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Poussin, Marino, and the Interpretation of Mythology*

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I

Of all the figures of the seicento that have been associated with Nicolas Poussin, or compared to him, either directly or analogously, only one, Giambattista Marino (1569–1625), received any notice in the early biographies of the artist. Bellori—whose life of Poussin was published in 1672, seven years after the painter's death—records Marino's recognition of Poussin's early works for the Jesuits of Paris and the subsequent friendship of the flamboyant expatriate Italian poet, then fifty-three, and the relatively young French painter. Bellori relates that Marino invited the artist to paint and draw in his home: "Era di grandissimo sollievo 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 conservano alcuni in un libro di sua mano, nella Bibliotheca del Signor Cardinale Massimi."¹

Passeri, in his life of Poussin, adds that Marino asked Poussin to

...dipingere alcune cose per adornare la sua Galleria che fin in Parigi andava disponendo per sua ricreazione procurando di avere opere de migliori soggetti che a tempo suo s'avanzavano nella stima, e perche il diletto del suo cuore era l'Adone composto da lui che desiderava publicarlo alle stampe come già ne conseguì l'intento, che fu poi interdetto e proibito in primo capo, ne faceva da Nicolò disegnare tutte le favole con le quali andava disponendo ciaschedun canto di tutte l'azioni della nascita, morte et amori verso di lui di Venere, e questo gli serviva per passatempo nelle sue continue indisposizioni che per lo più lo fermavano in letto. Gli furono di gran giovamento alcuni motivi che gli suggeriva il Marini estratti dalla sua bella poetica fantasia,

de quali egli si servì sempre in occasione opportuna per arricchire i suoi componimenti con qualche capriccioso aggiunto che non si dilungava dal soggetto principale.²

That Poussin did paint "some things" for Marino has generally been discounted, for no works can be associated with this endeavor. The nature of Marino's collection, however, is partially clarified through Marino's small volume, *La galleria*, published in Venice in 1619.³ This series of short poems, each providing a miniature description, or *ekphrasis*, of a work of art, presents a kind of catalogue of Marino's collection; drawings, sculpture, and paintings—both existing and imaginary—are included. Some of the items described were not owned by Marino, but many of the poems refer to works clearly in his possession—most obviously several portraits of Marino; these include various compositions by contemporaries, payment for which seems often to have been at least partly effected by the inclusion in the *Galleria* of a poem praising the artist and his work. Although the *Galleria* predates Marino's meeting with Poussin, we can see from its contents that some of Poussin's paintings or drawings—particularly of mythological subjects, which Marino preferred—would have been appropriate additions to the poet's collection.⁴ Many of the compositions mentioned in Marino's *Galleria* depict mythological themes treated by the young Poussin.⁵

Fifteen drawings in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle have been identified as works done at the time of Poussin's acquaintance with Marino and mentioned by the early biographers as having been in the collection of Cardinal Massimi.⁶ Of these so-called "Marino drawings," eleven present scenes from classical mythology and four are of battles. In her study of these drawings Jane Costello demonstrated that most of them illustrate passages from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*;

* I am indebted to Professor Howard Hibbard for many helpful suggestions. My thanks are also due to Edward Leiter for his patient advice concerning Marino's poetry, and to Professor Charles Dempsey, who kindly read this article in an earlier form and made several valuable suggestions.

N.B. A bibliography of frequently cited sources follows the footnotes.

¹ Giovanni Pietro Bellori, *Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni* . . . , Rome, 1672, 410–11. Bellori's date of 1623 for the Jesuit decorations is probably incorrect; Jane Costello has demonstrated that the date of 1622 given by Passeri (*Die Künstlerbiographien von Giovanni Battista Passeri*, ed. Jacob Hess, Leipzig-Vienna, 1934, 323) is more likely; "Poussin's Drawings for Marino and the New Classicism: I—Ovid's *Metamorphoses*," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVII, 1955, 298.

² Passeri, 323. Félibien's account is essentially a rewording of Bellori's: see A. Félibien, *Entretiens sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellens peintres*, Trevoux, 1725, IV, 9–10; modern edition, Félibien, *Entretiens sur la vie et les ouvrages de Nicolas Poussin*, Geneva, 1947, 22–24.

³ The later editions of 1630, 1636, and 1667 are freer from the many typographic errors present in the first edition; a modern edition was published in Lanciano in 1926. Marino's collection was located at other times in the poet's Roman residence, the Palazzo de' Crescenzi alla Rotonda, and at his Neapolitan villa in Posillipo; see Passeri, 178 and n.8, as well as Otto Grautoff, *Nicolas Poussin; Sein Werk und sein Leben*, Munich, 1914, I, 349f.

⁴ On *La galleria*, see among others the following: Angelo Borzelli, *La galleria del Cavalier Marino*, Naples, 1923; E. B. Toesca, "Il Cavalier Marino collezionista e critico d'arte," *Nuova antologia*, CDIV, 1952, 51–63; Antonio Belloni, "Giambattista Marino e due pittori veronesi suoi contemporanei," *Atti dell'Accademia di Verona*, IV, 1903, 44–63; Jean Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts*, Chicago, 1958, 100–05; James Mirollo, *The Poet of the Marvelous; Giambattista Marino*, New York, 1963, 45–51.

Bellori included excerpts from *La galleria* as complementary descriptions of paintings mentioned in the *Vite*, for example, on Agostino Carracci's *Polyphemus and Galatea* and on a portrait of a hunchbacked poet by Annibale Carracci (Bellori, 114 and 75, respectively).

⁵ As noted by Anthony Blunt, *Nicolas Poussin (A. W. Mellon Lectures, 1958)*, New York, 1967, I, 38.

⁶ The drawings were first recognized and discussed by 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," *ibid.*, 252–58. Further discussion of these drawings is to be found in Anthony Blunt, *The French Drawings in the Collection of His Majesty the King at Windsor Castle*, Oxford-London, 1945, 32–36; in Walter Friedlaender and Anthony Blunt, *The Drawings of Nicolas Poussin*, London, 1949, II, 7f. and London, 1953, III, 9f; in Costello, *passim*; in Blunt, 1967, I, 39–50; in Anthony Blunt, "The Massimi Collection of Poussin Drawings in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle," *Master Drawings*, XIV, 1976, 3–31.

she contended that they were drawn for a new edition of that book. As did Friedlaender and Blunt, she rejected the possibility that the Marino-Massimi drawings illustrate Marino's poetry, as Bellori, Passeri, and Félibien stated. Poussin's drawing of the *Birth of Adonis* from the Windsor series is now the only one of the group considered even potentially based on Marino's poetry. This proposal, despite Bellori's exact description and identification of the subject and source of the drawing, has been uniformly rejected, principally because Ovid's account of the event (*Metamorphoses* x. 476ff.) seems more extensive and detailed than Marino's in his epic *L'Adone* (i. 29–30).⁷

Evidently no one has tried to determine whether Marino's poems stimulated these or other of Poussin's compositions—probably because of the unwieldy length of Marino's principal work, *L'Adone*.⁸ This epic poem, published in 1623, extends for nearly 41,000 lines—longer than *The Faerie Queene* or *Orlando furioso*; more than twice as long as *The Iliad*, *The Odyssey*, *La divina commedia*, or *Gerusalemme liberata*; roughly four times the length of *Paradise Lost*.⁹ The *Adone* is not, as its title might imply, simply an expanded version of the Venus and Adonis legend; even the most casual perusal of the work reveals an amalgam of chivalric and mythological tales woven into an elaborate scheme, for which the story of Adonis provides but the skeletal structure of the poem. Marino's strikingly personal, if irregularly effective style—which was to become something of an international literary vogue in the seventeenth century—saturates the poem with florid descriptions underscored by exotic adjectives, rich textural variety, and an almost morbid sensual delectation. Were one to seek a pictorial counterpart for Marino's descriptive style (excluding considerations of quality), an overripe still-life by Caravaggio

might seem more germane than a Poussin landscape.¹⁰ The apparent dissimilarity of the styles of Marino and Poussin seems to belie a substantial relationship between the two figures. In a broad sense, one could observe that for Marino, "the aim of the poet is the marvellous," whereas for Poussin, painting's "aim is delectation."¹¹ But a consideration of Marino's poetry and its impact on Poussin is more to the point; it is less a question of lyric style than of content and structure.

The *Adone*, taken with Marino's other poetry, provides what might be termed a modern encyclopedia of classical mythology. In Marino's epic, a profusion of gods and goddesses enter to relate their legends to the poem's protagonists; architectural friezes, paintings, sculptures, painted vases, and the like appear and are fully described with attention to their ever-present mythological representations. Nearly every sustained action or movement in the poem is arrested as Venus or Adonis looks at or listens to sundry tales of gods and mortals. In this context it might well be premature to exclude the possibility that Marino's poetry was relevant to Poussin's Marino drawings.

With the addition of a *Bacchanal* in the Museum of Fine Arts in Budapest,¹² these drawings involve sixteen compositions, only nine of which clearly derive from the *Metamorphoses*; two others can be related indirectly to Ovid, but the remaining drawings probably have another source.¹³ What has been overlooked, however, is that some of these drawings from Ovid also find textual counterparts in Marino's poetry. The *Birth of Adonis* (M29)¹⁴ is treated in the *Adone* (i. 29–30), and the legend of Orpheus in Hades (M28) provides the material for a long poem in *La sampogna*.¹⁵ So, too, the themes of Polyphemus spying on Acis and Galatea (M33) and Acis transformed into a river-god (M34) receive full treatment in

⁷ See, for example, Friedlaender and Blunt, 1953, III, 10.

⁸ The "influence" of Marino's writings on Poussin was studied in a largely superficial way by Andrea Moschetti: *Dell'influsso del Marino sulla formazione artistica di Nicola Poussin*, Rome, 1913; also published more accessibly in *L'Italia e l'arte straniera; Atti del X congresso internazionale di storia dell'arte in Roma*, Rome, 1922, 356–384. Moschetti's sometimes specious connections between specific passages of Marino's poetry and Poussin's paintings have been either neglected or criticized; for the latter, see Walter Friedlaender in *Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXVII, 1914, 230–35, and briefly, with reference to the *Massacre of the Innocents*, Denis Mahon, "Poussin's Early Development: An Alternative Hypothesis," *Burlington Magazine*, CII, 1960, 291. The rejection of most of Moschetti's proposals seems to have discouraged further investigation into the relationship of Marino and Poussin. Recently, however, a lengthy appraisal of Poussin and Marino's friendship has been published by Kurt Badt in his *Die Kunst des Nicolas Poussin*, Cologne, 1969, I, 161–181; this discussion concentrates on generic similarities of form, composition, and effect between the two.

For an appraisal of Marino's theoretical writings, the *Dicerie sacre*, see Gerald Ackerman, "Gian Battista Marino's Contribution to Seicento Art Theory," *Art Bulletin*, XLIII, 1961, 326f. A perceptive comparison of Marino and Jan Brueghel is to be found in Mario Praz, *Mnemosyne: The Parallel Between Literature and the Visual Arts*, Princeton, 1970, 116–120; more fully as "Jan Brueghel e G. B. Marino," in Praz's *La casa della Fama; Saggi di letteratura e d'arte*, Milan-Naples, 1952, 200–05. A comparison of a bacchanal by Marino (*Adone*, II, 29f.) and a painting by Pietro da Cortona is offered by Grautoff, I, 351–52.

⁹ Actually 5133 stanzas comprising 41,064 lines. These numerical tidbits are to be found in Harold Priest's introduction to his abridged translation of the work: Giambattista Marino, *Adonis: Selections from L'Adone*, Ithaca, N.Y.,

1967, xix. *L'Adone* was first published in Paris in 1623; the only complete modern edition of the poem is that edited by Gustavo Balsamo-Crivelli, Turin, 1922. Citations to passages in *L'Adone* that appear in the text of this article refer to the number of the canto (in Roman numerals) and the verse (in Arabic numbers).

¹⁰ Tangentially it should be noted that Caravaggio painted Marino's portrait (now lost) as averred by Marino in *La galleria* and by Bellori in his life of the artist (p. 205). Also, in a letter of 1620, Marino mentions a painting of Susanna (also lost), "che ho di mano del Caravaggio" (Marino, *Lettere*, Venice, 1673, 282, No. CLXIII; reprinted in Marino, *Opere*, ed. A. A. Rosa, Milan, 1967, 210–11). Marino's poem on Caravaggio's death, also from *La galleria*, is included in Bellori's life of Caravaggio (pp. 211–12); published with a translation in Walter Friedlaender, *Caravaggio Studies*, Princeton, 1955, 243 and 252.

¹¹ "È del poeta il fin la meraviglia," Marino, quoted by Praz, *Mnemosyne*, 185; "C'est une Imitation faite avec lignes et couleurs en quelque superficie de tout ce qui se voit dessous le Soleil. sa fin est la Délectation," Poussin, quoted by Blunt, 1967, I, 371. On the meaning of *délectation*, see *ibid.*, 354f.

¹² First published by Walter Vitzthum and Jacques Thuillier, "Un Nouveau Dessin de Poussin pour Marino?," *Art de France*, II, 1962, 265; see also Blunt, 1967, I, 39.

¹³ Costello, 303f.

¹⁴ "M" numbers refer to the original numeration of the Massimi catalogue as given in Blunt, 1945, 32–36.

¹⁵ *La sampogna* was first published in Paris in 1620; a modern edition of the *Idilli favalosi*, the section of *La sampogna* containing "Orfeo," was published in Turin in 1928, edited by Gustavo Balsamo-Crivelli.

the *Adone* (XIX. 137ff.); the life of Achilles is reviewed by Thetis (M32) in the same canto (293ff.).¹⁶ Other parallel texts in Marino's work might well be found. The Budapest *Bacchanal* could be related to one of Marino's numerous verse bacchanalia (e.g., *Adone* VII. 116–123); the battle scenes conceivably refer to the conflict of Malgorre and Organte and the latter's death in the fourteenth canto of the *Adone* (this is less assured). To claim a literary derivation from Marino for these last drawings of relatively uncertain subject would be, at present, speculative. And in the case of those drawings for which Marino's poetry seems to provide as reliable a text as Ovid's, no distinction can be made as to the "more correct" source. The Marino drawings, then, should perhaps be considered works of still unresolved literary ancestry. Their iconographic homogeneity, or at least their derivation from one specific source, should be questioned; but at the very least, the relationship of Marino's poetry to these drawings ought to be reconsidered.

A series of three drawings at Windsor can be more confidently associated with Marino's poetry; they are usually considered productions of the "studio of Poussin": the *Realm of Flora*, *Perseus and Andromeda*, and *Venus and Adonis Hunting*.¹⁷ The first two sheets are highly finished versions of extant drawings by Poussin;¹⁸ the third, presumably, was also based on one of his drawings.

The relationship of the subjects of these compositions to the poetry of Marino has been discussed by Richard Spear.¹⁹ The *Realm of Flora*, often considered a preparatory sketch for Poussin's painting in Dresden (Fig. 1)²⁰ is associated with Marino's poem "La rosa."²¹ The drawing of *Venus and Adonis* was noted by Bellori under its more exact title of *La tintura della rosa*, since it refers to Venus staining the rose red from the blood of her pricked foot. Spear also associated this theme

with a passage in "La rosa."²² The legend of Perseus and Andromeda—here, more properly, the *Tintura del corallo*, the creation of coral from seaweed petrified by Medusa's blood—recurs several times in Marino's poetry.²³ Other passages in Marino's work, not cited by Spear, provide fuller treatment of these themes, which are rarely encountered in literature and art.²⁴ The connection of Marino's poetry with these compositions is most evident in the drawing of *La tintura della rosa*. As Blunt and Friedlaender have noted, no traditional version of the tale conforms to the representation in Poussin's drawing;²⁵ only Marino's recital of the legend parallels Poussin's depiction of the scene. Blunt proposes a date of 1625–27 for the original group of drawings;²⁶ it would be tempting to conjecture that this series is a surviving remnant or reflection of the drawings based on Marino's poetry that Bellori mentioned. In any case, they confirm that Marino's poetry provided the literary substance for some of Poussin's early work.

II

Poussin returned to the theme of the Realm of Flora in a painting executed for Fabritio Valguarnera in late 1630 or 1631, which can be identified confidently with a picture now in Dresden (Fig. 1).²⁷ Bellori called the painting *La trasformazione de' fiori* and described it as follows:

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

¹⁶ Moschetti (p. 372) attempted to associate the following related stanza (*Adone* XIX. 311) with the painting *Achilles Among the Daughters of Lycomedes*, now in Richmond, Va. (Anthony Blunt, *The Paintings of Nicolas Poussin: A Critical Catalogue*, London, 1966, No. 127):

La turba, de le vergini le voglie
Volge de'bassi oggetti a l'esca vile
E qual cembalo, o tirso, e qual si toglie
Gemmato cinto o lucido monite;
Pelide sol, celato in altre spoglie,
Dissimilar non può l'esser virile
E, disprezzando quel ch'a donna aggrada
Tosto a l'elmo s'avvena ed la spada.

This attempt to account for the presence of some motives and details not found in descriptions of the event in ancient literature was ostensibly refuted by Walter Friedlaender (*Repertorium für Kunstwissenschaft*, XXXVII, 1914, 234). He drew attention to a drawing from Cassiano dal Pozzo's collection after an antique relief of the subject, a drawing exhibiting the identical variances in Poussin's painting that Moschetti associated with Marino.

¹⁷ Blunt, 1945, Nos. 223, 224, 225. The *Venus and Perseus* sheets are illustrated in Friedlaender and Blunt, III, pl. 178 (A51, A66).

¹⁸ Blunt, 1945, Nos. 169 (M35, for *Flora*), 170 (M23 for *Perseus*).

¹⁹ Richard Spear, "The Literary Source of Poussin's Realm of Flora," *Burlington Magazine*, CVII, 1965, 563f.

²⁰ Blunt, 1945, No. 170; *idem*, 1966, No. 155. This drawing seems less a preparatory sketch for the Dresden picture than a slightly different but fully realized conception of the subject. The Dresden painting, which most probably follows the drawing by several years, is an expansion and

refinement of this early idea. Denis Mahon ("Poussin's Early Development," 292 and n. 33) has suggested that the Windsor drawing was intended as a rough sketch prepared for potential patrons or "a shorthand aide-memoire for a composition of this rather complex subject" (Mahon, "Poussiniana; Afterthoughts Arising from the Exhibition," *Gazette des beaux-arts*, II, 1962, 91 and n. 261; also published as a separate volume with the same pagination; Paris-New York-London, 1962). Badt (I, 200) agrees that the drawing is less a sketch than a "modello."

²¹ First published in the *Rime*, Venice, 1602; reprinted in Marino, *Opere*, ed. A. A. Rosa, 314–320.

²² Spear, 566f; Bellori (p. 443) describes the composition.

²³ Spear, 566; Bellori (p. 443) provides an exact description of the drawing.

²⁴ The story of the *Tintura della rosa* appears in fuller form in the *Adone* (III. 61f); other passages by Marino that are related to the *Realm of Flora* are discussed below. No pictorial representation of the *Tintura del corallo* predating Poussin's drawing is known to me, although reference is clearly made to the transformation in some paintings of Perseus and Andromeda, such as Vasari's in the Studiolo of the Palazzo Vecchio, Florence. The theme of the *Tintura della rosa* is found in some 16th- and 17th-century examples (see A. Pigler, *Barockthemen*, 2nd ed., Budapest, 1974, II, 216). The *Realm of Flora* has no clear iconographic precedents.

²⁵ Blunt, 1967, I, 119; Friedlaender and Blunt, III, 1953, 31.

²⁶ Blunt, 1967, I, 106. That the Marino drawings might themselves be copies after lost works by Poussin has recently been suggested by Konrad Oberhuber, in *Recent Acquisitions and Promised Gifts*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1974, 97, n. 7.

²⁷ Blunt, 1966, No. 155; Spear, 563f.

una mano, 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.²⁸

Omitted from Bellori's otherwise accurate description are the figures of Crocus and Smilax, who appear in the right foreground of the painting.

Poussin's painting is iconographically unique; its specific subject has remained somewhat perplexing, even with the help of Bellori's catalogue of the participants. Most critics have associated the iconography with the Roman feast of Flora as related in Ovid's *Fasti* (v. 183ff.).²⁹ Ovid's portrayal remains the fullest and most widely known of antique descriptions of the goddess.³⁰ Art historians have suggested that Poussin drew his conception of the *Primavera* (as the picture was called by Valguarnera) from this brief passage in the *Fasti*. But it is evident that if the general subject of Poussin's painting does find its literary source in Ovid, the setting, figures, and action do not. Poussin diminishes the prominence of Flora, the dominant figure in the passage from the *Fasti*, and sets her within a meadow populated somewhat differently from Ovid's (which omits Ajax and Clytie) and bearing only a generic resemblance to Ovid's *fecundus hortus*. Flora now dances among the flowers, rather than simply addressing or cataloguing them.

²⁸ Bellori, 441–42.

²⁹ The passage was first associated with the painting by Blunt, 1945, 36 (No. 169) and, slightly later, by Dora Panofsky, "Narcissus and Echo; Notes on Poussin's 'Birth of Bacchus' in the Fogg Museum of Art," *Art Bulletin*, xxxi, 1949, 114–15. The relevant section from the *Fasti* is quoted below from Ovid's *Fasti*, trans. and ed. Sir James G. Frazer, London-Cambridge, Mass., Loeb Classical Library, 1967, 275–77.

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

Her "subjects" react and, *ciascuno a suo modo*, actively portray their individual legends rather than content themselves with being praised; the garden full of flowers is replaced by one populated by their human ancestors.

In order to supplement Ovid's account of Flora, Georg Kauffmann has linked another passage from the *Fasti* with Poussin's *giardino de' fiori*: Ovid's description of Persephone roaming through a Sicilian meadow (iv. 425ff.).³¹ Kauffmann relates the Persephone legend to traditional calendar representations of spring and demonstrates the appositeness of what might otherwise appear a conflation of disparate sources: in the *Fasti*, Persephone is the goddess of April, Flora of May; their association would be related to their joint guardianship of the spring months. Kauffmann suggests that specific details of Poussin's landscape setting derive from descriptive elements in this Ovidian passage (e.g., the waterfall in the rear, and the abduction relief at the left—which he considers a representation of the rape of Persephone), and he concludes that the *fecundus hortus* of Poussin's painting is, in fact, a Persephone or Ceres "Schauplatz." The putti dancing at the rear, described by Bellori as *amori*, are identified as allegorical representations of the Four Seasons, and the entire painting is considered a celebration of spring.

Kauffmann's general appraisal of the picture is difficult to reject, but his association of the Persephone legend with the iconography of the painting may be overstated. The Ovidian passage cited seems an appropriate correlative source, but in its details it cannot be considered the descriptive underpinning of Poussin's composition. The abduction relief includes a satyr rather than Pluto and thus could not properly represent 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 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?

³⁰ On Flora, see Julius Held, "Flora, Goddess and Courtesan," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL; Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky*, New York, 1961, 1, 201–218; Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, New Haven, 1958, 113f.; W. H. Roscher, ed., *Ausführliches Lexikon der griechischen und römischen Mythologie*, Leipzig, 1884–1937, 1, 1483–86.

³¹ Georg Kauffmann, "Poussin's 'Primavera,'" in *Walter Friedlaender zum 90. Geburtstag*, Berlin, 1965, 92f. The passage is quoted from Ovid's *Fasti*, ed. Frazer, 221.

Attended as usual by her wonted damsels, her daughter [i.e. Persephone, daughter of Ceres] roamed bare-foot through the familiar meadows. In a shady vale there is a spot moist with the abundant spray of a high waterfall. All the hues that nature owns were there displayed and the pied earth was bright with various flowers. As soon as she espied it, "Come hither comrades," she said, "and with me bring home lapfuls of flowers." The bauble booty lured their girlish minds, and they were too busy to feel fatigue. One filled baskets plaited of supple withes, another loaded her lap, another the loose folds of her robe; one gathered marigolds, another paid heed to violets; another nipped off heads of poppies with her nails; some are attracted by the hyacinth, others lingered over amaranth; some love thyme, others rosemary, others melilot; full many a rose was culled, and flowers without name. Persephone herself plucked dainty crocuses and white lilies. Intent on gathering, she, little by little, strayed far, and it chanced that none of her companions followed their mistress. [Pluto then surprises her and carries her off to the underworld.]



1 Poussin, *Realm of Flora*. Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister

rape of Persephone; a fifth dancing putto is barely visible behind the figure of Flora, so that these figures cannot signify the Four Seasons. Other elements—the herm, basket, and moralized landscape (rocky on one side and verdant on the other)—that Kauffmann cites as attributes of Ceres and Persephone, should perhaps be seen as general symbols of fecundity rather than as specific references to these deities.³²

It is important to note that Ovid's *Fasti* does not provide the only ancient source for young women in flower-filled gardens. It would seem that Ovid himself drew upon an older poetic tradition, one found as early as Homer, but developed more

fully in later bucolic poetry. Pertinent to Poussin's painting but, surprisingly, never related to it, is a portion of the second idyll of Moschus (ca. 150 B.C.), a work well known in the Renaissance.³³ The appropriate passage, as with Ovid, describes a virgin—in this case Europa—wandering in a meadow filled with flowers and oblivious to her impending rape.

Therewith she [Europa] arose, and began to seek the dear maidens of her company, girls of like age with herself, born in the same year, beloved of her heart, the daughters of

³² As noted by Spear, 569 n.31; the left-right distinctions in the landscape seem to refer as much to a contrast of "wild nature" and "cultivated or controlled nature" (embodied by the pergola) as they do to the contrast of rocky and verdant topography.

³³ The extant poetry of the Greek pastoral poets was often published in a single volume in the Renaissance; the earliest edition of Moschus (together with Bion and Theocritus) is that of Aldus (Venice, 1495). Later editions were published in 1516 (Florence: Giunta, and Rome: Callierges), in 1579 (n.p.: Stephanus, ed.), and in 1664 (Heidelberg: D. Heinsius), as well as reprintings of various dates of the Aldine edition. On Moschus's "Europa," see Winifred Böhrer, *Die Europa des Moschus; Text, Übersetzung, Kommentar (Hermes, Einzelschriften, III)*, Wiesbaden, 1960. Borrowings and paraphrases

from "Europa" by Jean Antoine de Baif and Ronsard are given in Wilfred P. Mustard, "Later Echoes of the Greek Bucolic Poets," *American Journal of Philology*, xxx, 1909, 178ff.

Extensive criticism on flowers and garden settings in ancient and modern literature can be found in the numerous studies devoted to bucolic poetry; two basic works are Walter Greg, *Pastoral Poetry and Pastoral Drama*, London, 1906, and Mia Gerhardt, *La pastorale*, Assen, 1950; on the rhetorical contexts, see particularly Ernst Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. W. Trask, New York, 1953, 183ff. For further research consult the many studies of Milton's "Lycidas"; an excellent compendium is Scott Elledge, *Milton's Lycidas*, New York, 1966.

noble sires, with whom she was always wont to sport, when she was arrayed for the dance, or when she would bathe her bright body at the mouths of the rivers, or would gather fragrant lilies on the leas. And soon she found them, each bearing in her hand a basket to fill with flowers, and to the meadows near the salt sea they set forth, where always they were wont to gather in their company, delighting in the roses, and the sound of the waves. But Europa herself bore a basket of gold, a marvel well worth gazing on, a choice work of Hephaestus. [Here appears an extensive *ekphrasis* of the decorated basket.] Now the girls, so soon as they were come to the flowering meadows, took great delight in various sorts of flowers, whereof one would pluck sweet-breathed narcissus, another of hyacinth, another the violet, a fourth the creeping thyme, and on the ground there fell many petals of the meadows rich with spring. Others again were emulously gathering the fragrant tresses of yellow crocus; but in the midst of them all the princess culled with her hand the splendour of the crimson rose, and shone pre-eminent among them all like the foam-born goddess among the graces.³⁴

Moschus's Europa idyll (formally an *epyllion*, a "miniature epic" often characterized by frequent digressions) might seem a work of only limited relevance to Poussin's painting. As with the Persephone passage from the *Fasti*, there are undeniable similarities between the text and the image of Poussin. But the protagonist here is Europa, not Flora; the setting is vaguely similar, but not distinctly associable with Poussin's; the flowers catalogued are appropriately included, but again in non-human, passive form. In short, a binding association between poet and painter here would seem most unlikely; yet what makes this passage of interest to the study of Poussin's painting is the basic significance of Europa's appearance in the role of Flora.

Flora is a particularly Roman goddess; she does not appear in Hellenic mythology except in her earlier, non-floral existence as Chloris. An important symbolic manifestation of the rejuvenation of spring in Greek mythology was that of Taurus, the bull into which Zeus transformed himself when he abducted Europa; the same bull figure was placed in the Zodiac where he watches over the month following 20 April—that is, the month of Flora in the Ovidian scheme.³⁵ Ovid's description of Flora's garden may derive from the earlier Greek conception of Europa's flower-filled meadow. But, more important, there is an evident, if generic, bond between these

two figures brought about by the identification of Taurus (related to his zodiacal position) as the life-giving spirit of spring's rebirth and the deific propagator of all plants, herbs, and flowers. In Poussin's painting the Zodiac of Apollo's chariot is brightly illuminated by the sun precisely at the sign of Taurus.

The "Europa" of Moschus may provide a parallel to Poussin's painting, but little more than that. It is in the revival and reinterpretation of Moschus's *epyllion* by Marino, however, that this work gains greater importance for Poussin. But before a discussion of Marino's poem, also entitled "Europa," a review of three other hypotheses concerning the iconography of the *Realm of Flora* might be appropriate: all attempt to demonstrate a connection between Marino's poetry and Poussin's painting.

In 1914 Otto Grautoff noted a vague similarity between the subject of Poussin's painting and Marino's short description of Flora and Pomona dancing and making garlands in the first garden of pleasure (the garden of sight) in the *Adone* (VI. 40).³⁶ Grautoff admitted that the connection is tenuous, however, and that the setting, with its surrounding wall and loggia covered with paintings of the loves of the gods, is totally unlike Poussin's.³⁷ Louis Hourticq read farther in the *Adone* and discovered that on the other side of the decorated wall was a second garden, the garden of smell, in which Marino combined several flowers that appear in the *Realm of Flora* (VI. 132ff);³⁸ but neither Flora nor Adonis is included in this floral arrangement (Adonis is a human observer of it) and, again, none of the flowers appears either in its pre-metamorphosed existence or in any state of action. More recently, Richard Spear has proposed Marino's poem "La rosa" as the literary source for Poussin's painting; this *canzone*, of some 183 lines in dialogue form, first appeared in Marino's *Rime* of 1602.³⁹ Spear excerpted twenty-one lines from the poem and identified these as the literary basis for the painting.

Dirò d'Aiace tinto
Di vivace vermiglio?
Del Ligustro, ò del Giglio?
Dirò d'Adon dipinto?
Del fregiato Giacinto?
O di Clitia, a cui piace
Volgersi sempre inver l'eterna face?

Del lieto Fiordaliso?
O del'innamorata

³⁴ A. Lang, *Theocritus, Bion and Moschus*, London, 1920, 191–92.

³⁵ On the mythology of Taurus, see Roscher, *Lexikon*, V, 146–153.

³⁶ Grautoff, I, 354. Marino's passage (*Adone* VI. 40) begins:

Per lungo tratto a guisa di corona
da ciaschun fianco il bel giardin si spande
dove in ogni stagion Flora e Pomona
guidano danze e 'ntrecciano ghirlande.

³⁷ The artists responsible for this decorative project are mentioned by Marino; they are, in order of appearance (*Adone* VI. 53–57): Cavaliere d'Arpino, G. B. Paggi, Bernardo Castello, Caravaggio, Leonello Spada, Giovanni Luigi Valesio, Morazzone, G. B. Crespi, Giulio Cesare Procaccini, Titian, Veronese, Palma Giovane, Giovanni Baglione, Cristofano Allori, Domenico Passignano.

³⁸ Louis Hourticq, *La jeunesse de Poussin*, Paris, 1937, 130–36. Marino's passage (*Adone* VI. 132) is as follows:

Ne' fior, ne' fior istessi amor ha loco;
amano il bel ligustro e l'amaranto,
e narciso e giacinto, aiace e croco,
e con la bella Clizia il vago acanto.
Arde la rosa di vermiglio foco,
l'odor sospiro e la rugiada è pianto.
Ride la calta, e pallida ed esangue
tinta d'amor la violetta langue.

Hourticq's hypothesis was first rejected by Mario Praz, "Milton e Poussin alla scuola dell'Italia," *Romana*, II, 1938, 42 n.3.

³⁹ Spear, *passim*.

Mammoletta odorata
 D'Amor pallida il viso?
 O dirò di Narcisso,
 Che da quell'acque, ond'hebbe
 La morte già, trasse la vita e crebbe?

Canta Thirsi di quella,
 Ch'è più cara a gli amanti:
 Canta gli honori, e i vanti
 Dela Rosa novella,
 Che baldanzosa, e bella
 Sorge dal'humil herba
 Tra la plebe de' fior donna superba.⁴⁰

Spear's confident association of this poem with the *Realm of Flora* overlooks many inconsistencies, both specific and general. That Smilax and Echo are not included in "La rosa" is understandable, since these figures would be considered iconographic adjuncts to Crocus and Narcissus.⁴¹ But to explain the absence of Adonis and Crocus in this list of flowers, Spear notes that "Leggiadro Adone" is named in the following verse and that "Croco" appears near the end of the poem.⁴² What Spear neglected to mention, however, is that these two flower-figures are evoked in totally diverse and unrelatable contexts. Adonis is mentioned in connection with the story of the *Tintura della rosa*, and Crocus does not appear until over ninety lines later, and then not as a metamorphosed flower but as one humble member of a group of herbs and spices.

. . . fra 'l serpillio e l'amello
 e fra l'amorno e 'l croco
 avampa tutta d'amoroso foco
 (Among thyme and aster and among cardamom and crocus
 [or saffron] all is inflamed by the amorous fire.)⁴³

What also makes Spear's hypothesis less than convincing is the compositional context of the purported source. This rather short passage, lacking any extensive descriptions, is extracted from a verse dialogue in which the enumeration of flowers serves not as a primary or even secondary subject, but rather as an introductory rhetorical device designed to emphasize the superior beauty of the rose. Thirsi asks whether he should sing of flower A, flower B, flower C, D, or E (lines 15–35 of the

poem); Mopsus, the companion in the dialogue, replies, "Sing of the rose," and then Thirsi praises that flower for nearly the remainder of the poem (lines 57–175). Given the incomplete correspondence of "La rosa" to the *Realm of Flora*, Spear's hypothesis seems no more convincing than the others. Yet the basic subject of Poussin's painting—a garden with all the blossomed mortals from the *Metamorphoses*—is clearly reminiscent, if not related to this sort of Marinesque poetry.

If a contemporary literary source of this type may be said to underlie the Dresden picture, a far more likely text than those previously proposed is found in Marino's "Europa," published in his volume *La sampogna*.⁴⁴ The relevant passage (see Appendix) represents almost one third of the poem; these stanzas are immediately followed by Marino's description of the rape of Europa. The break following line 149 (the last quoted here) is quite abrupt and serves to isolate the peaceful, idyllic prologue from a quite separate and more violent tale of rape; in translation (with indications of the line number), the poem is as follows:

In that area at the time of the young year that the sun with mild and sweet rays melts the silvery ground to liquid flight from the crystal banks to the sluggish rivers; and the warm winds, begetters of the flowers, gravid with ripe and fertile power, engender in colorful birth the sweet-smelling conceptions; the painter of the world, whom I call life-giving Nature—coloring the shores green, purple, vermilion, and orange—seems to have wanted to portray the stars in flowers and the heaven in the earth.⁴⁵ And the paint-brushes of the great master were breezes and dew; the pigments, herbs and flowers. (20) One beautiful morning the daughter of the great King of the Phoenicians descended into the open air of the coast of Sidon with her company, as was her wont.⁴⁶ Here along the briny waves, a meadow was embroidered in a thousand ways as if the golden work of Turkish cloth or silken texture of Ethiopian linen. And here, because they all entice her to experience the smell of the flowers and the murmur of the waters, she stays her foot with her companions following. Each had in hand a beautiful basket of different design to shelter the flowers, but the lofty virgin was chosen to carry a basket of gold, one of ancient manufacture from the great forge of Lemnos.⁴⁷
 (38) Roaming carefree in the flowering season, the beautiful

⁴⁰ Spear (pp. 564–65) provides the following translation:

Should I sing of Ajax, coloured lively vermilion? Or privet? Or Lily?
 Should I sing of Adonis painted? Or of Hyacinthus embellished? Or of
 Clitia, turning always to face the eternal torch?

Should I sing of the merry fleur-de-lis? Or the enamoured sweet violet,
 fragrant, made pale by the face of Love? Or of Narcissus, who from the
 water, where death once was, draws forth life, and grows?

Sing, Thirsi, of the one dearest to lovers, sing honour and praise of the
 new Rose. From humble soil she rises among the common flowers,
 beautiful and bold, the arrogant Rose.

Spear has capitalized the names of the flowers in the Italian text as well as in his translation—an alteration of Marino's poem that gives the false impression that the flowers mentioned are cognitive or kinetic entities.

⁴¹ Dora Panofsky (p. 115, n.15) identified Narcissus's companion as Echo, in contrast to Bellori's identification of the figure as "una delle Naiadi ninfe"; Spear (p. 564) agrees with Panofsky. Kurt Badt (1, p. 618, n. 67), however, contends that the figure is indeed that of a nymph-naïad and he associates

the cornucopia near the figure's foot in Poussin's painting with Ovid's passage on the horn of Acheloeus (*Metamorphoses* ix. 85–88): "As he grasped my stiff horn in his [Herakles'] he broke and tore it off, mutilating my brow. But the naiads filled it with fruits and fragrant flowers and sanctified it, and now my horn enriches the Goddess of Plenty" (quoted from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. M. Innes, Harmondsworth, 1955, 205). In the *Fasti* (v. 120f.) Ovid states that the cornucopia came instead from Amalthea.

⁴² Spear, 565.

⁴³ Lines 145–48.

⁴⁴ For *La sampogna*, see note 17 above. The poem is also published in Marino. *Opere scelte*, ed. Getto, Turin, 1966, 1, 309f.

⁴⁵ "Painter" in this line and "master" in the next are translations respectively of "pittrice" and "maestra"—feminine forms that accord with the gender of "Natura."

⁴⁶ Europa, daughter of Agenor, King of Tyre; Sidon was the principal coastal city of Phoenicia.

⁴⁷ That is, the forge of Vulcan.

maiden—eager to arrange garlands and wreaths in her golden hair, and with her milk-white hand choosing one by one the most beautiful adornments from these tender gems—filled her bosom with them and then emptied the filled bosom into the golden vase.

(48) Beneath her beautiful foot shone the entire population of the flowers. And as goddess to them, they—bowed and devoted, causing ambitious rivalries among themselves—made votive offerings of their own smells, almost like Arabian incenses.

(55) The immortal amaranth, longing to be cut down by this new innocent Love-Fate, seemed to desire death from so beautiful a hand.

(59) The pleasant acanthus in the ivy and the vines envied her arms for tenaciously making a sweet chain with such beauty.

(64) The gentle violet, downtrodden by the dear weight of those beautiful plants—his cheek stained of amorous pallor—swooned of sweetness in the arms of the flower.⁴⁸

(69) 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.⁴⁹

(75) The beloved lily, the iris of the earth, damp with frost, grew more stately in the light of her beautiful eyes, and, at the sight of her white breast and blue eyes, its white increased in whiteness, its blue became richer in color.

(83) The cheerful fleur-de-lis also languished sweetly of love, sighed weepingly and wept sighingly and made its little tears dew and its little sighs smells.

(88) The handsome narcissus, content now to look at himself in the flattering font, made himself a mirror of the beautiful face and, attracted by such rare beauty, with just example taught himself to flee the murderous waters.⁵⁰

(94) The beautiful and blond crocus, sending odoriferous expressions from his purple lips, with three suppliant tongues of fire he begs the grace of being plucked and gathered to her breast.⁵¹

(100) The white privet—which minute star, whitening the green roof of the garden to emulate the heavens, showed in itself a beautiful milky-way—made a falling star fall down from the flowering sky and shower softly on the flowery meadow with white flakes.

(109) The graceful hyacinth—nature's book, on the pages of the leaves of which were already erased the pitiable writing of the ancient "AIs," all by the hand of Love, written in letters of blood—expressed these notes with a smile: I yield now at your beautiful face.⁵²

(118) From his deep oblivion, the soft poppy raised his vermilion and sleepy head full of marvel, and, on his feet, risen anew to emulate the roses, he colored his cheeks the finest scarlet, but then, conquered and neglected, he fell down from great pain and blushed doubly of shame, inflamed by disgrace.

(127) Not one of the flattering and lascivious group refused to offer her a courteous invitation to be admired and plucked by her. But the royal girl disdains the vulgar praise of the odoriferous people and runs along where the eye of spring, shining among the plants, makes merry and smiles, the purple one of the meadows, the phoenix of flowers, where the rose, beautiful daughter of April, like the young virgin and queen resembling her, seated on the thorned throne of the green stem, inside the palace of the shady hedge, holding up in majesty the sceptre of the flowers, and courted all around by the lascivious family of minister zephyrs, carries the crown of gold and the cloak of crimson.⁵³

Several qualities distinguish this potential source from the other examples previously suggested. All the metamorphosed flowers except Ajax are mentioned, their appearances related, and their legends referred to; the locus is precisely determined and extensively described. Perhaps more important, the flowers are humanoid; activity and movement are involved as they are not in other possible sources. Taken with this, the often extraordinary similarity in the ways Poussin and Marino describe the appearance and motion of their flower-people (for example, Clytie, lines 69ff.) might suggest that Marino's "Europa" was the unique literary source for Poussin's painting. Such a proposal could be supported by the vivid pictorial allusions in the poem and the quasi-ekphrastic manner in which the entire scene is related.⁵⁴

Rather than attempt to prove this association, one might suggest that the quest for a precise literary source for the painting is a misguided effort that in many ways excludes an understanding of Poussin's own creative and interpretive power. The more one studies the various potential sources of the painting's iconography, the more evident it becomes that none of the ancient or modern examples cited can be a complete program. The many subtle but important disparities between text and image perhaps indicate that no single literary source can be discovered and that the specific interpretation of the Flora myth in Poussin's painting is the artist's own. Thus a question more germane than "What was Poussin's source?" might be "How did Poussin reinterpret the subject?" It is here that the relationship between Poussin and Marino becomes

⁴⁸ "Mammoletta" may also mean "little child" and, by extension, Cupid; see Spear, 565.

⁴⁹ Clytie was changed into a heliotrope (in Poussin's painting represented as a New World sunflower), a flower that turns to follow the sun's path; see Ovid, *Metamorphoses* IV. 268.

⁵⁰ Metamorphosed into an anemone; *ibid.* III. 510.

⁵¹ Crocus was changed into a flower, usually associated with saffron; the "three suppliant tongues" of the next line refers to the shape of the flower; *ibid.* IV. 283.

⁵² From the blood of Hyacinth's wound a flower sprang up—on the petals of which were written "AI, AI," the lament of Apollo; *ibid.* X. 217.

⁵³ Author's translation.

⁵⁴ Marino's description of the rape of Europa, which immediately follows the "flower scene," clearly relies on Titian's painting of the subject (Boston). That Marino introduces the prologue to the rape by noting that the scene appeared to be a tapestry might allude to Arachne's weaving of the event in her Ovidian tapestry (*Metamorphoses* VI. 100) and it provides a parallel to Velázquez's inclusion of Titian's *Rape of Europa* in tapestry form at the rear of his *Las Hilanderas* ("The Tapestry Weavers") in the Prado.

more significant; study of Marino's poetry reveals the author to be less a paraphraser of classical myth than an interpreter of it. In the "Europa" Marino expands Moschus's idyll and imbues each figure (only briefly described in it) with human attributes, desires, and emotions drawn from Ovid.⁵⁵ Marino enriches the description and creates a scene of pastoral beauty underscored by human drama.

Poussin clearly knew Marino's poem but he did not seek to illustrate it. His subject was manifestly different from Marino's; but, in seeking to broaden Ovid's account of Flora in her garden, Poussin drew on Marino's poetry and method to create an allegorical representation of spring. Flora is the protagonist of the painting, not Europa; and the flowers do not plead to be culled by the goddess as in Marino but appear at the fragmented moments of their metamorphoses—transformations brought about by the presence and activity of Flora.⁵⁶ Marino's poem probably suggested to Poussin the idea of representing the flowers in human form surrounding a goddess. But in the choice of flowers to be included in the painting it is clear that Poussin decided to modify the population of Marino's garden. The artist chose to exclude both non-blossoming plants and any flower that did not have human ancestry, and to include every figure from the *Metamorphoses* changed into a flower—even when this creates an iconographic paradox, as with Ajax and Hyacinthus, who were both transformed into the same botanic entity.⁵⁷ Poussin's choice of flowers was calculated not only to provide iconographically appropriate companions for Flora but also to give a clear and understandable allegorical representation of the regenerative nature of spring. To include plants would be inappropriate in an image of Flora, and to paint blossoming flowers would not do, since the visual effect would lead a viewer to consider the subject simply as a young woman in a garden. But by representing particular flowers at the moment of their transmogrification from human to floral form, there could be little doubt of the subject and meaning of the image. Metamorphoses are rebirths, and through the employment of Marino's innovative method of describing the flowers in Europa's meadow Poussin was able not only to represent the blossoming of flowers at a single moment (caused, it would seem, by Flora) but also to underscore that process through the inclusion of the most recognizable and identifiable manifestations of floral transformation. With Flora's arrival beneath the

sign of Taurus, the waters flow again, vines creep over the pergola, flowers burst from the cornucopia, and the moribund trees sprout new branches. Above the sculptured rape stands the herm of Priapus, posted like a silent sentinal, augur of the passions of the season. The *amorini* dance before beginning their missions, while blossoms appear from the bodies of mortals barren in their wintry, corporeal existence. Poussin brilliantly evokes the joys of spring—the season of rebirth, rejuvenation, procreation; under the aegis of Flora life begins anew.

III

The study of Marino's poetry may prove relevant to Poussin's work in several ways. We have seen how a Marinian invention seems to have prompted Poussin's conception of the subject and its representation in the *Realm of Flora*. On a more fundamental level Poussin can be seen as having created what might be termed "visual poetry" in the mode of a pastoral elegy, for the painting seems imbued with poetic form and subject matter.

Furthermore, Poussin seems to have read Marino's poetry like a mythographic handbook, extracting and incorporating visual descriptions of the gods and their legends. What makes this use of Marino potentially important for the study of Poussin's paintings is that the poet's mythological sources were varied and recondite, and thus through Marino's fuller retelling of legend Poussin was often exposed to different, expanded conceptions and representations of specific mythological themes. Thus, whatever its ultimate "source" may be, the inexplicable cloud hovering near Venus and Adonis in the painting of that subject at Providence⁵⁸ might find its origin, or at least parallel, in a related passage by Marino. In the third canto of the *Adone* (III. 153) Venus and Adonis lie together after their first amorous encounter.

Fu così stretto il nodo onde s'avinse
L'aventurosa coppia, e si tenace,
Che non più forte vite olmo mai strinse,
Smilace spina, o quercia edra seguace.
Vaga nube d'argento ambo ricinse,
Quivi gli scorse e chiuse Amor sagace,
La cui perfidia vendicando l'onta
Con mille piaghe una sferzata sconta.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ That Marino's poem is a free reworking of the idyll by Moschus has long been recognized; as early as 1651 Thomas Stanley entitled his free translation of Marino's "Europa" as "Excitations on Moschus."

⁵⁶ In the passage from Ovid's *Fasti* (quoted above, note 31), Flora states that it is she who creates flowers out of mortals. In a short poem by Marino from *La lira*, the flowers of a garden are similarly set into motion by another beautiful female:

Effetti cagionati nei fiori dalla presenza della sua ninfa.

Ogni prato, ogni fior ride al tuo riso,
mentre, Elpinia, fra lor mori le piante:
nel tuo leggiadro aspetto il suo sembiante,
vago di vagheggiar, scorge Narciso;
in te si specchia Adon, ch' espresso il viso
aver di Citea gli sembra avante;
e Clizia, quasi volta al suo levante,
nel sol de' tuoi begli occhi il guardo ha fiso;
vinta in bellezza e dal tuo pie' calcata,

d'amorosa vergogna il volto tinto
inchina a te la rosa innamorata.

Fossi anch'io fiore! e per poter dipinto
mostrarti, sospirando aura odorata,
ne le foglie il mio duol, fossi Giacinto!

Quoted from *Marino e i Marinisti*, ed. G. G. Ferrero, Milan-Naples, 1954, I, 346-47.

⁵⁷ It is perhaps for this reason that Marino logically excluded Ajax from his garden in the "Europa." Poussin gives Ajax a carnation to avoid confusion with Hyacinth's homonymous flower.

⁵⁸ Blunt, 1966, No. 185.

⁵⁹ So close entwining was the knot which bound together the adventurous pair, so firm that ne'er more close did vine to elm tree cling, bindweed to thorn, or ivy to its oak. A silvery cloud enclosed the twain, and there ingenious Love observed and guarded them, whose treachery, avenging his disgrace, exacts for his one spanking many wounds.

Translated by Priest (Marino, *Adonis*, 80).



2 Poussin, *Birth of Venus (?)*. Philadelphia Museum of Art, George W. Elkins Collection

Similarly, one can point to a description in the *Adone* of a vase decorated with a representation of the Birth of Venus as correlative or perhaps additional evidence that the much-disputed *Neptune and Amphitrite* (Fig. 2) does indeed represent a birth or triumph of Venus and that Marino was aware of some of the more obscure classical sources proposed for the painting's iconography.⁶⁰

Vedresti per lo liquido elemento
 Nuotar la spuma gravida e feconda,
 Poscia in oro cangiarsi il molle argento
 E farsi chioma inanellata e bionda.
 La bionda chioma incatenando il vento
 Serpeggia e si rincrespa emula a l'onda.

Eccon spunta la fronte a poco a poco,
 Già l'acque a' duo begli occhi ardon di foco.

O meraviglia, e trasformar si scorge
 In bianche membra alfin la bianca spuma.
 Novo sol da l'Egeo si leva e sorge,
 Che 'l mar tranquilla e l'aria intorno alluma.
 Sol di beltà, ch'altrui conforto porge
 E dolcemente l'anime consuma;
 Così Venere bella al mondo nasce,
 Un bel nicchio ha per cuna, alghe per fasca.

Mentre col piè rosato e rugiadoso
 Il vertice del mar calca sublime,

⁶⁰ Blunt, 1966, No. 167. A series of articles on the iconography of this painting appeared during the 1960's in the *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*: Frank H. Sommer, "Poussin's 'Triumph of Neptune and Amphitrite': A Re-Identification," XXIV, 1961, 323-27; Michael Levey, "Poussin's 'Neptune and Amphitrite' at Philadelphia: A Re-Identification

Rejected," XXVI, 1963, 359-360; Charles Dempsey, "Poussin's Marine Venus at Philadelphia: A Re-Identification Accepted," XXVIII, 1965, 338-343; Charles Dempsey, "The Textual Sources of Poussin's *Marine Venus* in Philadelphia," XXIX, 1966, 438-442; Frank H. Sommer, "*Quaestiones disputatae*: Poussin's *Venus* at Philadelphia," XXXI, 1968, 440-44.

E con l'eburnea man del flutto ondoso
 Da l'auree trecce il salso umor s'esprime;
 Gli abitator del pelago spumoso
 Lascian le case lor palustri ed ime,
 E fan, sequendo il lor ceruleo duce,
 Festivi ossequi a l'amorosa luce.

Palemon, d'un delfino il curvo tergo
 Preme vezzoso e pargoletto auriga,
 E balestrando un fuggitivo mergo
 Fende i solchi del mar per torta riga.
 Quanti tritoni han sotto l'onde albergo,
 Altri accoppiati in mansueta biga
 Tiran pian pian la conca, ov'ella nacque,
 Altri per altro affar travaglian l'acque.

Chi de l'obliquo corno a gonfie gote
 Fa buccinar la rauca voce al cielo;
 Chi per sottrarla al sol che la percote
 Le stende intorn al crin serico velo;
 Chi volteggiando con lascive rote
 Le regge innanzi adamantino gelo,
 E perchè solo in sua beltà s'appaghi,
 Ne fa lucido specchio a gli occhi vaghi.

Nè di scherzar anch'elle infran costoro
 Del gran padre Nereo lascian le figlie,
 Ch'accoglie in lieto e sollazzevole coro
 Cantano a suon di pettini e cocchiglie;
 E porgendo le van succino ed oro,
 Candide perle e porpore vermiglie.
 Sì fatto stuol per l'umida campagna
 La riceve, la guida e l'accompagna.⁶¹

Although Marino's description of the vase could almost serve

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⁶¹ *Adone* III 135–140; translated by Priest (Marino, *Adonis*, 138–39), as follows:

There through the liquid element you see at first the pregnant, fertile foam afloat, and thence the silver, changing into gold and forming into tresses of blond hair. Those lovely tresses captivate the wind, and toss and curl, thus emulating waves. Then, lo, the forehead rises gradually; and now the waters burn with two fair eyes.

Oh, marvel! One beholds the candid foam transform to lovely limbs of gleaming white. A new sun rises from the Aegean Sea which brightens sea and the surrounding air; a sun of beauty which will comfort men and likewise sweetly will consume our souls; this is fair Venus born into the world, a conch for cradle, seaweed for her drapes.

Now while with roseate and dewy feet sublime she treads the vertex of the wave, and with her ivory hand she brushes off the briny damp that sparkles on her hair, the denizens of the foamy palaces depart their deep and marshy dwelling place, and following their great, cerulean lord [Neptune], they render homage to the amorous light.

Palemon a frolic coachman came, astride a graceful dolphin's curving back, and darting like a fugitive sea bird, he cleaves the furrows on his twisting course. A host of tritons, dwelling 'neath the waves, all ranged in pairs to form a gentle team, slowly draw the conch where she was born, while some on other duties churn the foam.

Here one with curving horn, his cheeks puffed out, trumpets its raucous voice to heaven's vault; here one, to shield the goddess from the sun, streams out a silken veil above her head; and one, careening far on wanton wheels, drives there as over adamantine ice; and since the sun so revels in her charm, he makes a mirror for her lovely eyes.

as an *ekphrasis* for Poussin's picture, here again the basic conception of the painting and the employment of certain allusions to clearly non-Marinian literature (notably the stormy cloud from Lucretius⁶²) proscribe a consideration of this passage as a text for Poussin's painted illustration. Yet the remarkably similar representations of the scene indicate that the artist might well have had Marino in mind when composing the painting or, related to this contention, that Poussin's reading of Marino led him to seek out some of the antecedent sources that Marino employed. The appearance of the figure of Palemon (which derives visually from Raphael's *Galatea* but textually from Apuleius⁶³) may serve as one of many examples, for that little god appears prominently on Marino's vase. What remains of paramount importance is that of the various ways to evoke or "reconstruct" the image of Venus on the sea—employing a combination, association, and assimilation of the many literary renderings of the scene—Poussin has utilized one essentially identical with that of Marino.⁶⁴

The intention of this study has been to indicate that the poetry of Giambattista Marino was of more importance to Poussin than we usually assume. Some of the suggestions are speculative, but they may demonstrate that further study is warranted. That Marino was still a strong presence for Poussin several years after his arrival in Rome is manifest in his desire to honor and memorialize him as the laureate poet in the *Parnassus* (Madrid, Prado).⁶⁵ It is perhaps in these early Roman years that Marino's impact on Poussin can best be studied. How powerfully, how long, and in what ways Marino influenced Poussin is an issue that merits scholarly attention.

The daughters of great father Nereus cease not to sport and dance among the rest, who gathered in a gray and charming choir, sing to the sound of plectrum and the lyre; they offer gifts of amber and bright gold, of whitest pearls and deep vermilion cloth. Thus o'er the fields of ocean such a band receives her, guides her, and accompanies her.

⁶² On Lucretius's description of Venus in the beginning of *De rerum natura*, see Sommer's two articles and Dempsey's second contribution (cited in note 60 above).

⁶³ Sommer, "Poussin's 'Triumph,'" 324–25.

⁶⁴ A further, but more tenuous similarity may exist between Marino and Poussin in the case of Poussin's *Diana and Endymion* at Detroit (Blunt, 1966, No. 149). The iconographic problems of this picture have been judiciously summarized by Francis Dowley in his "The Iconography of Poussin's Painting Representing Diana and Endymion," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxxvi, 1973, 305–318. Although the subject of the Detroit picture seems correctly understood, it is interesting to note how Marino treated a similarly described encounter between a divine goddess and her mortal lover. In the third canto of the *Adone* a long passage is devoted to the initial meeting of Venus and Adonis (III.61–140). Venus disguises herself as Diana, taking with her all the requisite hunting gear, as well as two dogs and an identifying moon for her forehead. She comes across the sleeping Adonis and, prompted by Cupid, kisses him awake. Adonis wonders who or what this lady before him might be; after continuing the masquerade for some time, Venus reveals her true identity. Adonis is greatly taken with the goddess and, gazing up into her eyes, delivers a long speech declaring and pleading his love.

⁶⁵ Blunt, 1966, No. 129; Erwin Panofsky, *A Mythological Painting by Poussin in the Nationalmuseum, Stockholm*, Stockholm, 1960, 51f.

Appendix

Giambattista Marino, "Europa," lines 1-149

- In quella parte a punto
de l'anno giovinetto,
che 'l sol con dolce e temperato raggio
scioglie in liquida fuga ai pigri fiumi
5. dai ceppi di cristallo il piè d'argento;
e l'aure tepidette
genitrici di fiori,
gravide di virtù maschia e feconda,
figliando van de' coloriti parti
10. gli odorati concetti;
la pittrice del mondo,
dico l'alma Natura,
miniando le piagge
di verde e perso e di vermiglio e rancio,
15. pareo ritrar volesse
ne' fior le stelle, e ne la terra il cielo;
e de la gran maestra
i pennelli e i colori
eran aure e rugiate, erbette e fiori;
20. quando al fresco discesa
del bel mattin su la Sidonia riva
con le compagne sue, secondo l'uso,
del gran re de' Fenici era la figlia.
Qui lungo i salsi flutti,
25. quasi di turco drappo aureo lavoro,
o serica testura
d'etiopica tela,
era trapunto in mille guise un prato,
e qui però che insieme
30. l'allettavano a prova
l'odor de' fiori e 'l mormorio de l'acque,
con la schiera seguace il piè ritenne.
Avea ciascuna in man di vario intaglio
da ricettare i fior vago canestro,
35. ma la vergine altera
era scelta a portar càlato d'oro,
del gran fabro di Lenno alta fatica.
Spaziando sen giva
per la stagion fiorita
40. la bella giovinetta,
desiosa d'ordire
ghirlande e serti a le dorate chiome;
e con la man di latte
scegliendo ad uno ad uno
45. fra le tenere gemme i più bei fregi,
se ne colmava il grembo, e 'l grembo colmo
tutto vuotava poi ne l'aureo vaso.
Sotto il bel piè ridea
tutto il popol de' fiori,
50. e sì come a lor dea, chini e devoti,
movendo tra se stessi
ambiziose gare,
quasi d'arabi incensi
le fean de' propri odor votive offerte.
55. L'immortale amaranto,
vago d'esser reciso
da la nova d'Amor Parca innocente,
parea da man sì bella amar la morte.
Il pieghevole acanto
60. a l'edra ed a la vite
invidiò le braccia,
per far tenacemente
a cotanta beltà dolce catena.
La gentil mammoletta
65. dal caro peso oppressa
di quelle vaghe piante,
d'amoroso pallor tinta la gancia,

- tramorti di dolcezza in braccio a l'erba.
Clizia d'Apollo amante,
70. per meglio vagheggiar de le due luci
il gemino levante,
levossi alta in sul 'l gambo e fu veduta
in un con le viole
a lei girarsi e ribellarsi al Sole.
75. L'innamorato giglio,
iride de la terra,
umidetto di brine,
al lamp de' begli occhi
più pomposo divenne: accrebbe in vista
80. del bianco seno e de' cerulei lumi
il candido il candore,
il cilestro il colore.
Il lieto fiordaliso
languì d'amor soavemente anch'egli,
85. sospirò lagrimoso,
lagrimò sospiroso, e fur rugiate
le lagrimette, i sospiretti odori.
Il leggiadro narciso,
sazio omai di specchiarsi
90. nel fonte lusinghiero,
si fea specchio il bel volto, ed invaghito
di sì rara beltà col proprio esempio
le 'nsegnava a fuggir l'acque omicide.
Il vago e biondo croco
95. mandando fuor de le purpuree labra
odoriferi accenti,
con tre lingue di foco
supplice la pregava
per grazia a còrlo ed a raccòrlo in seno.
100. Il canuto ligustro,
che qual minuta stella
imabiancando de l'orto il verde tetto
emulo del celeste
segnava in esso un bel sentier di latte,
105. fatto stella cadente,
precipitò dal suo fiorito cielo,
e di candidi fiocchi
tempestò lievemente il prato erboso.
Il giacinto vezzoso,
110. libro della natura,
ne' fogli de le foglie
già cancellata degli antichi lai
la pietosa scrittura,
tutto per man d'amore
115. lineato a caratteri di sangue,
espresse queste note in sorriso:
Io cedo al tuo bel viso.
Il papavero molle
alzò dal grave oblio,
120. colmo di meraviglia,
la sua vermiglia e sonnacchiosa testa,
e 'n piè risorto ad emular le rose
di fina grana imporporò le gote;
ma poi vinto e negletto
125. per gran doglia ricadde, e doppiamente
arrossi di vergogna, arse di scorno.
Alcun non fu di quella
adulatrice e lascivetta schiera
130. non le fesse di sé cortese invito.
Ma la real fanciulla
sdegna i plausi vulgari
de la plebe odorata, e corre solo
dove festeggia e ride
135. folgorando tra l'erba
l'occhio di Primavera,
la porpora de' prati,
la fenice de' fiori, ove la rosa,
bella figlia d'aprile,

140. sì come a lei sembante
verginella e reina,
dentro la reggia de l'ombrosa siepe,
su lo spinoso trono
del verde cespo assisa,
145. de' fior lo scettrò in maestà sostiene,
e corteggiata intorno
da lasciva famiglia
di zefiri ministri,
porta d'or la corona e d'ostro il manto.

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