

# CLASSICAL RHETORICAL INFLUENCES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF EIGHTEENTH- CENTURY BRITISH AESTHETIC CRITICISM

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While it is evident that, much in the neoclassical tradition of his eighteenth-century contemporaries, George Turnbull—philosopher and critic of the “painterly” art of expression and author in 1740 of *A Treatise On Ancient Painting*—views the parallel communicative capacities of both rhetoric and painting to move, instruct, and persuade as distinguishing characteristics common to the historical “sister arts” of expression, it must further be recognized that for Turnbull such an historical and intellectual connection was neither largely adventitious nor merely verbal. It comprised rather an essential philosophical and conceptual melding of the arts, a union arising from various widely accepted, observable similarities regarding common artistic means, precepts, and effects—elements of Art which in turn underlie Turnbull’s entire theoretical understanding of painting.

Indeed, further reflecting an equally pervasive and complementary eighteenth-century faith in the essential unity of all the humane arts of expression—a conviction which in Turnbull comprised a painterly equivalent to Newtonian gravitation and reflected a similar belief in the universal applicability of Baconian science—Turnbull cites on the title page of the *Treatise On Ancient Painting* an epigraph from Cicero’s *De Oratore* 3.6, which he takes to characterize the rhetorical tenor of the entire *Treatise*: the view from Plato that the “noble and humane Arts . . . [are] held together by a single chain of Association, for when the power of that reason, by which the causes and effects of things are understood, is once perceived, a real consensus and harmony, as it were,

of all the sciences is discovered.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, in so far as Truth “may be unfolded, proved, embellished, and enforced by Oratory, Poetry, or Painting” alike, all such arts “fall properly under the Idea of Language.”

But what is more, further in the tradition of his Augustan contemporaries and Renaissance predecessors Turnbull likewise endorsed that commonplace from Horace regarding the parallel between poetry and painting popularly expressed for the eighteenth century in Charles Alphonse du Fresnoy’s (*De arte graphica*, 1668) union of Horace’s *Ut Pictura Poesis erit* with Simonides’ *Similisque Poesi sit Pictura*. Indeed as a widely accepted extension of Horace’s original rather limited comparison of the two arts the union served in Turnbull’s *Treatise* as the basis for yet a further and corresponding dictum: that “as rhetoric, painting, so similar to rhetoric is painting”—*Ut rhetorica pictura*. For Turnbull, of course, such a view underscored the long standing historical union between the Ciceronian art of discourse and the graphic art of painting. Yet while through Du Fresnoy, Horace and Simonides were doubtless broadly influential in shaping Turnbull’s historical understanding of the communicative nature of the art of painting and its connection with rhetoric, the more immediate and avowedly direct source of his rhetorical view of art arose from the union between rhetoric and painting proposed by Gerard J. Vossius in his *De graphice* (1660), a philosophical connection implicit in nearly all ensuing eighteenth-century works on art from Roger de Piles’ *The Art of Painting* (1706) to Sir Joshua Reynolds’ *Discourses on Art* (1797).<sup>2</sup>

Indeed, apparently referring to the view of his brother-in-law, Franciscus Junius (*De pictura veterum* [1637], later *The Painting of the Ancients* [1638], Vossius parallels rhetoric and painting canon for canon. In rhetoric, Vossius observes

the first requisite is the invention of arguments; then, the disposition of what you have invented; then, after you have performed this disposition,

<sup>1</sup> George Turnbull, *A Treatise on Ancient Painting*, ed. with an Introduction by Vincent M. Bevilacqua (München 1972), Title page; see also, Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.6.21, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (London 1942). Throughout the *Treatise*, Turnbull seeks to delineate the philosophical union of painting with all of the expressive arts—music, rhetoric, poetry, and sculpture—and to this end examines “several Passages of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian, and other Authors, relative to these Qualities of good Painting” (p. xxii).

<sup>2</sup> *Ancient Painting*, p. ix. Turnbull cites both Junius and Vossius on the first page of his *Treatise* and forthrightly acknowledges a considerable debt to Junius (*ibid.*, p. xxv).

the embellishment with ornaments of one's words and thoughts, and finally animation through voice and gesture. Oratory is accordingly divided into Invention, Disposition, Elocution, and Delivery or Action. Similarly in the art of painting it is necessary first to devise the subject matter and the argument respecting the thing we wish to paint. After this one must think out, first the place where each thing ought to go, then what proportionality of the individual parts is suitable—that which the Greeks call *Xymmetria*. Then one must reflect on color: what it takes to render light and shade on the one hand, and brilliance and opacity on the other. Finally, grace and elegance are produced by means of gesture and action, wherein the hands, the eyes, and other members come into consideration. So, in accordance with these four [rhetorical] stages, let us take the parts of painting to be four also: Invention (or Argument or Subject Matter); *Oikonomia* or Disposition, together with *Xymmetria* (also called *Analogia* or *Harmonia*); Color, i.e., on the one hand light and shadow, on the other, brilliance and opacity; and finally Movement or Gesture, which as it were breathes a certain life into the work.<sup>3</sup>

Nor was Vossius alone in this view; for several other art theorists historically had proposed a rhetorical conception of the offices of painting. Most notable among such views were those of Paolo Pino, *Dialogo di pittura* (Venice 1548), *Inventione, Composizione, and Colorire* (fols. 15 r. passim); Lodovico Dolce, *Dialogo della pittura* (Venice 1557), *Inventione, Disegno, and Colorito* (p. 22); Junius, *Painting of the Ancients* (London 1638) "Invention, or Historicall Argument," Proportion, Color, Motion, and "disposition, or an oeconomicall placing and ordering of the whole worke" (pp. 221–22); Roger de Piles, *The Art of Painting* (London 1706), Invention, Disposition, Expression, and Colour (pp. 29–38); William Sanderson, *Graphice: or, The Most Excellent Art of Painting* (London 1658), "Invention, or Historicall Argument," Proportion, Colour, Motion, and "Disposition, or oeconomicall placing, or disposing, or ordering the work" (p. 45); Jonathan Richardson, *Theory of Painting* (London 1715), *Invention, Expression, Composition, Drawing, Colouring, Handling, Grace, and Greatness* (p. 38); and Francesco Algarotti, *An Essay On Painting* (London 1764), invention, disposition, and expression (pp. 81–127).

<sup>3</sup> Vossius, *De Artium et Scientiarum Natura ac Constitutione, Libri Quinque, Antehac Diversis Titulis Editi* (Amsterdam 1697), Ch. V, "De Graphicis, Sive Arte Pingendi," p. 24.

Note, for example, that in a statement which echoes precisely the Ciceronian definition of rhetorical *inventio*, Roger de Piles proposes that by means of "Invention" the "Painter should find out those Subjects to work upon that are most proper to be exprest and adorn'd. And by Disposition he ought to place them in the most advantageous Situation, and where they will have the greatest Effect."<sup>4</sup> Little wonder, then, in light of this widely perceived analogy among the arts, that the orator Thomas Erskine took Reynolds' *Eleventh Discourse* on painting to be "the best dissertation upon the *art of public eloquence* that ever was or that ever will be written" insofar as it concerned the "analogy between all the operations of genius," or that Jonathan Richardson took painting to be but "another Language which completes the whole Art of communicating our thoughts."<sup>5</sup>

## I

Historically, a number of intellectual forces common to the Renaissance-Augustan climate of opinion explain in part the conspicuous eighteenth-century inclination to employ the rubrics of classical rhetorical theory as a paradigm for theoretical inquiry into the painterly art of expression. Doubtless influential, of course, were the efforts of Renaissance art theorists like Dolce, Pino, and Junius to ameliorate the near total loss of art theory inherited from the ancient world by fitting the traditional offices of rhetoric to the offices and precepts of painting, thereby providing a readily accepted verbal and conceptual idiom in which to theorize on the art of painting while at the same time lending the long-standing respectability, prestige, and theoretical basis of the liberal art of rhetoric to the then mechanical art of painting.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The Art of Painting* (London 1706) 3. According to Cicero, *inventio*—one of the five great arts comprising the "grand art of expression"—concerns finding out "what to say" in a given situation. *De Oratore*, trans. E. W. Sutton and H. Rackham (London 1959–60), 1.21.141–43 and 2.33.145–34.147.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Erskine to Reynolds, Jan. 26, 1783, in Charles Robert Leslie and Tom Taylor, *Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds* II (London 1865) 390–91; *An Essay on the Theory of Painting* (London 1715) 5.

<sup>6</sup> In this vein Paolo Lomazzo observes that his own philosophical speculations on artistic invention are "fitter for a *Rhetorician* to handle, then for mee a plain Painter, who am onlie acquainted with the varietie of materiall colours." *A Tracte Containing the Artes of Curious Paintinge, Carvinge & Buildinge*, trans. Richard Haydocke (Oxford 1597) 4.

Doubtless in a field of study historically so wanting in its own theoretical precepts and literature as to prompt the incredulity of Dr. Johnson (upon seeing an *entire book*—as he observed—devoted to the subject), it was philosophically essential for painting to borrow both rubric and example from other, more highly developed theoretical disciplines.<sup>7</sup> For the neoclassical Augustans of the eighteenth century, of course, the art of rhetoric was prominent among such previously and broadly developed arts of affective expression, possessing as it did an intellectual provenance which spanned the entire history of artistic thought from ancient Greece forward, and embracing a philosophical range of investigation touching upon all of the arts of persuasion, be the medium words, colors, or tones. The resulting cross references between the arts of expression arising from their common precepts, concerns, and effects upon an audience together with their common bases in human nature was as well known to Richardson and Reynolds as it was to Cicero and Quintilian. Indeed, as Turnbull himself notes, all of the best rhetorical writers of antiquity were “ever referring to the practice of the painters and sculptors of their times, particularly Phidias” to support the belief that perfection in all art lies beyond mere imitation of nature, an historical view from Plato widely accepted in rhetoric.<sup>8</sup>

In this tradition, Cicero, for example, delineated the ideal orator with reference to Apelles’ and Phidias’ depiction of ideal beauty with brush and chisel.<sup>9</sup> And for Turnbull as well the observations laid down by the ancient critics, concerning the excellences of expression “equally relate to all Composition; to Painting as well as to Poetry and Oratory; so they [the ancients] not only tell us, that good Writing is good Painting by Words, but they have treated all these Arts [of expression] conjunctly, and have chosen to illustrate each of them by comparison with the others.”<sup>10</sup> In fact, Turnbull notes, “in the *Books of Cicero* on Oratory, we have a remarkable Instance of this ancient way of handling

<sup>7</sup> Johnson labeled the jibe while examining Sir Joshua Reynolds’ copy of Jonathan Richardson’s *An Essay on the Theory of Painting*. Frederick W. Hilles, *The Literary Career of Sir Joshua Reynolds* (Cambridge, England, 1936).

<sup>8</sup> Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (San Marino, Calif., 1959) 42–43.

<sup>9</sup> *Orator*, trans. H. M. Hubbell (London 1962), 1.3–iii.11.

<sup>10</sup> *Ancient Painting* 83–84. Regarding the nature of the painterly sublime, Turnbull cites the rhetoricians, Aristotle, Cicero, Horace, Quintilian, and Loginus (*de Sublimitate* 15).

any particular Art; for, whether he is giving the History of Eloquence, and its Improvements; or explaining its Scope, Foundations and Precepts, he constantly brings his Illustrations from the other Arts, from Painting and Sculpture particularly. So that however remote from one another these Arts may seem to be at first sight, they are soon found, in his way of treating them, to reflect very great light upon one another, and to have a very close and friendly Correspondence."<sup>11</sup>

Accordingly, though far from an ideal or complete record of ancient views on painting, it was in fact largely "to the excellent Use [which] ancient Writers on Oratory and Poetry have made of the former [rhetoric] in explaining the latter [painting]" that subsequent art theorists owed what little "knowledge of Painting and Sculpture of the Ancients" they did possess. Just such a reciprocal approach to illustrating the common affective character of rhetoric and painting, Turnbull notes, is of course "*Aristotle's, Cicero's, and Quintilian's Method.*"<sup>12</sup>

## II

But more influential still in the historical and philosophical development of art theory than merely as a preserver of ancient thought, the traditional offices of classical rhetoric provided for the art of painting a much needed theoretical framework in which to speculate regarding the philosophical bases of that graphic mode of expression. Rhetoric, that is, provided insight into those common philosophical, psychological, and aesthetic ties among the artistic powers common to human nature which further united the creative and expressive offices of painting with similar concerns in rhetoric. In this respect, the rubrics of Ciceronian rhetoric became parent terms for parent arts of creation, expression, and criticism, a central conceptual vocabulary representing

<sup>11</sup> *Ancient Painting* 17. Turnbull (*ibid.*) notes that similarly, "Quintilian imitates Cicero in this agreeable way of discoursing on Rhetorick; and hardly moves one step, without bringing, in like manner, apt Comparisons and Similitudes to illustrate its Rules and Principles, from the other Arts, from Painting and Sculpture in particular."

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* 144 and note. As subsequent art theorists were quick to note, both Cicero and Quintilian frequently illustrate the precepts of rhetoric with examples from painting and sculpture. See, for example, Quintilian's consideration of the several "kinds of style" appropriate to both painting and rhetoric alike. *Institutio Oratoria*, trans. H. E. Butler (London 1961) 12.9.20-10.27.

common artistic processes by means of which philosophically to view the intellectual and affective capacities of the mind—a vocabulary which, although derived initially from rhetorical theory, was taken historically to be applicable to the related sciences of aesthetics, criticism, and psychology as well as to the expressive arts of rhetoric, poetry, music, and painting.

In part, of course, such conceptual cross-fertilization of the expressive arts derived from recognition on the part of the ancients of the common bases in human nature underlying the psychological origin and persuasive efficacy of the several arts of expression: notably, in such natural creative powers of the mind as sensation, association, and the inventive imagination; in such universal moral-aesthetic senses as beauty, propriety, and proportion; in such native sympathetic emotions as benevolence and magnanimity—all of which were widely recognized elements of human nature comprising in common the root origin of affective expression in both word and line. Sir Joshua Reynolds' own rhetorical conception of art, for example, led him to express the precepts of painting in the verbal and conceptual idiom of rhetoric, as well as to pattern his theory of painting after classical rhetorical presuppositions which took the parent offices of verbal discourse to concern artistic control over "what to say" and "how best to say it."

Yet more than by reason of mere historical precedence or professional inheritance alone, Reynolds employed the language of classical rhetoric in speaking of painting largely because he found in the traditional idiom of rhetoric accurate, meaningful, and accepted terms of historical weight and veracity whose use in painting extended beyond the customary bounds of rhetoric to the origins of artistic creation and expression in general and thus were readily understood by his eighteenth-century audience through long-standing use in rhetoric. Reynolds, that is, found in the established rubrics of classical rhetoric parent terms for the offices of art which he believed appropriately to characterize the nature, origin, and effect of invention, composition, and expression in both painting and the *belles lettres* alike.

Nor was such rhetorical cross-fertilization limited to art theory alone. For among the poets of the Renaissance and the musicologists of the eighteenth century, traditional rhetorical theory served as a wellspring of artistic precepts as well as a theoretical paradigm for their own modes

of expression. Indeed, in the belief that the poet even more than the orator must at all times speak with eloquence, Girolamo Frascastoro—an Italian humanist of the sixteenth century—turned for his theory of poetry not to such expected sources as Aristotle or Horace, but rather to Cicero, the author whom he believed most fully to exemplify the ideal of eloquence and to provide a theoretical basis for it.<sup>13</sup> As Frascastoro well recognized, Cicero had himself frequently compared the poet and orator with respect to style and embellished expression. It was, then, with good reason and considerable reward that Frascastoro—together with such contemporaries as Pontano and Daniello—looked to Cicero and the Roman rhetorical tradition as a treasure-house of poetic eloquence.<sup>14</sup>

More important still, however, the eloquence Frascastoro sought was not, in his view, peculiar to poetry alone. It was, rather, a universal art of eloquence which flows from its origin in rhetoric to a like elegance in poetry, history, and philosophy as well. It was “a certain general art of eloquence which surveys all the kinds of eloquence, and from which, as from a leading and ruling art, the other sciences and arts receive the particular kind of eloquence which they need.” This art of eloquence, Frascastoro notes, “we call . . . oratory, . . . and him who professes it orator or rhetorician.”<sup>15</sup>

So too, a further broad influence of rhetoric is evident in the efforts of eighteenth-century musicologists to characterize the expressive and affective capacities of the art of music in terms of the verbal and conceptual idiom of the traditional art of discourse. For, as is clear from even the barest acquaintance with seventeenth and eighteenth-century academic works on music, early musicologists like Johann Nicolaus

<sup>13</sup> In this discussion, I have drawn from Ruth Kelso's translation of Frascastoro's *Naugerius Sive De Poetica Dialogus*, as well as Murray W. Bundy's Introduction to the Kelso translation. See “Girolamo Frascastoro *Naugerius Sive De Poetica Dialogus*,” in *University of Illinois Studies in Language and Literature* 9 (1924) 9–88. For a detailed examination of the influence of traditional rhetoric on Renaissance poetic theory, see Bernard Weinberg, *A History of Literary Criticism in the Italian Renaissance* (Chicago 1961).

<sup>14</sup> “Frascastoro,” p. 16. Giovanni Pontano observes (*ibid.* 82) that “where it is sufficient for the orator to speak well and appropriately, the poet must speak exceptionally well.” See also Pontano, *Actius dialogus*, in *Opera omnia* II (Venice 1518–19) 104–54.

<sup>15</sup> “Frascastoro,” pp. 60–61 marginal gloss; p. 62. Junius notes from Plutarch that the historian like the orator “*can adorn his Narration with such forcible figures and lively colours of Rhetorike, as to make it like unto a Picture.*” *Painting of the Ancients* 54.

Forkel and Johann Mattheson freely borrowed the language and precepts underlying their theory of musical *Tonsprache* from the offices of classical rhetoric, notably *dispositio* and *elocutio*.

In particular, the outline for a "musikalische Rhetorik" proposed in Johann Forkel's *Allgemeine Geschichte der Musik* (1788) stands as an especially suggestive illustration of a theory of music founded on the precepts and language of classical rhetoric. Forkel's view of "aesthetic arrangement" ("aesthetische Anordnung"), for example, doubtless reflects an origin in Ciceronian *dispositio*, including as it does an exordium, principal theme, neighboring theme, contrasting theme, dissolution, refutation, affirmation, and conclusion as the principal parts of such various musical forms as the sonata, the concerto, the symphony, and the instrumental fugue.<sup>16</sup> Likewise, Forkel's "rhetorischen Figuren" of music—ellipsis, hyperbaton, repetition, paronomasia, and antithesis—parallel closely in both form and effect the figures of rhetorical *elocutio*. Nor does Forkel's belief that the figures of music are addressed to the attention, the understanding, and the imagination suggest other than a rhetorical view of musical style.<sup>17</sup>

That Forkel should employ the traditional idiom of rhetoric in describing the artistic devices of music is, of course, not merely indiscriminate use of common terms for comparable expressive capacities in music and rhetoric. It is, rather, a reflection of the essentially rhetorical manner in which some eighteenth-century musicologists viewed the artistic means of securing in music—as in painting—that control over materials, whether words, colors, or sounds, by which ideas and sentiments are affectively expressed.

### III

In much the same manner, various precepts, concerns, and offices distinctive of the several arts of affective expression both arose from and reflected the rhetorical idiom common to eighteenth-century philosophies of art, rhetoric, and the *belles lettres* exemplified by the works of

<sup>16</sup> I (Leipzig) 66–68. Likewise, Johann Gottfried Walther speaks of *dispositio* with respect to musical styles, *Praecepta der Musicallischen Composition* (Leipzig 1955; first ed. 1708) 160.

<sup>17</sup> *Geschichte der musik*, I, 53–60.

Richardson, Turnbull, and Reynolds. Especially suggestive of such a classical rhetorical influence in painting is the pervasive eighteenth-century propensity to connect the sister arts—largely on the strength of their like metaphorical conception and function as “languages” ultimately concerned with “style” of expression—as variant modes of “communication.”

Indeed, much as Reynolds was later to propose as an axiom of Augustan artistic thought, style in painting was taken to be the same as in writing, “a power over materials whether words or colours, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, it was Turnbull’s belief that “Whatever is said to make the Beauty of Language, will be found to constitute, for the same reasons, the Beauty of Colouring. If Simplicity be the Perfection of Writing, it must, for the same reason, be the Perfection of Colouring. Whatever is said against the Gaudy, the Pompous, the florid, and luxuriant on the one hand; or in praise of the chaste, the pure, the subdued, and unaffected on the other, doth equally agree to Colouring and Discourse. And accordingly ancient Authors speak of the one and the other almost in the same Phrases.”<sup>19</sup> So too Jonathan Richardson observes that painting is a “Language, which completes the whole Art of communicating our Thoughts.” It is in fact a language more perfect than words since it can express an “Infinity of . . . Ideas which have no certain Words universally agreed upon as denoting them.”<sup>20</sup>

It was not without precedent then, that Reynolds should likewise conclude that “WELL-TURNED periods in eloquence, or harmony of numbers in poetry, . . . are in those arts what colouring is in painting;” a “seductive sister” (Du Fresnoy’s *lena sororis*) who employs in rhetoric those figurative expressions that move the passions and “distinguish oratory from a cold narration” very much as she employs in painting those strong and glowing colors that delight the fancy and distinguish the bold “eloquence” of a Titian from the more prosaic styles of lesser artists;<sup>21</sup> a view, of course, in the tradition of John

<sup>18</sup> *Discourses* 171, 191–92, 32.

<sup>19</sup> *Ancient Painting* 72–73. Turnbull cites Cicero, especially his *Orator* and *de Oratore*, as one such author.

<sup>20</sup> *Theory of Painting* 5–6.

<sup>21</sup> *Discourses* 130–36 and 198.

Dryden who observed that “*Strong and glowing Colours* are the just resemblances of *bold Metaphors*” in their “power to lessen or greaten anything.”<sup>22</sup>

Likewise Reynolds’ rhetorical view of expression correspondingly suggests that it was in fact upon the classical stylistic precept of “decorum” or propriety of expression in speaking that he founded his understanding of propriety of style in painting. Doubtless the matter of stylistic propriety in expression and action was frequently speculated upon by the classical rhetoricians, often with illustrative reference—as in Cicero and Quintilian—to the works and views of the ancient painters Zeuxis, Apelles, and Timanthes. Cicero, for example, notes that artistic “eye to propriety” of style which the speaker, like the painter, must possess, and concludes that “the universal rule, in oratory as in life, is to consider propriety,” citing Apelles on those ancient painters who err in propriety by expressing their ideas on a style beyond their subjects.<sup>23</sup> And so too Turnbull proposes that “Perfection of Oratory, Poetry, Painting, and every Art, is said by Cicero to consist in . . . *Decorum*,” noting in support of this view Cicero’s own example of Timanthes’ artistic propriety in veiling the face of the grieving father in the Sacrifice of Iphigenia.<sup>24</sup>

Accordingly, as is clear from the Augustan inclination to consider the nature of painting in terms of the historically established framework of Ciceronian rhetoric, Richardson, Turnbull, De Piles, and Reynolds, like their Renaissance predecessors, shaped in the image of the intellectual arts of rhetoric the manner in which the creative and expressive offices of painting were received, and thereby made the offices of Ciceronian rhetoric the verbal and conceptual idiom as well as the intellectual frame of reference in which the art of painting was speculated upon.

<sup>22</sup> *Parallel between Painting and Poetry in The Art of Painting* by C. A. Du Fresnoy (London 1695) 1. Quintilian, of course, compared the various rhetorical styles of expression to like “styles” in art, noting especially the Asian and Attic styles in painting and sculpture (*Institutio* 12.10.1–27). Similarly, in a lengthy discussion of ornamental embellishment, Reynolds speaks of Attic and “Oriental” styles in painting as comparable to similar styles in rhetoric (*Discourses* 136).

<sup>23</sup> *Orator* 21.71–23.76.

<sup>24</sup> *Ancient Painting* 87–88.

## IV

Likewise, prominent among the received connections uniting painting with rhetoric is the conspicuous audience-effect orientation of both arts arising from their common concern for the influence of "affective expression"—both verbal and graphic—on the mind of a spectator. Historically, this distinctly rhetorical point of view presumed that the affective painter—like the persuasive rhetorician—invents, disposes, and expresses his painterly "argument" in keeping with a predetermined end, with the dictates of human nature, and with the acknowledged rules of art.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, noting this audience-end orientation distinctive of both rhetoric and painting Myer H. Abrams has properly characterized such artistic or painterly control of subject matter as a "rhetorical and Horatian concept of art" in which "the end is foreseen from the beginning, part is fitted to part, and the whole is adapted to the anticipated effect upon the reader."<sup>26</sup> Nor is Abrams' view without precedent. Sir Joshua Reynolds likewise notes in this regard that "style in painting is the same as in writing, a power over materials, whether words or colours, by which conceptions or sentiments are conveyed."<sup>27</sup>

But more suggestive still of the philosophical similarity to rhetoric of Reynolds' broad view of the painterly art of expression as control over materials to a predetermined end is the conspicuous similarity of this view to George Campbell's widely received, contemporary definition of rhetoric as "the art of discourse adapted to an end."<sup>28</sup> For as the views of both Campbell and Reynolds amply demonstrate, in the persuasive efforts of both the painter and the orator, thought, feeling, and expression are marshalled to a predetermined end and thereby ensure a particular effect on the mind of the spectator.

Accordingly, although he doubtless recognized that the rules of one

<sup>25</sup> See in particular Junius' remarks on the "invention," "disposition," and "expression" of the painter's subject matter or "historical argument." *The Painting of the Ancients* (London 1638) 221 *et passim*.

<sup>26</sup> *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (New York 1953) 164. Similarly Reynolds observes that "the excellence of every art must consist in the complete accomplishment of its purpose," since the *effect* of art is "the test, and the only test, of the truth and efficacy of the means" (*Discourses* 176, 230).

<sup>27</sup> *Discourses* 32.

<sup>28</sup> George Campbell, *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, ed. Lloyd F. Bitzer (Carbondale, Ill., 1966).

art cannot arbitrarily be grafted to another, for Reynolds the comparable uplifting, ennobling, and transporting effect of the sublime in the works of both Michelangelo and Homer demonstrated the irresistible psychological effect of the ideal in thought or affection in both painting and the *belles lettres*. Indeed, in this belief, the ennobling ideas and devices of art which so raise the thoughts and affections as to produce the sublime in the grand style of painting were received as common to rhetoric as well. Such ennobling ideas and technical devices were in fact understood by Longinus to comprise the principal elements of that rhetorical "grand style" which similarly uplifts the spectator and transports him by force of language to a sublime state of ideal presence; an ennobling elevation of the emotions which in Reynolds' view derives in both painting and the *belles lettres* from the "same art operating upon different materials" but directed to similar ends and to the mind of the spectator.<sup>29</sup>

But what is more, it is further evident from the views of Reynolds and his contemporaries that underlying their rhetorical or end-oriented understanding of painting as persuasive communication is the parallel assumption that the inventive task of the painter—to *find* what to say, as well as to determine how best to say it—is also parallel to the inventive task of the orator from whom in fact the painter might well receive guidance with regard to the means by which to build and support the "historical argument" to be depicted. In the case of Reynolds a close inventional connection with rhetoric is manifest.

According to Reynolds the painter's art of invention concerns "finding out" what to portray in a picture and judging how best to portray it.<sup>30</sup> It concerns, that is, both the artistic means and the psychological process of painterly creation as that native capacity to conceive and depict a given subject is shaped by the artist's control of his subject matter and his intended effect on the spectator. Such painterly invention was for Reynolds, however, not simply the result of "genius," nor was it literal discovery *a priori* by means of topics and commonplaces in the manner of the scholastics.

Painterly invention was, rather, an effect of that observable capacity of the re-creative imagination to recover and select "what to depict"

<sup>29</sup> *Discourses* 175.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* 57-61.

from a body of knowledge previously derived from experience and stored in the memory for later use. For as Reynolds notes, "it is vain for painters or poets to endeavour to invent without materials on which the mind may work, and from which invention must originate. Nothing can come of nothing."<sup>31</sup>

And its base, of course, Reynolds' regard for artistic readiness and originality of invention through a store of ideas, is a distinguishing concern of Ciceronian rhetorical theory as that theory was carried over to painting in the Renaissance through application of the rhetorical notion of *inventio* to the inventional demands of the then mechanical art of painting. Cicero, of course, takes finding what to say as the first concern of the orator, and this, he proposes, derives largely from a store of knowledge where appropriate ideas are known to be found.<sup>32</sup> Such an understanding of painterly *inventio* doubtless reflects the accepted view from Quintilian—prominently echoed in the eighteenth century by du Bos—that invention is the chief accomplishment of the orator and the painter alike.<sup>33</sup>

Yet "the power of representing . . . [conceiving and depicting a] mental picture on canvass . . . what we call Invention in a Painter" is in this view largely the result of the re-creative imagination ranging over a store of ideas, "hunting out" as it were "what to depict," much as—in the popular inventional metaphor of the day prominent in Hobbes and Dryden—the nimble spaniel ranges over a field until it springs the quarry it has hunted after, a figurative conception of invention and the re-creative imagination itself in the hunt or topical tradition of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.<sup>34</sup>

For Reynolds, of course, the range of the artistic hunting ground is a "stock of ideas" which, by force of the imagination may "be combined and varied as occasion may require." Thus "it is indisputably evident that a great part of every man's life must be employed in collecting materials for the exercise of genius [re-creative invention].

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.* 99.

<sup>32</sup> *De Oratore* I.31.141-43 and 2.33.145-34.147.

<sup>33</sup> Jean Baptiste du Bos, *Critical Reflections on Poetry, Painting and Music* (1719), trans. Thomas Nugent (London 1748), II, 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Discourses* 58. Cooper notes that in Aristotle invention is seen in terms of the "live metaphor" of a hunt. *The Rhetoric of Aristotle*, trans. Lane Cooper (New York 1932), translator's Introduction, p. xxiv.

Invention, strictly speaking, is little more than a new combination of those images which have been previously gathered and deposited in the memory; nothing can come of nothing: he who has laid up no materials, can produce no combinations."<sup>35</sup> Accordingly, Reynolds proposes, "if I were to recommend method in any part of the study of a Painter, it would be in regard to invention; that young Students should not presume to think themselves qualified to invent, till they were acquainted with those stores of invention the world already possesses, and had by that means accumulated sufficient materials for the mind to work with."<sup>36</sup> For the Augustans, then, in painting as in rhetoric, a store of learning served as a handmaiden to art, providing inventional "inspiration" to the painterly muse; most particularly insofar as painterly *inventio* was taken to be the deployment of previously stored materials to a given end, thereby to affect by thought and expression the mind of a spectator.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup> *Discourses* 26–27. In his notes to Mason's translation of *De Arte Graphica*, Reynolds proposes that "the Invention of a Painter consists not in inventing the subject, but in a capacity of forming in his imagination the subject in a manner best accommodated to his art, though wholly borrowed from Poets, Historians, or popular tradition." *The Works of Sir Joshua Reynolds*, ed. Edmond Malone (London 1801), III, 107.

<sup>36</sup> *Discourses* 222.

<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly Reynolds employs the inventional system of a rhetorical theorist, Francis Bacon, as a philosophical starting point for his own recollective theory of painterly invention. Regarding "readiness of invention" in painting, Reynolds observes that "Sir Francis Bacon speaks with approbation of the provisional methods Demosthenes and Cicero employed to assist their invention; and illustrates their own use by a quaint comparison after his manner [in the *studia*]."

On the authority of Bacon himself, Reynolds proposes that invention is largely recollection of past knowledge: "Invention is readiness and present use of our knowledge and not addition or amplification thereof. Bacon 2<sup>d</sup> Book of the Advancement 195 so that our art is not properly Invention, for to invent is to discover that we know not, and not to recover or resume that which we already know and the use of this invention is no other, but out of the knowledge, whereof our mind is already possessed, to draw forth or call before us that which may be pertinent to the purpose which we take into consideration, it is therefore by the schools placed after judgment as subsequent and not precedent. Bacon." *The Literary Career of Sir Joshua Reynolds* 214.

Significantly, Reynolds' citation from the *Advancement of Learning* (1605) is taken from Bacon's brief discussion of "invention of speech or argument" later amplified in *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623). The italicized words, stricken in the reading notes, suggest that Reynolds believed such rhetorical invention to be in fact true "invention," not merely "recovery" of past knowledge as in Bacon's more limited sense of the term. See also Francis Bacon *De Augmentis Scientiarum*, in *The Works of Francis Bacon*, ed. James Spedding, Robert Leslie Ellis, and Douglas Denon Heath (Boston 1860–64), IX, 83–86.

## V

In much the same manner the Ciceronian “grand art of communication” (not of ideas only, but of sentiments, passions, and dispositions as well<sup>38</sup>) likewise may be seen as historically influential in the development of a “sister art” of philosophical criticism insofar as the precepts of the traditional art of discourse historically have suggested parallel aesthetic and belletristic precepts by which philosophically to comprehend the beauty of Art in all its several forms, even such works as appear to be distinctly beyond the accustomed, characteristically verbal, ken of rhetoric and the *belles lettres*. Indeed, when taken in the broader context of its eighteenth-century intellectual development in the ethical-aesthetic theory of “moral beauty” espoused by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, the study of taste—in essence philosophical understanding of that connatural capacity by which the beauty or ugliness of objects instinctively is sensed, judged, and understood—is at its base an affective or “rhetorical” form of aesthetics; emotional as well as rational, particular as well as general, variable as well as immutable, and, most importantly, derived from the intellectual predisposition of the given audience.

That is, viewed as a *rhetorical* form of aesthetics, taste is to abstract theories of beauty as persuasive rhetoric is to rigorous logic: the one a “tight fisted” rationalistic judgment such as would befit the philosopher of beauty; the other an affective or “open-handed” judgment appropriate to a less philosophically exacting popular audience. Indeed, just as rhetoric is an affective mode of communication adapted to the emotional and ethical demands of a given audience, so too taste is a popular mode of criticism similarly arising out of the practical judgmental requirements of the times and the views of a particular audience: the one being seen as artist and object oriented, while the other—like rhetoric—being considered audience and effect oriented.

For while both rhetorical taste and philosophical aesthetics share similar *concerns* (the perception, criticism, and judgment of beauty), *means* (critical precepts drawn from nature, art, and practice), and *ends* (a definitive critical judgment) philosophical aesthetics is largely concerned with the abstract ideal of beauty—with perfection in art,

<sup>38</sup> Campbell, *Rhetoric* xi.

with art as a philosophical “ought”—while taste is most often concerned with beauty as it is commonly received; the one is governed by immutable and abstract principles of beauty, while the other is guided by accepted precepts arising out of the social-intellectual temper of the times.

Doubtless, of course, the philosophical development of taste has historically been closely tied to the intellectual advancement of rhetoric, most especially the critical precepts which developed out of the *Peri Hypsous* of Longinus, in the eighteenth century the one most influential rhetorical treatise inherited from the ancient world. Likewise the pervasively influential Cicero similarly acknowledges that the popular taste must be accommodated; “the orator who is approved by the multitude must inevitably be approved by the expert.”<sup>39</sup> Indeed, as Walter J. Hipple has noted, the art theorists of the Renaissance drew in fact upon the long established study of the three levels of rhetorical style (the low, middle, and grand) and their appropriate modes of verbal embellishment for similar critical insights into the developing study of literary aesthetics.<sup>40</sup> And similarly among the Augustans the study of taste in general was closely related in precept, and, an example to the study of rhetoric, most especially works in the belletristic tradition of Hugh Blair’s *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1783).

But more important even than the pervasive historical influence of traditional rhetorical theory on the intellectual development of the study of literary aesthetics, is the recognition that insofar as the study of taste employed in common with rhetoric similar precepts (propriety, grandeur, simplicity and the like) widely regarded as distinguishing measures of stylistic and aesthetic beauty, and insofar as rhetoric, aesthetics, and taste all expressed their critical judgments in a common, distinctly Ciceronian, rhetorical idiom, the study of taste may accurately be understood as a rhetorical or affective form of aesthetics.

## VI

It appears then that the classical inventional, expressive, and judgmental arts of rhetoric had a pervasive historical influence on eighteenth-century artistic, painterly, and aesthetic thought, not only

<sup>39</sup> *Brutus* 49.184, trans. G. L. Hendrickson (Cambridge, Mass., 1962).

<sup>40</sup> On Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (Gainesville, Fla., 1963; first ed. 1759), editor’s Introduction, p. xiii.

in providing a body of precepts concerning artistic control over materials by means of which ideas and feelings are affectively to be conveyed, but more importantly as a verbal and conceptual idiom in which the creative, expressive, and judgmental capacities common to human nature philosophically have been considered. This, of course, is not to say that for eighteenth-century art theorists the various particular points of similarity uniting painting with rhetoric constitute an immutable philosophical parallel. It is rather simply to underscore such observable manifestations of classical rhetorical thought as are prominent in eighteenth-century artistic theory, and thereby to note in what regard the philosophical assumption "as rhetoric, painting" had a discernible effect on eighteenth-century views of the process of painterly invention, expression, and judgment.