic depictions of *parimente i monti e fiume piu famosi del dominio di Fiorenza* (the most famous mountains and rivers of the dominion of Florence).[552] This combination of allegorical representations of place along with realistically portrayed images of topography is a sort of

549 Just exactly who Bartolommeo was is still a mystery. The Abbot of S. Clemente during the dates given by Vasari is documented as Don Piero d'Antonio Dei. Several of Bartolommeo's works are minutely described by Vasari, however, and are still extant in Arezzo. Boase, p.168.

550 Vasari-Milanesi, III.214; du Vere, I.508.

551 for the increase of such scenes, see Gibson, chapter 4, "The Mirror and the Portrait of the Earth," pp. 49-59. Topographically-accurate landscapes are also mentioned in the biographies of Girolamo dai Libri (du Vere, II.46) and Giulio Romano (du Vere, II.122).

552 Vasari-Milanesi, V.49; du Vere, I.849.

landscape that Vasari himself often emulated. [553]

For example, from the initial designs of Vasari, his assistant Doceno painted another combination of a real view and an allegorical representation in a scene showing Lake Trasimene, executed for the facade of the Perugian Messer Sforza Almeni's palace in Florence. In this painting, the lake is represented naturalistically but it is further adorned with:

Nymphs who are issuing from the water with trench, pike, eel and roach, and beside the lake is Perugia, a nude figure holding with her hands a dog, which she is showing to a figure of Florence corresponding to her, who stands on the other side, with a figure of the Arno beside her who is fondling her.[554]

This amalgam of fantasy and mimesis may seem odd to readers, but Vasari (and his many patrons) approved of such complex designs. The recognizable topography of the lake oriented the viewer to the scene, while the allegorical figures provided sophistication. Both of these elements adorn the painting. As we have seen repeatedly, complete fidelity to nature is thought to lead to a laboured style, but naturalism in combination with the other delightful elements of painting adds variety and charm.

For the Medici Nuptials Vasari painted (or designed for assistants to execute) many scenes for the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio (figs. 25,26). He says that in spite of his enforced haste, he believes he gave great satisfaction with these works, which show vignettes from the history of Florence, and include *de 'paesi, dove furono fatte le dette cose dipinte, i quali ho tutti avuto a ritrarre di naturale in sul luogo e sito proprio* [the landscapes wherein all those things were painted, all of which I had to copy from nature on

553 Vasari speaks of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio's topographic landscapes, including descriptions of several realistically-rendered local areas. One such painting shows a *Nativity*, in which the Saints Francis and Jerome are included, kneeling in adoration. In this work *fecevi ancora un bellissimo paese, molto simile al Sasso della Vernia, dove San Francesco ebbe la stimata...e tutta l'opera fu di colorito molto bello e che ha assai rilievo* [he also made there a most beautiful landscape, very like the Sasso della Vernia, where S. Francis received the Stigmata...and the whole work was very beautiful in colouring and passing good in relief]. Vasari also notes a painting of the *Annunciation* by Ridolfo, which is set: *in certi paesi la piazza della Nunziata di Firenzie fino alla chiesa di San Marco: la quale tutta opera e ottimamante condotta, e con molti e belli ornamenti* [in a kind of a landscape [showing] the Piazza della Nunziata in Florence as far as the Church of San Marco; and all this work is executed excellently well and with many beautiful ornaments.] Vasari-Milanesi, VI.539; du Vere, II.479; and Vasari-Milanesi, VI.536; du Vere, II.481.

554 du Vere, II.333.

the actual site and spot.][555] In addition to these paintings, he was consigned to decorate the grand staircase of the palace with *quindici citta dell'Imperio e del Tirolo, ritratte di naturale in tanti quadri* [fifteen cities of the empire and the Tyrol depicted from the reality in as many pictures.][556]

Thus, in his own works and in the works of others, Vasari places a great emphasis on a painter's ability to show, if applicable, the topography and terrain of a setting in a recognizable way. This is not to say that Vasari wanted landscapes to be "realistic" in every detail, but rather that if the scene described took place in a known setting (and particularly, it might be noted, if that location had some personal association for Vasari), the artistry of the work was increased when viewers could identify the place in the image. As we have seen, the fact that a landscape was in some way topographically authentic does not mean that it was portrayed with absolute fidelity to external appearance. Often such works were amalgams of allegory and mimesis, and this combination expanded the resonance and appeal a work could have through the presentation of a variety of visual and cerebral delights.

Weather and Light Effects in Landscape

Vasari's describes a *Nativity* he painted for the Camaldoline order as a night scene illumined by the splendour of the newborn Christ (fig.27). He says that in Christ's radiance he tried to imitate *i colori i raggi solari.* Vasari also strove to make the lighting and "all the things in the work from Nature" as similar as possible to the reality--*accio fussero piu che si potesse simili al vero.*[557] He writes that the rays from the Christ child could not realistically pass through the ceiling of the hut, so to illuminate the landscape he employed other light sources. These sources, he says, are the angels singing on high, certain shepherds holding burning sheaves of straw, the moon and stars, and the Angel

555 Vasari-Milanese, VII.702; du Vere, II.1057. These vast scenes in the Palazzo Vecchio are described at length by Vasari in his *Ragionamenti*, where he describes how he chose the perspective views of Florence and worked out the appropriate measurements. see Boase, p.14.

556 Vasari-Milanese, VII.703; du Vere, II.1059.

557 du Vere, II.1029.

announcing the birth to shepherds sleeping in a field. The painting is representative of the two aspects of landscape that Vasari's writings show him to most enjoy--fidelity to nature and dramatic uses of light. The latter aspect is particularly important to him; we have seen that Vasari was appreciative of many kinds of landscape, but the outdoor scenes Vasari takes the most delight in and describes the most vividly are those that show striking effects of light or other extreme natural occurrences.[558]

Vasari's interest in light and reflection is well-documented in the *Lives*. He is impressed, for example, by Leonardo showing light shining through a vase of water; Piero di Cosimo depicting the bouncing reflections gleaming from one to another golden sphere, and Pontormo recreating the flash of highly polished armor. The only outdoor scene by Giorgione that Vasari describes is a tour-de-force of such reflections, a painting in which Giorgione set out to vie with sculpture by showing a figure in the round. To do this, he displayed a nude man from the rear, his front reflected in a pool of water. The man's left profile could be seen in his polished breastplate, and his right in a hanging mirror.[559] Needless to say, Vasari is enchanted by this "most beautiful and bizarre fancy."

One of the most dramatic ekphrases in the *Lives* is in the *Life of Raphael*, where Vasari describes a night scene of St. Peter imprisoned by Herod. This painting shows the prison plunged in darkness, illuminated only by the vivid light of the angel of the Lord, a torch, and the moonlight. The effect of these light sources, mixing with the smoke, shadow and reflections from the armor of the soldiers, had a great effect on Vasari, and his description of the scene reflects his great admiration for the boldness and imagination of the painting's conception. In his own biography, he relates at length his struggle to learn to render such effects.

Vasari certainly knew Pliny's praise of Apelles, that he "even painted things that

---

558 Light effects can include such *fantastiche* as the rendering of fire. Vasari is also impressed by weather effects, most strikingly by storms at sea (see for instance his description of Palma Vecchio's *Tempest at Sea*).

559 du Vere, I.644.

cannot be represented in pictures--thunder, lightening, and thunderbolts."[560] In the "paragone lists" previously analyzed, we have seen how greatly admired these depictions were. The ability to portray such ephemera was seen as the ultimate challenge of the painter's skill. Landscape painting offered the opportunity for many such displays. In outdoor scenes, sunlight, moonlight, lightning, or supernatural heavenly occurrences could be shown, and Vasari's descriptions show him to be delighted with artists who combine light sources in novel and stirring ways. Again and again, throughout the *Lives*, the reader will find Vasari appreciative of painters who attempt to render dramatic light and weather effects in landscape, the depiction of which, as we have seen, requires a mastery of color above all else.

In part two of the *Lives*, the painting by the illuminator Don Bartolommeo della Gatta Vasari describes as having the "best invention" and being "one of the best things he ever created" is a *Crucifixion* illuminated with novel and symbolic lighting.[561] The image shows a rich man and a poor man kneeling at the foot of the Cross. Rays shown glowing from the poor man's heart shine directly on the wounds of Christ, while those emanating from the rich man radiate past Christ and:

vagando ed allargandosi per alcuni paesi e campagne piene di grani, biade, bestiame, giardini ed altre cose simili, ed che altri si distendessino in mare verso alcune barche cariche di mercanzie, ed altri finalmente verso certi banchi, dove si cambiavano dinari (stray and spread over certain plains and fields full of grain, green crops, cattle, gardens, and other suchlike things; while some diverged over the sea towards certain boats laden

560 *Natural History*. IX, xxxv.xxxvi.96.

561 The first era of painting was not entirely bereft of the skills needed to depict natural extremes. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Vasari says, painted an unusual scene of a man hanged on a tree in the middle of a tempest, showing "the turmoil of the air and the fury of the rain and wind, where from modern masters have learned the method and the principle of this invention." Vasari is not as favorably disposed towards Taddeo Gaddi's attempt to portray supernatural light, describing the night scene in Taddeo Gaddi's *Resurrection* with reservation: *dove pare che e'volesse tentare che lo splendore del corpo glorificato facesse lume, come apparisce in una citta ed in alcuni scogli di monti; ma non seguito di farlo nelle figure e nel resto, dubitando forse non lo poter condurre per la difficolta che vi conosceva* (it appears that he wished to attempt to make the splendor of the glorified body give forth light, as we perceive in a city and in some mountainous crags; but he did not follow this up in the figures and in the rest, doubting, perchance, that he was not able to carry this out by reason of the difficulty that he recognized therein). Though Taddeo's moving experiments with symbolic lighting are well-known today, Vasari apparently did not think he had the technical facility to carry out such a challenging painting. du Vere, I.157; and Vasari-Milanesi, I.581; du Vere, I.176.

with merchandise; and others, finally, shone on certain moneylender's tables.)[562]

The vast and detailed space over which the beams from the rich man's heart wander (*vaghare*) is suited to depiction by an illuminator, one who must have infinite patience and diligence in bringing forth tiny scenes. As is typical with Vasari, however, his interest is in the peculiar effect created by the lighted rays moving across the earth and revealing the path that Christ's Grace will traverse.

The use of innovative lighting effects is one that increases throughout the sixteenth century, and the examples Vasari cites are much more numerous in the third part of the *Lives.*[563] In the *Life of Correggio*, for instance, Vasari rhapsodizes over a small painting made by the artist, only a foot square, showing *Christ in the Garden* (fig.28), saying it is "the rarest and most beautiful work to be seen by his hand." He describes it as:

pittura finta di notte, dove l'Angelo, apparendogli, col lume del suo splendore fa lume a Cristo; che e tanto simile al vero, che non si puo ne immaginare ne esprimere meglio. Giuso a pie del monte, in un piano, si veggono tre Apostoli che dormano; sopra' quali fa ombra il monte, dove Cristo ora, che da una forza a quelle figure, che non e possibile; e piu la in un paese lontano, finto l'apparire dell'aurora (representing an effect of night, and painted with little figures; wherein the Angel, appearing to Christ, illumines him with the splendour of his light, with such truth to nature that nothing better can be imagined or expressed. Below, on a plain at the foot of the mountain, are seen three Apostles sleeping, over whom the mountain on which Christ is praying casts a shadow, giving those figures a force which one is not able to describe. Far in the background, over a distant landscape, there is shown appearing the dawn.)[564]

In this work, the radiance of the Angel penetrates the dark night to bathe Christ in the light of Grace, a light which has not yet been made manifest to his followers. The promise of Grace to come, however, is held in the dawn approaching in the distance. In this way, the lights in the scene not only provide a striking and unusual composition of singular beauty, but also embody the central meaning of the Christian religion. As his ekphrasis shows, Vasari is aware of and admires this inextricable joining of form and content.

---

562 Vasari-Milanesi, III.221; du Vere, I.511.

563 For other examples of Vasari's description of light in artist's landscapes, see Raphael (du Vere, I.730); Il Fattore (du Vere, I.820) ; Pomponio (du Vere, I.879); Lorenzo Lotto (du Vere, I.947); Giulio Romano (du Vere, II.131); Sebastiano del Piombo (du Vere, II.142); Perino del Vaga (du Vere, II.162); Pontormo (du Vere, II.355); and Titian (du Vere, II.783).

564 Vasari-Milanesi, IV.117; du Vere, I.648.

In the introduction to the biography of Parmigianino, Vasari writes that of all the artists in Lombardy who have been gifted with facility in landscape painting, Parmigianino is by far the finest. Like Correggio, who supposedly brought the "modern" style to Lombardy, Francesco Mazzuoli, better known as Parmigianino, is recognized by Vasari as an artist who excels in painting the tender flesh of women and children and imparting vivacity and charm to his works. The very first sentence of Parmigianino's biography sets forth how this coloristic style also made the artist renowned as a landscapist:

Fra molti che sono stati in Lombardia della graziosa virtu del disegno e d'una certa vivezza di spirito nell'invenzioni e d'una particolar maniera di far in pittura bellissimi paesi, non e da posporre a nessuno,.anzi da preporre a tutti gli altri, Francesco Mazzuoli (Among the many natives of Lombardy who have been endowed with the gracious gift of design, with a lively spirit of invention, and with a particular manner of making beautiful landscapes in their pictures, we should rate as second to none, and even place before all the rest, Francesco Mazzuoli.)[565]

Parmigianino is an innovator in lighting his paintings in striking and symbolic ways, as is shown in a *Circumcision* he painted for the Pope (fig. 29). This scene, which is generally depicted inside the Temple, is conceived by Parmigianino outside the holy building. Vasari notes the light as the most beautiful element of the work:

fece un bellissimo quadro d'una Circoncisione, del quale fu tenuto cose rarissima la invenzione, per tre lumi fantastichi che e quella pittura servivano; perche le prime figure erano alluminate dalla vampa del volto di Cristo; le seconde ricevevano lume da certi che, portando doni al sacrifizio, caminavano per certe scale con torce accese in mano; e l'ultime erano scoperte ed illuminate dall'aurora, che mostrava un leggiadrissimo paese. ([He] painted a most beautiful picture of the Circumcision, which was held to be extraordinary in invention on account of three most fanciful lights that shone in the work; for the first figures were illuminated by the radiance of the countenance of Christ, the second received their light from the others who were walking up some steps with burning torches in their hands, bringing offerings for the sacrifice, and the last were revealed and illuminated by the light of dawn, which played upon a most lovely landscape.)[566]

---

565 Vasari-Milanesi, V. 217-18; du Vere, I.932. Vasari writes that Parmigianino completed a St. Roch with "some landscapes which are very beautiful, Francesco being particularly excellent in this respect," and a *Conversion of St. Paul* containing "many figures and a landscape which was a very choice work." du Vere, I.938.

566 Vasari is mistaken in his description of this work; there are no torch-bearers. He may be conflating this with the description of his own *Nativity*, which *does* display Christ's radiance, torches, and the dawn. The dark reproduction of the painting makes it very difficult to see the landscape in the upper left corner. Vasari-Milanesi, V. 223; du Vere, I. 935-6.

In this work, again it is the light sources playing over the scene that make it worthy of note. Christ's circumcision is the first shedding of his blood and a prefiguration of his redemptive sacrifice. Those closest to the holy event are lit by his supernatural radiance. Symbolizing the same promise of Grace to come shown by the dawn in Correggio's scene, Parmigianino has set his composition at the cusp of night and morning. This allows not only the symbolic meaning of daybreak casting its enlivening rays across the distant landscape, a reference to the miracle that will come from Christ's offering, but also affords the dramatic effect of the infant Christ's luminescence playing on the faces and figures of those on the temple stairs, still immersed in the darkness of night. Once more, form and content come together to create a work that is extraordinarily, even startlingly, artful, but still pregnant with spiritual meaning.

Above, in the discussion of Parmigianino's painting, Vasari designates the lights *fantastichi*. Vasari often calls scenes with dramatic and unusual light sources "fantasies" and "splendors," a term which underscores his assessment of the great degree of invention and skill such works display. His thoughts with regard to this are brought to light in a comment he makes about a painter named Gian Girolamo Bresciano, of whom he writes:

Di mano di Giangirolamo Bresciano si veggiono molte opere in Venezia ed in Milano; e nelle dette case della Zecca sono quattro quadri di notte e di fuochi, molto belli: ed in casa Tomaso da Empoli in Venezia e una Nativita di Cristo finta di notte, molta bella;[567]*e sono alcune altre cose di simil fantasie, delle quali era maestro. Ma perche costui si adopero solamente in simili cose, e non face cose grandi, non si puo dire altro di lui, se non che fu capriccioso e sofistico, e che quello che fece merita di essere molto comendato.* (By the hand of Gian Girolamo Bresciano are many works to be seen in Venice and Milan, and in the above mentioned house of the Mint there are four pictures of Night and of Fire, which are very beautiful. In the house of Tommaso da Empoli at Venice, there is a Nativity of Christ, a very lovely effect of Night, and there are some other similar works of fantasy, in which he was a master. But, since he occupied himself only with things of this kind, and executed no large works, there is nothing more to be said of him save that he was a man of fanciful and inquiring mind, and that what he did deserves

567 Vasari also identifies this same *Nativity* as Lorenzo Lotto's, commenting again on the singular effect of the night time scene. see du Vere, 1.947.

to be much commended.)[568]

For Vasari, it is obviously an exercise of fantasy to depict a scene under extremes of lighting. His descriptions of the works of Franz Mostaert and the men he takes to be his followers, Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Brueghel, underscore this. He writes that their specialties are: *paesi a olio, fantasticherie, bizzarie, sogni e imaginazioni...fuochi, notti, splendori, diavoli e cose somiglianti.*[569] He himself painted such *fantastichi* for his own home (fig. 30).[570]

Though such works take a great deal of inventiveness and skill, as the vocabulary used to describe them suggests, and plainly provide great pleasure to viewers who marvel at their exciting effects, Vasari believes that *fantastichi* are best used in the service of a more important subject. One masterpiece of Titian's monumental style,*The Death of St. Peter Martyr*, employs fantastic lighting in the service of a spiritual narrative, and can be considered Vasari's favorite painting by the artist. Destroyed in a fire in 1856, an engraving after the work shows why Titian received the palm from Vasari for his

568 Vasari-Milanesi, VI.507; du Vere, II.471. The passage about Gian Girolamo Bresciano also reveals the reason why Vasari takes such little notice of the many hundreds of small-scale landscapes we know to have either been created in Italy or imported from the North. The bulk of these works were created by artists who only painted small works for private homes. As such, these artist had even less fame than a painter of decorative landscapes working in the workshop of a more famous artists. First and foremost, Vasari is attempting to write *Le Vite de piu Eccellenti Pittore*, and not a history of painting in Italy; thus such men do not bear mention. In addition, it was not just the execution of small-scale landscapes that might hold an artist back, if he painted nothing else. In *The Life of Domenico Puligo*, Vasari says that Domenico never achieved true success because as his "profession" he chose to paint only "pictures of Our Lady, portraits and other heads ...[rather than] great works."

569 Vasari-Milanesi, VII.584. Small-scale scenes of burning landscapes must have been quite popular. In 1535, Matteo del Nassaro offered Federigo Gonzaga three hundred small landscapes painted on panel and linen, and the Duke bought one hundred and twenty of them. Twenty of these works showed "nothing but landscapes on fire which seem to burn one's hands if one goes near to touch them." quoted in Gibson, p.38.

570 Vasari's love for such fantasies is shown in part two of the *Lives*, as well. In the biography of the early oil-painting pioneer Francia, Vasari describes in great detail a landscape the artist painted for the Duke of Urbino on a set of horse's caparisons: *fece una selva grandissima d'alberi, che vi era appiccato il fuoco, e fuor di quella usciva quantita grande di tutti gli animal aerei e terrestri, ed alcuni figuri: cosa terrible, spaventosa e veramente bella; che fu stimata assai per il tempo consumatovi sopra nelle piume degli uccelli e nelle altri sorte d'animale terrestri, oltra di diversita delle fronde e rami diversi, che nella varieta degli alberi si vedevano* (he made a vast forest of trees that had caught fire, from which there were issuing great numbers of all sorts of animals, both of the air and of the earth, and certain figures--a terrible, awful, and truly beautiful thing, which was held in no little esteem by reason of the time spent in painting the plumage of the birds, and the various sorts of terrestrial animals, to say nothing of the diversity of foliage and the variety of branches that were seen in the different trees). Vasari-Milanesi, III.544; du Vere, I.581.

landscape depictions (fig. 31). In the work, Titian fluidly and dramatically merges the action of the scene with the landscape, making both figures and landscape elements actors in the narrative, and using the details of the natural scene to heighten meaning rather than just provide an ornamental background. Vasari brings this unity out in his description, writing that Titian shows the saint:

a una boscaglia d'alberi grandissimi, cascato in terra ed assalito dall fierezza d'un soldato, che l'ha in modo ferito nella testa, che, essendo semivivo, se gli vede nel viso l'orore della morte; mentre in un altro frate, che va innanzi fuggendo, si scorge lo spavento e timore della morte: in aria sono due angeli nudi, che vengono da un lampo di cielo, il quale da lume al paese, che e bellissimo (in a forest of very great trees, fallen to the ground and assailed by the fury of a soldier, who has wounded him so grievously in the head, that as he lies there is seen in his face the horror of death, while in another friar who runs forward in flight may be perceived the fear and terror of death. In the air are two nude angels coming down from a flash of Heaven's lightening which gives light to the landscape, which is most beautiful.)[571]

The sensational and symbolic natural lighting adds to the effect of the figures' overt displays of emotion and action. Here Titian has brought the elements of landscape to the fore. In the giant trees and violent lightening, he produces a setting of a certain grandeur and *terribilita* that elevates it to the epic mode of painting. Even in Vasari's ekphrasis of the painting, the landscape elements are integral to the narration; they are not tacked on, as is so often the case, to the end of his description.

Titian's oeuvre synthesizes all the elements that constitute Vasari's "theory of landscape:" the inventive mind that offers a great variety of delightful details; the questing, entrepreneurial spirit of an "impresario" who wants to leave his style evident in many public places, in many cities and even countries; the ability to render mimetic details like the *oltramontani*; the *bravura* blended color of the the Lombards; a facility for showing exciting and unusual effects of light; and a genius capable of presenting either the light charms of a pastoral landscape or the more serious symbolism of a religious one. Indeed, Titian is almost too adept. In Vasari's view, largely expressed through the comments he repeats from other painters, Titian achieves his superior status as a landscapist because he so fully embraces the Venetian *colore* tradition. Vasari, as his own works show, approves

571 Vasari-Milanese, VII.438-9; du Vere, II.787.

of a coloristic, loosely-painted, manner for the less-important, more-decorative elements of monumental painting, and a carefully-drawn, controlled style for the central figures.[572] Thus, Titian, who emerges as the best landscapist in the *Lives*, would have been a better painter in Vasari's estimation had he modeled his style on Raphael and attempted to achieve a golden mean of excellence in *all* the areas of painting.

The Landscapes of Giorgio Vasari

In Vasari's autobiography, he describes his own landscape backgrounds in great detail with regard both to their appearance and to the planning of their compositions. One striking passage discusses a landscape Vasari copied from nature, an altarpiece of *St. Francis receiving the Stigmata.* Vasari's explanation of his work shows the thought he put into making his landscapes innovative as well as naturalistic. He says that he represented the event:

nel Monte della vernia, ritratto dal vivo. Ma perche quel monte e tutto di massi e pietre bigie, e similimente San Francesco ed il suo compagno si fanno bigi, finsi un sole, dentro al quale e Cristo con buon numero di Serafini; e cosi fu l'opera varieta, ed il Santo con altre figure tutto lumeggiato dallo splendore di quel sole, ed il paese adombrato della varieta d'alcuni colori cangianti, che a molti non dispiacciono, ed allora furono molti lodati (on the mountains of La Vernia, copied from nature; and since that mountain is all of grey rocks and stones, and in like manner St. Francis and his companion are grey, I counterfeited a Sun within which is Christ, with a good number of Seraphim, and so the work is varied, and the Saint, with other figures, all illumined by the splendour of that Sun, and the landscape in shadow with a great variety of changing colours; all which is not displeasing to many persons, and was much extolled.)[573]

This passage is of great interest because in it Vasari tells us his method of planning a composition, one with which he evidently is well pleased. Apparently he felt compelled to show the grey, stony setting as it really was, and this meant that, when combined with the grey habits of the Franciscans, his painting was in danger of a dull monochromatism. He remedies this by using inventive, symbolic lighting, the addition of which was chosen to

---

572 Though Vasari admires the "coarse sweep" of Titian's mature works (one image he cites in this style is the *Rape of Europa*), writing that they are paintings that appear perfect "from a distance," he criticizes Titian's late, very loosely-painted works, saying that when the artist became old and infirm, he should no longer have painted for public consumption, for his "powers were declining and drawing towards imperfection." du Vere, II.794 and 798.

573 Vasari-Milanese, VII.685; du Vere, II.1045.

introduce variety. Thus, this lighting gives him an opportunity to illuminate the figures dramatically, and to add the ornament of changing, colored shadows playing over the landscape.

Passages like this show Vasari's desire to be faithful to nature and his painting's narrative content, but at the same time to be varied and delightful in his details. This aspiration towards variety seems to have driven the composition of a landscape with the *Pietá*, which was painted for Vasari's friend Bindo Altoviti. He writes that the scene shows Christ lying at the ground at Mary's feet, with:

nell'aria Febo che oscura la faccia del Sole, e Diane quella della Luna. Nel paese poi, oscurato da queste tenebre, si veggiono spezzarsi alcuni monti di pietra, mossi dal terremoto che fu nel partir del Salvatore; e certi morti corpi di Santi si veggiono, risorgendo. (Phoebus in the air obscuring the Sun, and Diana that of the Moon. In the landscape, all darkened by that gloom, some rocky mountains, shaken by the earthquake that was caused by the Passion of the Savior, are seen shivered into pieces, and certain dead bodies of Saints are seen rising again.)[574]

This grisly landscape, with its combination of allegorical representations and realistic effects, was said by Vasari to have pleased "the gracious judgment of the greatest painter, sculptor, and architect that there has been in our time." Known to us now only in a preparatory drawing (fig. 32), the work is an amalgam of mythological and religious imagery. In it, according to his description, Vasari seeks a bravura display of painterly control over tempestuous natural effects. The subject of the *Pietá* does not require an eclipse, an earthquake, and the resurrection of the Saints. Vasari developed this composition in order to show off his varied talents as a painter. Indeed, the work seems to have functioned as an introduction piece and was shown by Bindo and Paolo Giovio to Cardinal Farnese to advertise Vasari's skills.

Another tour-de-force of visual delights, an unusual portrait of Alfonso di Tommaso Cambi, contains a mythological landscape in which Vasari depicts a night scene. Cambi, at the time a "beautiful youth," chose to have himself portrayed full length, nude, and in the guise of Endymion, the Moon's beloved. Vasari describes Endymion's:

574 Vasari-Milanese, VII.671; du Vere, II.1035.

...la cui candidezza, ed un paese all'intorno capriccioso, hanno il lume della chiarezza della luna, che fa nell'oscuro della notte una veduta assai propria e naturale; perciocche io m'ingegnai con ogni diligenza di contraffare i colori propri che suol dare il lume di quella bianca giallezza della luna alle cose che percuote (white form and the fanciful landscape all around, [which] have their light from the brightness of the Moon, which in the darkness of the night makes an effect passing natural and true, for the reason that I strove with all diligence to counterfeit the peculiar colours that the pale yellow light of the Moon is wont to give to the things upon which it strikes.)[575]

Vasari's commentary on his *Endymion* shows he is pleased above all with the scene's colored light, which realistically imitates moonlight. This *bianca giallezza* illumination plays over a *capriccioso* landscape, lighting its inventive features and presenting an array of striking, bizarre delights. The portrait of Cambi as Endymion is intended above all to give visual pleasure, and thus, in the artistic planning brought to suit that purpose, color, style, lighting and fanciful details are Vasari's main concerns.

Vasari composes his *Stigmata* on a cliff thrown into heavy shadow and illuminated by Christ's multicolored radiance; he sets his *Pietá* in an earthquake-torn landscape in the ghastly dark of an eclipse; he composes a mythologizing portrait so that the pale yellow glow of moonlight plays over Endymion's alabaster body, supine in a fanciful landscape. The presentation of all the works is designed to maximize the impact of painterly, bold, chiaroscuro effects and unusual, supernatural lighting.[576] Vasari's exegeses of these scenes, which tell us about his thoughts in composing them, show him also to be very concerned with the naturalism of the settings. He did not consider placing his Stigmata anywhere other than *nel monte della vernia, ritratto dal vivo.* But La Vernia in reality is *tutto di massi e pietre bigie*, and Vasari would not depart from this. Thus, he enlivened

575 Vasari-Milanese, VII.690; du Vere, II.1049.

576 Vasari loved to depict the effect of night scenes. There is an interesting passage about the appeal of such paintings in the *Life of Taddeo Zucchero.* Taddeo was to execute a series of paintings for Cardinal Farnese, and he received a description of the scenes to depict from Annibale Caro. Vasari reproduces this document, in which Caro writes: "I would have a night painted there [in the bedroom], because, besides that it would be appropriate to sleep, it would be a subject not very customary and very different from the other rooms, and would give you an occasion of executing rare and beautiful works in your art, since the strong lights and dark shadows that go into such a subject are wont to give no little grace and relief to the figures; and it would please me to have the time of night close upon the dawn, to the end that the things represented there may be seen without improbability." du Vere, II.627.

the scene by varying the lighting. Christ is displayed in the sun, surrounded by seraphim, and this luminescence casts the landscape into relief, strongly marked by shadow and colored, divine light. In his portrait of Endymion, beloved of the moon, Vasari relates how he showed the bright moon in the darkness of night with an effect *propria e naturale*. This "natural and true light" was achieved because he strove *con ogni diligenzia di contraffare i colori propri* that moonlight has on nighttime surfaces.

Reading these passages, one cannot help but be struck by the fact that in describing the paintings, which include a deposed, stripped Christ and a nude, full-length Endymion, Vasari spends no time discussing the figures. Instead, he is at pains to let the reader know how the images dazzled through their deployment of ingenious light and color, painted convincingly in appropriate settings. Vasari wrote of the second-manner painters that their works were for the most part well-drawn and free from error. In Vasari's own age, the challenge of painting was not in portraying the eternal proportions of the human figure convincingly, but in presenting the dramatic, sensual, changing anecdotes of the world's light and color in ways that would convince with their naturalism and startle with their artifice.

•••••

In the late seventeenth century, Academic champion of color and chiaroscuro Roger de Piles wrote down his recommendations for landscape painters. He said that first of all, when painting landscape, the artist must be truthful to his subject. In order to overcome the potential dullness that could result from such fidelity to nature, however, de Piles suggested that artists enliven their paintings by introducing charming accidents and by using a painterly style to vivify their scenes.[577] Vasari's own manner of landscape painting seems to have prefigured de Piles' advice.

These ideas on painterly ornament did not originate with Vasari, however. In the previous chapters, we have seen how commonly-held notions of landscape were. As we have found, the *parerga* of art, a word that the Renaissance used for landscape as well as

[577] Roskill, *Landscape*, p.124.

for such extravagances as grotteschi, needed first of all to be mimetic. Mimesis in this sense means that the re-presentation had to fool the eye.

In Vasari's description of a Nativity he painted for the Camaldoline Order (fig. 27), the figures in the night scene are lit by the holy glow of the Christ Child. The distant landscapes behind the stable also needed to be illuminated, and Vasari wanted this lighting to be *accio fussero piu che si potesse simili al vero*-- as similar as possible to the reality. He was concerned because the rays emanating from the infant could not *realistically* pass through the roof and move out into the fields, so he also employed the light from torches, the moon and stars, and the Herald Angel. No viewer, of course, would have had an idea of how these supernatural light effects really looked. What was important was that the effects created a semblance of reality that not only embellished the work, but also made it seem tangible and apprehendable by the senses.

This potential, to make the false seem true, is the license of ornament, the power that we have seen feared for its sensuality, as well as admired for the artistic skill it embodies. In the *paragone* texts, the painter of landscapes was likened to a god as the potential creator of the all the universe's beauties--the sun, the moon, stars, lightening, wind, dawn, night, the seasons and more. It is these peripheral elements of painting that make two-dimensional painting seem more real than three-dimensional sculpture. These details are the material that bodies forth the ideal; the matter that enlivens form; and the accidents that lend credibility to the eternal. In their generative, sensual, changeable manifestations, they were likened to the feminine, and feared. Like woman, they were thought to be in their place when in the service of a rational and important central figure. This view is the view Vasari held of ornament in general and of landscape in particular. It was in these parergal additions, however, that Vasari found his own artistic ability and that of other painters most evident.

Conclusion

After spending several pages discussing the complex figural composition of Raphael's *School of Athens*, Vasari ends his narration of the painting by saying "he also adorned this work with a view in perspective."[578] This particular painting has long been held as an exemplar of High Renaissance style. It is thought to show the striving of men to be born again into the rational, individualistic mentality that was the gift of antiquity, to stand as an emblem of the rediscovery of the humanistic principles that spurred mankind out of the "Dark Ages" and into our modern era. In this monumental work, the clearly-defined space of Raphael's architectural fantasy has been heralded as a symbolic form. Linear perspective, according to Erwin Panofsky, symbolizes the Renaissance mind freed from the religious tyranny of the early Christian era.[579] Finally, man could again stand certain of the importance of his individual worldview, an outlook concretely symbolized by one-point perspective. Given this heady meaning, it is interesting that Vasari merely notes the perspective space of Raphael's painting as an "adornment."

This example is given not to debate Panofsky's definition of the philosophical significance of one-point perspective, but to show that the space in which paintings are set can be construed as a form of ornament, a choice that a painter makes when embellishing his composition. For Vasari, as well as for other Renaissance authors we have read, the space surrounding the central focus of an image *is* generally looked on as decorative. Vasari repeatedly includes both landscapes and linear perspectives in his "ornament lists," as when he writes that Raphael was a great decorator, and had complete mastery over "the enriching [of paintings]..with a bizarre variety of perspectives, buildings, and landscapes." The ornamental status of space in the Renaissance becomes even more clear when we recall that perspective renderings are among the "distracting graces" with which Michelangelo refused to "abase his great genius."

578 du Vere, I.718

579 Panofsky, Erwin. *Perspective as Symbolic Form.* trans. Christopher S. Wood. New York, 1991. (Originally published in German in 1924-5)

This is not to say that an artist's choice to depict space through linear perspective is without meaning. As we have seen in our analysis of Vasari's comments on landscape backgrounds, the most successful adornments of paintings are those which further the work's significance. Linear perspective carried the message of a certain intellectuality; it was an ornament that was appreciated by the *cognoscenti*. The amateur collector Sabba di Castiglione remarks on this when he writes that "perspectives and...[other such] artistic secrets are perhaps more agreeable for the intellectuals than they are appealing to the eyes of those who understand less."[580] Sabba, not surprisingly, prefers vividly-colored *vedute*. Vasari himself also favored the delights offered by pleasingly-detailed landscapes, which recede into space not with the harsh linearity of one-point perspective but with the blended modulation of soft pigment.

If linear perspective is an embellishment to painting that carries with it connotations of artistic difficulty and erudition, what significance does the ornament of landscape bring to bear? All of the texts we have looked at point to the same use for landscape imagery in painting--they are the parergal delights of art that bring sensual pleasure to viewers both through their convincing recreation of nature's beauties and through their displays of artistic skill. The stimulation found in their vivacity lends liveliness to the work's subject.

The introduction to these four essays showed the many ways people in the Renaissance were surrounded by pleasurable landscape imagery, both textual and visual. The following chapters attempted to reconstruct the Renaissance attitude towards such landscape depictions. To this end, first we analyzed the purposeful use recognized for pleasurable landscape images before the rise of an autotelic aesthetic philosophy. This investigation showed the indissoluble link that existed in Renaissance thought between the spirit and the flesh. Sensual pleasures were believed to be restorative to the body by being recreative to the soul, and thus delights such as the perusal of landscape images were prescribed both therapeutically and hygienically.

Though in some cases sanctioned as having a purposeful end, landscape was an art

580 quoted in Klein and Zerner, 23

that detractors feared for its sensual license. The second essay looked at this "fear of landscape" in terms of the various ways that such images were addressed as feminine. The chapter analyzed the link of women and the then-emerging medium of oil paint to rhetorical notions of color. Landscape images were defined in the Renaissance as arrays of colored details that only appealed to the senses and had no logical structure or rational purpose. Women, characterized since antiquity as irrational and unstable, were supposed to be attracted to such paintings because they could empathize with these "feminine" qualities. Partly because of this presumed similarity, the characterization of women in poetry and treatises on beauty lent its vocabulary to the accepted terminology for landscape images. Several specific words applied both to landscape and to women were analyzed, and these words were shown to be alike in their reference back to an observing (male) subject. Women and landscape were seen to be poetically portrayed as images of scattered beauty over which the (male) viewer should wander in order to find his pleasure. In the end, in both positive and negative assessments of femininity and landscape, both were seen to be without purpose unless suitably attached to a central work (ergon). If either existed alone, they had no internal justification, and purpose could only be brought to bear on them from the outside, from the completion of an external male onlooker.

Chapter three continued this investigation of the irrationality and seeming purposelessness that landscapes embodied in Renaissance thought with an analysis of the term parerga. This word, in both its antique and Renaissance manifestations, connoted the details added to a work solely to bring pleasure and to display the skill of the artist. In both Antiquity and the Renaissance, parergal displays were intended to convince through their mimesis and to delight through their novel, sophisticated artistry. In antiquity, parerga could refer to any such embellishment in the various arts. By the Renaissance, however, the term parerga became increasingly associated with the ornamental delights of landscape painting. Being colorful, delightful, mimetic, and not bound to any given composition or form, these landscape parerga were ideally suited to the decorative purposes of painting. Such associations are embodied in Renaissance *paragone* texts, which cede power to the

painter largely through his ability to display the changing accidents of nature, the elements that the sculptor cannot reproduce. These accidents are the details that come from light and color. Being transitory, they paradoxically exhibit the painter's skill most fully at the same time that they must cede place of importance to displays of eternal form.

The final chapter analyzed the *Lives of the Artists* in light of Vasari's landscape descriptions. Vasari's attitudes towards landscape painting were discovered to be markedly similar to the patterns of thought that emerged in the earlier essays. The use of oil paint's blended colors comes forth in the *Lives* as essential to the perfection of landscape in Vasari's third manner. In addition, Vasari describes the suitability of landscape to large-scale decorative campaigns. He notes the verisimilitude of landscape details that lend their vivacity to the images they grace. In his over-arching theory of art, he recognizes the subservient role that landscape as parerga must play, but he delights in the mimesis and virtuosity found in landscape's details. Connected to this latter particularly is Vasari's great love for outdoor scenes that convey the drama and changeability of nature. In many *paragone* lists, we read the Renaissance enthusiasm for the way pigment could express *integramente* not just the eternal form but also the changeable particulars of the world. The variability and animation of atmospheric phenomena and transitory light effects were adornments known only to painting, and Vasari, himself a painter, greatly valued them as expressions of artistic virtuosity.

We might end by looking at another passage from Vasari. In the *Life of Raphael*, Vasari states that the artist, knowing he could not compete with Michelangelo's singular style, decided to attain a catholic perfection in painting. This is the choice that *all* other painters should make, for as Vasari writes:

> And if the same had been done by many craftsmen of our own age, who, having determined to pursue the study of Michelangelo's work alone, have failed to imitate him and have not been able to reach his extraordinary perfection, they would not have laboured in vain, nor acquired a manner so hard, so full of difficulty, wanting in beauty and colouring, and poor in invention, but would have been able, by aiming at catholicity and at imitation in the other fields of art, to render service both to themselves and to the world.[581]

581 du Vere, I. 742-3

As we have seen, the "other fields of art" encompass all the painterly, decorative embellishments of painting, the parerga that patrons enjoy. Raphael makes the correct choice and does not try to foist on the world the demanding, cheerless and harsh paintings that the followers of Michelangelo executed.

Attempting to follow Michelangelo's unique manner merely leads artists back to the difficulties faced by painters of the second style. We recall that earlier in the *Lives*, Vasari explains the failings of the second manner artists. Their paintings, he says, were too dry and laboured; and they created works "unpleasant to the eye that were as painful to see as they were difficult for them to execute." The fault of these early artists was not in design; their works were well-drawn, but lacking in invention and "sweet harmonies of colouring." The criticism Vasari levels at the followers of Michelangelo in the above quote is remarkably similar to his complaints about quattrocento painting. Design was mastered in the quattrocento; it was in the next era, with artists like Correggio, Parmigianino and Raphael, that advancements were made in depicting the "accidents" of painting which made form come alive.

The sensual pleasure provided by the "other ways of painting," as we have seen, is not an unmitigated artistic good. Academic theory ranks art that strives only to stimulate sensually as the lowest genre, and equates it with the irrational and the feminine. Theory aside, however, the fourth century poet Libanius is succinct, saying "causes of delight are springs, plantations and gardens and soft breezes and flowers."[582] Such delights have always been portrayed in art, and no matter the vicissitudes of theory, there has always been an appetite for them.

582 quoted in Curtius, 197

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adams, Hazard and Leroy Searle, eds. *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1986.

Alberti, Leon Battista. *The Alberti's of Florence: Leon Battista Alberti's* "della Famiglia." Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1971.

---. *De re aedificatoria*. Florence, 1485.

---. *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*. trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach and Robert Tavernor. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991.

Alderotti, Taddeo. *Consilia*. vol. 1. ed. Giuseppi Michele Nardi. Turin, 1937.

Alpers, Paul. *What is Pastoral?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

Alpers, Svetlana. "Art History and its Exclusions: The Example of Dutch Painting." *Feminism and Art History: Questioning the Litany*. eds. Norma Broude and Mary D. Garrard. New York, 1982.

Anthologia Latina. ed. Bucheler-Reise. Leipzig, 1884.

Aretino, Pietro. *Lettere sull'arte*. 4 vols. eds. Flora, Pertile, and Camesasca. Milan, 1957-1960.

Aristotle. *Minor Works*. Vol. I. trans. W.S.Hett. Loeb Classical Library. 1936.

---. *Nicomachean Ethics*. trans. and commentary C.I. Litzinger. Chicago, 1964.

Armenini, Giovanni Battista. *De' veri precetti della pittura*. Ravenna, 1587.

---. *Precepts of the Art of Painting*. trans. Edward J. Olszewski. Renaissance Studies in Translations Series, 1977.

Bacci, Mina . *L'Opera Completa di Piero di Cosimo*. Milan, 1976.

Bal, Meike. "Light in Painting: Dis-seminating Art History." *Deconstruction in the Visual Arts: Art, Media, Architecture*. eds. Peter Brunette and David Wills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Barocchi, Paola. ed. *Scritti d'arte del Cinquecento*. 3 vols. Milan-Naples, 1971-76.

---. *Trattati d'arte del cinquecento fra manierismo e controriforma*. 3 vols. Bari, 1960.

Barolsky, Paul. *The Faun in the Garden: Michelangelo and the Poetic Origins of Italian Renaissance Art.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994.

---. "Play, Pleasure and Fantasy in Italian Renaissance Art." *Gazette des Beaux Arts.* 6, vol. 126, 1995.

Bartholomaeus de Montagnana. *Consilia Magistri Bartholomei Montagnane.* Venice, 1499.

Baxandall, Michael. "A Dialogue from the Court of Leonello d'Este," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 26 (1963).

---. *Giotto and the Orators: Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350-1450.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971.

---. *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy.* Oxford, 1972.

Bembo, Pietro. *Opere in Volgare.* ed. M.Marti. Florence, 1961.

Bergin, Thomas G. *Petrarch.* Boston, 1970.

Blier, Suzanne Preston. *African Vodun: Art, Psychology, and Power.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Blount, Thomas. *Glossographia.* 1656. Scholar Press Facsimile. Menston: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969.

Boase, T.S.R. *Giorgio Vasari: The Man and the Book.* Bollingen Series XXV. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979.

Boccaccio. *In Defense of Poetry.* trans. Charles G. Osgood. New York, 1956.

Burton, Robert. *The Anatomy of Melancholy.* Vols. I&II. eds. Nicolas K. Keissling, Thomas C. Faulkner, and Rhonda L. Blair. Oxford, 1989.

Buscaroli, Rezio. *La pittura di paesaggio in Italia.* Bologna, 1935.

The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy. eds. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992.

Capella, Martianus. *Martianus Capella and the Seven Liberal Arts.* Volume I. *The Quadrivium of Martianus Capella.* Volume II. *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury.* Trans. and commentary William Harris Stahl, Richard Johnson and E.L. Burge. New York: Columbia University Press, 1971.

Castellano, Angela. "Storia una parola letteraria: it. vago." *Archivio glottologico italiano.* 48 (1963).

Castiglione, Baldassare. *The Courtier.* trans. Sir Thomas Hoby. New York, 1956.

Cennini, Cennino d'Andrea. *The Craftsman's Handbook: "*Il Libro dell'Arte.*"* trans. Daniel V. Thompson, Jr. New York, 1960.

Ciavollela, Massimo. "Eros and the Phantasm of *Heroes*" *Eros and Anteros: The Medical Tradition of Love in the Renaissance.* eds. Donald Beecher and Massimo Ciavollela. Ottowa: University of Toronto Press, 1992.

Cicero. *De Natura Deorum.* trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. 1967.

Clark, Sir Kenneth. *Landscape into Art.* London, 1949.

---. *Landscape Painting.* New York, 1950.

Clements, Robert. *Picta Poesis: Literary and Humanistic Theory in Renaissance Emblem Books.* Rome, 1960.

Clements, Robert J. and Joseph Gibaldi. *Anatomy of the Novella: The European Tale Collection from Boccaccio and Chaucer to Cervantes.* New York: New York University Press, 1977.

Connelly, Francis S. *The Sleep of Reason: Primitivism in Modern European Art and Aesthetics, 1725-1907.* University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995.

Costamagna, Philippe. *Pontormo: Catalogue raisonne de l'oeuvre peint.* Paris, 1994.

Cropper, Elizabeth. "The Beauty of Women: Problems in the Rhetoric of Renaissance Portraiture." *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe.* eds. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1986.

---. "On Beautiful Women, Parmigianino, *Petrarchismo*, and the Vernacular Style." *Art Bulletin.* 58 (1976).

Cummins, Patricia W., trans. "A Salernitan Regimen of Health." *Allegorica.* 1, no. 2 (1976).

Curtius, Ernst Ludwig. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.

Dacos, Nicole. *La decouverte de la Domus Aurea et la formation des grotesques a la Renaissance.* London: Warburg Institute, 1970.

Dante Alighieri. *Literary Criticism of Dante Alighieri.* trans. Robert S. Haller. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

Derrida, Jacques. *La Verité dans la Peinture.* Paris, 1978.

Dino del Garbo. "The *Canzone d'Amore* of Cavalcanti According to the Commentary of Dino del Garbo." trans. and commentary Otto Bird. *Medieval Studies.* 2 (1940).

Dürer, Albrecht. *Dürers Schriftlicher Nachlass.* ed. Lange-Fuhse. Halle, 1893.

Fehl, Philipp P. *Decorum and Wit: The Poetry of Venetian Painting: Essays in the History of the Classical Tradition.* Vienna, 1992.

Fermor, Sharon. "Movement and Gender in Sixteenth-Century Italian Painting." *Body Imagined: The Human Form and Visual Culture Since the Renaissance.* eds. Kathleen Adler and Marcia Pointon. Cambridge, 1993.

---. *Piero di Cosimo: Fiction , Invention and* Fantasia. London, 1993.

Ficino, Marsilio *The Book of Life: Liber de Vita or De Vita Triplici.* trans. Charles Boer. Irving: University of Dallas Press, 1980.

Firenzuola, Angelo. *Opere.* 2 vols. ed. D. Maestri. Turin, 1977.

Freedberg, S.J. *Painting in Italy, 1500-1600.* New Haven: Yale University Press. 1993.

Frey, C. *Sammlung ausgewahlter Biographien Vasaris.* 4 vols., Berlin, 1884-87.

Friedländer, Max. J. *Essays über die Landschaftsmalerei und andere Bildgattungen.* The Hague, 1947.

Frye, Northrup. "The Argument of Comedy." *English Institute Essays.* ed. D.A. Robertson, Jr. New York, 1949.

Garrard, Mary. "Leonardo da Vinci. Female Portraits, Female Nature." *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History.* eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard. New York, 1992.

Gelli, G.B. *Lettere edite e inedite...sopra la Commedia di Dante.* 2 vols. ed. C. Negroni. Florence, 1887.

George of Trebizond. *Georgii Trapezuntii Rhetoricum libri V etc.* Venice, 1523.

Gibson, Walter S. *"Mirror of the Earth": The World Landscape in Sixteenth Century Flemish Painting.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989.

Gilbert, Chreighton. "On Subject and Not-Subject in Italian Renaissance Pictures" *Art Bulletin*. 34 (1952).

Girolamo di Manfredi. *El libro chiamato della vita, costumi, natura dell'omo*. Naples, 1478.

Goedde, Lawrence O. "Naturalism as Convention: Subject, Style, and Artistic Self-Consciousness in Dutch Landscape." *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*. ed.Wayne Franits. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Gombrich, Ernst. *Gombrich on the Renaissance, Volume 1: Norm and Form*. London, 1993.

Grazzini, Antonfrancesco. *Il primo libro dell'opere burlesche*. Florence, 1552.

Gundersheimer, Werner L. " Trickery, Gender and Power: the *Discorsi* of Annibale Romei." *Urban Life in the Renaissance*. eds. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F.E.Weisman. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1989.

Harvey, E. Ruth. *The Inward Wits: Psychological Theory in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*. London: The Warburg Institute, 1975.

Hinks, David A.G. *Martianus Capella on Rhetoric*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Trinity College: Cambridge, 1935.

Hollanda, Francisco de. *Four Dialogues on Painting*. trans. Aubrey F. Bell. Westport, 1949.

Honorati, Maddalena Trionfi. "A proposito de 'lettuccio.'" *Antichita Viva*. XX.3 (1981).

Horace. *Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*. trans. H. Rushton Fairclough. Loeb Classical Library. 1971.

Hortis, Attilio. *Studi sulle opere latine del Boccaccio*. Treiste, 1879.

Huizinga, J. *The Waning of the Middle Ages*. New York, 1989.

Hunt, Tony. "*Prodesse et delectare*: Metaphors of Pleasure and Instruction in Old French." *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen*. 80 (1979).

Jacobs, Frederika. "Woman's Capacity to Create: The Unusual Case of Sofonisba Anguisola." *Renaissance Quarterly*. 47 (1994).

Janson, H.W. " 'The Image Made by Chance' in Renaissance Thought." *De Artibus Opuscula XL. Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*. New York, 1961.

Jeffery, David L. *Early English Lyric and Franciscan Spirituality*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975.

Jones, Pamela M. *Federico Borromeo and the Ambrosiana: Art Patronage and Reform in Seventeenth Century Milan.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.

Jordan, Constance. *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models.* Ithaca and London, 1990.

Junius, Franciscus. *The Painting of the Ancients.* 2 vols. eds. Keith Aldrich, Philipp Fehl, Raina Fehl. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.

Kelso, Ruth. *Doctrine for the Lady of the Renaissance.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1956.

Kemp, Martin. *The Science of Art: Optical Themes in Western Art from Brunelleschi to Seurat.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Klein, Robert and Zerner, Henri. *Italian Art: 1500-1600: Sources and Documents.* 2cd ed. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994.

Klibansky, Raymond, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl. *Saturn and Melancholy.* New York, 1964.

Lasareff, Victor. "A Dosso Problem." *Art in America.* XXIX (1949).

Lee, Rensselaer W. Ut Pictura Poesis*: The Humanistic Theory of Painting.* New York, 1967. (rpt. from *Art Bulletin.* 22 [1940])

Leisure in Art and Literature. eds. Tom Winnifrith and Cyril Barrett. London, 1992.

Leonardo da Vinci.*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci.* trans. Edward MacCurdy. New York, 1958.

---. *Treatise on Painting.* 2 vols.ed. A. P. McMahon. Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1956.

Lichtenstein, Jacqueline. *The Eloquence of Color: Rhetoric and Painting in the French Classical Age.* trans. Emily McVarish. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993

Lomazzo, G.P. *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge, Carvinge, Buildinge.* trans. Richard Haydock. Oxford, 1598 (from the facsimile edition reprinted by Da Capo Press: Amsterdam,1969).

---. *Trattato dell' arte de la pittura.* (Milan,1584) in *Scritti sulle arti.* 2 vols. ed. R. Ciardi. Florence, 1973.

Lowes, John Livingston. "The Loveres Maladye of Hereos." *Modern Philology.* 11 (1913-14).

Maclean, Ian. *The Renaissance Notion of Woman.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Mander, Karel van. *Den grondt der edel vry schilder-const.* 2 vols. trans. Hessel Meidema. Utrecht, 1973.

Manzalaoui, M.A., ed. *Secretum Secretorum: Nine English Versions.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

Medici, Lorenzo de.' *The Autobiography of Lorenzo de Medici the Magnificent: A Commentary on my Sonnets.* trans. James Wyatt Cook. Binghamton, 1995.

---. *Opere.* 2 vols. ed. A. Simioni. Bari, 1913-4.

---. *Tutte le Opere.* 2 vols. ed. Paolo Orvieto. Rome, 1992.

Mendelsohn, Leatrice. *Paragoni: Benedetto Varchi's Due Lezzione and Cinquecento Art Theory.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1980.

Michiel, Marc Antonio. "Der Anonimo Morelliano." *Quellenschriften zur Kunstgeschichte.* ed. T. Frimmel.Vienna, 1888.

Midelfort, H. C. Erik. *Mad Princes of Renaissance Germany.* Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994.

The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics. ed. Alex Preminger and T.V.F. Brogan. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

O'Laughlin, Michael. *Garlands of Repose: The Literary Celebration of Civic and Retired Leisure.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978.

Olsen, Glending. *Literature as Recreation in the Late Middle Ages.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1982.

Pächt, Otto. "Early Italian Nature Studies and the Early Calendar Landscapes." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes.* XIII (1950).

Panofsky, Erwin. *Perspective as Symbolic Form.* trans. Christopher S. Wood. New York, 1991.

Parker, Deborah. "Towards a Reading of Bronzino's Burlesque Poetry." *Renaissance Quarterly.* L.4 (1997).

Petrarch. *Petrarch's Lyric Poems: The Rime Sparse and Other Lyrics.* trans. Robert M. Durling. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

---. *Petrarch's remedies for Fortune Foul and Fair.* Vol. I-IV. trans. Conrad H. Rawski. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991.

---. *Rerum familiarium libri, I-VIII.* trans. Aldo S. Bernardo. Albany: SUNY Press, 1975.

Philostratus the Elder. *Imagines.* trans. Arthur Fairbanks. Loeb Classical Library. 1931.

Pico della Mirandola. *On the Dignity of Man.* trans. Charles Glenn Wallis, et al. New York, 1940.

Pino, Paolo. *Dialogo di Pittura: A Translation with Commentary.* Mary Pardo. Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Pittsburgh, 1984.

Plato. *Phaedrus*, trans. Harold North Fowler. Loeb Classical Library. 1914.

Pliny the Elder. *Natural History.* 10 vols. trans. H. Rackham. Loeb Classical Library. 1968.

Plutarch. *Moralia.* 15 vols. trans. F.C. Babbitt, et. al. Loeb Classical Library. 1922.

---. *Plutarch's Morals*, 4 vols. trans. W.W. Goodwin. Boston, 1874.

Poliziano, Angelo. *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano.* trans. David Quint. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1979.

Pollitt, J.J.. *The Ancient View of Greek Art: Criticism, History, and Terminology.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

Pomeroy, Sarah. *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves Women in Classical Antiquity.* New York, 1975.

Puttenham, George.*The Arte of English Poesie.* Eds. G.D. Willcock and Alice Walker. Cambridge, 1936.

Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria.* 4 vols. trans. H.E. Butler. Loeb Classical Library. 1920.

Reilly, Patricia. "The Taming of the Blue: Writing out Color in Italian Renaissance Theory." *The Expanding Discourse: Feminism and Art History.* eds. Norma Broude and Mary Garrard. New York, 1992.

Richard de Bury.*The Love of Books: The Philobiblon of Richard of Bury.* trans. E.C. Thomas. London, 1925.

Rodini, Robert. *Antonfrancesco Grazzini: Poet, Dramatist, and Noveliere, 1503-1584.* Madison, 1970.

Rosenmeyer, Thomas G. *The Green Cabinet: Theocritus and the European Pastoral Lyric.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Roskill, Mark. *Dolce's "Aretino" and Venetian Art Theory of the Cinquecento.* New York, 1968.

---. *The Languages of Landscape.* University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 1997.

Rubin, Patricia. *Giorgio Vasari: Art and History.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995.

Sabba di Castiglione, "Ricordo 109: On the Decoration of a House" *Ricordi.* fol. 56r to 60v.Venice, 1560.

Salman, Phillips. "Instruction and Delight in Medieval and Renaissance Criticism." *Renaissance Quarterly.* 32 (1979).

Sannazzaro, Jacapo. (Actius Syncerus) *Arcadia.* ed. Portirelli. 1806.

Schor, Naomi. *Reading in Detail: Aesthetics and the Feminine.* New York, 1987.

Seybolt, Robert Francis, trans. *The Manuale Scholarium.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921.

Siraisi, Nancy. *Medieval and Early Renaissance Medicine.* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990.

---. *Taddeo Alderotti and His Pupils.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Sohm, Philip. "Gendered Style in Italian Art Criticism from Michelangelo to Malvasia." *Renaissance Quarterly.* XLVII.4 (1995).

Stannard, Jerry. "Medieval Gardens and their Plants." *Gardens of the Middle Ages.* eds. Marilyn Stokstad and Jerry Stannard. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press,1983.

Strabo, *Geography.* 8 vols. trans. Horace L. Jones. Loeb Classical Library. 1934.

Summers, David. *Michelangelo and the Language of Art.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981.

Thomas á Kempis, *Of the Imitation of Christ.* trans.Thomas Rogers. London, 1584.

Thomas of Chobham. *Summa confessorum,* Art. VI, Dist. IV, q. 22, ed. F. Broomfield. Analecta Mediaevalia Namurcensis. 25. Louvain and Paris, 1968.

Thomas Aquinas, St. *Summa theologica,* Blackfriars texts and trans. 60 vols. New York, 1964.

Tiraboschi, Girolamo. *Storia della letteratura italiana.* VII-4. Florence, 1824.

Torresan, Paolo. *Il dipingere di Fiandra: La pittura neerlandese nella letteratura artistica di Quattro e Cinquecento.* Modena, 1981.

Toscan, Jean. *Le carnaval du langage. Le lexique erotique des poetes de l'equivoque du Burchiello a Marino (XV-XVII siecles).* 4 vols. Lille, 1981.

Thorndike, Lynn. "A Mediaeval Sauce-Book." *Speculum.* 9 (1934).

Thornton, Peter. *The Italian Renaissance Interior: 1400-1600.* New York, 1991.

Trexler, Richard. *Public Life in Renaissance Florence.* Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.

Vasari, Giorgio. *Der literarische Nachlass Giorgio Vasaris.* 3 vols. eds. Karl Frey and Hermann-Walther Frey. New York, 1923-40.

---. *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects.* 2 vols. trans. Gaston du Vere. Toronto, 1996.

---. *Vasari on Technique.* trans. Louisa S. Maclehose. New York, 1960.

---. *Le Vite de' piu Eccellenti Pittori, Scultori ed Architettori.* 9 vols. ed. Gaetano Milanesi. Florence, 1906.

Vickers, N.J. "Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme." *Critical Inquiry.* 8 (1981).

Virgil. *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid, 1-6.* trans. H.R. Fairclough. Loeb Classical Library. 1986.

Vitruvius. *De architectura libri deci traducti de latinio in vulgare.* trans. Cesare Cesariano. Como, 1521.

---. *On Architecture.* 2 Vols. trans. Frank Granger. Loeb Classical Library. 1931.

Walde, Alois, and J.B. Hoffman, *Lateinisches Etymologisches Worterbuch.* Heidelberg, 1938.

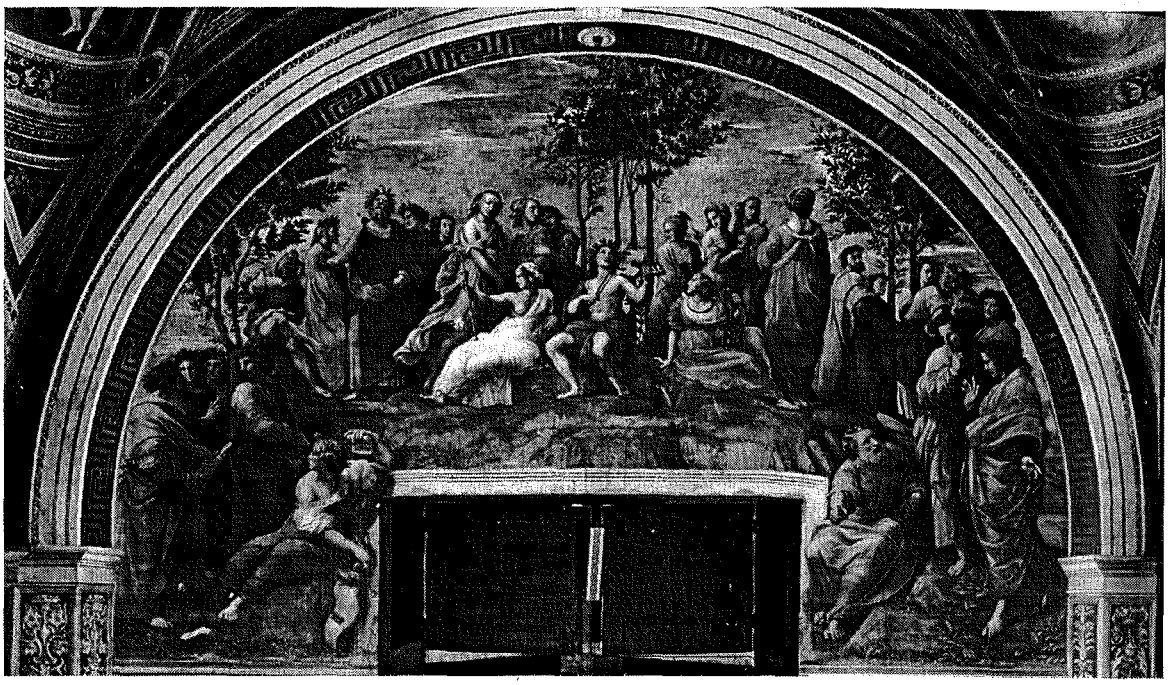
Wellek, Rene and Austin Warren. *The Theory of Literature.* New York, 1956.

Wittkower, Margot and Rudolph Wittkower. *Born Under Saturn: The Character and Conduct of Artists: A Documented History from Antiquity to the French Revolution.* Norton, 1963.

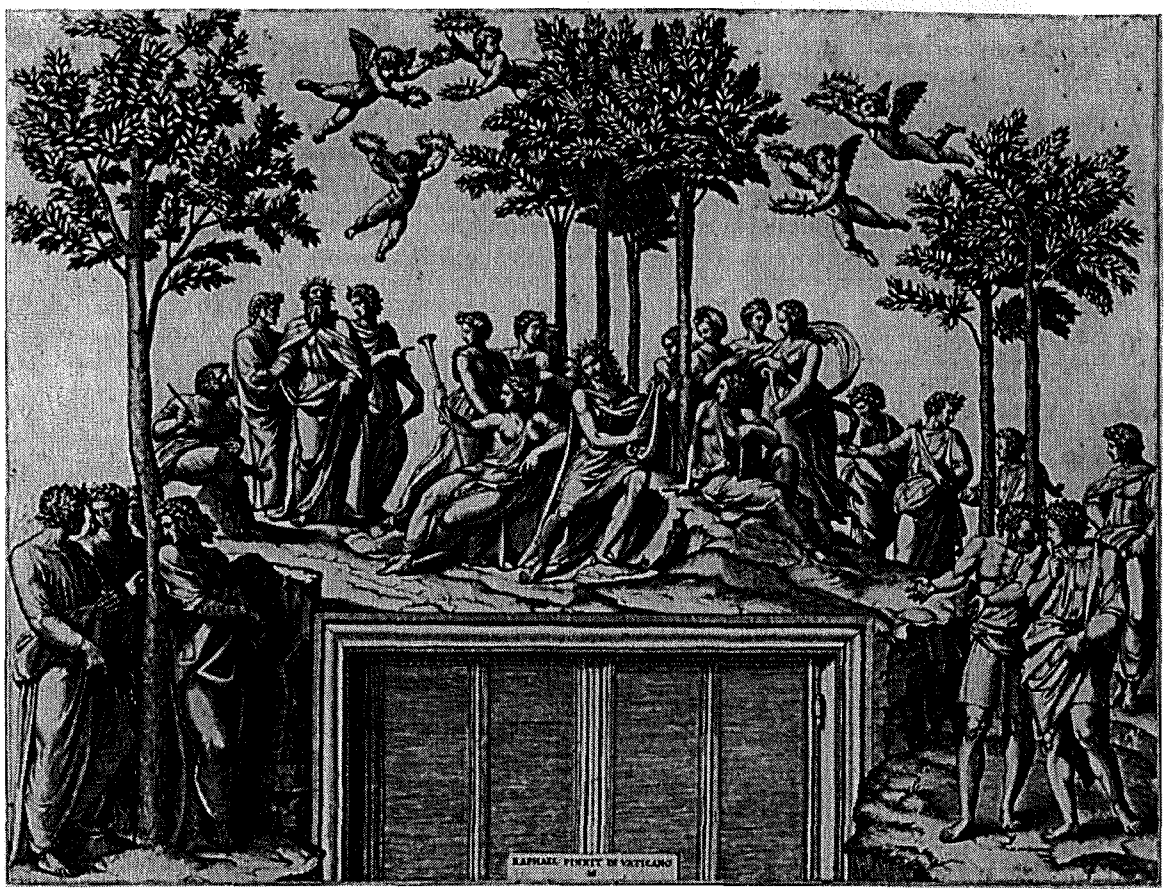
1. Giotto, *Stigmatization of St. Francis*, fresco, from *Scenes from the Life of St. Francis*, Bardi Chapel, Santa Croce, Florence (c.1320).

2. The Garden at Giorgio Vasari's House in Arezzo, Via xx settembre, (photograph).

3. Giorgio Vasari, *The Hermitage at Camaldoli*, drawing, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, Paris (c. 1536-7).



4. Raphael, *Parnassus*, fresco, Stanze della Segnatura, Vatican Palace, Rome (1510-1511).

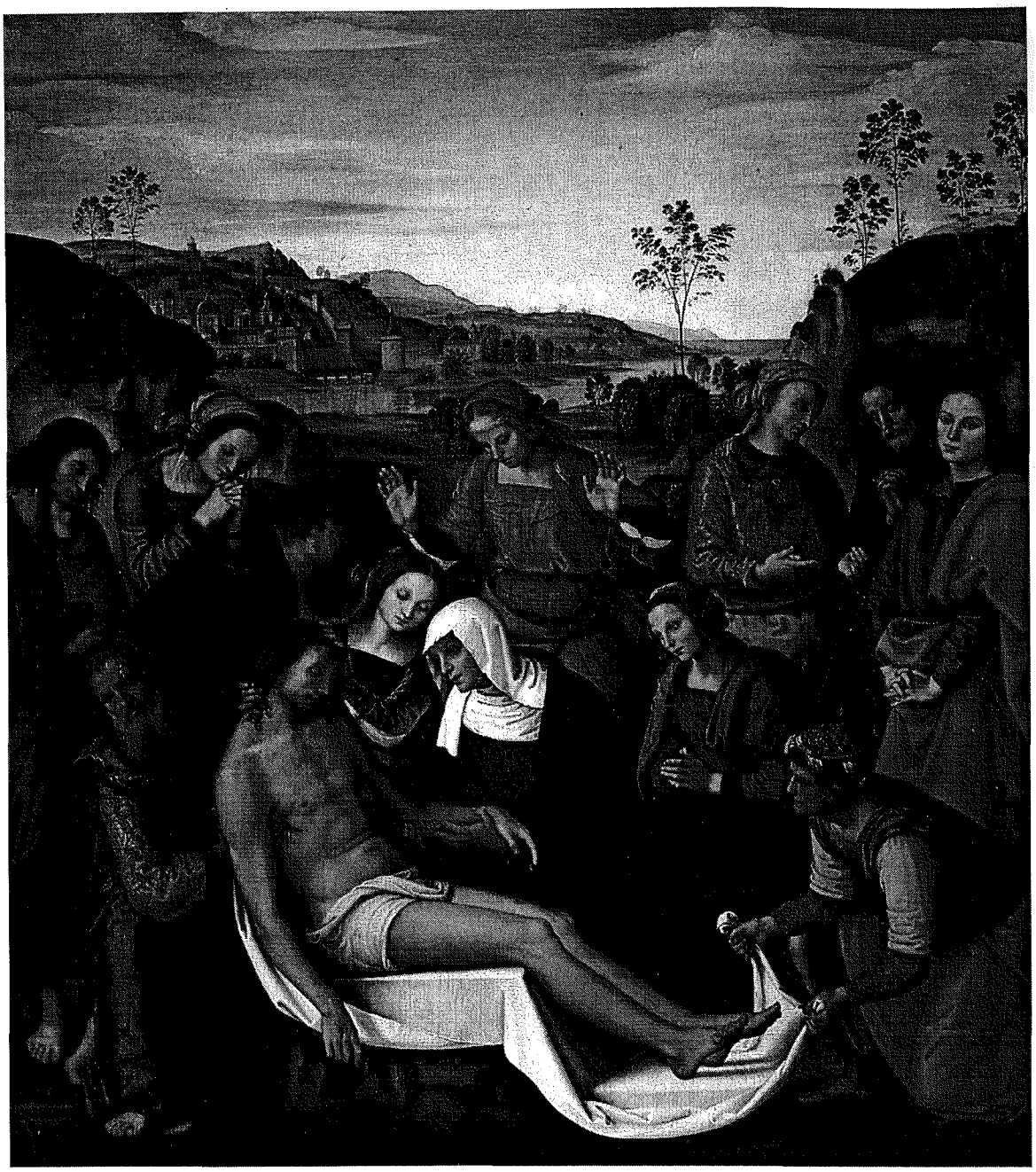


5. Marcantonio Raimondi after Raphael, *Parnassus*, engraving, Department of Prints and Drawings, British Museum, London (c.1518).

6. Paolo Uccello, *Battle of San Romano*, tempera on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (c.1445).

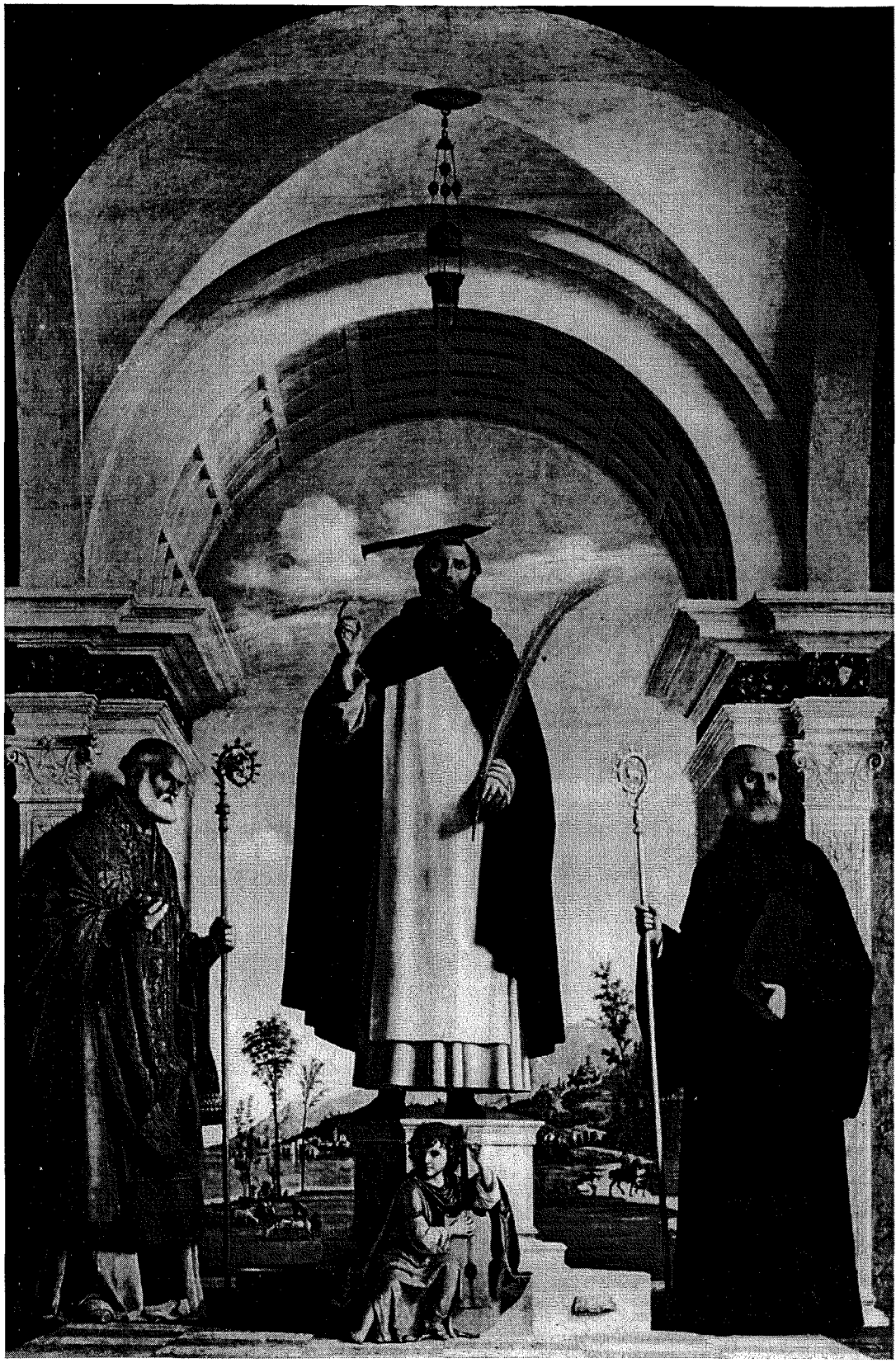
7. Alesso Baldovinetti, *Nativity*, fresco (experimental technique), Atrium, SS. Annunziata, Florence (1460-1462).

8. Andrea Mantegna, *Madonna and Child* ("Madonna of the Caves"), tempera on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (c. 1489-1490).

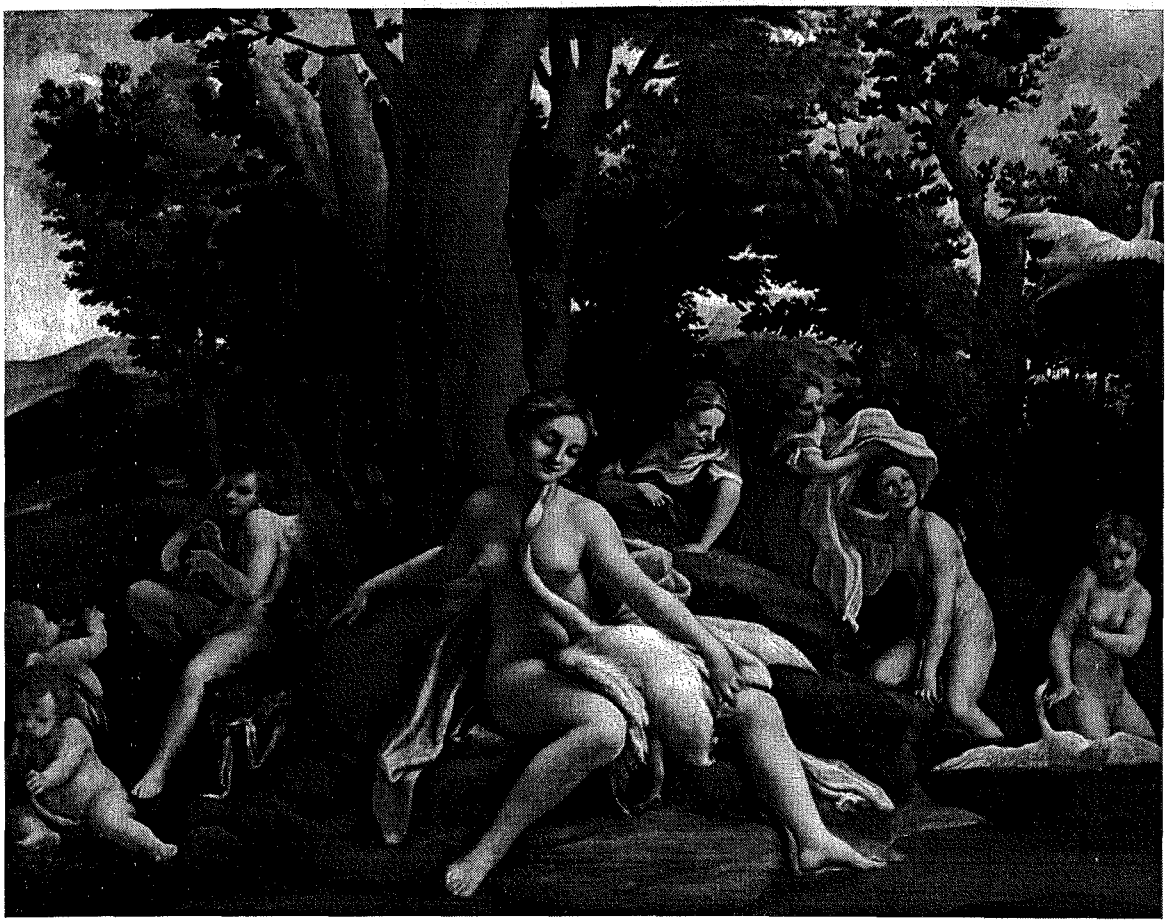


9. Pietro Perugino, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, oil on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (1495).

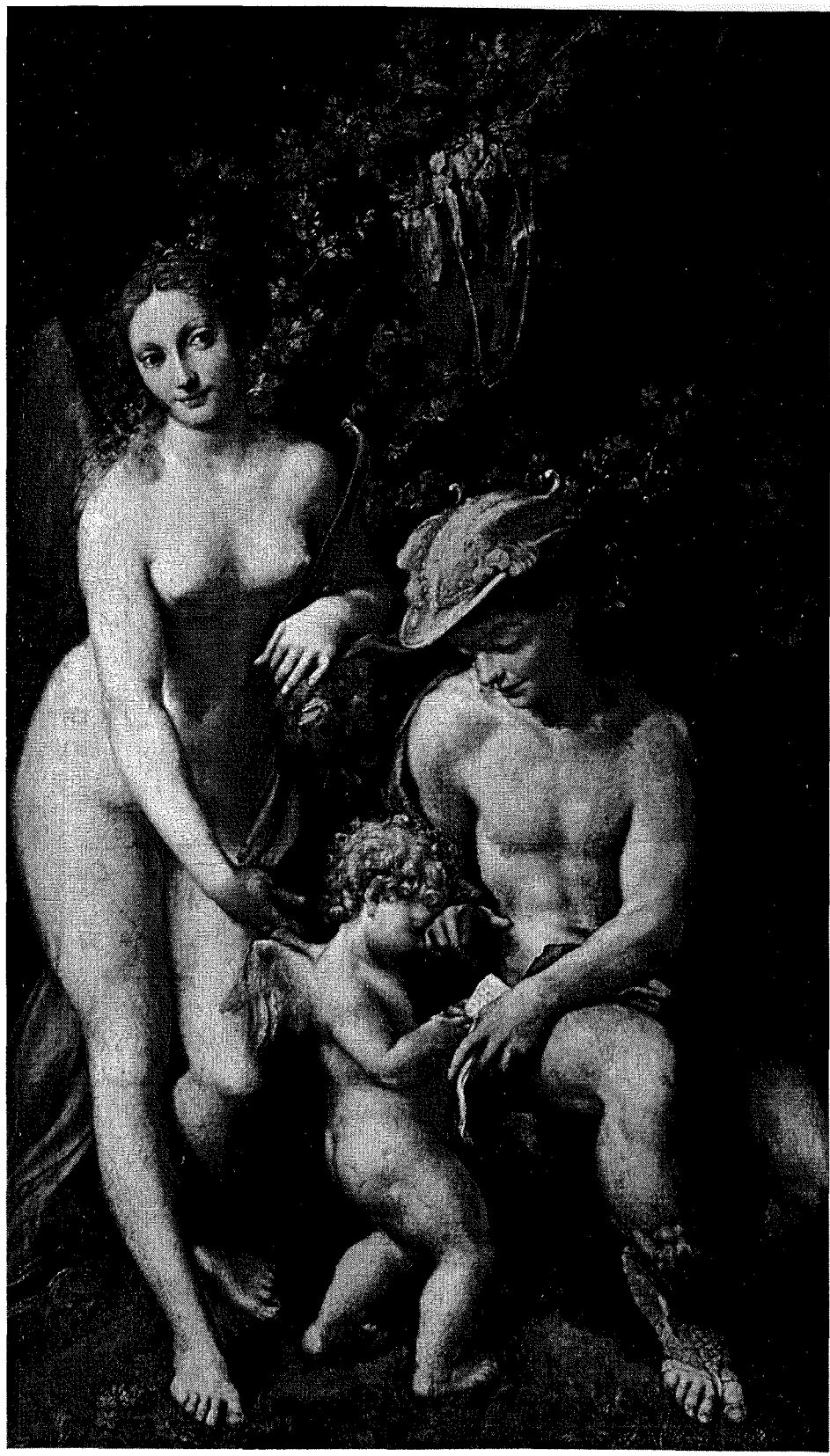
10. Vittore Carpaccio, *Preparation for the Entombment of Christ*, oil on panel, Ehemals Staatliche Museen, Berlin (c.1505-1510).



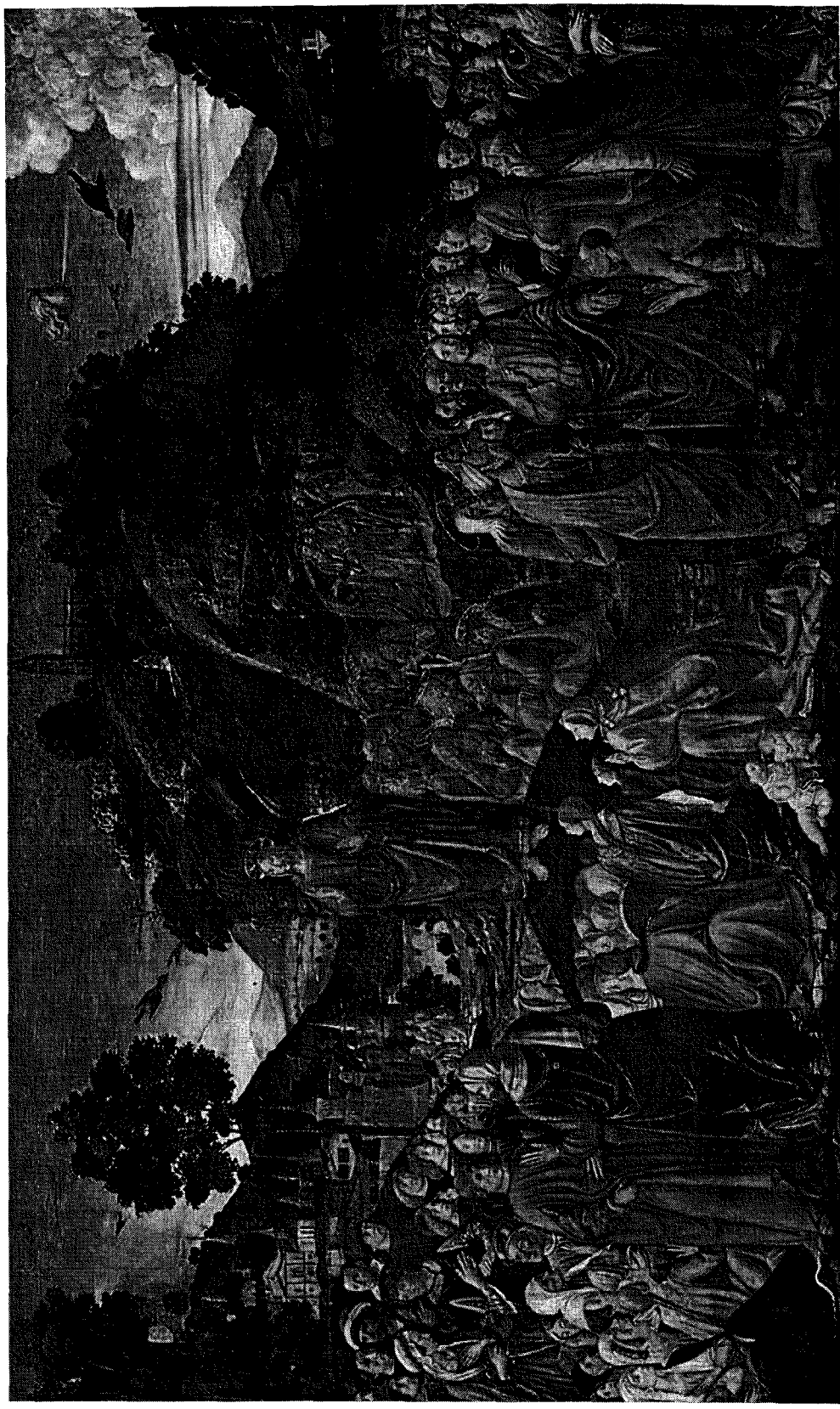
11. Cima da Conegliano, *St. Peter Martyr with SS. Nicholas and Benedict*, oil on panel, Brera, Milan (c. 1505-1506).



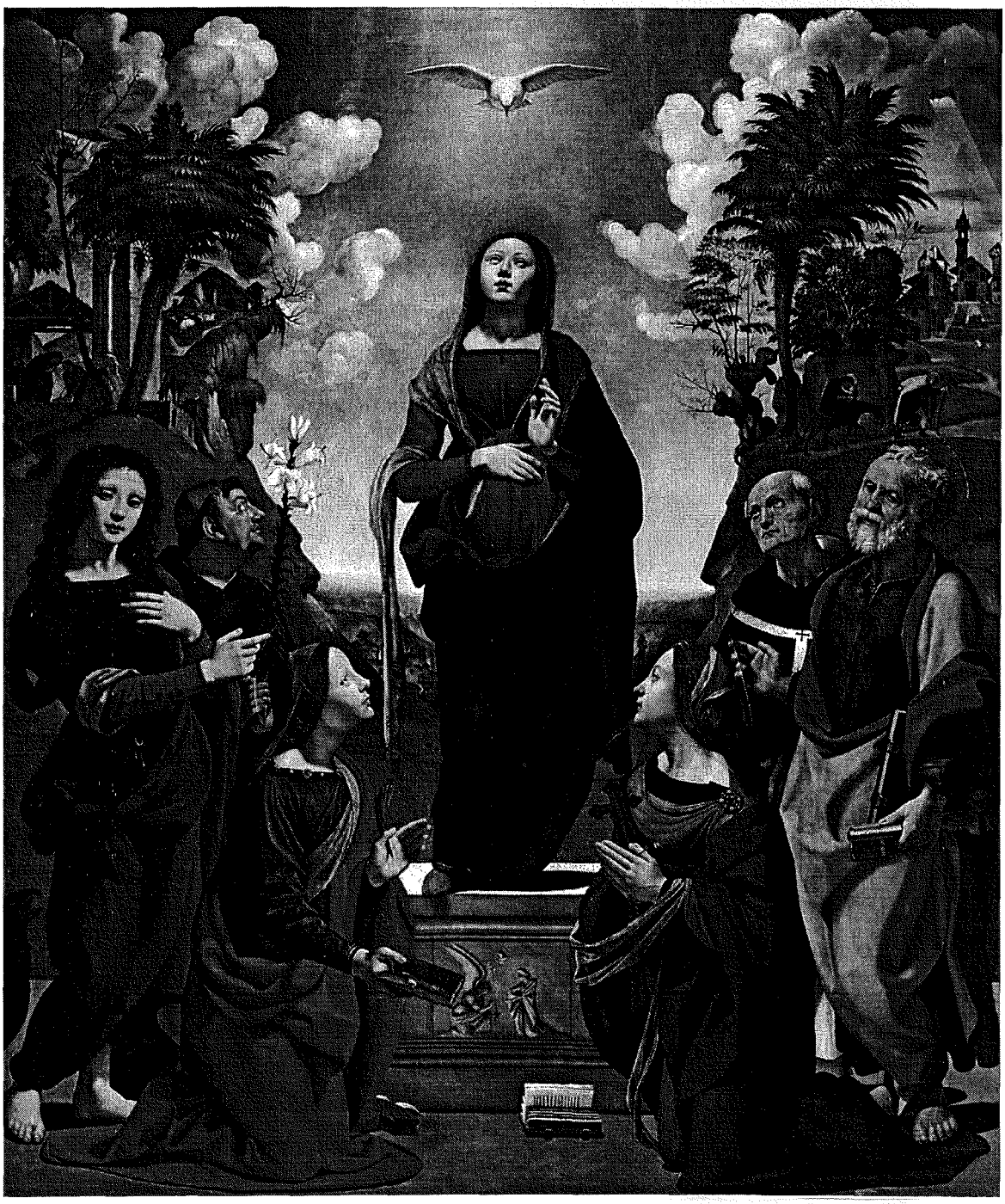
12. Correggio, *Leda*, oil on panel, Staatliche Museen, Berlin (c. 1530-1533).



13. Correggio, *Venus, Cupid and Mars*, oil on panel, National Gallery, London (c. 1505).



14. Cosimo Rosselli and Piero di Cosimo, *The Sermon on the Mount and the Healing of the Leper*, fresco, Sistine Chapel, Rome (1481-1482).



15. Piero di Cosimo, *The Incarnation with SS. Catherine of Alexandria, Margaret, John the Evangelist, Peter, Philip Benizzi and Antonius*, oil on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (c. 1505).

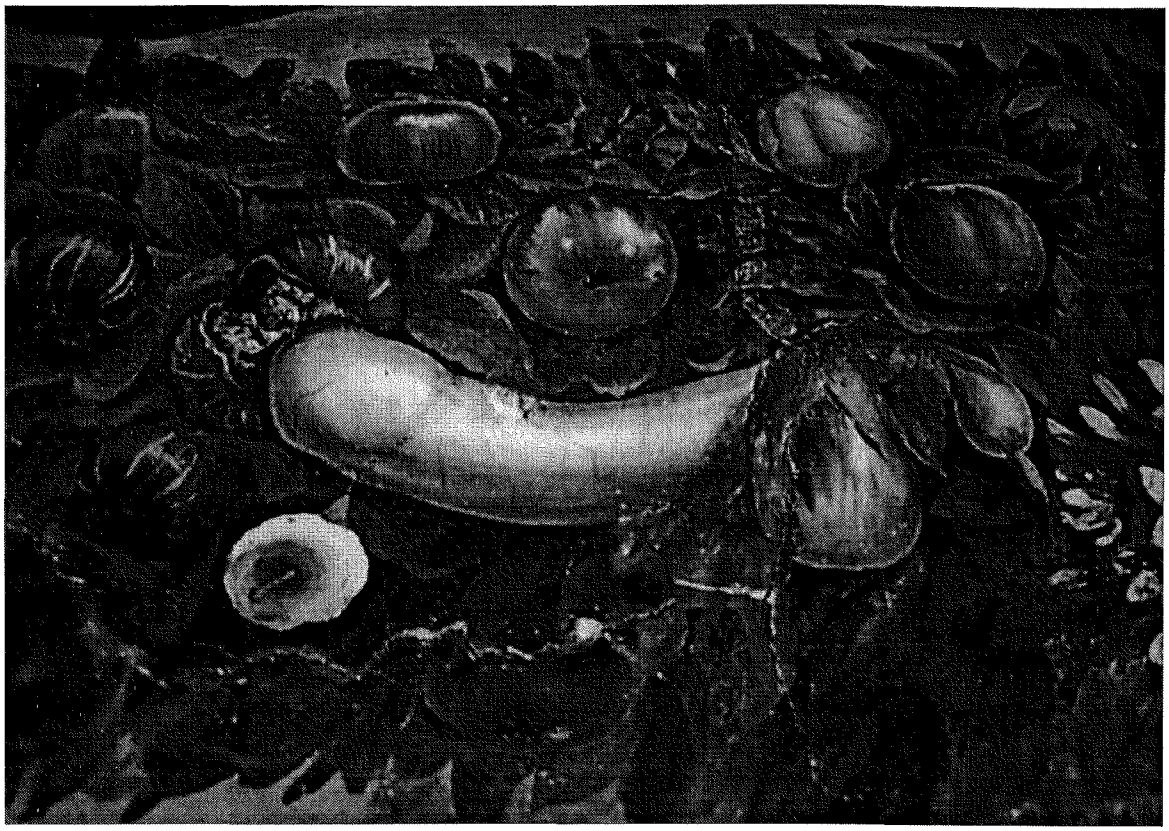
16. Piero di Cosimo, *The Liberation of Andromeda*, oil on panel, Uffizi Gallery, Florence (c.1515).

17. Raphael, *Madonna of the Meadows*, oil on panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (1505).

18. Polidoro da Caravaggio, *Noli me Tangere*, oil on plaster, S. Silvestro al Quirinale (c. 1525).

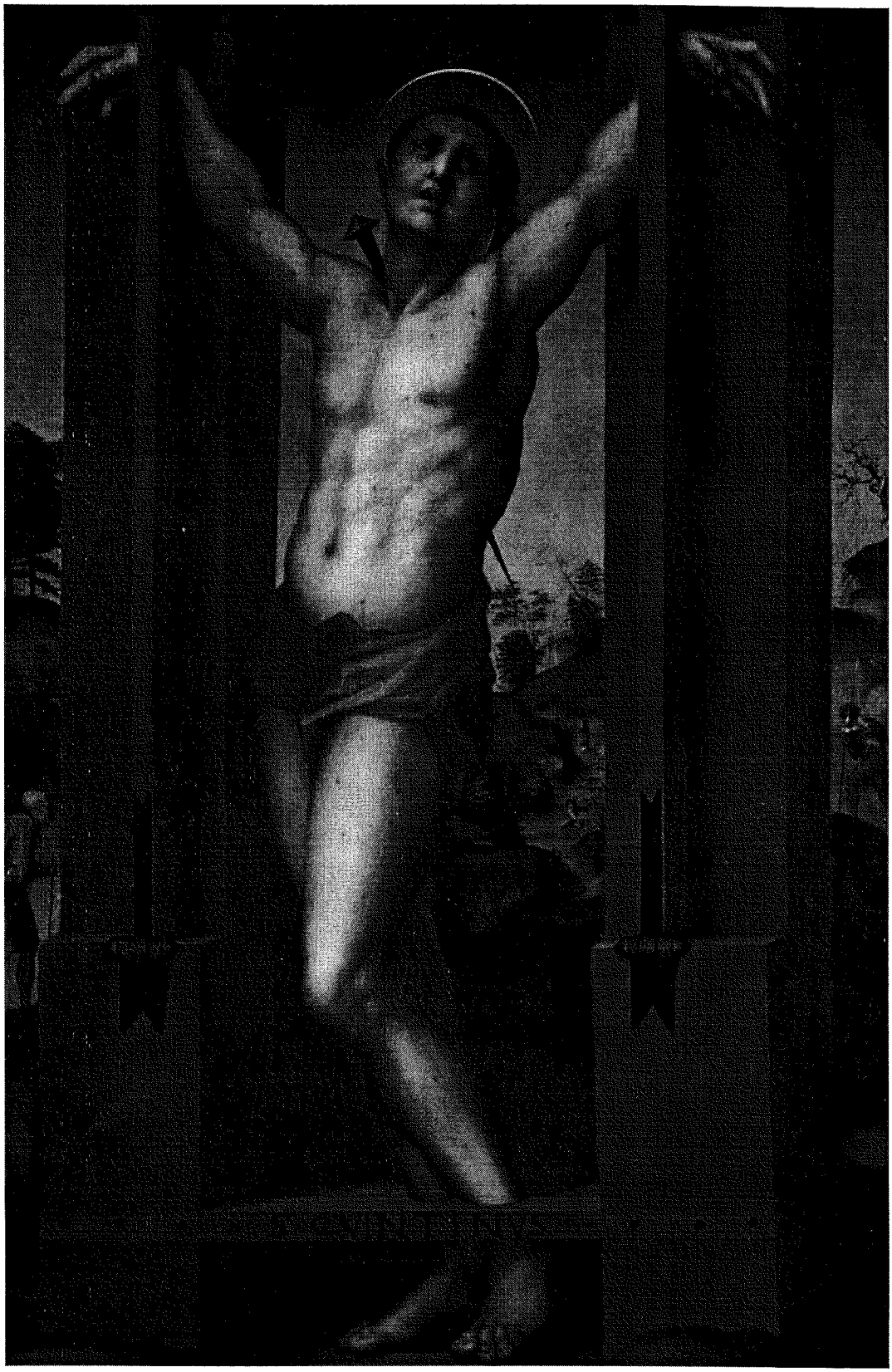
19. Bennozzo Gozzoli, *Procession of the Magi*, fresco, Chapel, Palazzo Medici-Riccardi, Florence (1459).

20. Domenico del Ghirlandaio, *Death and Assumption of the Virgin*, fresco, Tornabuoni Chapel, S. Maria Novella, Florence (c. 1490).

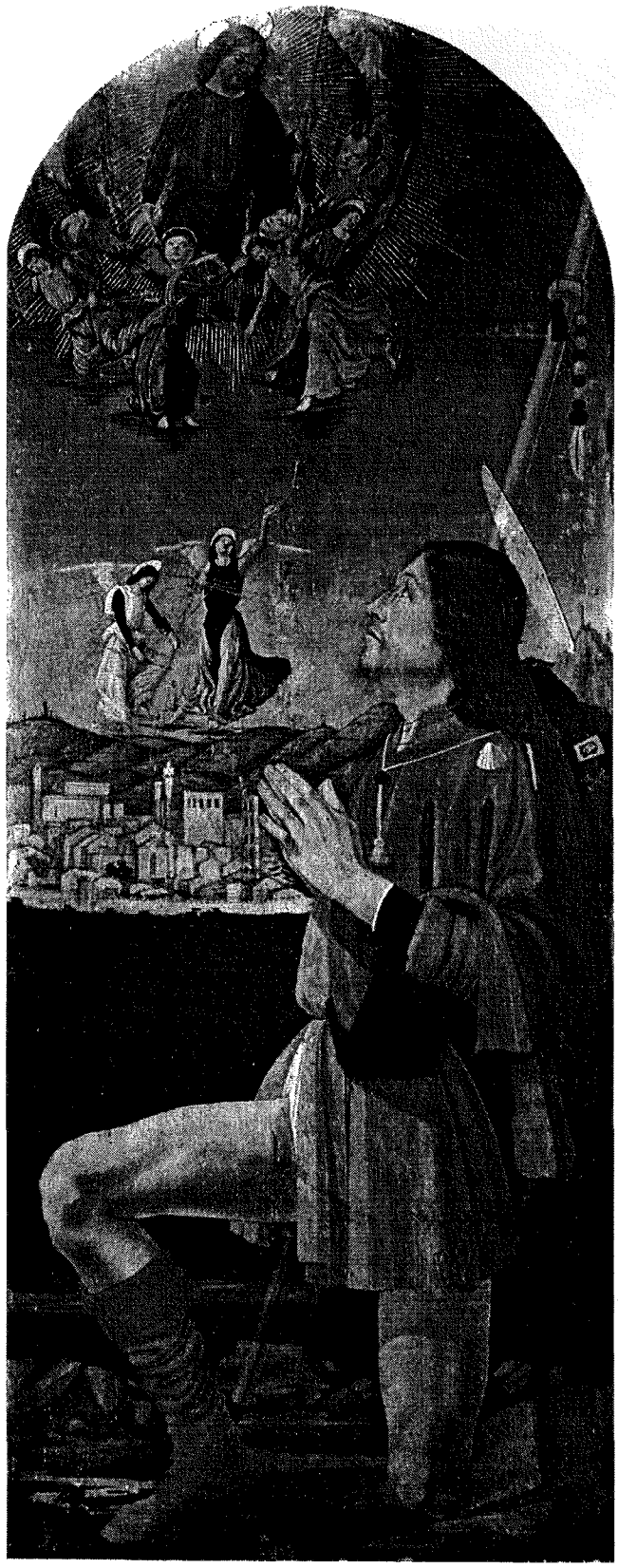


21. Giovanni da Udine, *Loggia of Cupid and Psyche, detail of garland*, fresco, Villa Farnesina, Rome (1517).

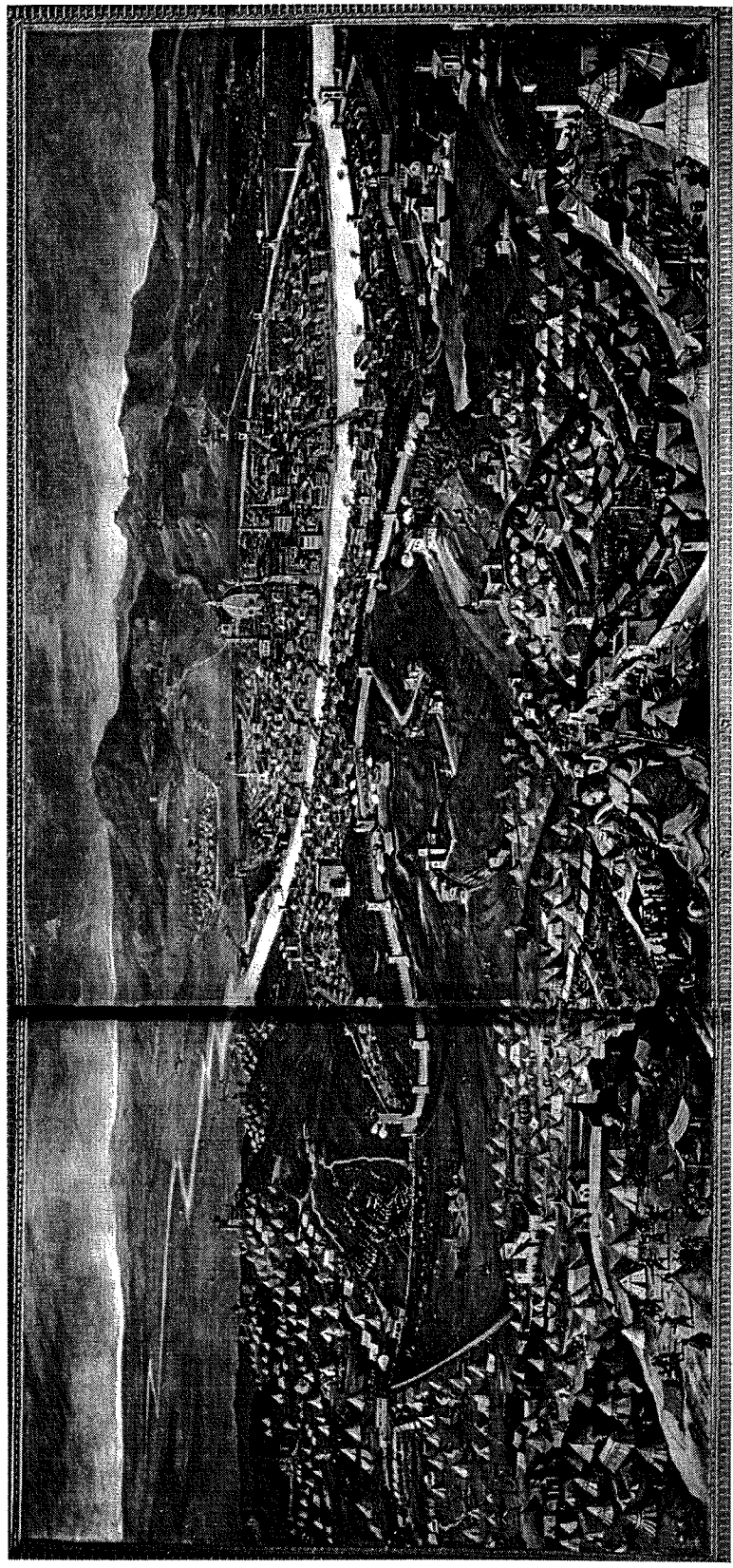
22. Dosso Dossi, *Melissa*, oil on canvas, Borghese Gallery, Rome (c.1520).



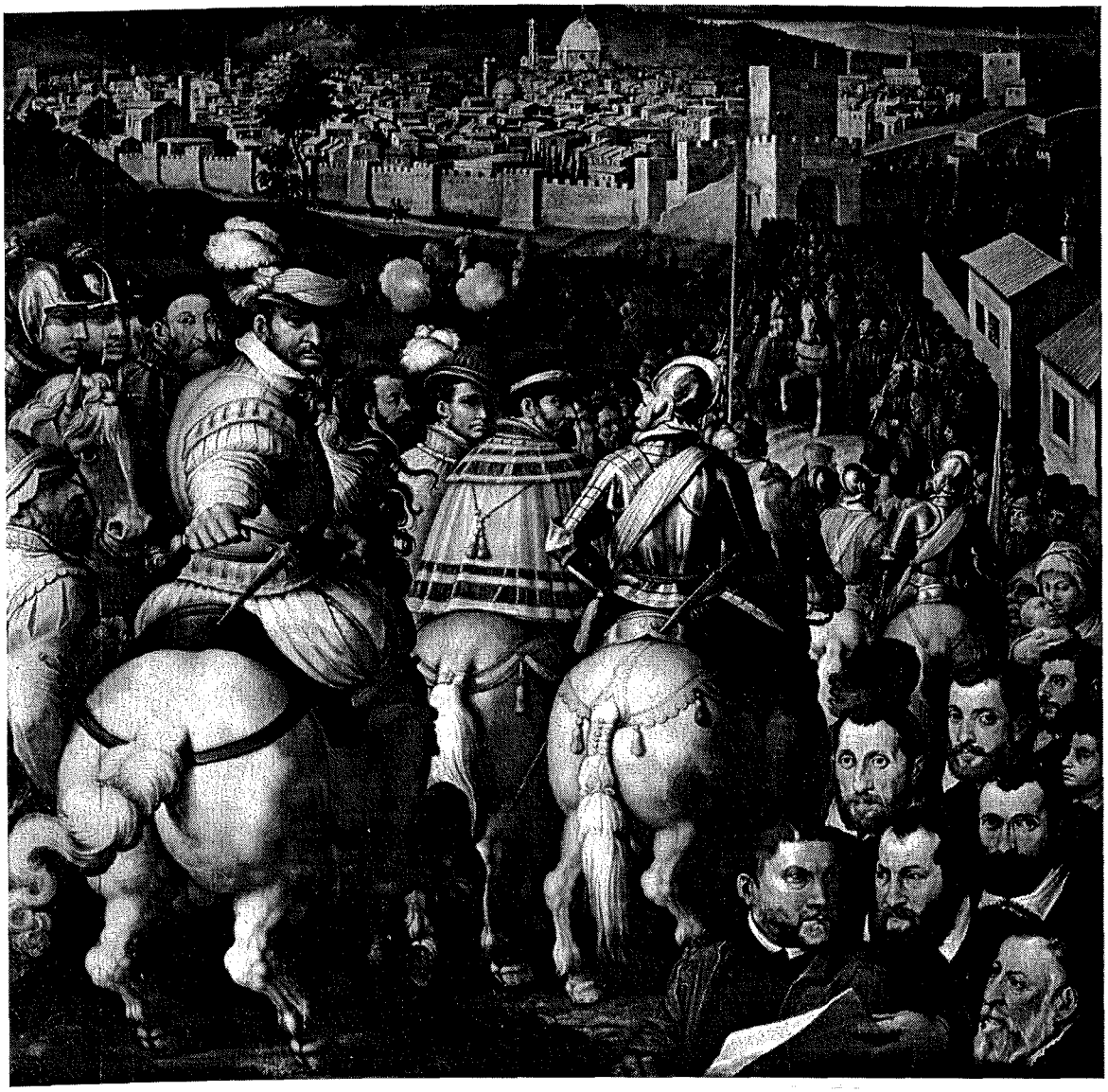
23. Pontormo, *St. Quentin*, oil on canvas, Pinacoteca Comunale, Sansepolcro (c. 1530).



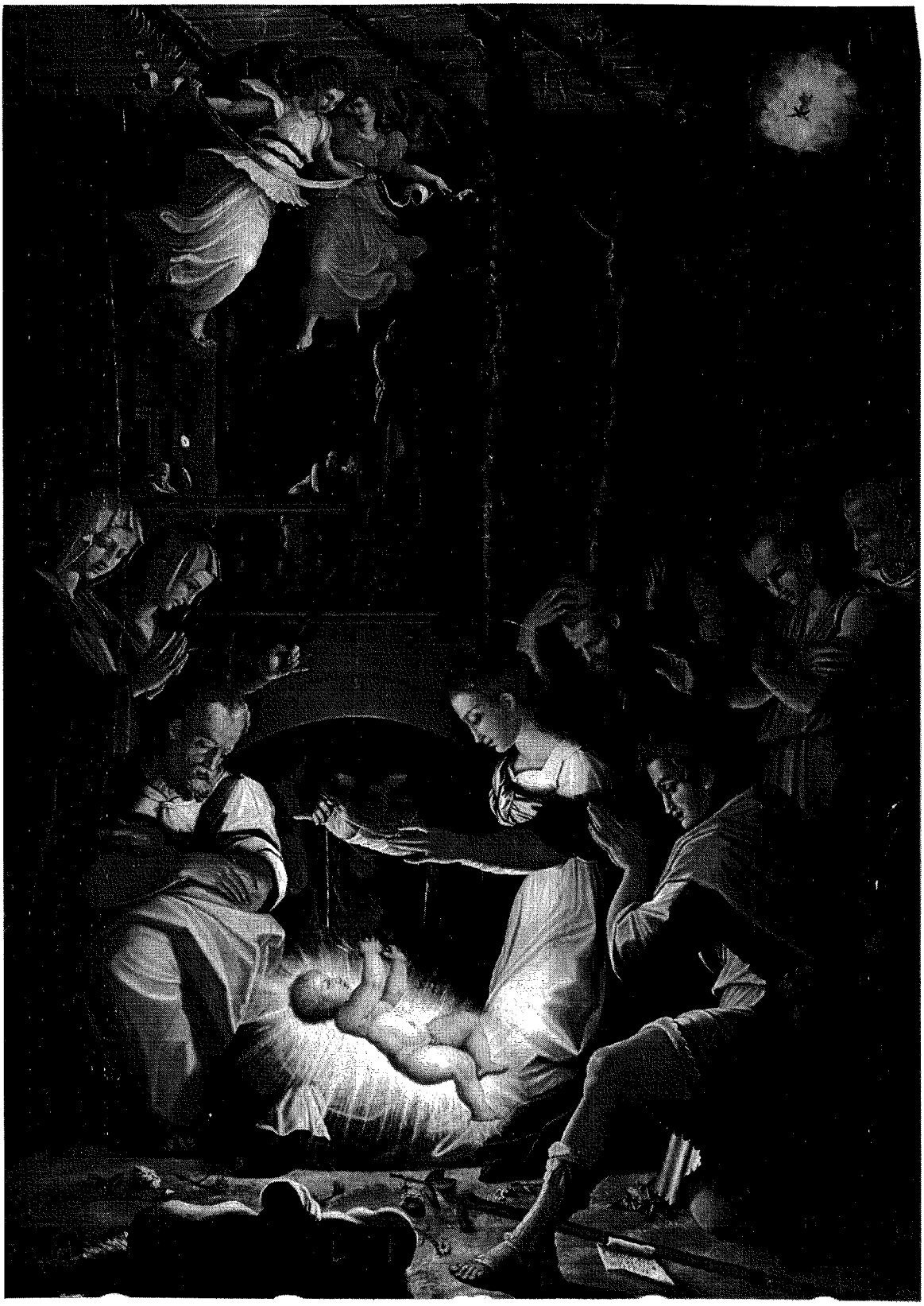
24. Bartolommeo della Gatta, *St. Roch Interceding for Arezzo During the Plague*, tempera on panel, Arezzo, Pinacoteca (c. 1468).



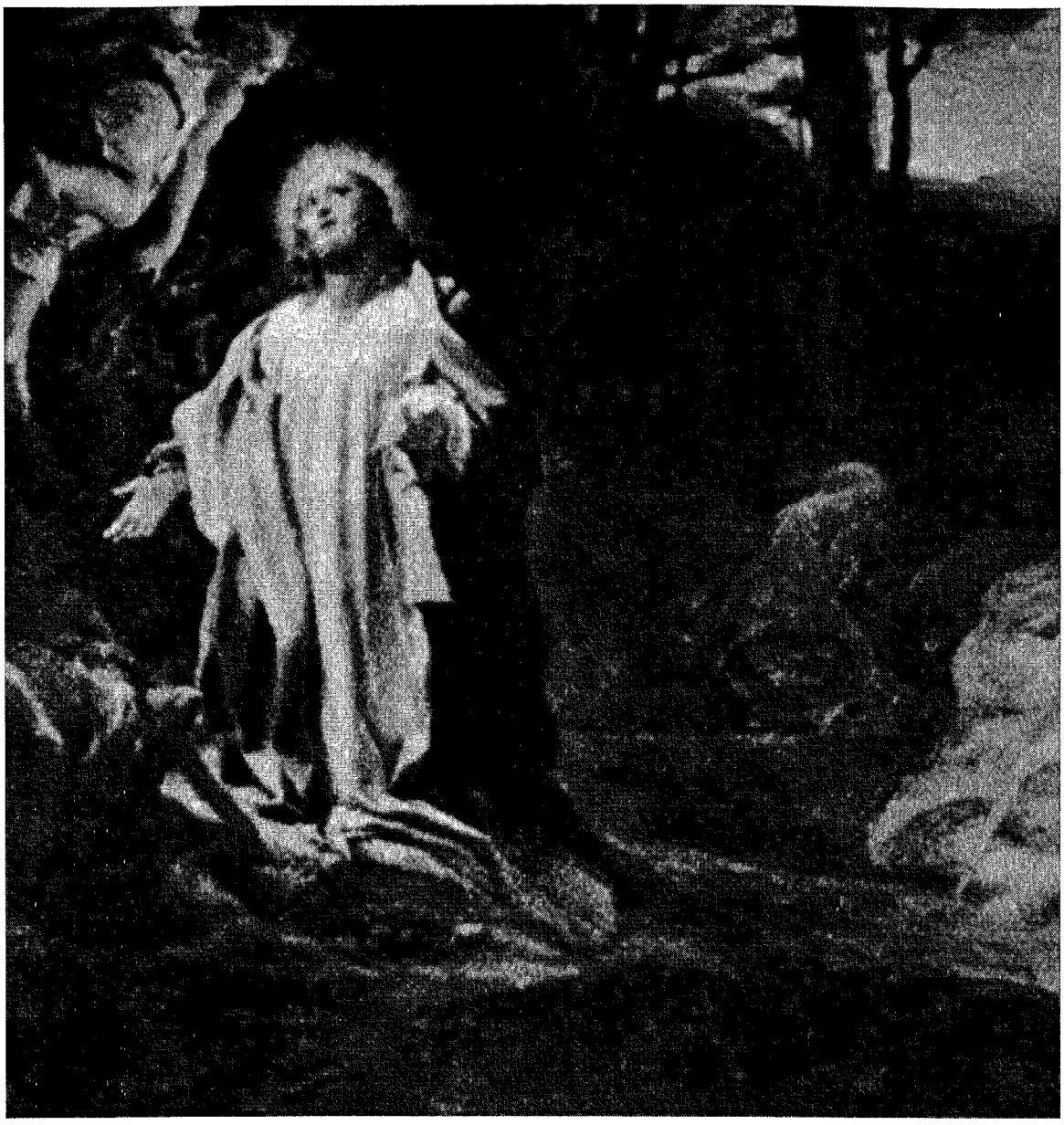
25. Giorgio Vasari, *Siege of Florence*, fresco, Sala di Clemente VII, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (1566-71).



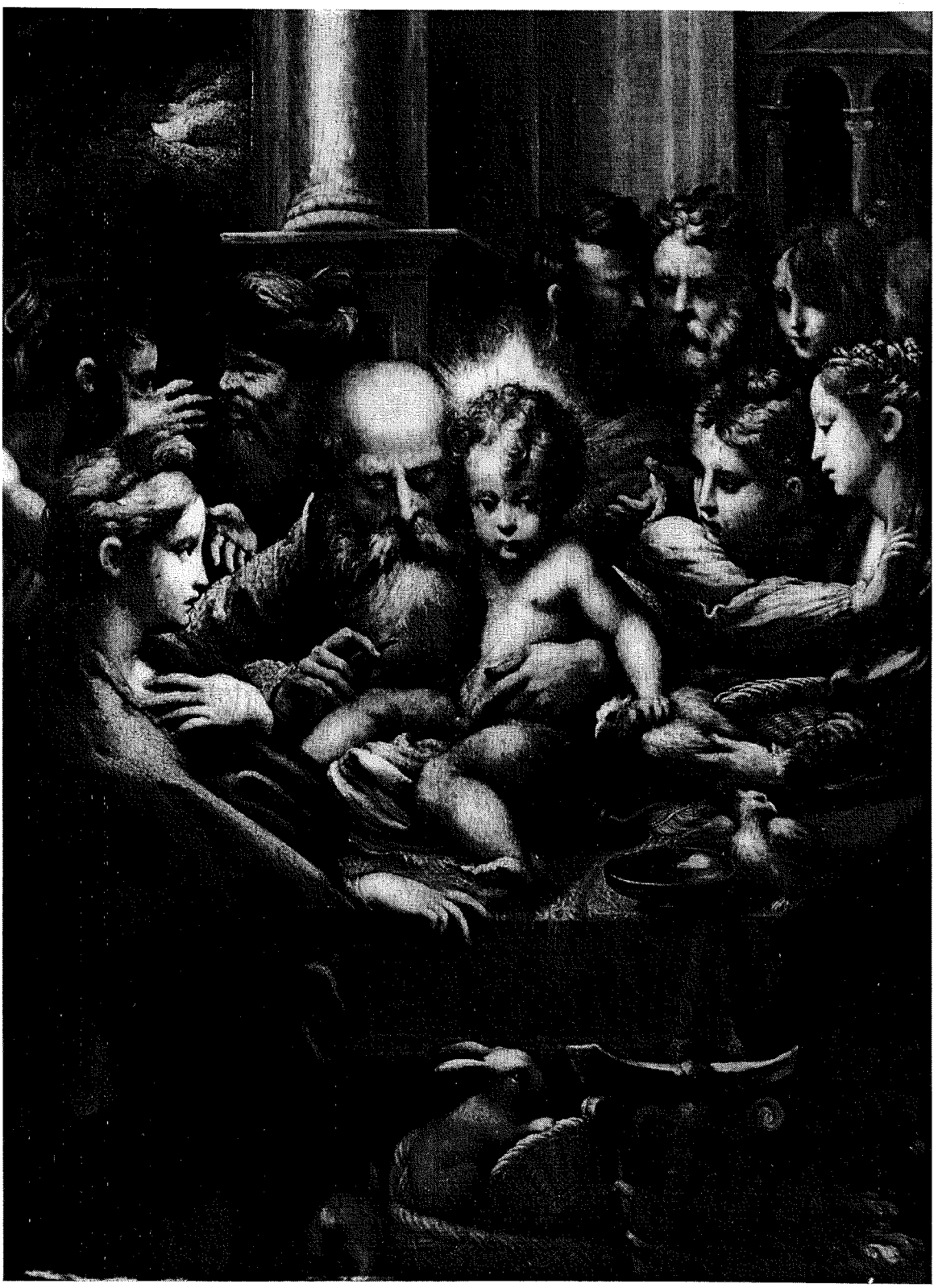
26. Giorgio Vasari, *Return of the Marquis of Marignano to Florence after the Conquest of Sienna (26 June 1555)*, fresco, Sala dei Cinquecento, Palazzo Vecchio, Florence (1563-1565).



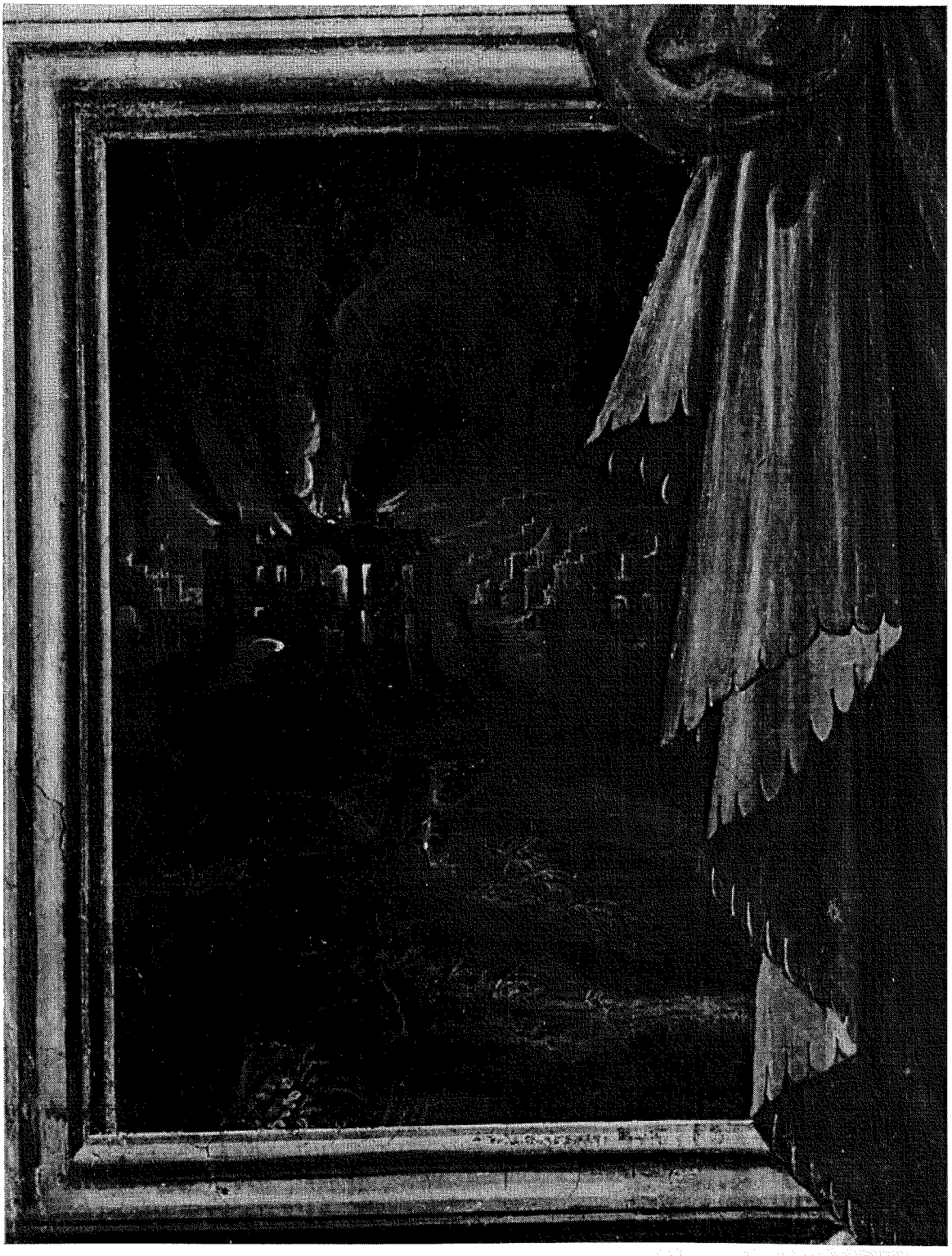
27. Giorgio Vasari, *Nativity*, oil on panel, Monastery of Camaldoli, Church of SS. Donatus and Hilarion (1538).



28. Correggio, *Christ in the Garden*, oil on panel, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (c.1528).



29. Parmigianino, *The Circumcision*, oil on panel, Detroit Institute of Arts, Michigan (c. 1522).



30. Giorgio Vasari, *Nocturnal Landscape with a Burning Building*, fresco, Sala del Trionfo della Virtu, Casa Vasari, Arezzo (c.1542).

31. after Titian, *Death of St. Peter Martyr*, engraving, (painting 1530, destroyed in fire, 1867).

32. Giorgio Vasari, *Pietá*, drawing, Cabinet des Dessins, Louvre, Paris (c.1542).