NICOLAS POUSSIN'S *REALM OF FLORA*: PAINTED POETRY IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

by

AMY MARIE COSTRINI

(Under the Direction of Shelley Zuraw)

ABSTRACT

In Nicolas Poussin's painting of the *Realm of Flora* in Dresden, the artist reinterprets Ovidian mythology in a manner inspired by the contemporary poetry of Giambattista Marino. The influence of Marino's refashioning of Ovidian poetry can also be seen in Gianlorenzo Bernini's sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne* in the Galleria Borghese and Caravaggio's painting of *Narcissus* in the Palazzo Corsini, Rome. However, only Poussin was inspired by the poetry of Marino to create his own visual poetry. As a result, the *Realm of Flora* is an invention of the artist's own mind, drawn from Ovidian mythology, composed according to the poetic theory of the modes, and guided by the principles of Marino's lyric poetry. This close examination of the *Realm of Flora* reveals the painting to be an example of painted poetry by Nicolas Poussin.

INDEX WORDS: Poussin, *Realm of Flora*, *Kingdom of Flora*, Marino, poetry, modes, Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne*, Caravaggio, *Narcissus*

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INTRODUCTION

The French painter Nicolas Poussin (b Les Andelys, Normandy 1594; d Rome, 1665) is an intriguing figure in seventeenth-century art. Poussin is often acclaimed as the father of French classicism and renowned for his strict adherence to classical models and intellectual essays in paint. This is an extraordinary fate, considering that Poussin spent almost his entire career working in Rome. A close examination of the famous painter reveals many similar anomalies in the persona of Poussin. In a century dominated mostly by artists who excelled in large-scale public commissions, Poussin's few forays in this area were ultimately considered failures. Yet, the French artist flourished, working for a small circle of intellectuals in Rome and Paris. Poussin's style fluctuated considerably throughout his career. His early work demonstrates an interest in Venetian art, with the coloring and composition of Titian as his guiding force. Yet, Poussin gradually abandons this approach in the mid-1630s for a classical style influenced by Raphael and Giulio Romano, as well as the study of antiquity. Poussin's religious beliefs are similarly unexpected. During the time when the glorification of the Catholic Church preoccupied the artists of Baroque Rome, Poussin sought personal refuge in Stoicism. This late antique philosophy emphasizes the importance of living one's life in accordance with nature and reason in the pursuit of virtue and tranquility. The artist's adherence to this philosophy is often called upon to explain the nature of some of Poussin's enigmatic works. In many ways, the character of Poussin, as well as his paintings, defies the common expectations of the Baroque French or Roman artist.

In the late eighteenth century, due to the intellectual nature of Poussin's images, the artist was attributed the epithet of 'peintre-philosophe'.[1] Yet, only recently has the poetic quality of many of Poussin's images become a focus of scholarship, inspiring the additional epithet of 'peintre-poète'.[2] Perhaps it is the existence of such seeming contrasts within the character of Poussin which explains his ability to conceive of a painting such as the *Realm of Flora* in the Staatliche Gemäldegalerie in Dresden (Figure 1).[3] A product of the artist's long residence in Rome, the painting is remarkable for its sheer beauty and inventive subject matter. The singularity of Poussin's image has caused the meaning of the painting to be sought in spheres of interest as remote as philosophy, metaphysics, and horticulture. The literary inspiration for the painting has been debated regularly and then consistently abandoned. It is my contention that the genius of Nicolas Poussin is revealed through the "marvelous artifice" of this image in conjunction with the understanding of the artist as a 'peintre-poète'.[4]

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[1] See Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin*. The A.W. Mellon Lectures in the Fine Arts 1958 (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1967), 3. This designation for Poussin was first suggested by the French art historian Jean Baptiste Louis George Séroux d'Agincourt in 1782.

[2] The term was first used by Oskar Bätschmann, "Apollon et Daphne de Nicolas Poussin: Le testament du peintre-poète," in *Actes du Colloque organize au Musée du Louvre,* ed. Alain Merot, 2 vols. (Paris: Musée du Louvre in association with La Documentation française, 1996), 543-53. Soon after, it was used by Claire Pace, "Nicolas Poussin: 'peintre-poète'?" in *Commemorating Poussin,* eds. Katie Scott and Genevieve Warwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 76-113.

[3] The painting is also sometimes referred to as the *Kingdom of Flora* in English. In French it is called *L'empire de Flore* and in German *Das Reich der Flora*. The painting is in oil on canvas and measures 131 cm in height by 181 cm long. Its accession number in the Staatliche Gemäldegalerie in Dresden is 719.

[4] Poussin used the term "marvelous artifice" to describe the labors of the poet in a famous letter to his friend and patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou. The significance of the painter's words will be discussed later in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION OF POUSSIN'S *REALM OF FLORA*

Visual Description of the *Realm of Flora*

The early history of the *Realm of Flora* is documented by the detailed description of the painting given by Bellori in his biography of Poussin, first published in 1672. There is considerable evidence that the two men enjoyed a close relationship in Rome, suggesting that the description of the painting was well informed.[5] It is, therefore, interesting to note that Bellori called the painting, 'La trasformatione de'fiori'.[6] Indeed, Bellori's title seems appropriate to the

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[5] On the relationship between Bellori and Poussin, see Olivier Bonfait and Pierre Rosenberg, "Nicolas Poussin," in *L'idea del bello: viaggio per Roman nel seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori*, exh. cat. Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, eds. Evelina Borea and Carlo Gasparri (Rome: Edizioni de Luca, 2000), 406-41; Janice Bell, "Introduction," in *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, ed. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4, who relates that contemporary sources record that Poussin and Bellori met at least every three days. For further information, see Kenneth Donahue, "'The Ingenious Bellori.' A Biographical Study," *Marsyas* 2 (1946): 119 quoting from Anatole de Montaiglon, *Correspondance des directeurs del' Académie de France à Rome avec les surintendants des bâtiments* 18 vols. (Paris: Charavay Frères, 1895), vol. 1, 378. Bellori credited Poussin with the inspiration to incorporate the descriptions of paintings into the biographies of artists, see Martina Hansmann, "Con modo nuovo li descrive: Bellori's Descriptive Method," in *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, ed. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 233; and Giovanna Perini, "Il Poussin di Bellori," in *Poussin et Rome*, eds. Olivier Bonfait, Christopher Luitpold Frommel, Michel Hochmann, and Sebastian Schütze (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1996), 293-308.

[6] Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*...(Rome: Stab. Arti Grafiche E. Calzone, 1931), 441-2:

> *La Trasformatione de'fiori*.
> Rappresentasi, in un giardino, Narciso, Clitia, Aiace, Adone, Giacinto, e Flora,
> che sparge fiori, danzando con gli Amori. Siede Narciso appresso una delle
> Naiadi ninfe, che gli tiene avanti l'urna piena d'acqua, in cui egli si specchia,
> e si vagheggia, e con le braccia aperte esprime il vano amore di se stesso,
> onde in fiore, morendo fù cangiato. Evvi Clitia rivolta la faccia verso il Sole amato,
> che scorre in alto nel carro, entro la fascia del Zodiaco; mentre ella sollevando una mano,

Realm of Flora, which depicts a garden setting that is presided over by the image of Flora. As the goddess of flowers, she is the central figure dressed in green, sprinkling flower petals. She lifts her right leg in a dancing pose and turns her joyful gaze downward and to the right, toward the inhabitants of her garden. Behind the goddess, a circle of putti join hands as they dance in celebration with the goddess. However, Flora's domain is no common flower-garden; rather, it is filled with depictions of the tragic episodes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which humans are transformed into flowers upon their deaths. The god Apollo also watches over the garden, as he drives his four-horse chariot, encircled by the zodiac, across the sky. He is present as both a symbol of the warmth of spring and the passage of time and the seasons, as well as an actor because of the role he played in the tragic deaths of many of the transforming figures. To the far left of the painting, a herm variously identified as Pan or more likely Priapus, the god of gardens and fertility, completes the trio of attending immortals. The identification of the herm as Priapus is supported by the surrounding baskets of flowers, which are a specific characteristic of the god.[7] As the god of fertility, Priapus is usually depicted with an oversized phallus, as an indication of his virility. However, Poussin has chosen to minimize this attribute, as well as discretely cover the genitals of the herm with leaves. The significance of the presence of Priapus, as the god of fertility, is also tied to the representation of the season of spring. Behind the herm

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pare che mal possa con gli occhi sostenere il raggio. Dietro vi è Aiace furioso,
che morendo, abbandona il fianco sù la punta della spada: egli è ignudo,
ma l'elmo che hà in capo, e le armi à suoi piedi, lo dimostrano guerriero.
Il bell'Adone si riconosce all'hasta, & à i cani, in habito di cacciatore;
egli mesto addita il fianco ignudo ferito dal Cinghiale. Seco pare si dolga il bel Giacinto,
volgendo una mano al capo, dove fù percosso à morte, nell'altra tiene,
e mira il fiore nel quale fu mutato.

Bellori's description provides the basic elements of the composition with only a few oversights. He failed to identify the two embracing figures in the far right foreground of the painting as Crocus and Smilax. Also, Echo, absent from his description, is referred to as an anonymous nymph.

[7] Blunt, 1967, 141.

of Priapus is an ancient sarcophagus with a relief that is difficult to decipher.[8] The sarcophagus is covered with baskets full of flowers, signifying the bounty of spring.

Directly in front of the herm, is the figure of Ajax, naked save for his headpiece, surrounded by his cast-off armor. He impaled himself upon his sword after losing a contest with Ulysses over the arms of Achilles.[9] According to Ovid, upon his death Ajax was transformed into the purple hyacinth flower. Poussin, however, depicts a white carnation at the base of Ajax's sword, rather than a hyacinth, for purposes which will become obvious as we explore the rest of the figures in the painting. The suffering of Ajax is clearly depicted by his anguished expression, as the white carnation awaits the tint of his spilled blood. To the right of Ajax is the figure of Clytie, a mortal who pined away due to the unrequited love of Apollo. She was transformed into the heliotrope flower, whose gaze follows the path of the sun in the sky, as Clytie was destined to do until her death.[10] Poussin depicts her with her left arm raised, as she gazes at Apollo's chariot. She is dressed in the muted yellow of the sunflower into which she will be transformed. It is almost as if we will soon witness the transformation of her human flesh into the open-faced sun-flower. Directly behind her is a large basket filled with heliotropes, which further define her narrative for the viewer.

In front of Clytie, are the paired figures of Echo and Narcissus, whose famous story is well-known. The nymph Echo was cursed by the goddess Juno so that she was only able to repeat words that were spoken to her. She fell desperately in love with the youth Narcissus, but was unable to communicate with him. Eventually, she pined away and her body was transformed

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[8] George Kauffmann, "Poussin's 'Primavera'," in *Walter Friedlaender zum* 90, eds. George Kauffmann, Walter Friedlaender, and Willibald Sauerländer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1965), 92, has suggested that the relief depicts the rape of Persephone.

[9] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, trans. and ed. Frank Justus Miller (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Loeb Classical Library, 1916), Book XIII, 380-98.

[10] Ibid., Book IV, 256-70.

into a rock. She appears only as an accessory figure to Narcissus, to whom she offers the urn of water between her legs. Consequently, she is sometimes referred to as a water nymph, rather than Echo.[11] Narcissus not only spurned the love of Echo, but that of all the others who loved him and for this he was punished by the god Nemesis. The youth fell in love with his own reflection and eventually died, his body being transformed into the Narcissus flower.[12] Poussin depicts the boy on his knees, absorbed by the reflection of his own face, which is also visible to the viewer in the neck of the urn. Between the kneeling Narcissus and the watery urn, the flowers which bear his name are already springing from the ground.

To the right of Flora is the figure of Hyacinthus, whose untimely death was caused by his love for Apollo as well. Although Apollo returned the love of Hyacinthus, the mortal's fate was sealed by the jealousy of Zephyrus, the god of the west wind. While Apollo was throwing a discus with his beloved, Zephyrus caused the wind to shift so that Hyacinthus was struck in the head and killed. As Hyacinthus was dying, Apollo promised him immortal life and from his blood grew the hyacinth flower, marked with the letters "AI AI", representing an exclamation of grief by Apollo.[13] Poussin depicts Hyacinthus with his left arm raised to touch the location of his mortal blow, while he gazes at the bunch of hyacinth flowers in his right hand, which were born from his flesh. The presence of Hyacinthus explains why Poussin does not associate the flower by this name with Ajax; otherwise, both figures would be transformed into the same flower in the painting.

To the right of Hyacinthus, is the figure of Adonis, wrapped in a swag of light blue drapery and accompanied by two hunting dogs. The fate of Adonis was also tied to the immortal

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[11] In Bellori's description of the painting he referred to this figure as "una delle Naiadi ninfe" rather than Echo. Also, Thomas Worthen, "Poussin's Paintings of Flora," *Art Bulletin* LXI, 4 (1979): 583-4 considers this to be a water nymph.
[12] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book III, 344-510.
[13] Ibid., Book X, 181-213.

gods, as he was loved by Venus. While hunting a wild boar, Adonis was wounded in the thigh by the beast and died. Venus was so distraught that she made the anemone flower spring from the blood of her beloved.[14] In the *Realm of Flora*, Adonis is depicted holding his hunting spear with his left hand, while his right hand caresses his wounded thigh. In the same manner as Hyacinthus, he gazes downward towards his thigh, where the string of anemone flowers appears, as if born from his exposed wound. In the far right foreground, the golden-haired youth Crocus is seated with his love Smilax sprawled before him. According to Ovid, both were punished for their unfulfilled passionate love and turned into flowers. [15] They gaze at each other, as Smilax touches the flower in Crocus' hand, which represents his transformation. They appear to be united now, although they were unable to enjoy each other's love in life.

Poussin places his human flowers in a setting comprised of rising rocky cliffs on the left creating a natural fountain. This contrasts sharply with the open and distant view of the right half of the painting, obstructed only by the figures and the flowering pergola. The pergola defines the space of the garden, beginning with an open arch on the far right and leading the viewer back into the canvas, before turning to the left at a ninety-degree angle and continuing across the canvas toward the rocks. In the painting's foreground, before the figure of Ajax, a cornucopia constructed of a large horn filled with flowers symbolizes the fertility of the garden and the season of spring. In the far right foreground corner, a lounging putto twists his body, with his back toward the viewer, in order to smell a flower, as his arm rests upon an arrow sheath.[16] Each

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[14] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book X, 708-39.
[15] Ibid., Book IV, 283
[16] Although depicted from behind, the putto is posed in a manner similar to the central putto in Raphael's *Triumph of Galatea* ca. 1513 in the Villa Farnesina, Rome. Poussin would later utilize many aspects of Raphael's composition, including the central putto riding the dolphin, in his *Triumph of Venus* ca. 1635-36 in the Philadelphia Museum of Art, See *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, exh. cat. Paris, Grand Palais, ed. Pierre Rosenberg (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1994), no. 54.

of these aspects of the painting has been assimilated with greater or lesser emphasis to construct numerous theses concerning the exact meaning of Poussin's novel composition.

On the most fundamental level, the painting is understood as a depiction of the season of spring, characterized by the renewal of floral life and fostered by the dancing Flora. In most instances, this straightforward interpretation is dismissed because of the ingenuity and richness of the painted composition. Even the overall mood of the painting is interpreted variously as melancholic and sorrowful or, at the other extreme, joyous and lighthearted. Certainly, the presence of Flora, scattering petals over her garden, encourages the understanding of the painting as a depiction of the renewal of nature in springtime. Similarly, the presence of Apollo and Priapus enhance the general suggestion of growth and life. And yet, this tender and nourishing garden is filled with death, most painfully apparent in the figure of Ajax. What is the viewer to believe when such overt death is combined with such explicit life force? Are we to feel comforted that these tragic mortals are fated to become ever-renewing floral entities or, compassion, that by virtue of the whim of the gods their human bodies must be sacrificed for their ephemeral flower form? Panofsky's reaction to the painting reveals one resolution to this dilemma, faced by each viewer of Poussin's image: "The extinction of one beauty means the genesis of another, and unending love is at the bottom of all these tragic deaths, which, therefore, do not signify annihilation, but metamorphosis."[17] Prior to exploring the meaning behind the image, it is first necessary to outline the history of the painting.

[17] Erwin Panofsky, "Et in Arcadia Ego: On the Conception of Transience in Poussin and Watteau,"in *Philosophy and History: Essays Presented to Ernst Cassirer*, eds. Raymond Klibansky and Herbert James Paton (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), 244.

Early History and Stylistic Evaluation of the *Realm of Flora*

As enigmatic as Nicolas Poussin's *Realm of Flora* has proved to be, the painting has been a crucial fulcrum for Poussin studies since it was exhibited at the Louvre in 1960.[18] At that time, it was unequivocally proclaimed to be the same painting mentioned by Poussin in his testimony, on the 28th of July, 1631, at the trial of the infamous Sicilian, Fabritio Valguarnera.[19] The defendant in the trial had been charged with a theft of uncut diamonds in Madrid in 1629, which he then utilized to purchase paintings.[20] Among the thief's collection, was at least two works by the hand of Poussin.[21] The original manuscript from the trial includes Poussin's statement, in which he testified to having sold two paintings to Valguarnera,

> Io trattato colui in materia di Pitture, et vendutogli dui quadri, cioè uno quattro ò cinque mesi sono ch'è il miracolo dell'Arca nel tempio di Agone, et l'altro 'un giardino di Fiori', che l'ebbe ultimamente tre mesi sono in circa, per questo Io mi sono immaginato che Vostra Signoria mi habbia citato per essaminarmi.[22]

Poussin had already begun the first painting, now known as the *Plague at Ashdod* (Figure 2), with the intention of finding a buyer, when it was purchased by Valguarnera for one hundred and ten scudi.[23] Apparently pleased by the first canvas, Valguarnera ordered a second painting,

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[18] This exhibition marked an important transition for the study of works by Nicolas Poussin, as it brought together many paintings by Poussin for the first time, as well as afforded the opportunity for many of the works to be cleaned and undergo x-radiography. This information is assimilated in the catalogue for the exhibition, *Catalogue de l'Exposition Nicolas Poussin*. exh. cat. Paris, Musée du Louvre. eds. Anthony Blunt and Charles Sterling (Paris: Édition des Musées Nationaux, Mai-Juillet, 1960), 59-60.

[19] Jane Costello, "The Twelve Pictures 'Ordered by Velazquez' and the Trial of Valguarnera," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XIII (1950): 275. This article published the transcript for the trial, preserved in the Archivio di Stato, Rome, under the title, *R. Chirografo* 1630-2, *Archivio del Governatore, processo contro F. Valguarnera*.

[20] Ibid., 85, Valguarnera fled Madrid with the diamonds and traveled to Rome, where he began to exchange the stolen jewels for paintings.

[21] There is the possibility that Valguarnera had a third painting by Poussin, as he stated in the trial that he had purchased a *Midas* by Poussin from the dealer Stefano Roccatagliata, probably the painting now in Ajaccio, See *Nicolas Poussin: i primi anni romani*, exh. cat. Rome, Palazzo delle Esposizioni, ed. Denis Mahon and M. E. Tittoni. (Milano: Electa, 1998), 76, no. 23.

[22] Cited by Costello, 1950, 275.

'un giardino di Fiori', as Poussin referred to the work during the course of his testimony, for the price of ninety scudi.[24] Valguarnera cited the second painting as well, during the course of his own testimony, as, "Il quadro grande della Primavera l'hò compro in Roma da Monsù Posi Pittore per scudi cento à denari contanti tre mesi sono in circa."[25] Once the *Realm of Flora* in Dresden was identified with the 'giardino di Fiori', or Valguarnera's 'Primavera', so well documented by the trial, a firm date for the painting could be set: between the end of 1630 and April of 1631. After the conviction of Valguarnera, the painting was confiscated by the state and its location is unknown until it appeared again in 1722, when it is documented in the collection of the Elector of Saxony.[26]

With the provenance established in 1960, the *Realm of Flora* became one of the few documented works from Poussin's first years in Rome.[27] As a result, Poussin scholars have attempted to identify and group other paintings from this period around the image, according to stylistic and iconographic details. Above all others, Anthony Blunt and Denis Mahon have heatedly debated the chronology of Poussin's works.[28] Following the 1960 exhibition, Mahon

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[23] See *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, 1994, 200-2, no.43, for bibliography for the *Plague at Ashdod* ca. 1630, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

[24] There is a discrepancy in the prices quoted by the patron and the artist. Valguarnera said that he had paid one hundred scudi, whereas Poussin said that he had sold the painting for ninety scudi.

[25] Costello, 1950, 273.

[26] See *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, 1994, 203.

[27] Poussin is known to have reached Rome in 1624. Much of the information concerning the works of Poussin's early years in Rome comes from Bellori's biography of Poussin, see Bellori, 1931, 407-414, where he mentions two battle scenes, a *Capture of Jerusalem*, the *Death of Germanicus*, the *St. Erasmus* altarpiece for St. Peter's, and the *Virgin Appearing to St. James*. The only other firm points of chronology come from the trial of Valguarnera; the *Plague at Ashdod*, the *Realm of Flora*, and a *Midas*.

[28] Blunt was responsible for the catalogue entries of the 1960 exhibition, which transformed many of the ideas that he had previously published on the chronology of Poussin's works. Mahon responded to the exhibition with two articles attempting to outline Poussin's early works, Denis Mahon, "Poussin's Early Development: An Alternative Hypothesis," *Burlington Magazine* CII (1960): 288-304 and "Poussin's Development: Questions of Method," *Burlington Magazine* CII (1960): 455-456. At the same time, Blunt continued to publish his series of Poussin studies, "Poussin Studies XI: Some Addenda to the Poussin Number," *Burlington Magazine* CII (1960): 396-403. In his "Letter: Poussin's Development: Questions of Method," *Burlington Magazine* CII (1960): 489, Blunt's letter ends with the statement, "It is only

attempted to reconstruct this period of Poussin's career, by explaining the artist's development according to the principles of the academic debate between *colore* and *disegno*.[29] In this grand scheme, the *Realm of Flora* represents the beginning of a transitional period for Poussin, in which he combined the pronounced influence of *colore* in his earlier works with the *disegno* which would come to dominate his later style.[30] Although the extent to which this ideological debate can be used to date the entire oeuvre of Poussin during the 1620s and 1630s is questionable, the *Realm of Flora* certainly exhibits some of the Venetian influences which characterized Poussin's early work, as well as a relatively new ability to place figures within a defined space.[31] This movement away from the frieze-like compositions of his earliest period is also associated with a more sophisticated use of light and shadow. The bright diffused lighting

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natural that, if he reads this into my footnote, Mr. Mahon should conclude that my views do not provide 'a sufficient basis for carrying on a reasoned discussion'. Let us therefore agree to abandon discussion of any kind."

[29] Denis Mahon, *Poussiniana* (Paris, London, and New York: A. Zwemmer, 1962). This book reprints an article first published in the *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, July-August 1962, concerning the author's thoughts arising from the 1960 exhibition at the Louvre.

[30] Mahon, *Poussiniana*, further makes the distinction between seicento artists of the *colore* camp such as Bernini, Cortona, and Lanfrano vs. artists defined by their excellence in *disegno,* such as Andrea Sacchi and Domenichino. This reflects the tendency in modern scholarship to exclusively associate *colore* with the "baroque" style and *disegno* with the "classical" style. This dichotomy was first criticized in Ann Sutherland Harris, *Andrea Sacchi* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 26-30. This was followed by other articles emphasizing the importance of *colore* for artists practicing what is defined as "classicism" in the seicento, such as Charles Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci and the Beginnings of Baroque Style*, Villa I Tatti, The Harvard University Center for Italian Renaissance Studies 3 (Glückstadt: J.J. Augustin, 1977) and "Federico Barocci and the Discovery of Pastel," in *Color and Technique in Renaissance Paintings*, ed. Marcia Hall (Locust Valley, NY: J.J. Augustin, 1987), 55-65; and Pauline Maguire, "Poussin in France: Chantelou's Collection," Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1994. For a full discussion and list of sources on this topic, see Janis Bell, "Bellori's Analysis of *Colore* in Domenichino's *Last Communion of St. Jerome*," in *Art History in the Age of Bellori*, ed. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 276-7.

[31] Konrad Oberhuber, *Poussin: The Early Years in Rome* (New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1988), 28 and 247. Oberhuber indicates Poussin's skill in the placing of figures within a geometric space in the *Realm of Flora*. However, he does not say much else about the painting, as the documents from the trial of Valguarnera already provide a firm date.

which characterizes the *Realm of Flora* differs greatly from the earlier Venetian-inspired works, revealing the fruits of the artist's studies on the logical dispersion of light and shadows.[32]

Perhaps the most stylistically striking element of the painting is its coloring. Poussin has used bright colors and suffused the image with light so as to express the joyful nature of the scene, resulting in a "blond" tonality.[33] This, too, has encouraged connoisseurs to date other "blond" paintings to the same time period. However, the use of the *Realm of Flora* as a standard has proved dangerous, as the painting has a strange quality that separates the image from many other early works by Poussin. This becomes all the more apparent when the painting is compared with the work that immediately preceded it, the *Plague at Ashdod*, which is characterized by dark somber colors, reflecting the dramatic disposition of the canvas. Although the vast differences between the two works are generally attributed to their diverse subject matter, they still make manifest the problem in attempting to describe an evolution in the work of Poussin, during this period, based upon the stylistic qualities of the *Realm of Flora*. Regardless of the painting's appropriateness as a standard for dating other works, the solid documentary evidence for the commission establishes the exact date of the *Realm of Flora*. Unfortunately, beyond this date and the stylistic testament of the canvas itself, there is little else about the nature of the painting that can be proposed with certainty.

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[32] See Elizabeth Cropper, "Poussin and Leonardo: The Evidence of the Zaccolini Manuscripts," *Art Bulletin* 62 (1980): 570-83. Poussin apparently studied the writings of Zaccolini and Leonardo da Vinci, as well as performed his own experiments utilizing wax figures in a stage-like setting and applying an outside source of light.

[33] Mahon, "Poussin's Early Development: an Alternative Hypothesis", 293, proposes the phrase 'the blond group' to describe those paintings which can be grouped around the *Realm of Flora* according to similar aspects of lighting and coloring.

Iconographic Precedents and Drawings for the *Realm of Flora*

That Valguarnera, Bellori, and Poussin himself each referred to the painting with disparate titles indicates the confusion that the image has caused on even the most elementary level of the evaluation of its subject matter. The basic conception of the painting, as a gathering of the humans who are transformed into flowers from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* within a single setting, under the auspices of the goddess Flora, has no iconographic precursor within the history of painting. Previously, Flora has been treated either alone or in triumph, as a representation of spring.[34] The image of Flora from Botticelli's *Primavera* ca. 1482 in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence exemplifies this tradition.[35] Similarly, while the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* often inspired artists, the resulting compositions typically took the form of one story on a single canvas. For example, there is Paolo Veronese's *Venus and Adonis* from the 1580s in the Prado, Madrid, Annibale Carracci's *Venus and Adonis* ca. 1595 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, or Domenichino's *Narcissus* ca. 1603-4 in the Palazzo Farnese, Rome. The closest associable subject to the *Realm of Flora* is Poussin's own painting of the *Triumph of Flora* in the Louvre (Figure 3).[36] At first, this painting appears to be identifiable with the traditional depictions of the triumphs of the seasons, where Flora often represents spring.[37] However, Poussin's addition of the same metamorphosed humans that populate the *Realm of Flora*, as cursory figures accompanying the procession, is a departure from precedent.[38] This similar aspect of both images,

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[34] See Julius Held, "Flora, Goddess and Courtesan," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, ed. Millard Meiss (New York: New York University Press, 1961), 201-218.
[35] Ibid., 204-5.
[36] For information on the *Triumph of Flora*, see the bibliography in *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, 1994, 146-8, no. 13.
[37] Worthen, 1979, 575-588, explores two specific models of the traditional type of the *Triumph of Flora* that Poussin would have known, Taddeo Zuccaro's fresco in the Villa Giulia in Rome, c. 1553-58 and Antonio Tempesta's engraving of 1592.
[38] Ibid., 579, suggests that the inclusion of these figures in both paintings so closely links the two images that any explanation of the meaning of one must therefore also be applied to the other.

as well as the fact that this painting also prominently features Flora, has caused considerable confusion among the two works.

Prior to the exhibition of 1960, Anthony Blunt posited that it was the *Triumph of Flora*, rather than the *Realm of Flora*, which should be associated with Valguarnera's commission.[39] This was based on the fact that the *Triumph of Flora* more closely resembles the traditional depiction of the triumph of spring, or 'Primavera', as Valguarnera referred to his painting during the trial. As for the Dresden *Realm of Flora*, Blunt supposed that it had been painted between 1637 and 1638, approximately ten years after the date he had given to the drawing associated with the image.[40] Blunt soon modified his opinion, stating that perhaps the painting had been started earlier, at the time of the drawing in 1626-27, but that it had not been completed until ten years later.[41] With the exhibition of the painting in 1960, it became apparent that only a short time could have passed between the initiation and the completion of the *Realm of Flora*, based upon the homogeneous appearance of the canvas.[42] This was later confirmed by an x-ray of the painting which revealed no alterations had been made throughout the entire composition. That it is the Dresden *Realm of Flora* which should be associated with Valguarnera is further supported by the relative purchase prices of the patron's paintings. Valguarnera paid less for the 'Primavera' painting he commissioned than for the *Plague at Ashdod* (148 x 198 cm). The *Realm of Flora* seems more appropriate to the lesser price, as it is a smaller work (131 x 181 cm) with fewer figures, while the *Triumph of Flora* (165 x 241 cm) is larger and contains more figures

[39] Anthony Blunt, "La première période romaine de Poussin," in *Nicolas Poussin*, ed. André Chastel. 2 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1960), vol. I, 163 and 174.
[40] This drawing will be discussed in detail in conjunction with the other drawings associated with the painting.
[41] Blunt, "La première période romaine de Poussin," vol I, 163 and 170-1.
[42] Denis Mahon, "Poussin's Early Development: an Alternative Hypothesis," 292.

than the *Plague at Ashdod*.[43] Perhaps the greatest testimony to the identification of the Valguarnera painting are the words of the artist himself, for surely Poussin would not have referred to his *Triumph of Flora* as 'un giardino di Fiori'.

This confusion aside, the *Triumph of Flora* in the Louvre is dated to ca. 1627 based upon its similarity in color and composition to the *Death of Germanicus*.[44] Once it was established that Poussin had painted the *Triumph of Flora* prior to the *Realm of Flora,* it became evident that the ideas which influenced Poussin in the conception of the first image were only fully realized in the second image. For this reason, it is useful to examine the first painting as an iconographic precursor for the *Realm of Flora*. Poussin's *Triumph of Flora*, too, differs from earlier images because Flora is not accompanied by a retinue of other gods, but by those humans from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* who were tragically transformed into flowers, placing them under the care of the goddess. Never before had Flora been attended in such a manner as Poussin imagined in his canvas. The goddess sits aloft a carriage on the right of the canvas, as two putti crown her with a floral wreath. Behind Flora's carriage is the barely discernable Narcissus, raising his name-sake flowers toward the goddess. The fully armored warrior, in front of Narcissus, is variously identified as Mars or Ajax.[45] The kneeling woman in the right foreground, plucking a heliotrope,

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[43] Doris Wild, "Poussin-Studien zum ersten Jahrzehnt in Rom," *Pantheon* XVIII, 3, (1960): 157-8.

[44] See Blunt, 1967, 78. There is considerable confusion as to who commissioned the *Triumph of Flora.* Bellori, 1931, 442, records that the patron was Cardinal Aluigi Omodei, "Vi sono altre figure ignude à sedere, altre in capo, e nelle mani portano panieri è ferti, che danno compimento all'immagine dipinta ne'primi tempi per l'Eminentiss. Signore Cardinale Aluigi Omodei." However, Omodei was only born in 1608, making it unlikely that he commissioned the work at the mere age of nineteen. Jacques Thuillier, *L'Opera completa di Nicolas Poussin* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1974), 91, no.48 hypothesized that the work may have been painted for Marcello Sacchetti, as a pendant to Pietro da Cortona's *Triumph of Bacchus,* and was later acquired by Omodei after Sacchetti's death in 1629. However, the dimensions of the Louvre painting are much larger than Cortona's, suggesting that it was a copy of the painting in the Capitoline Museum in Rome, with the same dimensions as Cortona's work, probably painted by Jean Lemaire, which was commissioned to hang with Cortona's work. For further information, see *Nicolas Poussin: i primi anni romani*, 106-8, no. 38 and 39.

[45] Worthen, 1979, 578, explains that this figure might represent Mars, because according to Ovid's *Fasti*, Flora impregnated the goddess Juno with Mars by touching her with a flower. This would explain the

is none other than Clytie, who was transformed into that sun-seeking flower, for love of the god Apollo. At the head of the procession is a dancing figure often identified as Venus, or Primavera herself. Adonis follows behind her, carrying a spear and crowned with anemone flowers. Hyacinthus is behind him, bending to accept the floral crown of a putto, as he carries a basket of hyacinths. In addition, Smilax may be identified as the figure on the far-side of the carriage, with the convolvulus flower in her outstretched hand.[46]

In the *Triumph of Flora*, these attendants simply celebrate the goddess of flowers. They are not shown in poses that suggest they are actively undergoing their transformations or that reveal the details of their tragic stories, as in the *Realm of Flora*. Although it is these same figures, save the one of the goddess of love or Primavera, that populate Poussin's *Realm of Flora*, their purpose and dispositions are entirely different from the earlier painting. The *Realm of Flora* is unique for its congregation of separate vignettes of mythological stories within the confines of a garden setting. In each case, the characters appear enthralled by their own fates of transformation. Flora presides over these occurrences as both the instigator of these tragic transformations and the guardian of their resulting floral entities. She is no longer the object of praise, as in the *Triumph of Flora*, but the ever-present reminder of the fate of those who have come to inhabit her garden. The *Triumph of Flora* provides a glimpse into Poussin's early conception of his latter homage to the goddess of flowers. However, the divergences among the two paintings seem to indicate that Poussin continued to contemplate his novel composition of Flora and her attendants for the next few years, resulting in the *Realm of Flora*.

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presence of Mars as a celebrant of Flora, although he was not metamorphosed into a flower himself. However, the similar warrior who impales himself in the *Realm of Flora* is certainly Ajax, suggesting that the figure in the *Triumph of Flora* may also be identified as Ajax, rather than Mars.

[46] Blunt, 1967, 78, identifies each of the figures in the *Triumph of Flora*.

In addition to the visual testament of the painting itself, two drawings exist in The Royal Library at Windsor Castle, which can be identified with the artist's preliminary conception of the composition. The first drawing (Figure 4), thought to be by the hand of Poussin, is a rough presentation of the basic elements that comprise the painting.[47] However, the rocky bluff on the left side of the painting has not yet been conceived, as the pergola continues to the left, forming a right angle and emerging toward the viewer on the left side of the drawing. Additionally, the pose of Ajax, with his bent knees as he impales himself on his sword, is less graceful than in the final composition. The putto in the right foreground also performs a different action, overturning a basket filled with something unidentifiable. The figures are tightly packed into the space of the drawing and crowded above by the presence of Apollo's chariot.

The second drawing (Figure 5), also preserved at Windsor, is thought to be a studio copy, because it is more finished and less detailed than the first.[48] Here, the left part of the pergola has been replaced by the rocks which appear in the painting and the sarcophagus behind the herm has also materialized. The figures are given more individual space and are less crowded from above by Apollo. However, this drawing still lacks the strong play of diagonals which provides the dynamic composition of the final painted image. Additionally, the figure of Narcissus exhibits an awkward stooped pose which differs from his final form in the painting. In both drawings, Flora is shown in profile and crowded behind Narcissus and Echo, which is a departure from her frontal pose in the open space of the finished work. A third sketch exists, for only the figure of Ajax, on the verso of a drawing in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge for the *Bacchus-Apollo*,

[47] See Walter Friedlaender and Anthony Blunt, *The Drawings of Nicolas Poussin, Catalogue Raisonné*. 5 vols. (London: The Warburg Institute, 1953), vol. 3, 35, no. 214.
[48] Ibid., 35, no. A58.

another painting by Poussin (Figure 6).[49] Here, also, the figure of Ajax is awkwardly bent as he collapses upon his sword. The existence of these drawings associated with the *Realm of Flora* suggests that Poussin took great care in designing the composition.

One of the most prominent transformations between the drawings and the final painting is also one of the most interesting visual aspects of the *Realm of Flora*, the pergola. Of the few possible influential images for the painting, two contain this strange detail. The first is an engraving from the school of Fontainebleau by Léon Davent after Primaticcio, entitled *Le Jardin de Vertumne* (Figure 7).[50] The engraving includes a strikingly similar pergola which leads back and across the sheet in the same manner as Poussin's trellis in the *Realm of Flora*. The detail from the engraving is particularly close in appearance to the pergola in Poussin's early drawing for the painting (Figure 4). This suggests the engraving served as an early source for Poussin, which he later altered in the final composition. In addition, the herm of Priapus in the center of the engraving, quite similar to that of Poussin, confirms the identification of this visual source. However, in the *Realm of Flora*, the painter depicts the statue in profile, rather than frontally, and eliminates the large phallus which is a customary attribute of Priapus represented in the engraving. Poussin's employment of this visual source is often called upon as evidence of the influence of Poussin's early French training on his Roman works.[51]

Another visual comparison which is strangely neglected by the literature is that of Andrea Mantegna's *Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* ca. 1502 in the Louvre (Figure

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[49] See Anthony Blunt, "Letter: A Mythological Painting by Poussin," *Burlington Magazine* CIII (1961): 437. See also *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665*, 1994, 162-3, no. 21 for bibliography for the *Bacchus-Apollo*, Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

[50] William Mills Ivins, "French Sixteenth-century Prints," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, New Series, III, (1945-46): 128.

[51] Blunt, 1967, 20-6 discusses Poussin's early training in France during the time that the artists of the Second School of Fontainebleau were working for the court of Marie de Médicis' regency.

8).[52] It would seem difficult to ignore the visual similarities of these two works, especially the arcade enclosing the garden, and the Mater Virtutum image on the far left which is situated in the same position as Poussin's herm of Priapus.[53] In his discussion of another painting by Poussin, the *Dance in Honor of Priapus* (Figure 9), Anthony Blunt recognized the influence of Mantegna.[54] Here too, Poussin placed a herm of Priapus before a pergola decorated with garlands of fruits and flowers.[55] However, the scholar failed to associate Mantegna's *Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* with the *Realm of Flora*. Instead, the influence of Mantegna on Poussin is often argued in connection with Mantegna's depiction of the dancing graces in his *Parnassus* ca. 1497 in the Louvre (Figure 10). The group of women holding hands and kicking their legs in Mantegna's image is suggested as the model for a similar group of dancing figures in Poussin's *Adoration of the Golden Calf* (Figure 11).[56] The same dancing group by Mantegna is also associated with the dancing women in Poussin's *Dance to the Music of Time* (Figure 12).[57] A similar correlation seems appropriate for the ring of putti who join hands behind Flora in the *Realm of Flora*. Any comparison between Poussin and Mantegna is supported by the inventory of Poussin's possessions at the time of his death, which included thirty-two engravings after Mantegna, reinforcing Poussin's use of his work as a model.[58]

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[52] See Ronald Lightbown*, Mantegna* (Berkley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), 189-207; and Egon Verheyen, *The Paintings in the "Studiolo" of Isabella d'Este at Mantua* (New York: New York University Press, 1971), 31-41.
[53] This astute observation is owed to Dr. Shelley Zuraw. It would seem that further exploration of this comparison may shed light upon the influence of Andrea Mantegna on Poussin.
[54] Blunt, 1967, 144. *Dance in Honor of Priapus*, Museu de Arte, São Paulo.
[55] Ibid., 144.
[56] Blunt, 1967, 128-30. *Adoration of the Golden Calf* ca. 1633-37, The National Gallery, London.
[57] Ibid., 128-30. *Dance to the Music of Time* ca. 1638-40, Wallace Collection ,London; See Richard Beresford, *A Dance to the Music of Time* (London: Meridian House PLC, 1995).
[58] Léopold Delisle, "Dessins, estampes et statues de la succession de Nicolas Poussin (1678)," *Archives de l'art français* XI (1858-60): 252.

Whether or not Poussin would have personally seen Mantegna's *Parnassus,* ca. 1497, or the artist's *Pallas Expelling the Vices* ca. 1502 is not known. These two works had been part of the series of paintings which comprised the decoration of Isabella d'Este's *studiolo* at Mantua and were consequently sold to Cardinal Richelieu (1585-1642), the chief minister of France, in 1627-29. It is possible that Poussin may have seen the actual works during the time of the sale and transport of the paintings. Even more enticing, is the fact that two Bacchanals, commissioned by Richelieu from Poussin and delivered in 1636, were designed to be shown in a series with the paintings acquired from the *studiolo* of Isabella D'Este.[59] That Poussin was entrusted with creating pendants to Mantegna's paintings indicates his probable knowledge of the works in some capacity. Additionally, the two Bacchanals were unusual subjects during this period and analogous works can only be found in the paintings of Bellini, Titian, and Dosso created for Alfonso d'Este in the early sixteenth century.[60] Poussin is known to have studied these works closely at the Villa Ludovisi.[61] It appears, then, that Poussin was enthralled by the paintings produced for the *studioli* of Isabella and Alfonso d'Este, finding inspiration from these works for his paintings of the 1630s. For Richelieu's Bacchanals, he turned to the works of Titian and Bellini, just as he had turned to Mantegna's *Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue* a few years earlier for his conception of the *Realm of Flora*.

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[59] The Bacchanals are identified as the *Triumph of Pan* ca. 1634-36, The National Gallery, London and the *Triumph of Bacchus* ca. 1634-36, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri. A third painting was also probably painted for the series, the *Triumph of Silenus* ca. 1635-36. The original is lost, but an early copy exists in The National Gallery, London. See Blunt, 1967, 146.

[60] Ibid., 146.

[61] According to Bellori, Poussin made a copy after Bellini and Titian's *Feast of the Gods*. Bellori also relates that Poussin made wax models after some of the figures in Titian's *The Feast of Venus*, see Bellori, 1931, 412, "Fecero ancora studio sopra il Giuoco de gli Amori di Titiano nel Giardino Ludovisi, che ora si trova in Spagna; li quali Amori essendo di ammirabile bellezza, Nicolò non solo copiavali in pittura, ma insieme col compagno li modellava di creta in bassi rilievi, onde si acquistò una bella maniera di formare li putti teneri, de'quali si sono veduti alcuni scherzi, e baccanali à guazzo, & ad olio di sua mano, fatti in quel tempo."

Another important iconographic model has recently been identified, which was surprisingly overlooked in early studies of the *Realm of Flora*.[62] The figure of Flora appears to be inspired by the allegorical depiction of *Allegrezza* or "Cheerfulness" in Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* (Figure 13).[63] The engraving depicts a woman in a dancing pose, her dress parting to reveal her lifted right leg, with her head tilted downward and toward the right. Although Poussin eliminates the attributes held by the woman and arranges her arms differently, the pose of the garden goddess is strikingly close to Ripa's. The identification of this source prompted the *Plague at Ashdod* and the *Realm of Flora* to be reconsidered as a pair, the former as a representation of sadness, with the latter symbolizing the opposite quality of cheerfulness.[64] In this way, the works may be considered pendants in a manner previously unrecognized. Even with the identification of these visual sources, Poussin's overall composition remains unprecedented. As a result, art historians have turned to possible literary sources in search of an iconographic model for the painting.

Ovid as the Literary Source for the *Realm of Flora*

A considerable amount of the literature concerning the *Realm of Flora* has focused on the discovery of a literary source that provides the explanation for Poussin's singular image. Considering the theme of human transformation, the most obvious text is clearly that of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. However, the figures depicted are each taken from different books within this work. Also, in the *Metamorphoses*, Ajax and Hyacinthus are transformed into the same flower,

[62] Henry Keazor, "Nicolas Poussin," *Kunstchronik* (1995): 337-59.
[63] Cesare Ripa, *Iconologia* (Siena: Matteo Florimi, 1613), 19.
[64] Keazor, 1995, 337-59.

which does not appear to be the case in Poussin's painting.[65] An alternative to this Ovidian source, are the *Fasti*, by the same poet.[66] In Book Five of this poem, both the Roman festival which celebrates the goddess Flora in late April to early May, the *Floralia*, and the goddess' mythological story are described in detail:

> Come, Mother of Flowers, that we may honour thee with merry games;
> last month I put off giving thee thy due. Thou dost begin in April and
> passest into the time of May; the one month claims thee as it flies, the
> other as it comes. Since the borders of the months are thine and
> appertain to thee, either of the two is a fitting time to sing thy praises.
> The games of the circus and the victor's palm, acclaimed by the spectators,
> fall in this month, let my song run side by side with the shows of the circus.
> Tell me thyself who thou art; the opinion of men is fallacious;
> thou wilt be the best voucher of thine own name.
>
> So I spoke, and the goddess answered my question thus, and while
> she spoke, her lips breathed vernal roses: "I who now am called Flora was
> formerly Chloris: a Greek letter of my name is corrupted in the Latin speech.
> Chloris I was, a nymph of the happy fields where, as you have heard, dwelt
> fortunate men of old. Modesty shrinks from describing my figure; but it
> procured the hand of a god for my mother's daughter. 'Twas spring and
> I was roaming; Zephyr caught sight of me; I retired; he pursued and I fled;
> but he was stronger, and Boreas had given his brother full right of rape by
> daring to carry off the prize from the house of Erectheus. However, he made
> amends for his violence by giving me the name of bride, and in my
> marriage-bed I have naught to complain of. I enjoy perpetual spring;
> most buxom is the year ever; ever the tree is clothed with leaves,
> the ground with pasture. In the fields that are my dower, I have a fruitful garden,
> fanned by the breeze and watered by a spring of running water. This garden
> my husband filled with noble flowers and said, 'Goddess, be queen of flowers.'
> Oft did I wish to count the colours in the beds, but could not;
> the number was past counting. Soon as the dewy rime is shaken from
> the leaves, and the varied foliage is warmed by the sunbeams,
> the Hours assemble, clad in dappled weeds, and cull my gifts in light baskets.
> Straightway the Graces draw near, and twine garlands and wreaths to bind their
> heavenly hair. I was the first to scatter new seeds among the countless peoples;
> till then the earth had been of but one colour. I was the first to make a flower out of
> Therapnean blood, and on its petals the lament remains inscribed [Hyacinthus].
> Thou too, Narcissus, hast a name in the trim gardens, unhappy thou in that thou

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[65] Dora Panofsky, "Narcissus and Echo: Notes on Poussin's 'Birth of Bacchus'in the Fogg Museum of Art," *Art Bulletin* 31 (1949): 114-5.

[66] This possible source has been addressed in various studies: see Anthony Blunt, *The French Drawings at Windsor Castle* (London: Phaidon Press, Ltd., 1945), 36, n.169; Kauffmann, 1965, 95, n. 20; and Panofsky, 1949, 115.

> hadst not a double of thyself. What need to tell of Crocus, and Attis, and the son of Cinyras [Adonis], from whose wounds by my art doth beauty spring?[67]

The key image from the text, visible in the painting, is that of a garden setting uniting metamorphosed flowers, where blossoms are being scattered by the goddess. There is also a fountain of water and an image of the Hours, represented by the putti dancing behind Flora, who have presumably gathered the flowers in the baskets present throughout the painting. Although convincing, this cannot be the single source which guided Poussin, as Ajax and Clitia, who figure prominently in the painted image, are not mentioned in Ovid's text. Ultimately, the texts of Ovid fail to explain fully Poussin's image of the *Realm of Flora*.

Thematic Interpretations of the *Realm of Flora*

Since there is no single identifiable iconographic precedent or specific illustrative passage from ancient literature which explains the entire image, art historians have labored to find another explanation for the *Realm of Flora*. Numerous theses have explored the painting as a manifestation of some as yet undiscovered social, scientific, religious, or philosophical phenomena to which Poussin must have adhered. Many of these discussions are fueled by the artist's association with the circle of learned intellectuals surrounding Cassiano dal Pozzo. Pozzo was drawn to the study of the natural sciences, as well as fascinated by ancient art and society. Among his collections, his famous *Museo Cartaceo* compiled a number of drawings recording ancient works of art. Poussin produced many paintings for Pozzo and considered himself "a pupil in his art of the house and museum of the Cavaliere dal Pozzo."[68] For the art historian,

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[67] *Ovid's Fasti*, trans. and ed. Sir James G. Frazer (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Loeb Classical Library, 1967), 275-77.

[68] Filippo Baldinucci, *Notizie de' professori del disegno da Cimabue in qua'*…..6 vols. (Florence, 1681-1728), vol. 4, 480. On Poussin's paintings owned by Pozzo, see Sheila Somers-Rinehart, "Poussin et la famille dal Pozzo," in *Nicolas Poussin*, ed. André Chastel, 2 vols. (Paris: Centre National de la Recherche

Poussin's association with Cassiano dal Pozzo seemingly provides the incentive for many of the artist's novel compositions of the 1630s and beyond. Thus, many interpretations of the meaning behind the *Realm of Flora* often relate back to the influence of Pozzo's intellectual circle.

Perhaps the most profound explanation of the painting is that presented by Anthony Blunt. For this scholar, the *Realm of Flora* is no unassuming garden of flowers, but an allegory representing the continual cycle of death and rebirth in nature, symbolizing the Christian doctrine of death and Resurrection.[69] This theory of the symbolic nature of Flora's garden is supported by the general association of flowers with Resurrection and funerals in Christian iconography.[70] Blunt suggests that this link underlies Poussin's choice to depict only Ovid's floral transformations in the *Realm of Flora* and not those humans metamorphosed into animals, birds, or rocks. In fact, he notes that Poussin never took any of the latter transformations as his subjects, proving the artist's association of the floral metamorphoses with religious allegorical significance. For further proof of Poussin's interest in the parallel systems of nature and religion, Blunt turns to a painting of the same period entitled *Venus with the Dead Adonis* ca. 1628 in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Caen (Figure 14). Here, the sprawled figure of Adonis, though reversed, appears almost identical to the body of Christ in Poussin's *Lamentation* ca. 1627 in Munich (Figure 15). In this way, the death and rebirth of Adonis as the anemone is paralleled to the death and Resurrection of Christ.[71] This association was often made by intellectuals, including Cassiano dal Pozzo and his circle, interested in the phenomena of comparative religion and

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Scientifique, 1960), vol. I, 19-30; Francis Haskell and Sheila Rinehart, "The Dal Pozzo Collection, some new Evidence," *Burlington Magazine* CII (1960): 318-26; and Anthony Blunt, "Poussin and his Roman Patrons," in *Walter Friedlaender zum* 90, eds. George Kauffmann, Walter Friedlaender, and Willibald Sauerländer (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter &Co., 1965), 58-75.

[69] Blunt, 1967, 114-122.

[70] Ibid., 118.

[71] Blunt, 1967, 114-7 and 349 no. 50, also points out that Ovid associated the story of Hyacinthus with resurrection and that Poussin's placement of Adonis and Hyacinthus next to each other in both the *Realm of Flora* and the *Triumph of Flora* indicates the allegorical nature of the images.

seeking to discern connections between pagan myths and Christian stories.[72] Poussin may also have been influenced by the poet Giambattista Marino's writings on this subject in his *Dicerie sacre*:

> We find symbolized in the gods, somewhat imperfectly, but after a fashion:
> the Trinity in Janus, the creation of man in Prometheus, the revolt of the Angels
> in the Giants, Lucifer in Phaeton, Gabriel in Mercury, Noah in Deucaleon,
> Lot's wife in Niobe,…the flood in Atlantis, the Incarnation in Danae,
> the love of Christ in Psyche, the battle with the devil in Hercules,….
> the Resurrection of the dead in Aesculapius, the Passion in Attis,
> the descent into Hell in Orpheus, …the Assumption in Ariadne…
> and a thousand and one other falsehoods are applicable to the truth,
> as diligent study of their brevity will reveal.[73]

This tendency to emphasize associations between classical mythology and Christian dogma lends strength to Blunt's argument. However, his theory ignores the fact that flowers are fragile entities that quickly fade and die, only to resurge each year. In this way, their short-lived annual renewal differs from the Christian notion of resurrection.

Blunt attempts to provide further evidence of the allegorical meaning of the *Realm of Flora* by invoking the words of Ovid himself, who, in the first and last books of the *Metamorphoses,* appears to associate his own stories with the Pythagorean doctrine of metamorphosis. However, according to this dogma, the soul of a dying man would pass into the body of an animal and then either successively rise through reincarnation into another mortal body or decline into an even lower form of life, such as a flower.[74] By invoking Ovid's Pythagoreanism, Blunt contradicts himself, as he previously proposed Poussin's depiction of only Ovid's floral transformations as evidence of the Christian allegorical significance of the

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[72] Ibid., 115, says that Poussin was aware of this tendency, because it was discussed in *On the Syrian Goddess*, a work usually ascribed to Lucian that was widely read in the seventeenth century, See Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess,* ed. J.L. Lightfoot (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).
[73] Giambattista Marino, *Dicerie sacre*, 102, cited by Blunt, 1967, 116, no. 21.
[74] Ibid, 118, no. 31 sites Georges Lafaye, *Les Métamorphoses d'Ovide* (Paris: F.Alcan, 1904), Ch. X, for a full discussion of Ovid's Pythagoreanism.

painting, while the Pythagorean doctrine specifically includes transformation into animals. As a result, Blunt is unsuccessful in manipulating the ancient poet's words to support his interpretation of the *Realm of Flora* as a philosophical reflection upon the transience of man's soul.

Since the introduction of Anthony Blunt's theory, most interpretations of the *Realm of Flora* are initiated by an argument which focuses on disproving the famous Poussinist's spiritual understanding of the painting. One such dispute begins by suggesting that any theory applied to the *Realm of Flora* must also be applicable to the *Triumph of Flora*, as they are so similar. While this may not necessarily be the case, this precept initiates an interesting interpretation of the painting, emphasizing the elements of the earth and their role in the creation of life, according to the cycle of nature.[75] More precisely, Worthen suggests that Poussin's *Realm of Flora* illustrates the process by which the genesis of life occurs through the combination of heat and moisture. Obviously, Apollo's chariot represents the element of solar heat which warms the earth. To symbolize the required moisture, the figure of Echo is transformed into a water nymph.[76] That the water nymph, Flora, and Apollo were placed in a vertical column in the early drawings for the painting further emphasizes their connection in this manner.[77] The transformation of the landscape from the watery barren rocks on the left side of the image to the lush landscape on the right, illustrates this process as well.[78] Worthen returns to specific Ovidian passages for support of his interpretation. He emphasizes that in the *Fasti*, the poet says heat and moisture, "contain

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[75] See Worthen, 1979, 575-588.
[76] Bellori recognized the figure as "una delle Najadi ninfe" in his description, rather than Echo. Worthen, 1979, 583-4, associates this figure with the reclining girl in the foreground of the *Triumph of Flora*, whom he also calls a water nymph. Both are interpreted in this way because they wear blue robes, which is the color Poussin generally assigned to river gods. The girl in the *Triumph* also has a flowering vase between her legs.
[77] Ibid., 584.
[78] Worthen, 1979, 584.

the source of life."[79] A more explicit passage in the *Metamorphoses* is also invoked, "For when moisture and heat unite, life is conceived, and from these two sources all living things spring. And, though fire and water are naturally at enmity, still heat and moisture produce all things, and this inharmonious harmony is fitted to the growth of life."[80] Although an interesting suggestion, this naturalistic interpretation seems too abstract and ultimately oversimplifies Poussin's complex image. For example, the theory ignores the importance of the other figures in Flora's garden. Furthermore, Worthen too closely associates the painting with Poussin's earlier *Triumph of Flora* and traditional representations of the triumph of spring, ignoring the extent of Poussin's novel conception. Therefore, the justification for the *Realm of Flora* must lie elsewhere then in the simple theory that it demonstrates the nature of growth from heat and moisture.

When attempting to understand the painting and its Ovidian subject matter, scholars often turn to contemporary sources that might provide access to the classical texts. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was published in Italian translation with additional commentaries, such as that of Giovanni Andrea dell'Anguillara, published in thirty-two editions between 1561 and 1624.[81] In addition to the commentaries provided by the author, these translations included moralistic interpretations at the end of each book by Giuseppe Orologi and notes in the margin by Francesco Turchi.[82] Thomas suggests that in the case of each mortal story depicted by Poussin in the *Realm of Flora*, the corresponding commentaries by Anguillara are

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[79] Sited by ibid., 580, from the *Fasti* IV. 790-91.
[80] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book I, 429-433.
[81] Worthen, 1979, 586-7, was the first to search within this edition for an explanation for the *Realm of Flora*. He focused on the commentaries of the translator and suggested that many works by Poussin are closer to Anguillara's text than to Ovid's.
[82] Troy Thomas, "'Un fior vano e fragile': The Symbolism of Poussin's *Realm of Flora,*" *Art Bulletin* LXVIII, 2 (1986): 225-36; the author takes Worthen's strategy further by turning to the additional commentaries published in Anguillara, whose book was actually titled: *Le metamorfosi di Ovidio, ridotte da Gio. Andrea dell'Anguillara in ottava rima, con le annotationi di M. Gioseppe Horologgi & gli argomenti & postille di M. Francesco Turchi*. (Venice: Francesco de Franceschi Sanese, 1571).

the artist's inspiration. The commentaries emphasize that the humans are victims of their own passions and that their transformation into flowers, the most short-lived of entities, is primarily a symbol of the vanity and brevity of life.[83] This suggests that the painting should be considered an image in the tradition of vanitas iconography, depicting the frailty of human life in contrast with the regenerative forces of nature and the seasons. Thomas further notes the funereal connotations of each of the metamorphosed flowers and suggests that this indicates the true nature of the painting as an elegy. According to this interpretation, Poussin intended for the *Realm of Flora* to convey the tragic deaths of the figures and the sadness of their metamorphosis into fragile flowers in a poetic manner, stirring the viewer to reflect upon death in a way comparable to elegiac poetry. In complete contrast to the theories of Blunt, this interpretation suggests that death in the *Realm of Flora* signifies the frailty of humanity, rather than a rebirth or resurrection. As we will see, this view of the *Realm of Flora* as elegiac vanitas imagery underestimates the importance of the joyous figure of Flora and the overall light-hearted nature of the painting reflected in the brightness and color of the composition.

Another interpretation of the painting returns to the words of Poussin, who referred to the image as "un giardino di Fiori". This theory focuses on the garden aspect of the painting and closely associates the *Realm of Flora* with the intense interest in gardens in Rome, beginning in the second half of the 1620's.[84] This phenomenon would have been familiar to Poussin through

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[83] For Thomas, 1986, 227-30, the commentaries imply that: Ajax is guilty of being rash and imprudent; Narcissus's guilt is self-love; Clytie is symbolic of those who love wisdom (Apollo) only as doctrine, but learn nothing from it; Hyacinthus is guilty of succumbing to his own passions, because he used his strength against a god; Adonis also is a victim of vanity; Smilax and Crocus are punished for being too eager to enjoy love.

[84] See David Freedberg, "Poussin, Ferrari, Cortone et *l'Aetas Florea*," in *Actes du Colloque organisé au Musée du Louvre*. ed. Alain Merot, 2 vols. (Paris: Musée du Louvre in association with La Documentation française, 1996), 337-361. The author suggests this interest was initiated by the publication in 1625 of the *Exactissima descriptio rariorum quarundam plantarum, quae continentur Romae in horto Farnesiano*, describing the gardens of the Farnese.

his association with Cassiano dal Pozzo, who was intensely interested in horticulture.[85] Freedberg finds iconographic, as well as visual inspiration, in Giovanni Battista Ferrari's *De florum cultura* of 1633, a book which celebrated the current interest in gardens.[86] It is suggested that an engraving for this work, entitled *La Danse de Vertumne,* by Pietro da Cortona provided the inspiration for Poussin's figure of Flora (Figure 16).[87] In the engraving, the figure of the dancing Vertumnus, surrounded by youths, appears in the right background of the image. The pose of the figure is similar to that of Flora, although in reverse. Poussin arranges his putti around Flora in the same manner, although they appear much younger than the engraved youths. Similarly, the engraved frontispiece for the book, also by Cortona, is invoked as another possible model (Figure 17). Here, a herm is draped by garlands and placed in profile, in the same position within the image as Priapus in the *Realm of Flora*. Additionally, Freedberg makes the unconvincing assertion that the arch behind Flora in the engraving recalls the pergola from Poussin's image. The publication of *De florum cultura* in 1633 certainly indicates that Poussin and Cortona may have been influenced by similar visual and associational symbolism related to the current interest in gardens in Rome in the year 1630.[88] However, this explanation as the singular inspiration for the *Realm of Flora* ignores many of the Ovidian stories depicted by Poussin and fails to appreciate the visual richness of the image.

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[85] Freedberg, 1996, 343, mentions a manuscript in the Vatican in which Cassiano dal Pozzo speaks of the proposed garden plan for the Palazzo Barberini on the Quirinal. See also, Blunt, 1967, 122, no. 40, Pozzo had a collection of scientific botanical drawings, some of which were engraved with epithets directly associating the flowers with mythology.

[86] For further information on Giovanni Battista Ferrari's *De Florum Cultura*, see *Roma 1630: il trionfo del pennello*, exh. cat. Rome, Villa Medici. ed. Olivier Bonfait (Milan: Electa, 1994), 245-8.

[87] Freedberg, 1996, 348, suggests that Poussin blended the static statue of the *Flora Farnese* with the active figure of *Vertumne* in the engraving. He posites that Poussin would have looked to Cortona for inspiration because the *Triumph of Flora* is often evaluated as a pendant to Cortona's *Triumph of Bacchus* for Marcello and Giulio Sacchetti.

[88] Ibid., 346, Freedberg says that the publication of *De Florum Cultura* was at least five years in the making, thus justifying the later dating of the published work in comparison to Poussin's painting.

Each of these interpretations of the *Realm of Flora* ultimately relies on Ovid's poetry as the literary source for the painting. However, each theory recognizes that Poussin's image is by no means a straightforward illustration of the poetry of Ovid. Rather, these scholars propose that the artist is reinterpreting the ancient texts in a modern manner, creating a new iconography and meaning using the poetry of Ovid as a subtext. Poussin's image and these interpretations reveal a changing attitude in Baroque Rome toward the depiction of episodes from the poetry of Ovid. Incidentally, Poussin was not the only artist in Baroque Rome to treat Ovid as a beginning rather than an end in the pursuit of creating novel images. In order to understand this tendency, it will be necessary to explore the Ovidian-inspired works of other Baroque artists working in Rome.

CHAPTER 2

THE INTERPRETATION OF OVID THROUGH THE POETRY OF MARINO IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ROME

For most artists working in Rome during the first half of the seventeenth century, the poetry of Ovid served as the essential inspiration for their treatment of mythological subject matter. Ovid's original Latin texts would have been accessible to learned artists, but most relied on contemporary illustrated translations for the details of the poet's stories.[89] The illustrations from these editions represented established iconographic models followed by many artists. However, a number of Ovidian images from this period appear so vastly different from these illustrations, as to indicate a willingness on the part of some artists to stray from conventional representations of Ovid in favor of visual reinterpretations of the stories.

Perhaps the inspiration for the artist in Baroque Rome to reconfigure the stories of Ovid came from the sphere of poetry itself. During the first quarter of the seventeenth century, the most extensively published poet in Rome was Giambattista Marino (1569-1625). As a youth in Naples, Marino aspired to the level of fame enjoyed by the Neapolitan poet Torquato Tasso. Marino arrived in Rome in 1600 after fleeing Naples, where he had been imprisoned for "immorality" and charged with fraud.[90] Once in Rome, Marino found favor with the most

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[89] Nigel Llewellyn, "Illustrating Ovid," in *Ovid Renewed*, ed. Charles Martindale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 152.

[90] Gerald Ackerman, "Gian Battista Marino's Contribution to Seicento Art Theory," *Art Bulletin* XLIII (1961): 327, no. 6, says that in 1598 Marino was imprisoned for either homosexuality or his role in the arrangement of an abortion for a young woman. After four months these charges were dropped. However, in 1600 Marino again found himself in trouble with the law for forging documents. It was at this time that he left Naples for Rome.

powerful of men, including Melchiorre Crescenzi and Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, nephew to Pope Paul V. Throughout his career, the poet enjoyed the patronage of Carlo Emmanuel I, Duke of Savoy, Marie de' Medici, and Louis XIII. Although brilliantly prolific and splendidly received during his own lifetime, Marino has not been treated kindly by history. His name anoints the rather disappointing movement of early seventeenth-century Italian mannerist poetry, termed *Il Marinismo*, which identifies those poets who followed the principles of Marino's poetry without the success of their leader.

According to Marino, "the aim of the poet is the marvelous," and his style reflects his will to astound.[91] His poetry is often described as overtly sensual and even pornographic in some instances. His verse is full of elaborate metaphors and flowery adjectives, as well as extensive conceits and witty word play.[92] Many of Marino's works, including his epic poem *L'Adone*, which treated the love of Venus for Adonis, took as their theme the poetry of Ovid. However, Marino transformed the stories of the ancient poet through reinterpretation and poetic embellishments according to his own style. By means of extensive metaphors, the juxtaposition of opposites, and clever conceits, the poetry of Marino revitalized and modernized the ancient texts of Ovid. The result was an additional source through which the poetry of Ovid might be accessed by Marino's contemporaries, including painters and sculptors.

Two Roman Baroque artists who were influenced by the contemporary poetry of Marino in their depictions of stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are Gianlorenzo Bernini and Caravaggio. In the case of Bernini's sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne*, the artist's representation of the Ovidian story reveals the subtle influence of Marino's poetry, although the statue is astonishingly close in appearance to the ancient text of Ovid. On the other hand, Caravaggio's

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[91] See Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), 185.
[92] Ackerman, 1961, 329-30.

painting of *Narcissus* was influenced by Marino's poetry in a manner which removes the final image from the tradition of Ovid, revealing it to be a creation of the painter's mind. As the more straightforward illustration of Ovid's text, Bernini's sculpture will be considered first. In each instance, Marino's reinterpretation of the poetry of Ovid affected Bernini's and Caravaggio's creation of images that are recognized for their innovative treatment of a particular Ovidian episode.

Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598-1680) and Poussin were both active in Rome during the same period, but they had vastly different ideas concerning the theory and practice of art. Bernini epitomizes the spectacular "Baroque" style, which transformed Counter-Reformation Rome into a stage of dramatic visual imagery. [93] Throughout his life, Bernini was commissioned by successive popes and the most powerful patrons in Rome, including Cardinal Francesco Barberini. Despite the fact that Poussin is also known to have worked for the Cardinal, the two artists were apparently not familiar with each other in Rome.[94] It is, therefore, interesting to note Bernini's reaction to the work of Poussin, which he saw in Paris late in his career, in 1665. During his visit, Bernini was under the guardianship of Paul Fréart, Sieur de Chantelou, one of Poussin's greatest patrons. When Bernini was shown the artist's work he exclaimed, "Truly, that man was a great history painter and a great painter of mythology" or "un favoleggiatore." After extended viewing, Bernini remarked to Chantelou, "Today you have given me great displeasure by showing me the worth of a man who makes me realize that I know nothing."[95] Bernini's words reveal that he was impressed by the manner in which Poussin was able to narrate a story through the images on a canvas. At this late point in his career, Bernini, too, was preoccupied

[93] For Bernini see Howard Hibbard, *Bernini* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 1965) and Rudolf Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini: The Sculptor of the Roman Baroque* (London: The Phaidon Press, 1966).
[94] See Blunt, 1965, 58-9.
[95] Paul Fréart de Chantelou, *Diary of the Cavaliere Bernini's Visit to France,* ed. Anthony Blunt (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 78-9.

with overcoming the difficulties that the medium of sculpture presented for the possibility of illustrating a story. However, for the purpose of this study, our interest does not lie in Bernini's complex narrative images from late in his career, but rather in his early illustration of the Ovidian story of Apollo and Daphne.

Bernini's sculpture of *Apollo and Daphne* ca.1622-25 (Figure 18) is an example of the artist's attempt to render a visually challenging narrative in stone through the depiction of a single dramatic moment in time.[96] According to Ovid, the god Apollo and the nymph Daphne were the victims of Cupid's whim, each struck by one of his mischievous arrows. Apollo was incited to fall in love with Daphne, while the nymph's arrow caused her to reject the god. Overcome with desire, Apollo attempted to abduct Daphne against her will. She fled through the forest and Apollo pursued. Just as the god caught her in his grasp, her plea for help was answered by her father, the river god Peneus, who transformed her into a laurel tree. Yet, Apollo still loved her and embraced her, proclaiming that the laurel would forever serve as a symbol of all that is sacred to Apollo.[97] It is for this reason that poets and musicians are crowned with laurel wreaths, symbolic of the approval of their patron god, in memory of his love for the metamorphosed Daphne.

The choice of subject matter for the sculpture was, therefore, appropriate to the decoration of Cardinal Scipione Borghese's villa dedicated to intellectual and cultural activity. Moreover, the statue was probably conceived of as an example of profane poetry, to be considered in combination with Bernini's statue of *David* ca. 1623-24, an example of sacred

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[96] The *Apollo and Daphne* was one of four early sculptures commissioned by the Cardinal Scipione Borghese for the decoration of the Galleria Borghese, where it remains today. For further information, see *Bernini Scultore: La Nascita del Barocco in Casa Borghese*, exh. cat. eds. Anna Coliva and Sebastian Schutze (Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 1998); *Apollo e Dafne del Bernini nella Galleria Borghese*, ed. Kristina Herrmann Fiore (Milan: Amilcare Pizzi S.p.A., 1997); Hibbard, 1965, 48-55; and Wittkower, 1966, 3-7.

[97] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book I, 452-567.

poetry.[98] The fact that Bernini left the *Apollo and Daphne* unfinished in order to begin the sculpture of *David*, further suggests the consideration of the two statues as a pair. Displayed in separate rooms of the villa, the figure of the biblical poet *David* and the *Apollo and Daphne* illustrated the dichotomy between sacred and profane poetry in seventeenth-century Rome. The lascivious nature of the contemporary profane poetry of Marino and Petrarch preoccupied the literary circle of Cardinal Maffeo Barberini, Borghese's uncle and, as of 1623, Pope Urban VIII.[99] Inspired by Bernini's sculpture, Barberini composed a line of text to be engraved on a cartouche that was placed on the base of the statue: "Whoever, loving, pursues the joys of fleeting forms fills his hands with sprays of leaves and seizes bitter fruits."[100] This text served the purpose of a moral allegory, meant to justify the display of the pagan statue in the palace of his nephew. Thus, the statue serves as both an illustration of the fleeting nature of earthly sensual pleasure and the vanity of profane poetry.

The Ovidian subject of the sculpture was probably also chosen for the opportunity its transformative nature provided for a display of Bernini's technical prowess in carving marble. Although this episode from Ovid was often depicted in painting, it was not well suited to sculpture, as it required the illustration of motion as well as the mutation of flesh.[101] Bernini chose the moment at which the transformation of Daphne's body into the laurel tree occurs. Apollo has just grasped her torso with his left hand as her feet begin to take root and her

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[98] Rudolf Preimesberger, "Themes from Art Theory in the Early Works of Bernini," in *Gianlorenzo Bernini: New Aspects of his Art and Thought: A Commemorative Volume*, ed. Irving Lavin (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1985), 12-13.
[99] Ibid, 12-13.
[100] Translated in Hibbard, 1965, 236.
[101] There are many painted depictions of Apollo and Daphne in the history of art including the following: Antonio Pollaiuolo, *Apollo and Daphne* ca. 1470 in the National Gallery, London; Baldassare Peruzzi, *Apollo and Daphne* ca. 1509-11 in the Villa Farnesina, Rome; Dosso Dossi, *Apollo and Daphne* ca. 1522 in the Galleria Borghese, Rome; Veronese, *Apollo and Daphne* ca. 1565-70 in the San Diego Museum of Art; and Domenichino, *Apollo Pursuing Daphne* ca. 1616-18 in the National Gallery, London.

fingertips change into leaves. Her arched back and swinging hair suggest that what was swift motion has just been arrested. Bernini's technical skill in carving marble enabled him to exploit the exact properties which might seem to make the story of Apollo and Daphne difficult to render in stone. Not only does Daphne's soft flesh appear to become rigid before the viewer's eyes, but we see Apollo's left hand embrace the half-human and half-bark flesh of her torso. Indeed, Bernini brilliantly captures in visual terms the transitory moment in Ovid's text of the *Metamorphoses*: "Scarce had she thus prayed when a down-dragging numbness seized her limbs, and her soft sides were begirt with thin bark. Her hair was changed to leaves, her arms to branches. Her feet, but now so swift, grew fast in sluggish roots, and her head was now but a tree's top."[102]

Beyond Bernini's adherence to the text, the sculptor infuses the statue with a psychological intensity. At the moment when Apollo's arm encircles Daphne and he appears to have caught her, his wide-eyed facial expression suggests that he is aware of his impending loss. Similarly, Daphne's expression of fear and her open-mouthed scream seems two-fold. She is at once terrified that she has been trapped by Apollo, and at the same time fearfully aware of her body's transformation into a tree. The viewer of the statue is intended to be drawn into the illustration of the text, through the reaction of the figures. Bernini's rendering is strikingly sensual, infused with a psychological understanding of the story, and a virtuoso display in stone.

In addition to the text of Ovid, the poetry of Marino may have further inspired Bernini's conception of the *Apollo and Daphne*. Marino treated the story no less than three times in his poetic oeuvre.[103] According to Hibbard, Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* is the artist's most

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[102] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book I, 548-552.

[103] Two of Marino's poems concerning Apollo and Daphne will be treated here, a third short poem entitled "La Trasformazione di Dafne" can be found in *Giambattista Marino: Poesie varie*, ed. Benedetto Croce (Bari: G. Laterza & figli, 1913), 175.

successful attempt at 'Marinism'.[104] He cites Marino's short poem entitled *Dafne in Lauro* as the inspiration for the *Apollo and Daphne*,

> O why do you flee, o Daphne, from him who follows and loves you,
> And desires nothing other than your lovely eyes? Are you a soft
> nymph? Or perhaps a hard tree-trunk of this flinty mountainside,
> unbending and deaf to him who begs and calls you? But if you are
> a trunk, why are your feet so ready to flee? How can you not stay
> for my entreaties? So Apollo was speaking, but he saw then the
> lovely fugitive, changed into a real trunk, stay un-movingly upon the bank.[105]

Whereas the text of Ovid merely describes the metamorphosis of Daphne's body into a tree, Marino's poem differs in its playful treatment of the nature of Daphne's transformation. Marino emphasizes the inability of Apollo to comprehend the change that is occurring. As a result, the poem is comprised of a series of witty questions posed by Apollo, which emphasize the contrasts inherent in Daphne's metamorphosis, between "soft nymph" and "hard tree-trunk" or "fleeing" and "staying un-movingly". It is these same witty contrasts which are inherent in Bernini's statue due, in part, to the nature of the medium. Thus, Marino's playful treatment of the story seems similar to the visual play which Bernini creates between soft human flesh and hard tree-trunk; or, Daphne seemingly ready to flee and at the same time unmoving.[106] Although, this aspect of the statue may be explained by Bernini's adaptation of Ovid's text into stone, without the intervening influence of Marino, it seems likely that the sculptor would have been familiar with Marino's poem. This is supported by the fact that in the poet's dedication of his *Dicerie sacre* in 1614, he referred to his acquaintance with Scipione Borghese, the patron of the *Apollo and Daphne*.[107] Furthermore, if the *Apollo and Daphne* had been conceived by Bernini and his

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[104] Hibbard, 1965, 235.
[105] Translation cited in Hibbard, 1965, 236.
[106] Ibid., 235.
[107] See Joy Kenseth, "Bernini's Borghese Sculpture: Another View," *Art Bulletin* LXIII, 2 (1981): 201.

patrons as an illustration of profane poetry, surely they would have been familiar with the poems addressing this Ovidian episode by the most exemplary contemporary profane poet, Marino.

Similar inspiration may be found in Marino's *Dafne* from the *Egloghe boscherecce*, which is an elaborate re-telling of Ovid's story, published in 1620, only two years prior to the creation of the *Apollo and Daphne*.[108] The additional significance of this poem lies in its association with the manner in which the statue was originally viewed.[109] Reconstructions of the original arrangement of statues in the Villa Borghese reveal that the viewer's initial experience of the statue would have been to observe Apollo's dynamic form from behind. This encouraged the viewer to move around the statue in order to gradually understand the narrative depicted. As the viewer moves around to the right side, the story becomes more apparent, terminating in the frontal view of Daphne in which the viewer recognizes, like Apollo, that her body is undergoing a transformation. In this way, the understanding of the transformation of Daphne occurs gradually.[110] Similarly, the first half of Marino's poem is told entirely from the point of view of Apollo as he attempts to catch Daphne and struggles with understanding her reason for fleeing from him. Slowly, the poem which has focused on Apollo begins to include allusions to the imminent metamorphosis, with the introduction of words associated with trees. With one final plea, "but the more you flee the more I follow you; but the more I follow you the less close I come to you," the point of view shifts from that of Apollo to the poet.[111] The remainder of the

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[108] See James Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvelous: Giambattista Marino* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963) 66.

[109] Kenseth, 1981, 191-210, explains that the sculpture was originally placed next to the west wall of the northeast room in the Villa Borghese. Therefore, a viewer entering the room either through the entrance door to the left of the sculpture on the west wall, or the other entrance in the western corner of the south wall, would first view Apollo from behind and then move around to the right of the sculpture.

[110] Ibid., 194-5.

[111] Giovanni Battista Marino, "Dafne," in *Opere scelte di Giovan Battista Marino e dei Marinisti*, 2nd ed., ed. Giovanni Getto, 2vols. (Turin: Unione tipografico-editrice torinese,1966), vol. I: Marino, 193-98, lines, 150-51, translated by the author.

poem relates the experience of the metamorphosis of Daphne from the perspective of a third party and the subsequent reaction of Apollo. The spatial experience of the sculpture's narrative mirrors the changing point of view from which Marino's poem is told. Additionally, in the first two thirds of the poem, the words 'fuggi' and 'aspetta' are used repeatedly to create a sense of rapid motion that is suddenly arrested.[112] Marino was able to use words to create the same sensation that is praised in Bernini's sculpture. Perhaps Bernini was so inspired by the poet's ability to create this contrast with words, that the challenge of adapting the story to stone seemed more accessible. Such a comparison between words and image may also have been suggested to Bernini by the writings of Leonardo da Vinci. In his comparison of the arts, Leonardo determines that painting and sculpture are more noble arts than poetry, as images serve the eyes, while words serve the less important faculty of hearing.[113] Therefore, Bernini's statue may also stand as a challenge to Marino and Ovid's poetry, exemplifying the better ability of sculpture to portray the story of Apollo and Daphne.

For Bernini, Marino's interpretations of Ovid's story of Apollo and Daphne provided subtle influences which enhanced the sculptor's ingenious translation of the episode into marble. The *Apollo and Daphne* is an innovative image for the technical skill and sensuality which Bernini is able to bring to the rendering of a narrative moment in the three-dimensional form of sculpture. However, for all of its invention, the image ultimately relies upon the poetry of Ovid and Marino. Bernini does not embellish or transform the narratives of these poets, he merely illustrates, as miraculous as it may be, the moment of transformation with which we are familiar. In this way, the sculpture is a dramatic feat of technical, psychological, and sensual creation

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[112] Kenseth, 1981, 201.
[113] Leonardo da Vinci, *Paragone: A Comparison of the Arts,* trans. Irma A. Richter (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 69-70.

illustrating a single moment from the poetry of Ovid and influenced by Marino's poetic interpretation of the original textual source.

Caravaggio's painting of *Narcissus* ca. 1597-1600, in the Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica in the Palazzo Corsini in Rome (Figure 19) provides a diverse example of the influence of Marino's poetry on an artist's conception of an Ovidian episode.[114] Caravaggio treated few mythological subjects in his career, those that he did, such as his *Medusa*, *Self-Portrait as Bacchus*, *Bacchus*, and *Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto* defied standard conventions for classical subject matter.[115] The *Narcissus* is no exception, and Caravaggio's novel composition has motivated much discussion on the source, inspiration, and ultimate meaning behind the haunting image. Caravaggio presents us with a youth kneeling before a pool of water, contemplating the reflection of his own image. The basic elements inspire the viewer to believe that they are witnessing the ancient story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* concerning Narcissus. According to Ovid, Narcissus was punished by Nemesis for spurning the love of every woman and man, including the nymph Echo. One day while hunting, Narcissus came across a pool of water and leaning over it he fell in love with his own reflection. A victim of unrequited love, he pined away, unable to eat or drink. So enthralled was the youth by his own image, that even after his death

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[114] For Caravaggio's *Narcissus,* see Roberto Longhi, "Gentileschi padre e figlia," *L'Arte* 32 (1916): 245-314; *The Age of Caravaggio*, ed. Mina Gregori (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 265-8; Rosella Vodret, "Brevi note al Narciso, in Caravaggio. Nuove riflessioni," *Quaderni di Palazzo Venezia* 6 (1989): 222-26; Rosella Vodret, "Il Restauro del Narciso," in *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio. La vita e le opera attraverso i documenti. Atti del convegno internazionale di studi, novembre 1995*, ed. Stefania Macioce (Rome: Logart Press, 1996), 167-83; Catherine Puglisi, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio* (London and New York: Phaidon Press Limited, 1998) 106, 388-91; Avigdor W.G. Posèq, "A Humanistic *Narcissus*," *Caravaggio and the Antique* (London: Avon Books, 1998), 31-42; and Helen Langdon, *Caravaggio: A Life* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998), 202-4.

[115] *Medusa* c. 1598 in the Uffizi, Florence; *Self-Portrait as Bacchus* c. 1593-94 in the Galleria Borghese, Rome; *Bacchus* c. 1597 in the Uffizi, Florence; *Jupiter, Neptune, and Pluto* c. 1599-1600 in the Villa Boncompagni-Ludovisi, Rome.

and descent into the underworld, he perpetually gazed at his reflection in the river Styx. Meanwhile, upon his death, his earthly body was transformed into the Narcissus flower. [116]

Caravaggio has eliminated the distracting details of the narrative, such as hunting accessories, dogs, flowers, and even the nymph Echo, reducing the image to Narcissus and his reflection in the darkness. There is no landscape either, so that the scene is quite unlike those painted images which preceded it. For example, earlier images of Narcissus include those of Jacopo Tintoretto (1518-1594), Alessandro Allori (1535-1607), Francesco Ubertini called Bacchiacca (1494-1557), and Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio (1467-1516), a disciple of Leonardo.[117] In each of these instances, the story of Narcissus appears to function as an excuse to create a vast landscape. There is little concentration on the accurate depiction of the character's reflection; rather, the youth's tragedy is an accessory to the verdant landscape. Caravaggio completely distances himself from this tradition. Interestingly, Caravaggio's dark seclusion of Narcissus' font appears close to the story Ovid, which says that Narcissus' pool lay within a dense forest never touched by rays of light: "There was a clear pool with silvery bright water, to which no shepherds ever came, or she-goats feeding on the mountainside, or any other cattle; whose smooth surface neither bird nor beast nor falling bough ever ruffled. Grass grew all around its edge, fed by the water near, and a coppice that would never suffer the sun to warm the spot."[118] However, this passage from Ovid does not account for the singularity of Caravaggio's image, which eliminates other important narrative aspects of the poem. In addition to the absence

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[116] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book III, 338-510.
[117] For a list of all prior sixteenth-century depictions of Narcissus, see Andor Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 2 vols. (Budapest: Akadémiaia Kiadó, 1974), vol. 2, 185-6. For Tintoretto, see Rodolfo Palucchini and Paola Rossi, *Tintoretto,* 2 vols. (Milan: Electa, 1982), Cat.201, vol. 1, 174 and vol. 2, fig. 265; For Allori, see Adolfo Venturi, *Storia dell'arte italiana* (Milan: U. Hoepli, 1933) IX.6:114; For Francesco Ubertini called Bacchiacca, see Venturi, IX.1: 472, fig. 354. For Boltraffio, see *National Gallery Illustrated General Catalogue* (London: The National Gallery, 1986), no. 2673.
[118] *Ovid's Metamorphoses*, Book III, 407-412.

of landscape, Caravaggio's *Narcissus* is a young Roman boy dressed in contemporary clothes, which removes the youth from his classical context.

Beyond the narrative details of the myth, Ovid's poetry emphasizes the dual nature of the Narcissus story by demonstrating the coexistence of opposing forces within the youth overcome with self-love:

> He admires for which he is himself admired. Unwittingly he desires himself;
> he praises, and is himself what he praises; and while he seeks, is sought;
> equally he kindles love and burns with love.
> How often did he offer vain kisses on the elusive pool?
> How often did he plunge his arms into the water seeking to clasp
> the neck he sees there, but did not clasp himself in them!
> What he sees he knows not; but that which he sees he burns for,
> and the same delusion mocks and allures his eyes.
> O fondly foolish boy, why vainly seek to clasp a fleeting image?
> What you seek is nowhere; but turn yourself away,
> and the object of your love will be no more.
> That which you behold is but the shadow of a reflected form
> and has no substance of its own.
> With you it comes, with you it stays, and it will go with you-if you can go.[119]

Caravaggio's composition seems to attempt the same duality in paint that Ovid does with words. The composition creates a circle comprised of the kneeling boy and his reflection, emphasizing the extent to which Narcissus is trapped in a perpetual cycle of self-love, unable to embrace the image in the pool. He is both the "lover and loved", the one "desiring and desired". At the center of this circle of longing is his illuminated, foreshortened knee, which forms another circle inside that of his arms, shoulders, and head. The encircling nature of the composition also suggests the eternal cycle of death and rebirth which is the fate of the youth and the eponymous flower, who will be reborn each year during the spring as a part of the unbroken succession of the seasons.

Although Ovid's poetry supplies the basic narrative and possibly the notion of duality so well depicted by Caravaggio, the strange psychological quality of the painting may be explained

[119] Ibid., Book III, 424-436.

further, again by the artist's association with the poet Marino. Marino and Caravaggio were well acquainted with each other in Rome.[120] Marino composed a poem dedicated to Caravaggio's *Medusa*, ca. 1598, and sat for a portrait by the artist, which was owned by their mutual patron Crescenzio Crescenzi.[121] In an article on the connection between Caravaggio and Marino's poetry, Elizabeth Cropper points to many commonalities between the two men; both were given to criminal behavior, both advertised their originality, and both shared an interest in exploring the power of art, and especially in the interaction between a painting and the viewer.[122] She goes on to suggest a connection between the poet and Caravaggio's paintings of *The Musicians*, *The Lute Player*, *The Cardsharps*, the *Sleeping Cupid*, and the *Medusa*.[123] It would seem that this argument may be extended to the *Narcissus*. In Marino's *Adone* of ca. 1596, he tells the story of Narcissus, emphasizing the human emotional struggle of the youth, torn between desire and hopelessness.[124] This focus on the intense psychological emotions of the figure is comparable to Caravaggio's painting. Indeed, both artists were criticized during their lifetime for the lack of dramatic action in their works, which tended to rely on the emotional response of the viewer or reader.

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[120] For the relationship between Caravaggio and Marino, see Elizabeth Cropper, "Caravaggio e la questione della Lirica," in *Caravaggio nel IV Centenario della Cappella Contarelli,* ed. Caterina Volpi (Castello: Petruzzi Stampa, 2002); Maurizio Marini, "Marino e Caravaggio: un ritratto nel contesto della Contarelli," in *Caravaggio nel IV Centenario della Cappella Contarelli,* ed. Caterina Volpi (Castello: Petruzzi Stampa, 2002); Langdon, 1998, 197-205 and Elizabeth Cropper, "The Petrifying Art: Marino's Poetry and Caravaggio," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal* 26 (1991): 193-5.

[121] For Caravaggio's *Medusa* (Uffizi, Florence), see Avigdor W.G. Posèq, "Caravaggio's Medusa Shield," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts* 113 (1989): 170-4; Louis Marin, *To Destroy Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); and Puglisi, 1998, 109, 229, 363, 376, 388; For the portrait, see Mia Cinotti, *Caravaggio: tutte le opere* (Bergamo: Poligrafiche Bolis, 1983), 571, no.111.

[122] Cropper, 1991, 194.

[123] Ibid, 196-205. *The Musicians*, ca. 1595, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; *The Lute Player*, ca. 1595-96, Hermitage Museum, Leningrad; *The Cardsharps*, ca. 1595, Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth; *Sleeping Cupid*, ca. 1608, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.

[124] Avigdor W. G. Posèq, "The Allegorical Content of Caravaggio's Narcissus," *Source* 10, no.3 (1991): 23.

Marino's respect for the power of Caravaggio's art is verified by a statement of the poet following the death of Caravaggio, "Death and Nature conspired to kill Caravaggio, the one because he brought the dead alive with his brushes, the other because she was conquered in every image that Caravaggio created rather than painted."[125] The epitaph suggests the idea that nature is captured by Caravaggio in his paintings, but not before she is subjected to his choices. This notion is similar to the understanding of the Narcissus myth as a metaphor for the mirroring of external nature as it is shaped by the notion of the self.[126] In other words, like God the Father, Caravaggio "created rather than painted" nature according to his own desires.[127] Marino's words reveal an understanding of Caravaggio's manipulation of images to suit his purpose that is comparable to the poet's witty refashioning of Ovidian imagery in his own poetry.

Marino interpreted the image of Narcissus "not as one who studies himself, but one who is deluded by an image."[128] In Marino's *La Galeria* there are four poems which describe paintings of Narcissus, emphasizing the blurring of art and nature, reality and illusion.[129] One of these is believed to describe a painting of *Narcissus* by Bernardo Castello (1557-1629) in La Galleria Pallavicini in Rome (Figure 20). This poem praised the artist's illusionism, "No imitation fountain this: for what is seen in it is real and living,…the boy keeps silent, utterly absorbed, in fixed contemplation of that face that so delighted him."[130] Yet, Marino's description seems more akin to Caravaggio's painting, then to that of Castello, as there is no virtuoso display

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[125] Giambattista Marino, *La Galeria*, I, 191, cited in Cropper, 1991, 204.
[126] Christopher Braider, "The Fountain of Narcissus: The Invention of Subjectivity and the Pauline Ontology of Art in Caravaggio and Rembrandt," *Comparative Literature* 50, no. 4 (1998): 301
[127] Marino, *La Galeria*, I, 191, cited in Cropper, 1991, 204.
[128] Louise Vigne, "Reflections of Narcissus." *Kunsthistorisk Tidskrift* 35 (1966): 43.
[129] Although Marino's *La Galeria* was not published until 1620, his poetry was in wide circulation prior to its publication, Cropper, 1991, 196.
[130] Marino, *La Galeria*, Sonnet 7, cited and discussed in Langdon, 1998, 203.

of the reflection attempted by the lesser-known artist.[131] In fact, the central conceit of each of Marino's four poems is that of the viewer who is enthralled by a painting of Narcissus in the same manner as the youth was seized by his own image.[132] By association with Marino's poetry, the meaning behind the *Narcissus* is that of a psychological image which emphasizes the interaction of the viewer with the painted work by depicting the boy as both the viewer and the viewed. Narcissus is subject to the gaze of the observer of the painting as well as his reflection, while the viewer essentially experiences what the boy sees as well. This type of technical conceit seems very similar to that of the *Medusa* shield, which displays the head of Medusa as if she is being petrified by her own reflection in Perseus' shield, at the same moment that the viewer looks-on in danger of being turned to stone himself.[133] Although none of Marino's four poems have been connected with Caravaggio's work, no other depiction of Narcissus approaches this notion as closely. It seems that Caravaggio, as an associate of Marino, interested in the power of art revealed by his *Medusa*, contemplated the poetry of Marino and decided to create his own *Narcissus*, worthy of commemoration among works which address illusion and reality.

This concern for maintaining the ambiguity of Narcissus and his reflection explains Caravaggio's *pentimento* for the left hand of Narcissus.[134] By removing it from the depths of the pool, where it was initially depicted, possibly in order to form a more clearly circular image, Caravaggio sustains the tension between the viewer and the viewed. The moment Narcissus touches the water he will become aware that his reflection is just that. We see him reach out and barely touch the water, or in his mind, his lover. Caravaggio would have the viewer suspended in

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[131] Langdon, 1998, 202-4, suggests the possibility that Caravaggio was influenced by Marino's poems concerning images of Narcissus or at the very least by Marino's emphasis on the blurring of reality and illusion in art.
[132] Vigne, 1966, 43.
[133] For a discussion of these properties in the *Medusa*, see Marin, 1995, 115-144 and 191-4.
[134] Vodret, 1996, 169.

that moment before this revelation, to emphasize the confusion created by an image which is at once appealing and elusive, in the same manner as his own painting. At the same time, Caravaggio's composition places the viewer in the position of Echo, as a silent observer, unable to warn the youth of his misplaced love. Echo and, thus, the viewer both see and become the mute response to Narcissus - the oral echo transformed into a visual reflection. As a result, Caravaggio's painting of *Narcissus* is a silent poetic image depicting the muteness of Echo and the viewer.

Caravaggio's depiction of *Narcissus* provides for a visual comparison with Poussin's representation of the same myth within the *Realm of Flora*.[135] Although Poussin's figure is reversed and unclothed, the tilt of the head is similar to Narcissus' pose in Caravaggio's painting. Poussin portrays the youth with the same curling hair and forward falling lock. Also, the way in which Poussin situates Narcissus and Echo around the circular vessel, suggests the same type of encircling composition as Caravaggio's *Narcissus*.[136] Many scholars have dismissed such a borrowing as improbable based upon the apparent differences between the images and also because of Poussin's negative evaluation of Caravaggio's art. This of course refers to the famous declaration of André Felibien, who repeats the words of the artist himself, "Poussin could not bear Caravaggio and said that he had come into the world in order to destroy painting."[137] Although, these are not the sentiments of a caravaggisti, Poussin's statement reveals that he clearly knew Caravaggio's work. The two artists also shared the patronage of Vincenzo Giustiniani, for whom Poussin painted his *Massacre of the Innocents* ca. 1632-37, which was

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[135] Panofsky, 1949, 115-6.
[136] Ibid., 115-6.
[137] André Félibien, "Entretien VI," *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres anciens et modernes; avec la vie des achitectes*, 6 vols. (Trevoux: de l'imprimerie de S.A.S., 1725), vol. 4, 194.

closely associated with Marino's poem of the same subject entitled *La Strage degli Innocenti*.[138] With this in mind, the visual similarity between Poussin's Narcissus in the *Realm of Flora* and Caravaggio's painting proves quite convincing.

Regardless of whether Poussin made use of Caravaggio's image of Narcissus in the *Realm of Flora*, it is clear that the poetry of Marino influenced Caravaggio. The focus of Marino's poetry on the internal emotional struggle of Narcissus and the involvement of the viewer in this experience motivated Caravaggio to depict an image which addressed these aspects of the story. The result was an extraordinary depiction of Narcissus and his reflection which the viewer is inspired to contemplate. It is no longer a representation of the narrative story of Echo and Narcissus, but an image which appeals to the emotions and reveals the underlying psychological potential of the original Ovidian story. Caravaggio's *Narcissus* is an invention of the artist's mind, inspired by the poetry of Marino, which differs from other images of Narcissus.

Given the prevalence of Marino's poetry in seventeenth-century Rome and its connection with other Ovidian images, it is no surprise that a number of scholars have focused on the possible connections between the *Realm of Flora* and the poetry of Marino.[139] The possibility of a connection between the painting and Marino's poetry is enriched by the documentation of all

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[138] For the patronage of Vincenzo Giustiniani, see Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey, *Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 23-105. For the relationship between Poussin's *Massacre of the Innocents* (Musée Condé, Chantilly) and Marino's *La Strage Degli Innocenti*, see Idem., 253-78.

[139] For the relationship between Poussin and Marino, see Walter Friedlaender, "The Massimi Poussin drawings at Windsor," *Burlington Magazine* LIV (1929): 116-128 and "Catalogue of the Massimi Collection of Poussin drawings at Windsor," *Burlington Magazine* LIV (1929): 252-258; Andrea Moschetti, "Dell'Influsso del Marino sulla formazione artistica di Nicola Poussin," in *Atti del X Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte in Roma,* ed. International Congress of the History of Art (Nendeln and Liechtenstein: Kraus, 1912, reprint 1922), 356-384; Pietro Toesca, "Il Cavalier Marino collezionista e critico d'arte," *Nuova Antologia* CDLV (1952): 54-63; Jane Costello, "Poussin's Drawings for Marino and the New Classicism: I – Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* XVIII (1955): 296-317; Ackerman, 1961, 326-36; and Mirollo, 1963.

the early biographers of Poussin, who testify to the relationship between the two men.[140] Poussin made the acquaintance of Marino in Paris in 1622, where the poet had lived since 1615, under the patronage of Marie de' Medici. Marino soon commissioned a series of drawings from the artist based on subjects taken from Ovid, which are now housed at Windsor Castle.[141] It was probably Poussin's relationship with the Italian poet Marino which convinced him to make the move to Rome. When Marino returned to Italy in 1623, Poussin followed the next year, spending some time in Venice prior to reaching Rome. It was Marino who provided Poussin with introductions to key figures in the circle of intellectual patronage in Rome, such as Cardinal Francesco Barberini and Marcello Sacchetti.

The relationship between artist and poet, as well as the fact that much of Marino's poetry concerned the reinterpretation or embellishment of Ovidian themes, has caused many historians

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[140] Giovanni Battista Passeri, *Vite de'pittori, scultori ed architetti che anno lavorato in Roma, morti del 1641, fino al 1673*. Rome, 1772 – *Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri*. (Römische Forschungen, vol. 11) ed. Jacob Hess (Leipzig and Vienna: H. Keller, 1934), 323; Félibien, 1725, 22-4; and Bellori, 1931, 410-11:

> Trovauasi all'ora nella Corte di Parigi il Cavaliere Gio:Battista Marino celebratissimo Poeta, il quale per lo diletto suo della pittura, conobbe l'ingegno, e la superiorità di Nicolò in quelle historie, volle però conoscerlo, e lo raccolte à dipingere in casa sua; e riuscendogli pronto, ed efficace nelle inuentioni, e ne gli affetti, lodaualo, quasi concitato dalle Muse, non altrimente che li Poeti, all'imitatione. Era di grandissimo follievo al Marino la compagnia sua, perche dimorando egli per lo più indisposto in letto, godeva di vedere rappresentare in disegno le sue proprie poesie, e quelle particolarmente di Adone; de'quali disegni si conferuano alcuni in un libro di sua mano, nella Bibliotheca del Signor Cardinale Massimi. Trà questi scorgesi il natale di Adone, che esce dal ventre di Mirra già in arbore convertita, con le chiome, e le braccia disciolte in frondi, e con le gambe indurate in tronco: Evvi una ninfa, che aiuta à trar fouri il bambino, e l'altre vi accorrono con vasi; & arredi, riguardando la sua nuova bellezza con maraviglia.
> E ben si comprende da quei disegni quanto fin dall'ora egli avesse feconda, & impressa la mente nelli buoni esempi di Rafaelle, e di Giulio, e quanto ancora, con la consuetudine del Marino, egli si adornasse delli colori poetici, che si confanno del tutto con li colori della pittura, e li quail egli ritenne poi sempre con grandissima lode ne'suoi componimenti. Tornandofene in tanto il Marino à Roma, voleva condurlo feco, ma Nicolò non era all'ora in istato di partire, se bene lo seguitò poi passati alquanti mesi….Intraprese egli la terza volta il viaggio di Roma, e vi giunse finalmente la primavera dell'anno 1624 dove poco potè godere l'amistà del Marino, che tornò à Napoli sua patria, & in breve terminò la vita. Nel partire il Marino lo raccomandò al Sig. Marcello Sacchetti da cui fù portato alla gratia del Card. Barberini Nipote di Urbano VII.

[141] See Costello, 1955, 296-317.

to search for the literary inspiration for the *Realm of Flora* within the Italian poet's vast oeuvre. One such theory supports Marino's epic poem *L'Adone* as the single inspirational source.[142] However, this suggestion has been thwarted by the elucidation of many details present in Poussin's painting and absent from the epic poem. [143] Another explanation singles out a poem from Marino's *Rime* of 1602 entitled *La Rosa*, in which two characters named Mopso and Thirsi are speaking to each other:

Dirò d'Aiace tinto	Should I sing of Ajax,
Di vivace vermiglio?	Coloured lively vermilion
Del Ligustro, ò del Giglio?	Or Privet? Or Lily?
Dirò d'Adon dipinto?	Should I sing of Adonis painted?
Del fregiato Giacinto?	Or of Hyacinthus embellished?
O di Clitia, a cui piace	Or of Clitia, turning always
Volgersi sempre inver l'eterna face?	To face the eternal torch?
Del lieto Fiordaliso?	Should I sing of the merry fleur-de-lis?
O del'innamorata	Or the enamoured
Mammoletta odorata,	sweet violet, fragrant,
D'Amor pallida il viso?	Made pale by the face of Love?
O dirò di Narciso,	Or of Narcissus,
Che da quell'acque, ond'hebbe	who from the water, where
La morte già, trasse la vita, e crebbe?	Death once was, draws forth life, and grows?
Canta Thirsi di quella,	Sing, Thirsi, of the one
Ch'è più cara a gli amanti:	dearest to lovers,
Canta gli honori, e i vanti	Sing honour and praise
Dela Rosa novella,	of the new Rose.
Che baldanzosa, e bella	From humble soil
Sorge dal'humil'herba	she rises among the common flowers,
Tra la plebe de' fior donna superba.	beautiful and bold, The arrogant Rose.

In the following passage, Mopso tells Thirsi to praise her who:

Con ridenti foglie	Adorns the pure green
Di questa herbosa chiostra	of this grassy precinct with
Il puro verde inostra.[144]	Bright petals.

[142] See Louis Hourticq, *La jeunesse de Poussin* (Paris: Hachette, 1937), 130-6.
[143] See Mario Praz, "Milton e Poussin all scuola dell'Italia," *Romana* II (1938): 42, n.3.
[144] Giambattista Marino, *Rime* (Venice: Presso G.B. Giotti, 1602), 56-62, quoted and translated in Richard Spear, "The Literary Source of Poussin's *Realm of Flora*," *Burlington Magazine* CVII (1965): 564-565.

Two of the transformed personas not mentioned in the above stanzas, Adonis and Crocus, do appear later in the text of *La Rosa*. Spear provides a convincing argument as to the way in which details of the painting are direct translations of *La Rosa*.[145] Perhaps the most convincing aspect is the presence of the putto, in the right foreground smelling a flower, who is explained as an illustration of the lines "the enamoured sweet violet, fragrant, made pale by the face of Love?" The quiver and arrows identify the putto as cupid, or Amor (Love), as he smells the sweet violet before his face.[146] In addition, Spear sites three drawings by the artist, from the collection at Windsor, which all seem to relate to the text, as well as to Poussin's *Realm of Flora*.[147] The result is a convincing reading of the painting as a visual illustration of Marino's epic *Rime* and in particular, *La Rosa*. However, this theory also has its inconsistencies, such as the appearance of Adonis and Crocus in contexts unrelatable to the painting's setting. Additionally, the key lines cited by Spear have been identified as merely a rhetorical introduction to the praise of the Rose, and therefore, hardly a substantial textual source for the *Realm of Flora*.[148]

Finally, Marino's *Europa* from *La Sampogna* has been identified as a more suitable text for the *Realm of Flora*.[149] In this case, the flowers described by Marino are mentioned in their human form, in a manner not apparent in Marino's other poetic lists of flowers. Also, it seems that some of the poetic descriptions closely resemble the actions of Poussin's figures. For example, in the poem, Clytie is portrayed as, "Clytie, beloved of Apollo, in order better to gaze upon her rising mate from her two eyes, raised herself high on her leg, and was seen in among the violets which turn themselves to her and rebel from the sun".[150] However, even the author

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[145] Spear, 1965, 565.
[146] Ibid., 565.
[147] For a complete discussion of this possible textual inspiration, see Spear, 1965, 563-9.
[148] See Robert Simon, "Poussin, Marino, and the Interpretation of Mythology," *Art Bulletin* LX (1978): 62.
[149] Ibid., 62-4.
[150] Marino, *Opere scelte di Giovan Battista Marino e dei Marinisti*, 1966, vol. I, 309, lines 69-74.

who proposes this source ultimately abandons his own proposition in favor of a broader interpretation of the inspirational role played by the poet Marino. It would seem that Poussin did not strive to illustrate a specific poem of Marino's, but was more influenced by the manner in which the poet reinterpreted and revived classical Ovidian mythology.[151] As a result, the *Realm of Flora* appears to be an altogether singular invention on the part of the painter, amounting to his own "visual poetry".[152] Nevertheless, the ability of Poussin to conceive of such a novel image relies on the artist's experience of Ovidian mythology, through the poetry of Marino.

Poussin's *Realm of Flora*, Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne*, and Caravaggio's *Narcissus*, are all images whose innovative representation of an Ovidian episode was to some degree affected by the poetry of Marino and its reinterpretation of Ovid's text. Through their association with Marino, all three artists conceived of their own distinctive images of metamorphosis. However, the stimulus supplied by Marino was of a different type and degree for each individual artist. For Bernini, Marino's poetry merely enhanced the artist's portrayal of an Ovidian transformation with such immediacy and dramatic affect that the viewer is struck by its realistic depiction of the narrative moment in stone. For Caravaggio, Marino's interpretation of the emotional struggle of Narcissus and the underlying possibilities of such an image to engage the viewer resulted in an unconventional rendering of the Ovidian myth. However, neither Bernini nor Caravaggio was inspired by Marino to create images equivalent to visual poetry. In contrast, Poussin's *Realm of Flora* truly reveals itself to be a "poem" of the artist's own invention, refashioning the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* into a unique image, in the same manner as Marino's contemporary poetry.

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[151] Simon, 1978, 63-4.
[152] Ibid., 64.

CHAPTER 3

POUSSIN THE POET AND THE *REALM OF FLORA* AS VISUAL POETRY

In order to interpret the *Realm of Flora* as comparable to a work of poetry by Poussin, it is first necessary to understand the state of the enduring relationship between the sister arts of painting and poetry in Baroque Rome. Throughout history, discussions concerning the fine arts often entailed the comparison of the poet and the painter according to various criteria. Painting was first associated with poetry in antiquity, by Horace (65-8 BCE) who coined the phrase *ut pictura poesis*- "as is painting so is poetry" to describe the commonalities between the two arts.[153] Horace also said, "Painters, like poets, have always had an equal right in hazarding anything" in order to emphasize the freedom of imagination shared by the two arts.[154] The nature of the comparison was expanded to incorporate not only the process of creation, but also the mutual effects of the two arts. According to Plutarch (45-125 CE), it was the Greek poet Simonides (556-468 BCE) who said that "painting is mute poetry and poetry a speaking picture."[155] This statement emphasizes the comparison of the two arts as they relate to the viewer.

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[153] Horace, *Ars poetica*, lines 361-5, cited in Rensselaer W. Lee, *Ut Pictura Poesis: The Humanistic Theory of Painting* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 5, no. 15. The phrase *ut pictura poesis* has come to embody a theme where a comparison of poetry and painting occurs in order to show the similarity of the two arts or to argue for the superiority of one over the other. The complex nature of this subject is best explored in Lee's book on the subject.

[154] Horace, lines 9-11, cited in Pace, 1999, 102, n. 15.

[155] Plutarch, *De Gloria Atheniensium* III. 346f-347c, attributed this aphorism to Simonides (556-486 BCE), cited by Lee, 1967, 3, no. 3. Although Simonides lived prior to Horace, his comparison of poetry and painting was not well-known until it was referred to by Plutarch in the first century CE.

In other words, both have the same purpose; however, painting conveys its meaning through images, while poetry utilizes words.

Renaissance theorists, including Leonardo da Vinci, revived the debate, emphasizing that the similar aims of both poetry and painting are to effectively imitate human nature.[156] Later in the sixteenth century, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo further explored the comparison of poetry and painting in his *Trattato dell'arte de la pittura* (Milan, 1584), where the two arts are described as closely related because both rely on divine inspiration for the expression of human emotions.[157] According to Lomazzo, "no man may be a painter, who does not also….have a touch of poetry."[158] Following Lomazzo, many similar theories on painting from the seventeenth century emphasize the importance of the artist's creative imagination, likening the process of painting to poetic inspiration.[159] It is this freedom of imagination which was often referred to as *fantasia* by artists and theorists. For example, Franciscus Junius emphasized the necessity of *fantasia* for the successful artist when he wrote, "Imitation may allow the novice to reach the level achieved by predecessors – it is *fantasy* that allows him to progress beyond what is known."[160] Junius emphasizes the role of *fantasia* in *ut pictura poesis* when he says:

> Both [Poetry and Painting] are most of all advanced by the ready help of a strong and well-exercised Imagination… So doth then the Art of Painting as well as Poesie relie upon a generous and bold strength of Imagination, so that they will no more creepe and crawle to feele and to follow the steppes of them that are gone before, but they take upon themselves to trie somewhat further. [161]

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[156] Lee, 1967, 9-16.
[157] Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo, *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura, et architettura,* 7 vols. (Milan: Appresso Paolo Gottardo Pontio, 1584), vol. 6, 2, 281, cited in Lee, 1967, 18, no.75.
[158] Ibid., cited in Lee, 1967, 18, no.75.
[159] Pace, 1999, 88.
[160] Franciscus Junius*, The Painting of the Ancients in Three Books, 1638* (Farnborough: Gregg Press, 1972), 29.
[161] Ibid., 60.

As with the example of Junius, references to *ut pictura poesis* in the seventeenth century often emphasize the ability of both poets and painters to utilize their *fantasia* to create images from their own minds.

Marino also attempted to contribute to the ancient debate. His *La Galeria*, with its juxtaposition of images and poetry, reveals his interest in the comparison of words and works of art. More specifically, Marino addressed the concept of *ut pictura poesis* in the first of his three *Dicerie sacre*, entitled "La Pittura, Diceria prima, sopra la Santa Sindone," he begins:

> Many are the relationships, and great are the analogies, as believe
> all the sages, between canvas and paper, between colors and ink,
> between brush and pen…Poetry is described as speaking Painting,
> Painting as mute poetry; one is characterized by mute eloquence;
> the other by eloquent silence. One is silent in the other;
> one argues in the other, thus in turn exchanging roles and voices,
> Poetry may be said to Paint, and Painting to write.[162]

Marino further explains the common purpose of both arts to "delectably nourish human souls, and with the loftiest pleasure console them."[163] In this discourse, Marino discusses the basic components of painting, *disegno* and *colorito*, often discussed in theoretical descriptions of the art, such as that of Leon Battista Alberti's *De pictura* (Florence, 1435) and Lodovico Dolce's *Dialogo della pittura intitolato l'Aretino* (Venice, 1557). Marino makes a further distinction between *disegno interno*, or the internal and intellectual practice and *disegno esterno*, or the external and practical aspects of painting.[164] Marino's conception of *disegno interno* relies on the ability of the painter to employ *fantasia* in the creation of novel images.[165] Like Junius, Marino stresses that the capable painter does not rely on imitation but utilizes his own *fantasia*. It is

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[162] Giambattista Marino, *Dicerie sacre*, ed. Giovanni Pozzi (Turin: G. Einuadi, 1966), 151, translated by Pace, 1999, 98.
[163] Ibid., 151.
[164] Ackerman, 1961, 332, shows that Marino's theories are taken from the writings of Federigo Zuccaro, *L'Idea de'pittori, scultori, e architetti* (Turin, 1607).
[165] Ibid., 332-3.

within this atmosphere which stressed the importance of *fantasia* and imagination that Poussin was inspired, not simply to illustrate the poetry of Ovid or Marino, but to conceive his own poetic image in the *Realm of Flora*.

As an artist inspired by the writings of the ancients, Poussin was familiar with the notion of *ut pictura poesis* and, therefore, valued the art of poetry in relation to his own art. He revealed his predilection for the comparison of the two arts in his own letters, when he stated that "je fais profession de choses muettes" and referred to his paintings as "mes tacites images".[166] Poussin's conception of his paintings as "mute things" and "silent imagery" demonstrates his understanding of his art in relation to *ut pictura poesis*. Additionally, Poussin's other writings on painting also suggest that he perceived the arts of poetry and painting to be intrinsically related. At the end of Bellori's description of the life of Poussin in his *Vite*, he includes the *Osservazioni di Nicolo Pussino sopra la pittura*, a collection of Poussin's thoughts on painting, organized under thematic headings. The observation entitled, 'Diffinizione della pittura e della sua propria imitazione' reads:

> La pittura altro non è che l'imitazione dell'azioni umane, le quali
> propriamente sono azioni imitabili; l'altre non sono imitabili per se,
> ma per accidente, e non come parti principali, ma come accessorie,
> ed in questa guisa si possono ancora imitare non solo l'azioni delle bestie,
> ma tutte le cose naturali.[167]

Blunt recognized that Poussin had taken his definition for painting from Tasso's definition for poetry in his *Discorsi del poema eroico* (Milan, 1594), merely substituting the word 'pittura' for

[166] *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin* (reprint of Archives de l'art Français, vol.5, 1911) ed. Charles Jouanny (Paris: F. de Noble, 1968), no. 8, p.16 and no. 26, p.54.
[167] Bellori, 1931, 460.

'poesia'.[168] In this way, Poussin indirectly suggests that poetry and painting are interchangeable, as the same definition may apply to either art.[169]

Poussin's appreciation for the comparison of painting and poetry was enriched by his early interaction with the poet Marino. According to Bellori, Marino was the first person to recognize Poussin's imaginative genius, which he compared to poetic inspiration.[170] Bellori also remarked that Poussin's exposure to the poetry of Marino contributed to the "colori poetici" which "he always retained in his compositions, to his great credit."[171] These statements by Bellori reveal a contemporary understanding of Poussin as a painter-poet.

That Poussin valued the process of poetic inspiration is evinced by his many paintings that celebrate the divinely inspired poet, as well as by his numerous images of Apollo, the god of poetry. First among these is the *Venus and Mercury* ca.1626-30 which depicts the two gods as the protectors of the arts of poetry, painting, and music, surrounded by their corresponding attributes (Figure 21).[172] An even more explicit homage to poetry may be seen in *The Inspiration of the Lyric Poet* ca. 1628-29 in Hanover (Figure 22). [173] In this painting, a poet kneeling before Apollo is crowned from above by a winged putto. Although the poet has been variously identified as Ovid, Tibullus, Marino, or even Poussin himself, he is generally accepted as Anacreon, the Greek lyric poet.[174] In any case, the role of divine inspiration in the labors of the

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[168] Nicolas Poussin, *Lettres et propos sur l'art*, ed. Anthony Blunt (Pais: Hermann, 1964), 169.
[169] Anthony Colantuono, "The Tender Infant: Invenzione and Figura in the Art of Poussin," Ph.D. dissertation, Johns Hopkins University, 1986, 16. Colantuono suggests that this is an example of Poussin's practiced use, in his writings, of the type of witty conceits that characterize Marino's poetry.
[170] Bellori, 1931, 410, see note 140 above.
[171] Ibid., 411, see note 140 above.
[172] *Venus and Mercury*, Dulwich College Picture Gallery, ca.1626-30. For further information, see Richard Verdi and Pierre Rosenberg, *Nicolas Poussin 1594-1665* (London: Zwemmer in association with the Royal Academy of Arts, 1995), 20 and Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin: A Critical Catalogue* (London: Phaidon Press Ltd., 1966), no. 184.
[173] Blunt, 1966, no. 125; Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, no. 14.
[174] Marc Fumaroli, *L'école du silence* (Paris: Flammarion, 1994), 139-42.

poet is depicted symbolically as he drinks from a cup held by Apollo. Similarly, the Louvre's *Inspiration of the Epic Poet* ca. 1630, is also an allegory for the creative genius of the poet (Figure 23).[175] Again the poet is crowned from above by a flying putto, and in this image the laureate raises his pen to his tablet as he prepares to record verses dictated by Apollo. The importance of ancient literature is emphasized by three prominent works of Homer and Vergil, one held by a standing putto and the other two resting on the ground.[176]

The final painting in this group of Poussin's depictions of the inspired poet is the *Parnassus* in the Prado ca.1628-33 (Figure 24). [177] This image evokes Raphael's fresco of the same subject in its depiction of Apollo and the Muses as they receive the most celebrated poets of history on Parnassus. The poet kneeling before Apollo will join the ranks of those depicted to the left, who seem to represent Homer, Vergil, and Tasso.[178] Poussin's identification of this genuflecting figure as Giambattista Marino suggests that the painter valued the poetry of Marino to such an extent that he wished to honor him among the most famous poets of history.[179] The poet holds two books, possibly representing the two epic poems for which Marino is celebrated, the *Adone* (1623) and the *Strage degli Innocenti* (1632).[180] Since Marino died in March of 1625, the painting has been interpreted as a posthumous homage by Poussin to his dear friend and one-time patron. These four paintings reveal Poussin's interest in the divine inspiration of the poet. It

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[175] Blunt, 1966, no. 124; Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, no. 18; Fumaroli, 1994, 53-147.
[176] Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, 176.
[177] Blunt, 1966, no. 129; Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, no. 22. The dates for all three works, the *Inspiration of the Lyric Poet*, the *Inspiration of the Epic Poet*, and the *Parnassus*, are problematic, as they are not based on any documentary evidence, but rely on stylistic comparisons with other works.
[178] Erwin Panofsky, *A Mythological Painting by Poussin in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm* (Stockholm: Kungl. Boktryckeriet P.A. Norstedt & Söner, 1960), 51-6
[179] Ibid., 51-6
[180] Panofsky, 1960, 55. Although the *Strage degli Innocenti* was not published until after Marino's death, at the end of the period for the dating of Poussin's *Parnassus*, the text of the poem is known to have been complete by 1610 and, therefore, Marino had the poem with him in France in 1622 when he met Poussin. See Giambattista Marino, *Dicerie sacre e La Strage degli Innocenti* ed. Giovanni Pozzi (Turin: G. Einuadi, 1960), 445-463.

seems curious that in a century which abounds with examples of the artist exalting the art of painting, Poussin chose repeatedly to praise the sister art of poetry.[181] And, it was only twenty years later, in his *Self-Portrait* ca. 1649-50 in the Louvre, that Poussin depicts the personification of the art of painting as his muse.[182]

Along with Poussin's interest in the connections between poetry and painting, as well as his depiction of subjects related to the divine inspiration of the poet, it has been argued repeatedly that Poussin created his paintings according to principles which he believed to be poetic in nature. Poussin's thoughts on his creative process are recorded in a letter dated November 24, 1647 to his patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou. The letter was written in response to Chantelou's complaint that the *Ordination* that Poussin had painted for him was less appealing than *The Finding of Moses* that Poussin had painted for Jean Pointel.[183] Poussin replied that a painting must be treated in the manner dictated by its subject matter:

> If you find the painting of *The Finding of Moses* which belongs to M. Pointel so attractive, is this a reason for thinking that I did it with greater love than I put into your paintings? Can you not see that it is the nature of the subject which has produced this result and your state of mind, and that the subjects that I am depicting for you require a different treatment? The whole art of painting lies in this. Forgive my liberty if I say that you have shown yourself precipitate in your judgment of my works. To judge well is very difficult unless one has great knowledge of both the theory and the practice of this art. We must not judge by our senses alone but by reason.

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[181] Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, 21, provides examples of other seventeenth-century artists who exalted the art of painting in their works, such as Velázquez' *Las Meninas* ca.1656-57 in the Museo del Prado, Madrid and Vermeer's *An Artist in his Studio* ca. 1665 in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna. [181]

[182] Bellori, 1931, 440, identified the female figure in the left background of the painting, embraced by two hands and wearing a diadem with an eye in the middle, as a personification of the art of Painting embraced by Friendship. Bellori suggests that Poussin's intention was to honor the patron of the painting and his dear friend, Chantelou, through this depiction of Friendship and Painting, "Dietro nell'altra tavola contraria è figurata la testa di una donna in profilo con un'occhio sopra la fronte nel diadema: questa è la Pittura, e v'appariscono due mani che l'abbracciano, cioè l'amore di essa pittura, e l'amicitia, à cui è dedicato il ritratto. Così egli espresse le lodi, e l'affetto verso quell Signore, che sempre lo favorì per la sua nobile inclinatione."

[183] The *Ordination* that Poussin painted for Chantelou is dated to ca. 1647 and is now in the National Gallery of Scotland. *The Finding of Moses* painted for Jean Pointel is dated to ca. 1647 and is now in the Louvre.

This is why I want to tell you something of great importance which will make you see what has to be observed in representing the subjects of paintings.

Those fine old Greeks, who invented everything that is beautiful, found several Modes by means of which they produced marvelous effects.

This word Mode means, properly, the ratio or the measure and the form that we employ to do anything, which compels us not to go beyond it, making us work in all things with a certain middle course or moderation. And so this mediocrity or moderation is simply a certain manner or determined and fixed order in the process by which a thing preserves its being.

As the Modes of the ancients were composed of several things put together, the variety produced certain differences of Mode whereby one could understand that each of them retained in itself a subtle distinction, particularly when all the things that pertained to the composition were put together in proportions that had the power to arouse the soul of the spectator to diverse emotions. Observing these effects, the wise ancients attributed to each [Mode] a special character and they called Dorian the Mode that was firm, grave, and severe, and they applied it to matters that were grave, severe, and full of wisdom.

And passing on from this to pleasant and joyous things they used the Phrygian Mode because its modulations were more subtle than those of any other Mode and because its effect was sharper. These two manners and no others were praised and approved by Plato and Aristotle, who deemed the others useless; they held in high esteem this vehement, furious, and highly severe Mode that strikes the spectator with awe.

I hope within a year to paint something in this Phrygian Mode; frightful wars provide subjects suited to this manner.

Furthermore they considered that the Lydian Mode was the most proper for mournful subjects because it has neither the simplicity of the Dorian nor the severity of the Phrygian.

The Hypolidian Mode contains within itself a certain suavity and sweetness which fills the soul and the beholders with joy. It lends itself to divine matters, glory, and Paradise.

The ancients invented the Ionic which they employed to represent dances, bacchanals, and feasts because of its cheerful character.

Good poets have used great diligence and marvelous artifice in adapting their choice of words to their verse and disposing the feet according to the propriety of speech, as Vergil has observed throughout his work, because to all three manners of speech he accommodates the actual sound of the verse with such skill that he seems to set before our eyes with the sound of the words the things he is describing. So, when he is speaking of love, he has cleverly chosen certain words that are sweet, pleasing, and very grateful to the ear. Where he sings of a feat of arms or describes a naval battle or accident at sea, he has chosen words that are hard, sharp, and unpleasing, so that on hearing them or pronouncing them they arouse fear. If, therefore, I had painted you a picture in which this manner was followed, you would imagine that I did not love you.[184]

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[184] *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin*, no. 156, 370-5 cited in translation by Blunt, 1967, 367-70.

Poussin's theory of the modes describes how a painter must choose a manner of depiction appropriate to his subject matter. Then, he must construct his composition, so that every aspect of the image works towards the expression of the whole. He compares this prudent selection process to the labors of the poet, who chooses his words and metaphors carefully so that each word functions toward a central conceit. According to Poussin's theory, the reasoned construction of a painted image according to the designated mode is necessary for the evocation of the desired emotion from the viewer. Thus, in order for a painting to elicit emotion, it must be purposefully constructed according to measured reason in order to achieve its desired effect. As Poussin cautioned Chantelou, "We must not judge by our senses alone but by reason." Poussin explains that, although his art may be guided by the creative inspiration of *fantasia*, the effectiveness of his images relies on his adherence to the rational principles of the modes.

Poussin's explanation of the modes is considered integral to understanding the artist's creation of his images. Interestingly, his thoughts on the modes were actually taken from a prior treatise on the nature of music, Gioseffo Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche*, first published in 1553.[185] Zarlino's treatise attempts to define the ancient modes as they apply to poetry and music, emphasizing that "Ancient musicians and poets were one and the same."[186] Zarlino illustrates his discussion of the modes using the example of ancient poets, who structured their verse according to the theory of the modes. He cites Ovid's explanation for his uncharacteristic experiment with elegiac poetry, "Perhaps, too, you may ask why my verses alternate, when I am better suited to

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[185] Paul Alfassa, "L'origine de la lettre de Poussin sur les modes d'après un travail récent," *Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'art français* (1933): 225-43, based on the thesis of Anthony Blunt, 1967, 226, no. 33. Zarlino's treatise has been translated into English, see Gioseffo Zarlino, *On the Modes: Part Four of L'Istitutioni Harmoniche, 1558*, ed. Claude Palisca (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983). Interestingly, Poussin's statement in the letter to Chantelou that, "We must not judge by our senses alone but by reason", corresponds to the title of Zarlino's last chapter for this part of his treatise entitled, "The Senses are Fallible, and Judgments Should Not Be Made Solely by Their Means, but Should Be Accompanied by Reason".

[186] Zarlino, 1983, 2.

the lyric mode. I must weep for my love, and elegy is the weeping strain, no barbiton is suited to my tears."[187] For Poussin, Zarlino's explanation of the adherence of ancient poets and musicians to the modes suggested a model for the creation of his own paintings, according to the same principles. Just as Poussin adapted Tasso's definition of poetry to painting with the substitution of one word, he has again succeeded in suggesting the similarity of the two arts by applying the theory of the modes to painting.

Attempts to define the particular mode in which Poussin painted a picture have proved successful only in dealing with the straightforward genres of religious and history paintings. All other subjects, including Poussin's mythological paintings, are difficult to evaluate in this manner.[188] In these instances, the exercise is often futile, as the naming of the modes is not consistent throughout history, or even within Poussin's adaptation of Zarlino's text.[189] For example, Poussin names only the Dorian, Phrygian, Lydian, Hypolidian, and Ionic modes in his letter to Chantelou. However, Zarlino mentions all of these, as well as the Aeolian, Iastian, Hypodorian, and Mixolydian. Although Zarlino attempts to assimilate the various definitions of the modes according to different ancient writers such as Plato, Cassiodorus, Ptolemy, and Pindar, the naming of the modes by each of these men, too, proves to be inconsistent. Zarlino necessarily abandons the names given to each mode for a numerical assignment. The *Realm of Flora* is similarly difficult to place, especially among the limited definitions given by Poussin. It would appear only to be associable with the Ionian, which Poussin describes as suited to dances, bacchanals, and feasts. Yet, the Aeolian mode, described by Zarlino, appears to be the closest in

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[187] Ovid, *Heroides* 15. 5-8, cited by Zarlino, 1983, 2-3.
[188] Jennifer Montagu, "The Theory of the Musical Modes in the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 55 (1992): 234, gives the example of Charles Sterling in the *Catalogue de l'Exposition Nicolas Poussin*, 260-1. Sterling attempted to define Poussin's *Self-Portrait* ca. 1649 in the Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie for Pointel as in the Phrygian mode and the *Self-Portrait* ca. 1649-50 in the Louvre for Chantelou as in the Dorian mode.
[189] Alfassa, 1933, 225-43.

nature to the *Realm of Flora*, though it is not mentioned by Poussin. This mode was considered to have a "mixed nature" of severity and cheerfulness, which made it appropriate for both cheerful, sweet, and mild subjects, as well as severe themes.[190] This "mixed nature" seems appropriate to the *Realm of Flora*, when one considers the juxtaposition of the tragic stories, such as that of Ajax, with the dancing Flora. Furthermore, the Aeolian mode was said to be suited to lyrical verse and was deemed to have "the power to render tranquil and serene a Spirit oppressed by various passions, and that after these passions had been driven away it had the power to induce sleep."[191] Also, this mode had the "capacity to sharpen the intellect of those who were not very educated, and to induce a desire for heavenly things in those burdened by a certain earthly and human desire."[192] Similarly, Poussin's image is often described as lacking the lasciviousness usually associated with the representation of the stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.[193] This suggests Poussin's attempt to elevate the passionate sensual episodes of Ovid in the manner prescribed by the Aeolian mode. However, the purpose of this evaluation of the *Realm of Flora* is not to illustrate Poussin's employment of a specific mode. Rather, the true understanding of Poussin as a painter with the aims of a poet becomes apparent by exploring the individual aspects of the *Realm of Flora*, which were carefully chosen by the painter, like the words of a good poet.

In addition to the poetic construct of the modes, it will also be necessary to remember the influence of Marino's poetry on Poussin. At the end of Chapter Two of this paper, it was determined that the *Realm of Flora* does not illustrate a particular poem by Marino. Rather, it

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[190] Zarlino, 1983, 25.
[191] This description of the Aeolian mode comes from the Roman statesman, monk and writer of the sixth century, Cassiodorus, *Variae epistolae* 2. 40. 4, cited in Zarlino, 1983, 25.
[192] Ibid., 26.
[193] Blunt, 1967, 103-114 discusses the manner in which Poussin's mythological paintings differ from the erotic and sensual Ovidian depictions of Titian and Rubens.

was concluded that Poussin was inspired by the manner in which Marino reinterpreted Ovid to create his own poetic image. Significantly, the form of Poussin's painting also reveals the artist's employment of specific stylistic attributes of the poetry of Marino, not just an analogous reinterpretation of Ovid. Poussin's adaptation of Marino's poetic technique has been explored in previous studies. One such analysis makes the comparison between the style of Marino's poetry and Poussin's two *Children's Bacchanals* ca. 1625-26 in the Palazzo Barberini.[194] More specifically, Anthony Colantuono has shown how these images may be identified with the Marinist *scherzo*, or brief lyric poem, by virtue of Poussin's use of witty, epigrammatic conceits in the painting.[195] This is achieved first and foremost through the figure of the tender infant, which is the *putto moderno*, modeled on the young putto from Titian's *Feast of Venus*.[196] Colantuono explores the manner in which Poussin utilizes the figure of the tender infant to convey the central underlying conceit of tenderness and sweetness in each of the *Children's Bacchanals*. Recently, another study has shown that Poussin was influenced by stylistic elements of Marino's poetry in the composition of the last painting of his career, the unfinished *Apollo and Daphne* presented to Cardinal Camillo Massimi in 1664 and now in the Louvre.[197]

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[194] Colantuono, 1986, 58-120. The *Children's Bacchanals*, as they are known collectively, include the *Children's Bacchanal with Two Termini* ca. 1625-26 and the *Children's Bacchanal with Chariot* ca. 1625-26.

[195] Ibid., 95-6.

[196] Colantuono, 1986, 36-44, differentiates between the *putto antico* and the *putto moderno*, which he says was discovered by Poussin's friend and colleague, Francois Duquesnoy, and referred to in the writings of the sculptor's pupil, Orfeo Boselli, *Osservazioni della Scoltura Antica*, ca. 1657. The two types of putti have different proportions, with the *putto moderno* appearing younger than the *putto antico*. As a result, the *putto antico* seems old enough to perform certain tasks, while the *putto moderno* often looks too young to perform the actions depicted. This model of the *putto moderno* derived from Titian's paintings, especially *The Feast of Venus*, which Duquesnoy and Poussin studied together in the Villa Ludovisi in the mid-1620s. Colantuono suggests that Poussin identified the *putto moderno* with the quality of tenderness he wished to express in the *Children's Bacchanals*.

[197] Bätchmann, 1996, 543-53 came to the conclusion that the painting represents a synthesis of many stories and texts filtered through the mind and drawings of Poussin and expressed as his own poetic image, prompting Bätchmann's epigram for Poussin as the "peintre-poète". Françoise Graziani, "Poussin mariniste; la mythologie des images" in *Poussin et Rome*, eds. Olivier Bonfait, Christopher Luitpold

Following these paradigms, the same stylistic influences are apparent in Poussin's creation of the *Realm of Flora* and are important for the evaluation of the image as painted poetry.[198] Therefore, the painting must be understood as a poetic reinterpretation of Ovid achieved through Poussin's *fantasia*, exhibiting stylistic aspects of Marino's poetry and, at the same time, conforming to Poussin's own theory of the modes.

Poussin's image is first and foremost an experiment in visual lyric poetry. Just as this form of poetry takes its name from its original accompaniment by the music of the lyre, it is not difficult to imagine the scene of Flora's garden set to music from Apollo's lyre. Appropriately, the dancing figure of Flora and the surrounding putti evoke such a musical accompaniment. As we know from Poussin's discussion of the modes, each aspect of the painting must function in its own way toward the illumination of the central conceit. The central witty *concetto* behind Poussin's painting is of course, the depiction of "un giardino dei Fiori", as the artist so acutely stated, that is filled with human figures who represent flowers. In this, there lies a Marinist device which utilizes the juxtaposition of antithetical elements, such as the death of the human figure and the birth of the flowers within the garden. However, the true nature of the mode of the painting lies in the figure of Flora. As the iconographic representation of *Allegrezza* from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia* suggests, the overall nature of the painting must be the evocation of a joyous or cheerful feeling in the viewer.[199] Poussin's lyric poetry ultimately takes the form of an Ode which celebrates Flora and the season of spring. The artist uses the figure of Flora to express the

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Frommel, Michel Hochmann, and Sebastian Schütze (Paris: Réunion des musées nationaux, 1996), 367-85, closely associates Poussin's composition of the *Apollo and Daphne* with the structure and meaning of Marino's poetry.

[198] Pace, 1999, 85-6, summarizes the work of Bätchmann, Graziani, and Colantuono. She uses the *Realm of Flora* as an example of Poussin's interest in the underlying conceit of a painting, a practice common in Marino's poetry. However, Pace does not identify the central conceit or any other specific aspects of the painting as similar to the poetry of Marino. She fails to interpret the *Realm of Flora* as equivalent to visual poetry.

[199] Keazor, 1995, 337-59. See Chapter One of this Thesis, 21.

overall joyous nature of the image, as he uses the figure of the tender infant in the *Children's Bacchanals* to express the underlying conceit of tenderness. She is the central focal point of the composition and commands the space of her garden. Her outstretched right leg and right arm give her a commanding pose that ensure she will be considered in relation to every other figure in the composition. For example, the goddess and Ajax are closely related to each other across a diagonal. They also exhibit similar poses, their heads tilted in the direction of each other, both bending at the knee. Similarly, Adonis is turned toward Flora, his left leg bent toward her, his left arm raised and his right arm reaching around the front of his body to his thigh. His pose is also a reflection of Flora's, creating another strong diagonal between the two. As a result of Poussin's carefully designed composition, the ever-present figure of Flora prohibits the viewer from dwelling upon the tragic stories depicted**.**

The conceit relies as well on the interpretation of the image as a visualization of the season of spring, by virtue of which the death of winter is replaced by the joyous life of this new season. Poussin has ensured the identification of the season by the illumination of the sign of Taurus in the zodiac, as well as the inclusion of the flowering cornucopia before the figure of Ajax.[200] The juxtaposition of opposites, with the dying Ajax and the abundant cornucopia reinforces the celebration of this season of rebirth. Similarly, the inclusion of Priapus, the god of fertility, and Apollo, as he drives his chariot across the sky, serve as the pictorial equivalent of phrases which enrich Poussin's poetic depiction of the season of spring. In addition, the manner in which Poussin unites the various stories from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* within the garden of Flora results in a distinctly non-narrative composition. Each episode occurs as a separate entity, so that no two stories are dependent on each other. Since there is no sense of chronology, time is

[200] Spear, 1965, 565.

suspended, even as the cyclical passage of time that occurs with the coming season of spring is celebrated. The effect is not only paradoxical, but entails a distinctly poetic treatment of time.

Poussin adheres to his description of the modes, in that the overall composition of the painting expresses the central conceit. Each episode from Ovid is given its own space on the canvas in a manner that suggests the separate stanzas of a poem, each dedicated to an Ovidian transformation. Simultaneously, the stories are united by the circular composition which expresses the lyric nature of the painting. Flora forms the central point of the circle and the series of tragic episodes construct a curve across the foreground of the painting. Each figure is interwoven through a series of gestures and gazes, as if together, they were meant to form a garland of bodies draped across the space of the canvas. The composition ensures that each episode is subordinate to the figure of Flora. Therefore, the cheerful, dancing Flora remains the central thematic representation of Poussin's poetic image, as an evocation of the season of spring, even when the viewer is confronted by the tragedy of the death of Ajax. The arrangement of the figures is echoed by the arch of the clouds in the sky and the circular band of the zodiac. The repetition of circles within the composition not only reflects the lyric nature of the painting, but also illustrates the poetic nature of the cycle of death and rebirth represented by the seasons. As noted previously, Poussin places Ajax on a strong diagonal, linking him with Flora and gives him a pose reminiscent of the goddess. Here, Poussin utilizes Marino's poetic technique of the juxtaposition of opposites, balancing the dancing figure of Flora with the most distressed human in the garden, the impaled Ajax. Of all the figures, he is the one who appears to suffer the most and so provides a direct contrast to Flora. Poussin's tortured treatment of Ajax may reflect the fact that he is the only character whose death is not a direct result of love, but war. Additionally, Ajax is the only figure who dies by suicide, as opposed to a fated or imposed death. The joyous

nature of Flora is made all the more prominent by the tragic, self-willed death of Ajax**.** By contrasting these two figures, Poussin's visual poem illustrates the manner in which the happiness and birth of spring supplants the death which must necessarily occur prior to the season.

The tragedy of Ajax's death is tempered, though it by no means disappears, in the depiction of Clytie. She raises her hand to shade her eyes as she follows her lover across the sky. Although she clearly remains distraught by her love for Apollo, her depiction is not nearly as violent as that of Ajax. Poussin has posed her like the heliotrope flower, whose face always twists on its stalk toward the sun. She is also dressed in the flower's yellow color, so that we understand that her human body will soon wither and be transformed into the heliotrope, like the ones gathered in a basket behind her. The next episode depicts the transformation of Narcissus, with Echo and the youth gathered around an urn full of water, with the flowers which bear his name springing from the ground before him. Narcissus gazes longingly at his reflected image, a scene which the viewer understands will be followed by the youth's death. Yet, the depiction of Narcissus' obsession is strikingly peaceful, suggesting a transformation that is tragic and yet necessary for the rebirth of spring. The next strophe treats the story of Hyacinthus, who seems to contemplate his own tragic fate by touching his wounded head. As he does this, he stares at the flower in his hand which sprang from his blood in a manner that suggests he has already experienced the transformation that is actively occurring in the three episodes on the left of the canvas. His body is still present, as this is ultimately Flora's divine garden, comprised of humans and flowers. However, his contemplative nature reveals an understanding of his tragic story that differs from Ajax's violent impalement. He is, of course, seen in relation to Apollo above, whose love is responsible for his death and transformation.

From Hyacinthus, we move on to the story of Adonis, who grasps his wounded thigh. Poussin includes two hunting dogs as a reminder of the youth's tragic death. The depiction is closely related to Hyacinthus, with Adonis gesturing so as to reveal his mortal wound, while the anemone flower which sprang from his blood drapes across his thigh. Together, these two figures suggest peaceful acceptance of their fates.[201] Finally, the embracing Crocus and Smilax gaze at each other lovingly, as Smilax touches the flower into which Crocus was transformed. Poussin places this episode on the far right of the canvas as a peaceful contrast to the image of Ajax on the far left of the canvas. These two lovers symbolize the ultimate joy of spring that comes from their tragic deaths, because only by way of their deaths were they able to enjoy each other, as they now do in Flora's garden. Their transformation appears to have brought forth not only floral life in the spring, but the triumphant experience of love. As such, the two lovers bring Poussin's poem full-circle, returning to the image of Flora.

Although the individual episodes in the painting may seem elegiac, lamenting the death of each human figure, it is impossible to ignore the ever-present joyous depiction of Flora. Only Ajax's countenance reveals his pain in death. As for Clytie and Narcissus, the depiction of their transformations is clearly less intense than that of Ajax. All the other characters appear

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[201] Here, Poussin's depiction of the character's peaceful acceptance of death may be a manifestation of his belief in Stoic philosophy, which understood death as simply a part of the cycle of nature, and held that not even loss of life can affect true happiness. Similar ideas may be present in conjunction with Poussin's inclusion of Ajax within Flora's garden, as Stoics held a less negative view of suicide than traditional western religions. For example, the Roman Stoic philosopher Seneca (3 BCE – 65 CE) said, "I will not relinquish old age if it leaves my better part intact. But if it begins to shake my mind, if it destroys my faculties one by one, if it leaves me not life but breath, I will depart from the putrid or the tottering edifice. If I know that I must suffer without hope of relief I will depart not through fear of the pain itself but because it prevents all for which I should live." (*De Ira*, Book 1, Ch. 15). Even more explicit are the words of the Roman Stoic philosopher Epictetus (60 CE – 120 CE), "…Above all, remember that the door stands open. Do not be more fearful than children. But, just as when they are tired of the game they cry, 'I will play no more,' so too when you are in a similar situation, cry, 'I will play no more' and depart. But if you stay, do not cry." (*Discourses*, Book 1, Ch. 24). Although there is little evidence that Poussin subscribed to the philosophy of Stoicism prior to the 1640s, Blunt has proposed that many of the artist's earlier compositions may reflect an understanding of these principles during the 1630s as well, See Blunt, 1967, 157-76.

contemplative or even content, as in the case of Crocus and Smilax. Poussin has constructed his visual poem so that it expresses the elation of Flora and springtime in conjunction with the sorrow of death, most clearly depicted by Ajax. Each Ovidian episode expresses a different degree of emotion associated with the death and transformation of the humans in Flora's garden. In this poetic scheme, the image of Crocus and Smilax is closest in nature to the figure of Flora herself, as the two embracing lovers signify a blissful outcome similar to the joy of the blossoming season of spring.[202]

Poussin has chosen his visual verses carefully, including every floral transformation from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and excluding those plants and flowers of non-human origin mentioned in the poems of Marino.[203] In each instance, the ever-present image of Flora in relation to the episode depicted is reassurance of both the rebirth of the humans as flowers and the happiness of the season to follow the winter of their deaths. It is not difficult to imagine the creation of a poem with a theme of the celebration of spring, which includes the evocation of the images of death represented by winter, as a way to exalt the new season. This is the poetic form taken by Poussin's image.

The setting of the *Realm of Flora* creates a secluded garden suitable for Poussin's poetic recitation. The painter sets up a visual contrast between the left half of the image and the right. Whereas, the left half of the painting is dominated by rocks, the right half provides an open view of a vast landscape, framed by the blue sky. This effect creates a setting which parallels the emotion of the episodes depicted on either side of the canvas. [204] Thus, the violence of Ajax's

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[202] Worthen, 1979, 583-5 identifies a gradual transformation from left to right in the painting as the figures change from unsatisfied to at rest, from more human to more flower. He relates the change in the figures and the landscape around them to the effects which the heat and moisture of the season of spring have on the barren land of winter.
[203] Simon, 1978, 64.
[204] Wothen, 1979, 583-5 and note 202, above.

transformation appears before a high wall of rocky cliffs. In front of the cliffs, the ancient tree draped with ivy, the sarcophagus, and the antique herm are layered visually so as to suggest that Ajax is already entombed by the earth and stone behind him. Then, the transition in the landscape occurs behind Clytie and Narcissus, as the rocks descend to form the waterfall. The falling water metaphorically bathes the story of Narcissus, transforming the landscape with this element so necessary to the season of spring. Poussin has placed his natural fountain carefully, signifying the role of water in bringing death to Narcissus, and at the same time emphasizing its life-giving nature in the garden. The more peaceful and contemplative depictions of Hyacinthus, Adonis, Crocus, and Smilax are placed before the distant landscape and flowering trellis, which also serve as a backdrop for Flora.

True to the theory of the modes, the muted colors of the painting suggest the sweetness of its meaning. Flora's enveloping green dress brings to mind the lushness of springtime. Similarly, the light blues of Echo's and Adonis' drapery, the muted yellows of Clytie and Hyacinthus, and the rusty red and orange of Narcissus, Smilax, and Crocus are the colors of the season's blooming flowers.[205] Only Ajax is completely naked, his soiled and drab colored clothing beneath him. Once again, he represents the harshest effects of winter and death which lead to transformation and rebirth. He is also depicted in shadow, created by the rocks behind him, while the remainder of Flora's garden is bathed in bright light which reinforces the joyous celebration of the goddess. It would seem clear why Poussin included Ajax in this gathering, even though this proved a conflict with the story of Hyacinthus, as they were both transformed into the same flower according to Ovid. For Poussin's *Realm of Flora*, the story of Ajax provides for the violent depiction of death and metamorphosis that the other episodes do not. The depiction of Ajax enriches Poussin's poem so that it expresses the true nature of Flora's anthropomorphic

[205] Verdi and Rosenberg, 1995, 181.

garden, where the life represented by the blooming flowers of springtime is made possible only by the tragic deaths of their human counterparts.

Poussin's visual poem of the *Realm of Flora* would not be complete without the addition of a few witty conceits of the type often utilized by Marino. Poussin has once again included the figure of the tender infant as one aspect which conveys the overall sweetness and tenderness of the composition. The five *putti moderni*, who form a circle behind Flora, join in the celebration of her garden and the renewal of spring. Their presence reinforces the joyous nature of the composition and reveals the artist's employment of specific stylistic elements from the poetry of Marino. Among these tender infants, Poussin has also included the putto in the right foreground corner, which has been explained as a witty illustration of a phrase from Marino's poem *La Rosa*, "the enamored sweet violet, fragrant, made pale by the face of Love".[206] Previously, this detail has lead to the misreading of the *Realm of Flora* as an illustration of Marino's poetry. Within the scope of our understanding of the painting as Poussin's own visual poem, the inclusion of this putto takes on new meaning. Poussin incorporated this specific witty detail from the poetry of Marino to illustrate the sensuous enjoyment of spring that comes from smelling flowers, and at the same time, to pay homage to the poet who had inspired him in so many ways to the creation of the *Realm of Flora*.

Poussin's realization of the *Realm of Flora* reveals the influence of Marino's inventive reinterpretation of Ovidian mythology, as well as the painter's use of specific stylistic devices of the poetry of Marino. The composition also demonstrates the artist's adherence to the theory of the modes in that each aspect enriches the central conceit of the painting as a celebration of Flora's springtime garden filled with the humans from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The result is a visual Ode which evokes the desired emotion of *allegrezza* in the viewer. Clearly, Poussin

[206] Spear, 1965, 565 and Chapter Two of this thesis, 50.

envisioned himself as an adherent to the practices of the poets to whom he referred in his letter to Chantelou, who "used great diligence and marvelous artifice in adapting their choice of words to their verse and disposing the feet according to the propriety of speech."[207] Poussin's use of the term "marvelous artifice" is striking in connection with Marino's assertion that "the aim of the poet is the marvelous."[208] The word *maraviglia* appears again in Poussin's *Osservazioni* entitled 'Come si deve supplire al mancamento del soggetto':

> Sè il pittore vuole svegliare ne gli animi la maraviglia anche non
> avendo per le mani soggetto abile a partorirla, non introdurà
> cose nuove strane, e fuori di ragione, ma constumi l'ingegno
> in rendere maravigliosa la sua opera per l'eccelenza della maniera,
> onde si possa dire. Materiam superabat opus.[209]

At the same time that Poussin emphasizes the importance of the mind in the creation of marvelous images, he stresses the necessity of reason as the guiding faculty in this process. Clearly, Poussin wished for his paintings to produce the effects of *maraviglia* or 'wonder' sought by Marino's poetry. However, in every instance, Poussin subverts his poetic inspiration to reason, creating an image which produces wonder through legible means. As a result, the *Realm of Flora* represents the culmination of all of Poussin's poetic theories and influences in one visual lyric poem.

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[207] *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin*, no. 156, 370-5 cited in translation by Blunt, 1967, 370.
[208] Praz, 1970, 185.
[209] Bellori, 1931, 462.

CONCLUSION

Nicolas Poussin's *Realm of Flora* is a poetic marvel that provides insight into the artist's consideration of himself as both a poet and a painter. Poussin represents the garden of Flora as a distinct locus for the celebration of the renewal of spring, illustrated by the tragic stories of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This unique image reveals a clear understanding and conscious reinterpretation of Ovid's classical poetry from the *Metamorphoses* and the *Fasti*. The painter's willingness to interpret Ovidian mythology in a liberal manner is exemplified by the poetry of Marino, which had a distinctive effect on Poussin, as well as other Baroque artists in Rome. Both Bernini's *Apollo and Daphne* and Caravaggio's *Narcissus* reveal the influence of Marino's poetry in their treatment of Ovid's texts. For Bernini, Marino's poems concerning Apollo and Daphne served as supplementary inspiration to the sculptor's depiction of the moment of transformation in stone. Although the statue remains close in nature to the original Ovidian source, an allusion to Marino's poetry seems appropriate considering the prevailing understanding of the image as an exemplar of profane poetry. In the case of Caravaggio's *Narcissus*, Marino's poetry inspired the painter to reinterpret the Ovidian episode in the same manner as the poet, so that the resulting image is far from traditional representations of the narrative. That is, like Marino's poetry, Caravaggio's painting emphasizes the emotional struggle of the youth and the power of art manifest in the relationship between the viewer and the viewed. Similarly, Marino's innovative manner of reviving Ovidian poetry and transforming it with

contemporary metaphors inspired Poussin to reinvent the traditional stories of metamorphosis in his painting, the *Realm of Flora*.

Although all three artists were inspired to some degree by the poetry of Marino in the creation of their Ovidian images, only Poussin aspired to the fabrication of his own visual poetry. This may be explained by the artist's demonstrated interest in the connections between poetry and painting, made manifest in his own writings and works of art. Thus, in reinterpreting the poetry of Ovid, Poussin creates his own lyric Ode celebrating the goddess Flora and her springtime garden. The resulting image is an invention of the artist's own mind, drawn from Ovidian mythology, composed according to the poetic theory of the modes, and guided by the principles of Marino's lyric poetry. Consequently, the *Realm of Flora* may truly be read as a poem, written with visual images, by the painter-poet Nicolas Poussin.

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Figure 1 – Nicolas Poussin, *Realm of Flora,* ca. 1630-31.
Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, Dresden

Figure 2 – Nicolas Poussin, *Plague at Ashdod,* ca. 1630.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 3 – Nicolas Poussin, *Triumph of Flora,* ca. 1627.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 4 – Nicolas Poussin, *Realm of Flora*,
Drawing in Pen with Brown Wash over Red Chalk
Windsor Castle, The Royal Library

Figure 5 – Copy from studio of Nicolas Poussin, *Realm of Flora,*
Drawing in Pen with Brown Wash over Black Chalk
Windsor Castle, The Royal Library

Figure 6 – Nicolas Poussin, Study for *Realm of Flora* and other studies. Red Chalk. Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Figure 7 – Léon Davent after Primaticcio, *Le Jardin de Vertumne*, sixteenth century.

Figure 8 - Andrea Mantegna, *Pallas Expelling the Vices from the Garden of Virtue*, ca. 1502.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 9 - Nicolas Poussin, *Dance in Honor of Priapus*
Museu de Arte, São Paulo

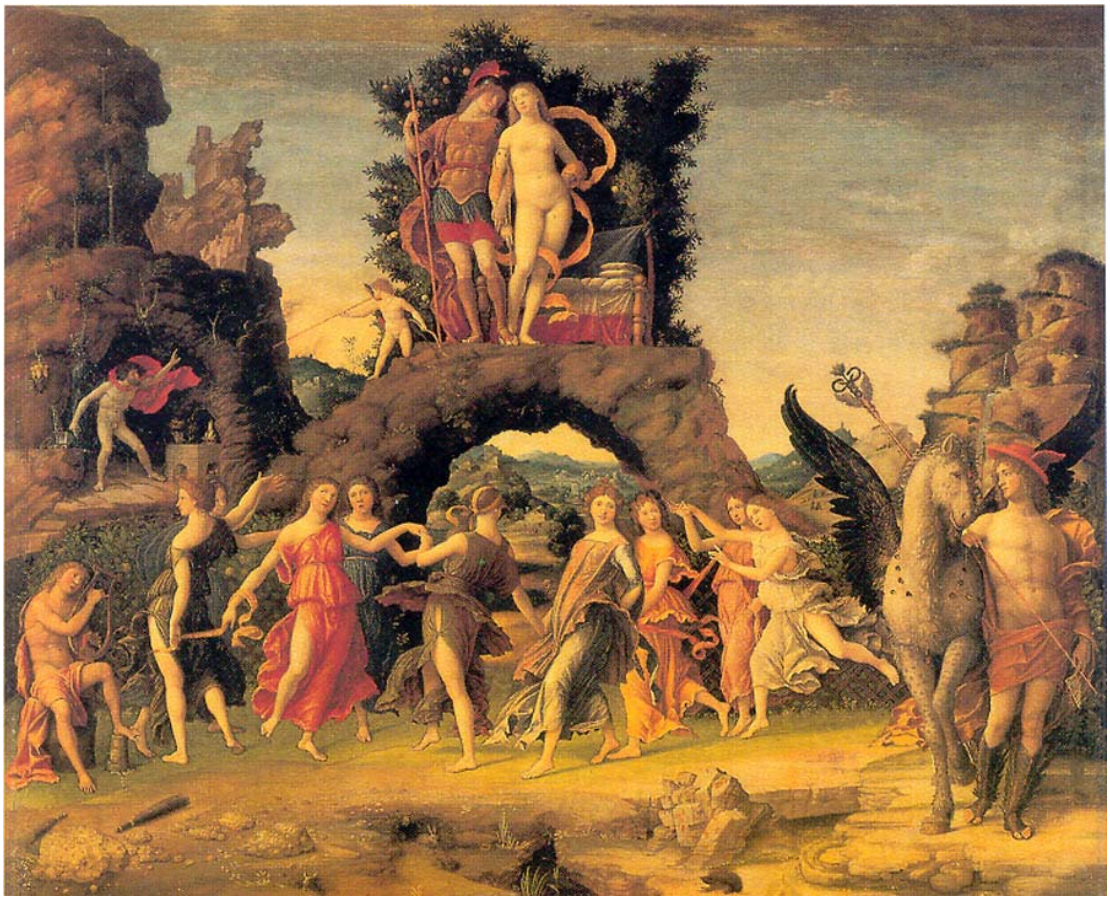

Figure 10 – Andrea Mantegna, *Parnassus*, ca. 1497.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 11 – Nicolas Poussin, *Adoration of the Golden Calf,* ca. 1633-37.
The National Gallery, London

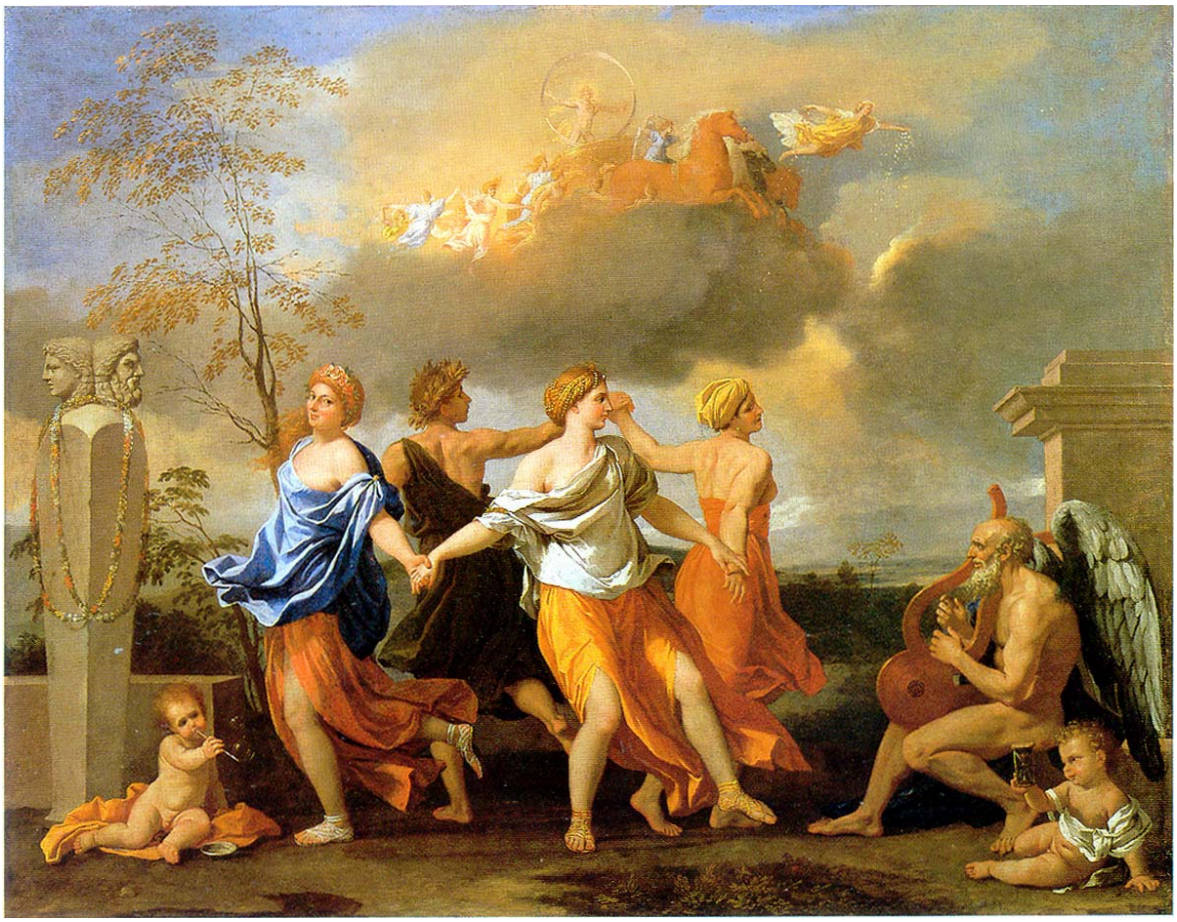

Figure 12 – Nicolas Poussin, *Dance to the Music of Time,* ca. 1638-40.
Wallace Collection, London

Figure 13 – *Allegrezza*, from Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*, Siena, 1613

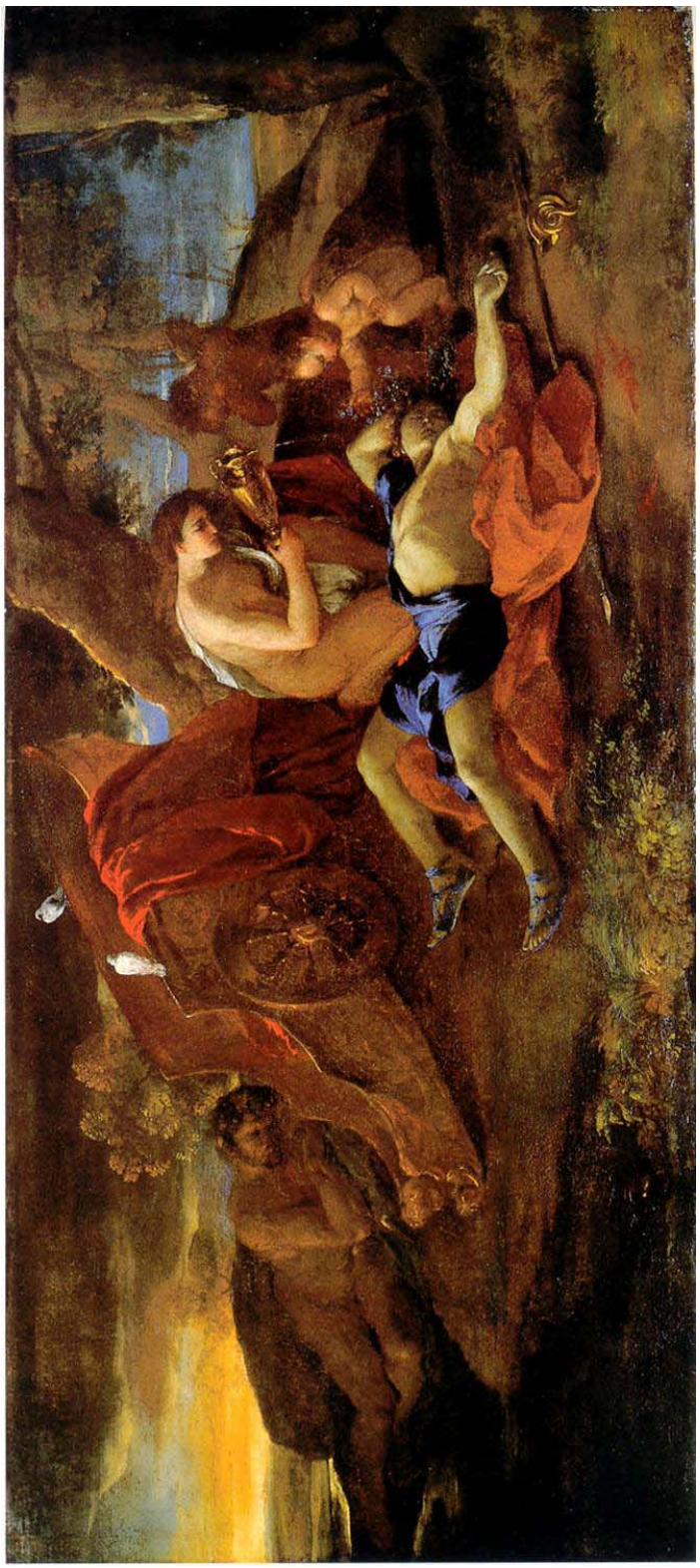

Figure 14 – Nicolas Poussin, *Venus with the Dead Adonis,* ca. 1628.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen

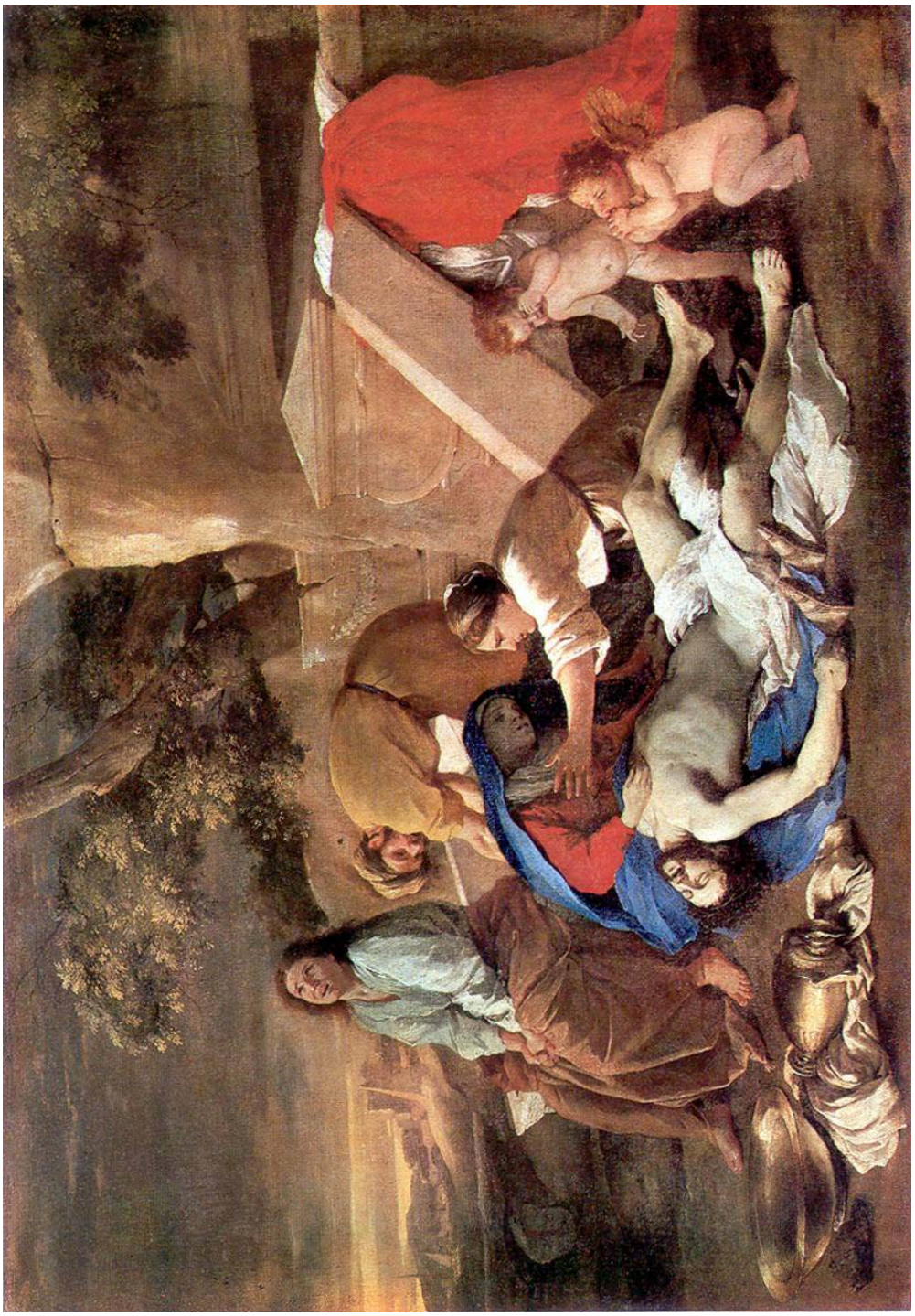

Figure 15 – Nicolas Poussin, *Lamentation*, ca. 1627. Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Figure 16 – F. G. Greuter after Pietro da Cortona,
La Danse de Vertumne, from G.B. Ferrari's
De Florum Cultura, Rome, 1633

Figure 17 – F.G. Greuter after Pietro da Cortona,
Frontispiece for *De Florum Cultura*, Rome, 1633

Figure 18 – Gianlorenzo Bernini, *Apollo and Daphne,* ca.1622-25.
Galleria Borghese, Rome

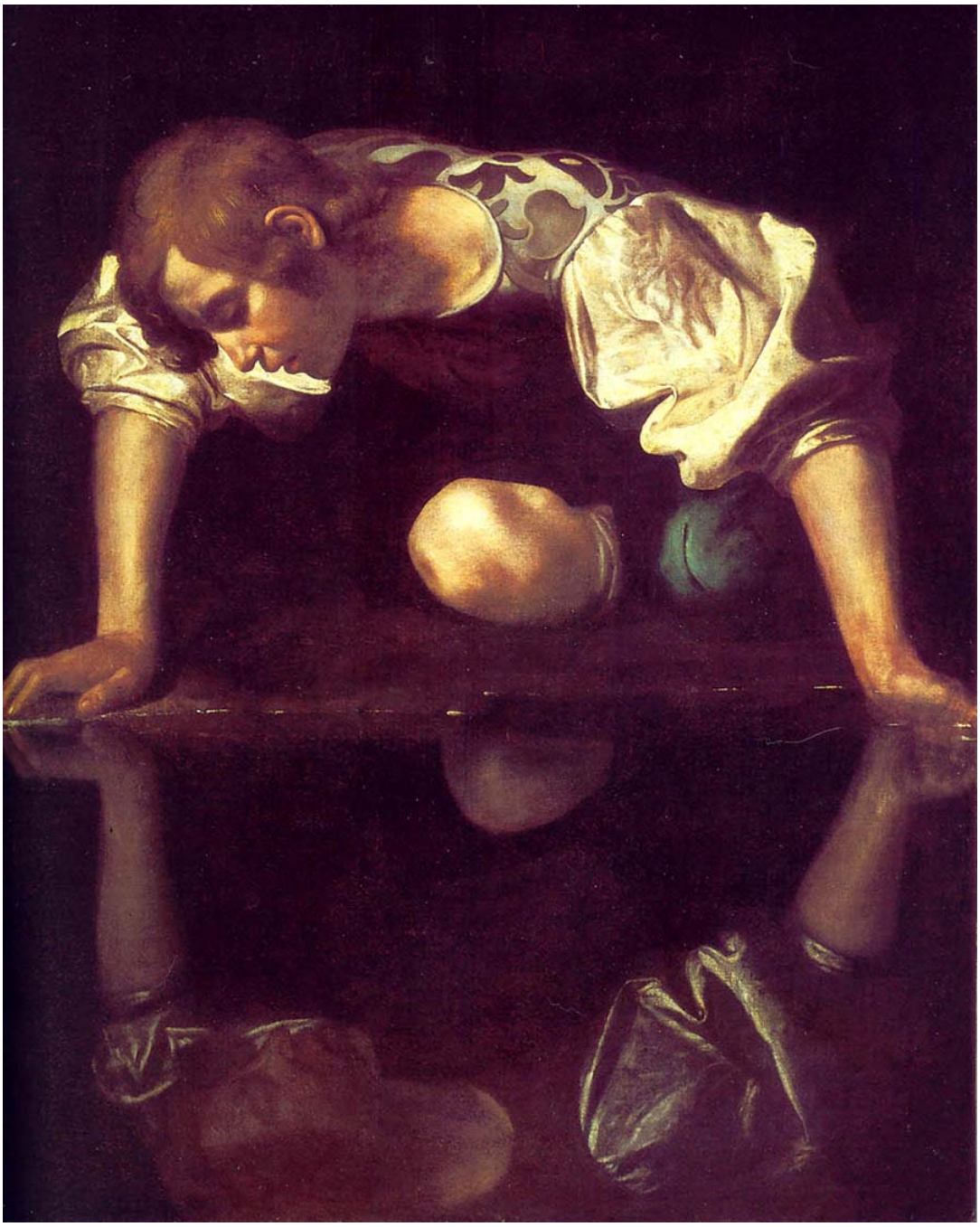

Figure 19 – Caravaggio, *Narcissus,* ca. 1597-1600.
Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Antica, Palazzo Corsini, Rome

Figure 20 – Bernardo Castello, *Narcissus*. La Galleria Pallavicini, Rome

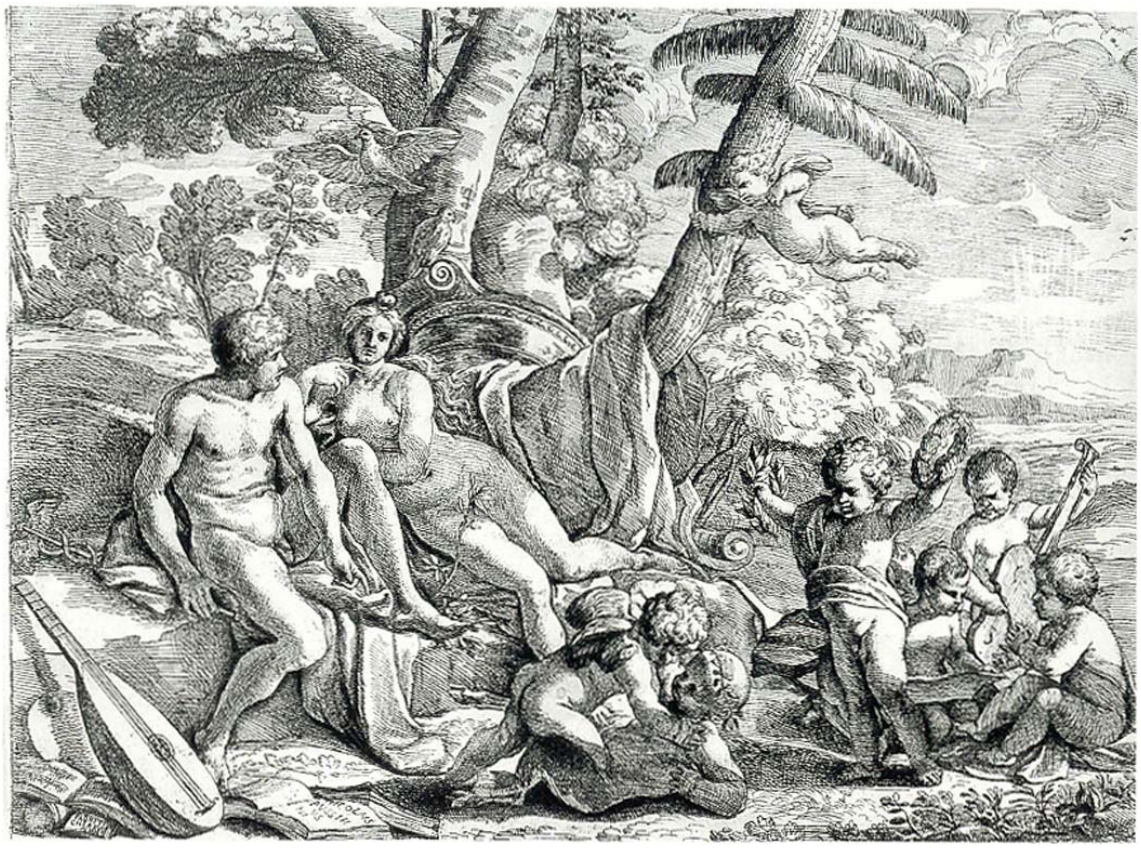

Figure 21 – Fabrizio Chiari after Nicolas Poussin, *Venus and Mercury,*
ca. 1626-30. Dulwich College Picture Gallery

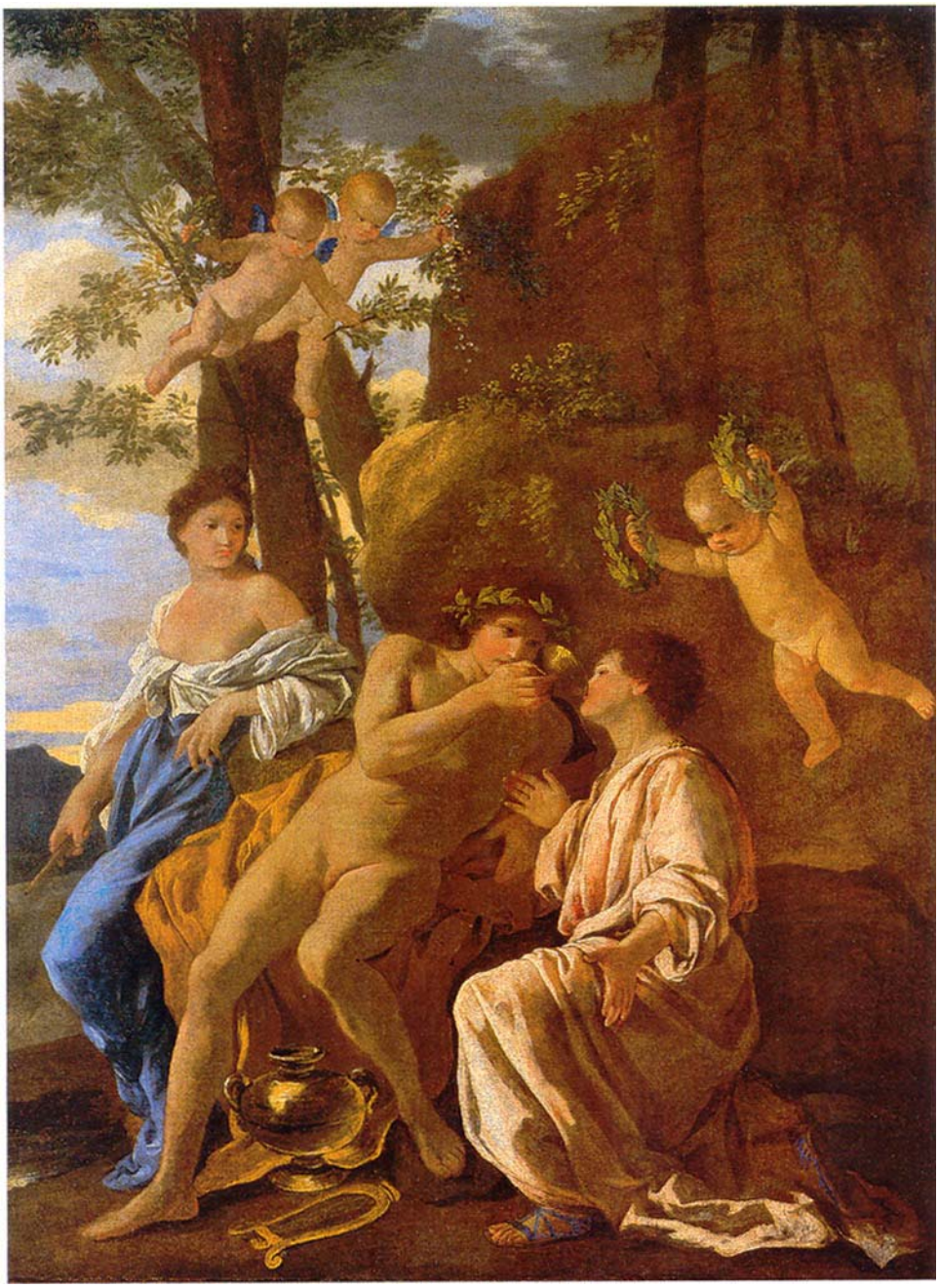

Figure 22 – Nicolas Poussin, *The Inspiration of the Lyric Poet,* ca. 1628-29. Niedersächsische Landesgalerie, Hanover

Figure 23 – Nicolas Poussin, *Inspiration of the Epic Poet,* ca. 1630.
Musée du Louvre, Paris

Figure 24 – Nicolas Poussin, *Parnassus,* ca. 1628-33. Prado, Madrid