

# A Source for Rubens's *Modello* of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin: a Case Study in the Response to Images\*

ONE of the standard art-historical exercises is the search for the pictorial sources of individual works of art. The purpose of this article is to suggest that this exercise need not constitute an end in itself, as it usually does, but that it can yield valuable information about the status of an image in a given social context and about the response it evokes. Rubens's *modello* of *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin* in Leningrad<sup>1</sup> (Fig.2) raises a number of iconographic problems; these in turn are largely resolved by the discovery of an important pictorial source for the work. That source and its relation to the work by Rubens may be used as an illustration of some of the ways in which it is possible to determine the associations which the seventeenth-century beholder made when looking at works of art – even when they were not actually recorded by the beholder himself. While it can never be possible to recover the full range of such associations – because many would have been too personal and idiosyncratic – the art historian may regard it as his province to reveal at least some.

The Leningrad *modello* has been shown beyond reasonable doubt to have been one of the two projects which Rubens presented to the Cathedral Chapter on 22nd April 1611 for the High Altar of Antwerp Cathedral.<sup>2</sup> It is also likely that the painting of *The Assumption of the Virgin* in Vienna<sup>3</sup> (Fig.3), which reproduces the bottom half of the Leningrad composition, and which comes from the Lady Chapel of the Jesuit Church in Antwerp, was originally intended for the High Altar of the Cathedral.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from its pictorial brilliance, what is striking about the *modello* is its iconographic originality. As in all his later representations of the *Assumption*, Rubens has here combined the group of apostles surrounding the Madonna's tomb with a number of female figures. While these women are not usually shown to be present at the actual scene of the Assumption, nor are described thus in any of the textual sources,<sup>5</sup> their inclusion may be explained by the fact that they were said to have been present at the funeral of the Virgin, after having washed and shrouded her body.<sup>6</sup> The rolling away of the stone cover of the sepulchre (here inscribed MARIA) is also unusual, and so is the absence – or relative lack of prominence – of the sarcophagus in which she was laid to rest. But what is most unusual in the *modello* is the upper half of the composition. It is true that the angels (and their variety) are emphasized in all the accounts and commentaries,<sup>7</sup> and the fact that the Virgin is on Christ's right depends on the reading from the forty-fourth psalm in the liturgy for the Feast of the Assumption.<sup>8</sup> But what exactly is the scene? Is it an *Assumption of the Virgin*, a *Coronation*, or both? We know that in all Rubens's later *Assumptions* the Virgin ascends heavenwards towards a sculpted figure of Christ, God, or the Trinity placed outside the painting.<sup>9</sup> But here she kneels at the feet of Christ. If the scene is a *Coronation*, then it is surprising to find the Virgin being crowned by Christ alone – for ever since the beginning of the fifteenth century, the standard Netherlandish *Coronation* was effected

\* I am indebted to Michael Hirst for a number of pertinent observations on several of the issues raised here, and to Elizabeth McGrath for a critical reading of a late draft of the text. The Central Research Fund of the University of London made a grant towards the costs of research. The same source as the one discussed here was noted by T. L. GLEN: *Rubens and the Counter Reformation. Studies in His Religious Paintings between 1609 and 1620*, New York [1977]; originally presented as the author's thesis, Princeton University, 1975], p.151, which appeared after this article was written. But the purpose of the present discussion is not simply to identify a source for Rubens's composition; it is to examine some of the implications of this kind of relationship.

<sup>1</sup> Oil on panel transferred to canvas, 106 by 78 cm.; Leningrad, Hermitage, Inv. No.1703. M. VARSHAVSKAYA: *Rubens Paintings in the Hermitage Museum*, Leningrad [1975], pp.63–68, No.3 (in Russian); M. ROOSES: *L'Oeuvre de P. P. Rubens, histoire et description de ses tableaux et dessins*, II, Antwerp [1888], pp.189–90, No.364.

<sup>2</sup> F. BAUDOIN: 'Altars and Altarpieces before 1620', in J. R. MARTIN, ed.: *Rubens before 1620*, Princeton [1972], pp.64–72; and especially C. VAN DE VELDE: 'Rubens Hemelvaart van Maria in de Kathedraal te Antwerpen', *Jaarboek Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten Antwerpen* [1975], pp.245–59, with full documentation.

<sup>3</sup> Oil on Panel, 458 by 297 cm.; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Inv. No.518.

<sup>4</sup> Well argued by BAUDOIN, *op. cit.*, pp.68–70, and VAN DE VELDE, *op. cit.* pp.253–56. The matter will be fully discussed in my forthcoming volume in the *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* (Vol.VII).

<sup>5</sup> These are usefully gathered together in J. FOURNÉE: 'Himmelfahrt Mariens', *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie*, II [1970], cols. 276–77.

<sup>6</sup> As, for example, in the *Golden Legend*. The most easily available modern edition is the French one published by Garnier-Flammarion: J. DE VORAGINE: *La Légende Dorée*, transl. J.-B. M. ROZE, Paris [1967]. For the three holy women see p.89; and E. STAEDL: *Ikonographie der Himmelfahrt Mariens*, Strasbourg [1935], pp.200–03.

<sup>7</sup> *Golden Legend*, ed. *cit.*, pp.90, 94, 101 (Cherubim and Seraphim); cf. also notes 36 and 38 below.

<sup>8</sup> 'Propter veritatem, et mansuetudinem, et iustitiam, et deducet te mirabiliter dextera tua'. Ps. 44 (45): 4.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. ROOSES, *op. cit.*, II, No.356, pp.168–69 (Vienna); No.358, pp.170–72 (Düsseldorf); No.359, pp.173–80 (Antwerp); the circumstantial evidence that this also applies to the paintings in Brussels (*Kl. d. K* [1921], p.120), Augsburg (*Ibid.*, p.300) and Liechtenstein (*Ibid.*, p.352) is considerable. At this point it should be added that the adoption of the lower half of the Leningrad *modello* and the rejection of the upper half for the painting first intended for the High Altar (i.e. the picture in Vienna) may have been due to the unusual nature of the iconography discussed here, but it may also have been as a result of a decision by the Cathedral Chapter to have a *sculpted* figure or group crowning the Virgin, as in all the later works listed above.

by the whole Trinity.<sup>10</sup> What, then, is the particular iconographic moment that Rubens has chosen to depict, and on what could he have based his representation? Such questions may be regarded as splitting hairs about the meaning of a scene which is, after all, not very difficult to interpret. Rubens presumably knew Ludovico Carracci's altar-piece of 1601 in Corpus Domini in Bologna, which also shows the reception of the Virgin into heaven accompanied by music-making angels, as well as several other elements used by Rubens in his later *Assumptions*.<sup>11</sup> But a specific answer is provided by the penultimate plate (Fig.6) in Jerome Nadal's *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*, of which the illustrated section is entitled *Evangelicae Historiae Imagines*.<sup>12</sup> Hieronymus Wierix's engraving (after Bernardo Passeri<sup>13</sup>), provides not only the source of Rubens's composition, but also the key to the precise theme it represents. As the engraving by Wierix occurs in the sequence of four plates (Nos.150–53) devoted to the various stages in the Death, Burial, Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin, it also clarifies the position of this particular moment in the sequence.<sup>14</sup> It is the third in the series, and is entitled *Suscitatur Virgo Mater a Filio*, while it is only the following plate which combines the scenes of the actual Assumption and Coronation (Fig.5). The textual discussion of this plate (as well as the caption on the plate itself) refers to the event

as the reception of the Virgin into heaven by her Son.<sup>15</sup>

I do not want to suggest that Rubens himself wished to distinguish consciously between the various stages in the sequence of events leading up to the Coronation of the Virgin in the way that Nadal did, nor that he intended his painting to be given the same title as Hieronymus Wierix's print. It is likely that he did not, and he may simply have used the print because it seemed a pictorial invention which suited the iconographic terms of his commission. But there can be no doubt of Rubens's indebtedness to it, for the puzzling top half of his composition at any rate (despite some differences, the bottom half comes closer to traditional forms). Not only is the Virgin placed on a lower level on Christ's right (as required by the text cited above) in almost identical poses and the same relation to each other, but the arrangement of clouds and angels is strikingly similar. On the lower bank of clouds are the younger *putto*-like angels (represented by heads only in the print), while the older ones are arranged on clouds which extend diagonally to the topmost corners of the print, exactly as in the work by Rubens. Admittedly, they do not play musical instruments in the engraving, but their music-making activity is insisted upon a number of times by both the annotations and the explanatory text.<sup>16</sup> It should perhaps be noted that Wierix's print presents the Virgin's sepulchre as securely closed (in contrast to Rubens, who shows the rolling away of the stone), and she stands on the crescent.<sup>17</sup> But for the rest the similarities are very close.<sup>18</sup>

In itself the relationship between Rubens's *modello* and the Wierix print is not an especially significant discovery; but the immediate context of the print has wide-ranging implications, especially in terms of the issues raised at the beginning of this discussion.

Nadal's book, written at the instigation of St Ignatius himself,<sup>19</sup> may at first sight seem to be only one of the many aids to meditation which were published in the wake of the *Spiritual Exercises*.<sup>20</sup> But (as Thomas Buser has recently

<sup>10</sup> Cf. F. BAUDOIN: 'De Kroning van Maria door de Heilige Drieëenheid in de 15de eeuwse schilderkunst der Nederlanden', *Bulletin, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique*, VIII [1959], pp.179–230, with both literary and pictorial examples. The same applies to Rubens's paintings of the Coronation itself in Brussels and formerly in Berlin, *Kl. d. K.* [1921], pp.270 and 341 respectively.

<sup>11</sup> For the painting by Carracci, see H. BODMER: *Lodovico Carracci*, Burg-bei-Magdeburg [1939], Pl.46; cf. E. STAEDL: *op. cit.*, pp.181–84 and W. PROHASKA, in [Exhibition Catalogue], *Peter Paul Rubens 1577–1640, Ausstellung zur 400. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna [1977], pp.71–72 for a brief discussion of further aspects of the iconographic originality and significance of Rubens's treatment of this subject.

<sup>12</sup> These plates were first published separately in 1593, but the *editio princeps* of the work as a whole was HIERONYMUS NATALIS: *Adnotationes et meditationes in Evangelia quae in sacrosancto missae sacrificio toto anno leguntur, cum evangeliorum concordantia historiae integritati sufficienti. Accessit & Index historiarum ipsam Evangelicam in ordinem temporis Vitae Christi distribuens*, M. Nutius, Antwerp [1595], Fol.; but a later edition, published by the Plantin press in 1607, will be referred to here – not only because it is chronologically closer to the work by Rubens, but also because it is a revised and corrected version (*Editio ultima, in qua Sacer Textus ad emendationem Bibliorum Sixti V et Clementis VIII restitutus*) with an additional preface to be discussed here. For the various editions (and on Nadal himself), see the basic work by M. NICOLAU: *Jerónimo Nadal, S.I. (1507–1580), sus obras y doctrinas espirituales*, Madrid [1949], pp.114–31, where information about the genesis and posthumous publication of the book may be found. See now, for a recent assessment of its significance, T. BUSER: 'Jerome Nadal and Early Jesuit Art in Rome', *The Art Bulletin*, LVIII [1976], pp.424–25, with still further bibliographical material.

<sup>13</sup> The size of each plate is 230 by 145 mm. Almost all the plates in book were by Wierix after drawings by Bernardo Passeri, 126 of which are at Windsor Castle (L. VAN PUYVELDE: *The Flemish Drawings at Windsor*, London [1942], No.196. For the participation of Marten de Vos in this project, see L. VAN PUYVELDE: 'Bernardo Passeri, Marten de Vos and Hieronymus Wierix', in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Lionello Venturi*, II, Rome [1956], pp.59–64; but see also ALFONSO RODRIGUEZ G. DE CEBALLOS: 'Las "Imágenes de la Historia Evangélica" del P. Jerónimo Nadal en el marco del jesuitismo y la contrariforma', *Traza y Baza* [1974], 84–85.

<sup>14</sup> A not altogether dissimilar division into the different stages of scenes usually conflated may be found in the plates devoted to the *Entry into Jerusalem* (Pl.85–87), the *Carrying of the Cross* (Pl.124–26), and even the *Three Maries at the Sepulchre* (Pl.136–37). All of these may naturally be used to determine the precise iconographic moment of other representations of these subjects, as in the case of the subject painted by Rubens under discussion here.

<sup>15</sup> NATALIS, p.586: *Excipit illam Filius Deus laetitia ineffabili, & immensa gratulatione* (more briefly on the plate as *Excipit eam Christus gratulatione summa*).

<sup>16</sup> See below, p.435. These angels are repeated – almost as if this *modello* were a preliminary study – in the panels of the *Music-making Angels* in Liechtenstein (*Kl. d. K.* [1921], p.66).

<sup>17</sup> A reference to the Virgin as the Apocalyptic Woman, '*Mulier amicta sole, et luna sub pedibus eius et in capite eius corona stellarum duodecim*' (Apoc. 12:1).

<sup>18</sup> Although the holy women – whose presence is explicable on the iconographic grounds referred to in note 6 above – are absent in the engraving, it should be noted that they are present in the two preceding scenes of the *Death and Burial*, (Pl.150–51). In the light of their presence there, Rubens may have felt there was no reason to omit them at the very following event – apart from the aesthetic grounds he may have had for their inclusion.

<sup>19</sup> The opening sentence of the first preface (unpaginated) to the book makes this clear: '*Dixerat aliquando, Beatissime Pater, Hieronymo Natali, uni ex suis alumnis, Parens nostrae Societatis Ignatius, operae pretium facturum eum, qui ad perpetuam atque paratam Religiosius eiusdem Societatis scholaribus meditandi, orandique materiam atque segetem, Evangelia Quadragesima tota, Dominicisque per annum diebus inter sacrificandum recitari consueta, methodo quam brevissima certos ad locos, seu capita meditantium utilitati accomodata redigeret; neque id solum, sed etiam appositis imaginibus & Adnotationibus illustraret*'. A short introductory work on the relationship between Nadal and St Ignatius is J. SUREDA I BLANES: *Sant Ignasi i Jerónimo Nadal*, Barcelona [1967], but fuller details will be found in the book by NICOLAU cited in note 12 above.

<sup>20</sup> NICOLAU, *op. cit.*, pp.166–70, as well as the same author's 'Un autor desconocido en la historia de la meditación: Jerónimo Nadal', *Revista española de Teología*, II [1942], pp.101–59; for some of Nadal's own early views on meditation, see his twentieth Coimbran sermon, published by M. NICOLAU, ed.: *Pláticas Espirituales del P. Jerónimo Nadal, S.I., en Coimbra (1561)*, Granada [1945] (Biblioteca Teológica Granadina, Series I, No.2), pp.195–201.

stressed<sup>21</sup>) the significance of this popular work lay in the emphasis placed on the illustrations and on their rôle in the meditative process. These illustrations, of which there are 153 grouped together at the end of the text, were each provided with a sequence of letters (usually between four and six) placed close to the chief incidents or elements in the composition. The captions below each print in turn provided a short explanation of these letters. But the real importance for the reader of this system of annotation only becomes apparent when one consults the text. This is divided into chapters (arranged according to the gospel readings of the entire year) bearing the same titles as the illustrations. Each chapter (conceived as a *meditatio*) contains, in the first place, a short *adnotatiuncula* corresponding to the caption beneath the relevant print. There then follows a much longer *adnotatio* which, although it is still arranged according to the letters on the print, contains an expanded meditation on each of the elements therein, as well as on the print as a whole.

How, then, was the book intended to be used? What was the rôle assigned to the illustrations? It is worth asking these questions, not only because this system of annotation was adopted, whether in a modified form or not, in a whole series of some of the most popular devotional works in the Netherlands<sup>22</sup> but also because it provides an insight into an important aspect of the function of images in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Fortunately, an almost complete answer to these questions may be found in the two prefaces (or the foreword and the preface) to the text. The first, to Clement VIII and signed by Jacobus Ximenes (Diego Jiménez), makes it clear that the work was originally intended for members and novices of the Jesuit order, with the illustrations to be used as an aid to meditation.<sup>23</sup> What is significant, however, is the concern displayed for the quality of the illustrations: deliberate care was taken that they should not be engraved by an unattractive hand, and cause boredom by the very multitude of images. They were to be as skilled, elegant and attractive as possible, and by the best possible artists, in order to encourage assiduous meditation.<sup>24</sup> To achieve the required quality, great expense was involved, and a number of difficulties encountered in the process, but these were finally overcome.<sup>25</sup> Here is a clear statement of the validity and purposes of art in a religious context, in an age when – certainly from a Protestant

point of view and usually from a Catholic – pictorial imagery was consistently underplayed in favour of a renewed emphasis on words, or specific texts.<sup>26</sup> What is important here, and without which this work would be unthinkable, are the illustrations. They are to be the very basis of the meditative process – and one is dealing here with real images, not the mental images of Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*. It is an awareness of the fact that art preceded the calling up of mental images.

The second preface (to the reader; present in the edition of 1607 but absent in the earlier ones) makes it clear that the work had now been adapted for wider circulation.<sup>27</sup> And because further guidelines might be needed on *how* to meditate on each image (and on what, therefore, to think), the decision was taken to include an *adnotatio* not only below each picture but also an expanded one in the body of each chapter, along with the appropriate section from the Gospel.<sup>28</sup> It is precisely these *adnotationes* which enable the art historian to gain some idea of how the seventeenth century 'read' these images; and with the Life of Christ divided into 153 different scenes one is thus provided with an insight into how almost every religious representation within this cycle would have affected the beholder, and what sorts of associations were open to him.<sup>29</sup>

In the case of the image to which Rubens was indebted in the Leningrad *modello*, the print headed *Suscitatur Virgo Mater a Filio* (Fig.6) is, as we have noted, the third of four scenes dealing with the Virgin. We need not here deal with the first two, illustrating the death and burial of the Virgin, but it should be noted that all four scenes are dealt with in the final and longest section of the text, subsumed under the general heading of *The Assumption of the Virgin*. Fifty-three closely printed folio pages of double column text deal with this subject as a whole.<sup>30</sup> But to return to the *adnotatio* to the particular print under discussion.<sup>31</sup> Here the explanatory caption of the print (and the identical *adnotatiuncula* in the text) is expanded by the addition of words and whole phrases, which not only enlarge the description of the various elements in the scene, and call into play a range of purely theological associations, but are also sensual and emotive.

<sup>26</sup> Discussed in D. FREEDBERG: 'The Problem of Images in Northern Europe and its Repercussions in the Netherlands', *Hafnia - Copenhagen Papers in the History of Art* [1976], pp.25-45.

<sup>27</sup> 'Cur denique in Adnotationibus, ac frequentius etiam in meditationibus, sermonem ad religiosi status homines convertat, haec maxima causa est, quod eius primum consilium non fuit ut opus hoc in vulgus ederetur; sed ut religiosi tantum Societatis nostrae, iunioribus praecipue scholaribus, inserviret', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, Preface to the Reader, n.p.

<sup>28</sup> 'Verum cum ei suggeretur, non tamen omnes aequae esse idoneos ad id prestandum, nec fore inutile vel maxime exercitatis has Meditationes legere; adductus est tandem, ut eas Adnotationibus inseri pateretur. Fuit autem operae pretium Adnotationum capita non solum sub ipsis imaginibus collocare, verum etiam in Adnotationum volumine ea suis Evangelicis lectionibus praefigere, ut qui imagines nancisci non possent (an interesting reflection on the circulation of this work), his illas brevi compendio summaria ipsa referrent, simulque meditantium commoditati & memoriae inservirent', *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> But see the proviso regarding psychological associations at the conclusion of the first paragraph here, as well as those engendered by the aesthetic aspects of the work of art on p.441 below. I am aware that much of what follows could be found in any number of texts, ranging from patristic sources through medieval devotional practices to seventeenth-century meditational handbooks. But we are here concerned specifically with an audience such as Rubens might have had – even though they might, either consciously or unconsciously, have been acquainted with related manifestations of the same tradition.

<sup>30</sup> NATALIS, *op. cit.*, pp.583-636.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p.586.

<sup>21</sup> BUSER, *op. cit.*, p.425; see also CEBALLOS, *op. cit.*, esp. pp.81-83.

<sup>22</sup> See below, p.440 and note 76 for several examples.

<sup>23</sup> See the opening sentence of the preface quoted in note 19 above.

<sup>24</sup> 'Ne autem ipsarum imaginum multitudo satietatem cuiuspiam pareret, unde suo fine, spirituali scilicet animarum fructu, opus ipsum frustraretur si in aes incideretur parum eleganti manu; sed potius ut officii elegantia ac pulchritudo, simul cum maxima ipsius argumenti sanctitate atque excellentia, operisque pietate coniuncta, omnes ad illud evolendum, assiduaque meditatione invitaret, necessarium omnino fuit, ut excellentissimi quique artifices operi tam eximio, quod ipsius Evangelii nova ac pene spirans imago est, adhiberentur', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, preface to Clement VIII, n.p. One may here be inclined to draw a parallel with the Horatian dictum 'Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci, Lectorem delectando pariter monendo' (*Arts Poetica*, ll. 343-44) so frequently taken up in the art theory of the Cinquecento.

<sup>25</sup> 'Id quod sine magnis difficultatibus, maxima impensa perfici non potuit. Omnes tamen difficultates superatae, omnia impedimenta, Christo propitio, tuisque auspiciis, Beatissime Pater, sublata sunt; opus denique ipsum ad pietatem, & devotionem excitandam maxime accomodatum, tuo tandem tempore in vulgus prodit; . . .', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, Preface to Clement VIII, n.p.

The *adnotatio* is deliberately calculated to help the reader realize the emotional qualities which the image is likely (or supposed) to arouse. This may be achieved quite simply, as in the case of the annotation to the sepulchre of the Virgin (marked *B* on the print), where the simple caption 'Christ rouses his Mother from the closed tomb and heaps the greatest gifts upon her body and soul'<sup>32</sup> becomes 'He (re)joins the soul of his Mother with her body, and both body and soul are filled with the most excellent honours and gifts; and straightway he brings his Mother forth from the closed tomb'.<sup>33</sup> The piling up of synonyms (which may of course be found in other devotional treatises, especially Jesuit ones) and the addition of evocative words (here simply 'straightway') are intended to stir the emotions of the beholder and are carried to a greater pitch in the annotations which follow. When one looks upon the Virgin (here marked by the letter *C*) one sees her 'coming forth with the most radiant garment of immortality, adorned with glory, surrounded by a variety of honours and gifts, golden and blessed . . .'<sup>34</sup> 'The Son welcomes his Mother [*D* on the print between the two figures, indicating the act of welcoming] with ineffable happiness and immense joy'.<sup>35</sup> When one's eyes turn to the hosts of angels (*E*), one observes that 'they and all the other blessed spirits pay homage and do reverence to her, the Queen and Mistress of heaven and all the earth, the Mother of omnipotent God'.<sup>36</sup> While Rubens has omitted the crescent on which the Virgin stands, his portrayal of the upper half of the scene seems to follow these descriptions almost exactly: not only is the Virgin surrounded by an effulgence the quality of which it is impossible to imagine any other artist in the Netherlands attaining, it is almost as if he has tried to evoke the same psychological relations described by Nadal. But it is always difficult to describe the pictorialization of emotional moments,<sup>37</sup> and it may be that our perceptions of these have only been made possible by the verbal ones in the text. In any event it is the latter which has provided some clues as to how a seventeenth-century beholder might have responded to the picture.

It is worth proceeding to the next section in Nadal's book, to the *adnotatio* for the last plate in the book, representing the *Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin* (Fig. 5), not only because it helps to explain a puzzling iconographic feature of the lower half of Rubens's work, but also because it casts light on all of his later *Assumptions*.

We may note in passing the description of the angels (*B*) in this print, which is similar to the preceding description, but still further expanded. 'An escort of angels of all ranks encircles her, along with other sacred spirits, rejoicing and making music. With this most brilliant celestial and divine triumph, the Virgin Mother of God is carried up to the

<sup>32</sup> 'Clauſo ſepulcro ſuſcitat Matrem, animam eius & corpus maximis donis cumulatur'.

<sup>33</sup> 'Animam Matris corpori unit, & replet excellentiſſimis donis ac dotibus & anima & corpus; ac ſtatim e clauſo ſepulchro Matrem educit', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, p. 586.

<sup>34</sup> 'Egreditur ipſa fulgentiſſima veſte immortalitatis ac gloria ornata, circumdata varietate donorum, dotium, aureolarum beatarum . . .', *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> 'Excipit illam Filius Deus laetitia ineffabili, & immenſa gratulatione', *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> 'Illi obedientiam & reverentiam exhibent Angeli & alii beati ſpiritus omnes, Reginae ac Dominae caeli atque orbis univerſi, Matri Dei omnipotentis', *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> For an effective attempt, see the diſcuſſion of the relationship between certain Italian devotional handbooks and paintings of the Annunciation in M. BAXANDALL: *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy*, Oxford [1972], pp. 45-56.

heavenly empyrean'<sup>38</sup> and so on. While this description may seem to apply particularly to the Leningrad *modello*, it is no accident that in all his *Assumptions*, Rubens shows at least two different types of angels, and sometimes more (*angelicae omnium ordinum cohortes cum sanctis aliis spiritibus psallentes ac iubilantes*). Letter *C* is placed adjacent to the Coronation by the Trinity at the very top of the print. As this moment does not appear within any of Rubens's paintings of the Assumption, we need not dwell on it here; but it should be observed that the exceptionally long accompanying *adnotatio* emphasizes the relationship of the Virgin to each of the persons of the Trinity: she kneels before the Father with whom she conceived her eternal son, before the Son whom she conceived, gave birth to, fed and nourished, before the Spirit *cuius operatione & virtute Filium Dei conceperat*.<sup>39</sup> Here almost the full range of associations that the Virgin was capable of arousing is evoked; and in order to do so, there is no eschewing of emotive phrases like (*Filius*) *quem conceperat, genuerat, nutriverat*.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, this sort of emotive evocation is the hallmark of much of the work. The Virgin's exultant elevation is emphasized, but so is her humility before her Lord.

The letter *E* marks the rocky sepulchre of the Virgin, and in the annotation may be found a partial explanation for Rubens's usual decision to show the tomb as being open (instead of being firmly locked, as in the preceding print): 'Once the sepulchre was opened, they did not find the body, but only those things with which she was buried'.<sup>41</sup> And it goes on to arouse not only the emotions, but also the senses. That of hearing has already been mentioned; now it is the sense of smell. When one saw the sepulchre, one was put in mind of the fact that the apostles were 'filled with the wonderfully sweet fragrance coming from the tomb; so they lifted their eyes, and bodies and souls upwards to contemplate the resurrection, assumption and glory of the most blessed Virgin . . .'<sup>42</sup>

While it is not necessary to suggest that Rubens followed precisely this text, it should be borne in mind that in these respects all his paintings of the *Assumption* follow it far more closely than do the engravings by Wierix. There are, it is true, some additional elements in the paintings, like the miracle of the roses (an attractive part of the tradition found in the *Golden Legend*<sup>43</sup> which Rubens found difficult to resist),

<sup>38</sup> 'Circumvolant Angelicae omnium ordinum cohortes cum sanctis aliis spiritibus psallentes ac iubilantes. Cum hoc triumpho praeclarissimo, caelesti, divino evehitur ad caelum empyreum Virgo Dei parens: ei Angeli, & species creatas gubernantes, & caelorum motores transeunt genua curvant, & obedientiam deferunt Reginae suae & Dominae', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, p. 587.

<sup>39</sup> 'Genibus nixa divina Virgo adorat trinum Deum & unum: Patrem, qui cum Filium aeternum genuisset, eundem ipsi dederat generandum; Filium quem conceperat, genuerat, lactaverat, nutriverat, subditum in terris habuerat & obedientiam; Spiritum sanctum, cuius operatione & virtute Filium Dei conceperat', *Ibid.*; Something like these notions may also be found in earlier texts - compare, for example, the *Golden Legend*, *ed. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>40</sup> As quoted in the preceding note; but cf. also note 60 below.

<sup>41</sup> 'Aperto sepulchro corpus non invenerunt, sed ea tantummodo, cum quibus fuit compositum & sepultum', NATALIS, *op. cit.*, p. 587; Again cf. p. 439 below, and note 68. Cf. also the *Golden Legend*, *ed. cit.*, p. 104.

<sup>42</sup> 'Simul fuerunt odoris suavitate admirabili repleti ex sepulchro spirantis. Ad caelum igitur oculos & corporis & mentis attolentes toti fuerunt in contemplatione resurrectionis, assumptionis, & gloriae Virginis beatissimae' (continues the quotation in the preceding note).

<sup>43</sup> The *Golden Legend*, *ed. cit.*, p. 89.

but these would only have served to enhance the associations – in this case, for example, of the sweet smell coming from the tomb – indicated by Nadal's text.

All this is followed in the last chapter of the book by a long final meditation *De Virginis Deiparae Laudibus*. In its forty-eight pages (pp.586–636) every aspect of the Virgin's Assumption is dwelt upon in a series of headed paragraphs. Every possible relationship is brought into play, every possible epithet used to describe the Virgin or the significance of the event. Here, for example, may be found the whole range of references to the Song of Solomon, the Old Testament text most frequently drawn upon for its sensual prefiguration of the Virgin and her relationship with Christ, God, and the Trinity<sup>44</sup> (it is worth recalling that the basis for the identification of the Leningrad *modello* with the project of 1611 is the fact that Otto van Veen's rival *modello* represented 'Christ calling his bride from Lebanon to be crowned', in other words the Coronation of the Virgin – referred to, as it often was, in terms of the Song of Songs<sup>45</sup>). Certain passages are analysed at extraordinary length. Each word of the phrase *Ecce tu pulchra es* is elaborated into an expansion of the idea contained in the sentence as a whole, in an almost scholastic way.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, the Virgin's beauty forms the main burden of many of these paragraphs, in a manner that seems to the present-day reader to call out for pictorial realization. And so it seemed to Nadal as well, as we may judge from the prefaces.<sup>47</sup> He realized, in a way that the writers of other meditational works did not, that pictorial images could take priority over literary ones, and could be used to stimulate the further visualization of everything that was written out at length in these pages. The chapter concludes by listing not only the evangelical but also the patristic statements related to the *Assumption*,<sup>48</sup> and emphasizes the inevitable parallelism between the Virgin and the Church (the *Virgo/Ecclesia* relationship).<sup>49</sup> One could scarcely wish for fuller evidence of the possible range of associations available to the beholder of the images of the *Assumption* with which we have here been concerned.<sup>50</sup>

The importance of Nadal's work lies in its use of detailed illustrations and the relationship of text to image. But there are other meditational handbooks of the time which, even if they are not illustrated themselves, may be used to cast light on the response to images. It is not only for this reason, but also because several aspects of Rubens's paintings which do not feature prominently in Natalis are further clarified, that it seems worth examining one such handbook. We may turn to one of the many works by Franciscus Costerus,<sup>51</sup> the *De Vita et Laudibus Deiparae Mariae Virginis Meditationes Quinquaginta*,<sup>52</sup> in order to supplement the evidence of Nadal, as well as to demonstrate the relationship of the latter with other writers of the time.

The preface to this work insists on the correct method of contemplation – which it then spells out – but in doing so draws a parallel with the various ways of responding to painted pictures. One could of course respond on different levels, from the superficial to the profound. Coster puts it briefly: 'Just as it is of great import whether we look at a painting casually or intently, in passing or directly, attentively or thinking of something else, whether we are moved or we admire the art,<sup>53</sup> so it is of great importance that we meditate on the Virgin with a definite method'.<sup>54</sup> How did this 'method' operate? Although it is spelt out in rather diffuse detail in this preface, it is systematically exemplified, with great precision, in the body of the text. The subject of each of the fifty meditations is carefully divided into its constituent elements. These are further subdivided according to the various issues they raise: every moment in the event and every emotional juncture is considered, in a strict system of enumeration. Each subdivision begins with the injunction 'Consider', followed by a series of numbers. It is a method (whose origin may be found in medieval handbooks such as those attributed to St Bonaventure as well as in the practice of meditating on the Rosary) which demands that the reader calls up before himself a specific mental image; and this image then provides the basis for meditation. It is the same function which is assigned to the *composición viendo el lugar* of the Ignatian exercises. By these means, therefore, the work compensates for its lack of physical images; and the system of numbering each division (i.e. each image) and

<sup>44</sup> NATALIS, *op. cit.*, pp.591–92.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. VAN DE VELDE, *op. cit.*, p.252, note 11, for the reference to the *modello* 'quae Dominum nostrum sponsam suam de Libano provocantem ad coronam continet' by van Veen; for the use of the famous passage 'Veni de Libano sponsa mea, veni de Libano veni: coronaberis de capite Amana . . .' from Cant. 4:8, and its use in the early texts, see A. KATZENELLENBOGEN: *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral*, Baltimore [1959], pp.56–60, and the valuable notes on pp.125–30 with references not only to the early sources, but also to modern texts dealing with the subject of the *Assumption of the Virgin*.

<sup>46</sup> Thus 'Ecce: rem raram admirabilem singularem; Tu: nulla alia tam pulchra' and so on, NATALIS, *op. cit.*, p.592. Earlier, in his twentieth Coimbra sermon of 1561, Nadal had recommended a similar way of meditating on the words 'Pater noster qui es', although naturally these offered less scope for visualisation: cf. NICOLAU's edition of the *Pláticas Espirituales* cited in note 20 above, p.195. Similar, too, are the methods of some of the Spanish mystics, as for example, in St John of the Cross: *Canticum Espiritual*.

<sup>47</sup> See especially the passage quoted in note 19 above.

<sup>48</sup> NATALIS, *op. cit.*, pp.602–15 (the Gospel texts) and 618–36 (the patristic sources).

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.616–18. Once again, the notes in KATZENELLENBOGEN, *op. cit.*, pp.127–33 provide a valuable fund of sources for the parallelism between the Virgin and The Church in the context of the Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin.

<sup>50</sup> Although clearly the response of different social groups may have varied considerably; cf. below p.440.

<sup>51</sup> On Costerus (*recte* de Coster, 1539–1619) see E. NEEFFS in *Biographie Nationale de Belgique*, V, Brussels [1876], cols. 11–16, with an extensive listing of the works by him, and R. HARDEMAN: *Franciscus Costerus Vlaamsche Apostel en Volksredenaar*, Alken [1933].

<sup>52</sup> FRANCISCUS COSTERUS: *De Vita et Laudibus Deiparae Mariae Virginis Meditationes Quinquaginta*, Inglostadt, David Sartorius [1588], 12° (with an Antwerp *Approbatio* of 1587).

<sup>53</sup> This distinction seemed to be especially important to theological commentators on art in general in the sixteenth century; in the case of an artist such as Rubens it must have seemed crucial (although a modern observer might argue against the existence of the distinction at all). For a similar concern over the possibility that the beholder might be more aesthetically than spiritually moved, cf. the remarks at the end of the Preface to the Reader in Nadal's work: 'ad spirituale fructum . . . non satis esse fingere curiose peroluere, aut illarum artem & pulchritudinem admirari; sed in singulis esse tibi singulos, vel etiam plures dies insistendum, Adnotationum & Meditationum capita sensim perlegenda, meditandum, contemplandum omnes denique orationis partes exercendas . . .' For reservations about the effects of works of art by other writers in the sixteenth century, see my article cited in note 26 above.

<sup>54</sup> 'Iam vero, sicut permultum refert, quomodo externis oculis pictam tabulam intuearis, leviter, an fixe; oblique an directe; attente an aliud cogitans; ut movearis, an ut artem admireris: ita ad utilitatem nostram, multum interest, ut certa methodo hasce de Virgine meditationes instituamus, affectusque in nobis varios excitemus', COSTERUS, *op. cit.*, p.15



2. *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin*. By Peter Paul Rubens. Panel transferred to canvas, 106 by 78 cm. (Hermitage, Leningrad).

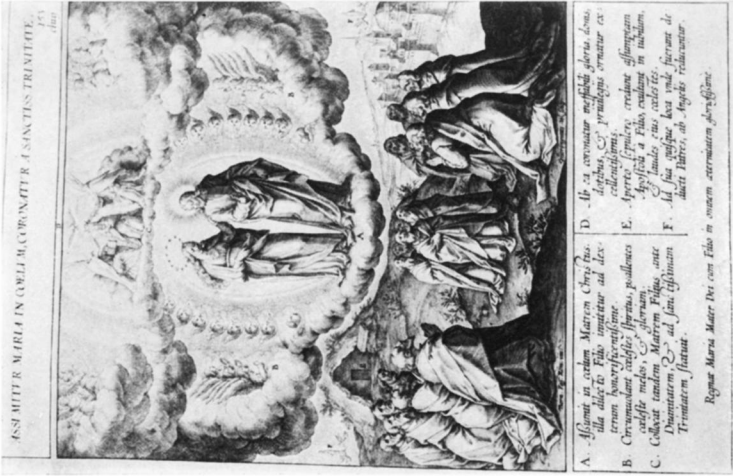


3. *The Assumption of the Virgin*. By Peter Paul Rubens. Panel, 458 by 297 cm. (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).



4. *Madonna and Child with Saints*. By Gregorio Pagani. Signed and dated 1592. (Hermitage, Leningrad).

5. *The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin*. By Hieronymus Wierix after Bernardo Passeri. Engraving, 23 by 14.5 cm. (From H. Natalis, *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1607).



6. *The Reception of the Virgin into Heaven*. By Hieronymus Wierix after Bernardo Passeri. Engraving, 23 by 14.5 cm. (From H. Natalis, *Adnotationes et Meditationes in Evangelia*, Antwerp, 1607).

each subdivision (i.e. each of the thoughts the former arouses) corresponds to the use of letters in Nadal – except that the use of numbers enables Coster to be still more precise about every component of the meditative process, a fact necessitated to some extent by the absence of illustrations.

The *Meditation on the Death of the Virgin* is divided into three sections – on the events preceding her death, on her death itself, and on her burial.<sup>55</sup> In the last section one finds again an emphasis on the sensual aspects of the image. Here too the musical component is emphasized, as well as the glorious light that pervaded the scene, and the sweet-smelling flowers spread by the apostles. These are sensual flowers, but they are also metaphysical ones (for they are the flowers of the Virgin's virtues).<sup>56</sup> Similarly, the apostles light real torches as they accompany her bier, but divine light ('because while she lived the Virgin was the light of the world')<sup>57</sup> pervades the scene, and so on.

In the *Meditation on the Assumption* itself, the first point to consider, according to Coster, is the welcome accorded by Christ to His Mother.<sup>58</sup> The emotional component is even stronger than in the related passage in Nadal, but our feelings are aroused by dwelling on the same things. Although the description of Christ kissing His Mother and wiping away her tears<sup>59</sup> is not to be found in Nadal (nor represented in paintings) it is followed by an insistence on recollecting Christ's relationship with His Mother in His infancy which we have already noted. By these kisses Christ repays those maternal ones frequently given to Him as a child; now He reciprocates His Mother's action in wiping away His childish tears; He recalls how she cradled him in her arms, gave him to suck, nurtured and fostered Him.<sup>60</sup> There is

much in a similar mood in the Spanish mystics.<sup>61</sup> The joy of this reunion having been considered, the second consideration is the glorious entry of the Virgin into Heaven;<sup>62</sup> the third consideration her welcome by the heavenly hosts (with more references to the Song of Songs).<sup>63</sup> We wonder at 1: the glory accorded to her by the sterile world (an allusion to the *desertum* referred to in Canticles 6 and 8), 2: the spiritual delights gained thereby, 3: the honour she deserves in heaven.<sup>64</sup>

The next section of this meditation on the Assumption, *De Assumptione Corporis*,<sup>65</sup> need not detain us, but it is worth noting in the light of the long-standing discussion about the distinctions between the Assumption of the Soul and that of the Body.<sup>66</sup> This is followed by a section *De Corpore non invento*<sup>67</sup> which is of more direct relevance to the Leningrad *modello*. It deals with Thomas's doubt about the miracle (of her passage from the closed tomb) and explains that once the sepulchre was opened, 'nothing was found except the funeral shroud', in which Christ too had been wrapped.<sup>68</sup> Here is a sufficient explanation for the rolling away of the tombstone in the Leningrad *modello*, and the careful representation, in all Rubens's *Assumptions*, of the examination of the shroud.

The final twelve meditations in the book are devoted to each of the stars (the twelve stars referred to in Revelation 12:1) of the Virgin's crown. Each one is taken to signify a particular virtue, from the generic (the first star equated with *Fides*, the second with *Contemplatio*) to the specific (the twelfth star seen in terms of the positive aspects of matrimony, *De Bonis Matrimonii*).<sup>69</sup> And the symbolic significance of each star is spelt out in great detail. Here the meditative process and the associative method are carried to greatest length. It is unlikely that more than a small number of adepts pondered images of the Assumption to the extent of dwelling carefully on each of the stars of the Virgin's crown<sup>70</sup> (and many

<sup>55</sup> *Meditatio XXXVI De Obitu B. Virginis, Ibid.*, pp.333-41; divided in sections *Ante Obitum* (p.333), *In Obitu* (p.336), and *De Sepultura Virginis* (p.339).

<sup>56</sup> 'Omnes enim cecinerunt divinos hymnos . . . flores spargunt quia Mater Iesu Nazareni, hoc est, floridi, virtutum floribus abundabat, suavissimumque ad omnes fideles odorem profudit', *Ibid.*, p.340.

<sup>57</sup> 'Facies accensas manibus suis Apostoli, atque discipuli praeserunt; quia Mater Dei lux mundi dum viveret, nunc caelum ipsum nova claritate illustrat, atque inferiorem hunc mundum gloria sua and maiestate illuminat . . .', *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> 'Considera 1. sanctissimam Virginis animam, simul atque de corpore exivit, a Christo Filio benigne susceptam esse, summaque gratulatione salutata', *Ibid.*, pp.341-42.

<sup>59</sup> 'quam osculatus est Dominus osculo oris sui, and abstersit omnem lachrymam ab oculis eius' (continues the preceding quotation), *Ibid.*, p.342.

<sup>60</sup> 'Memor enim fuit sibi infantulo ab hac sua Matre frequenter data amoris oscula, detersas pueriles lachrymas, seque ulnis delatum ab eius collo pependisse eius ubera suxisse, in eius gremio quievisse, multisque officiis adiutum, fotum, purgatum, educatum. Tempus igitur postulare videbatur, ut Matri vices rependeret. Tu hic Matris gaudium contemplare', *Ibid.*, p.342. Cf. the much more restrained version of these sentiments in NATALIS quoted in note 39 above. They may depend ultimately on the passage in LUKE XI, 27: 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked', but there is probably some influence here from the traditional iconography of the Intercession of the Virgin, where she appeals to Christ's mercy by revealing her breast. See the engraving by E. van Panderen after Rubens of this subject, with the caption: ' . . . Ostendit Mater Filio pectus et ubera: . . . Quomodo poterit ibi esse ulla repulsa, ubi tot suavia charitatis insignia' (C. G. VOORHELM SCHNEEVOOGT: *Catalogue des Estampes gravées d'après P. P. Rubens*, Haarlem [1873], pp.92-93, No.163). The source of this text was a late tenth-century text attributed to the Patriarch Germanos of Constantinople (*P.G.*, XCVIII, col.399), where the Virgin's breasts are compared to the chalices of the eucharistic sacrifice, but it is actually a quotation from a twelfth-century text by Arnaldus of Chartres (*P.L.*, CLXXXIX, cols.1725-26), which was then adapted in the *Speculum Humanae Salvationis*, Chapter LXIX (see J. LUTZ AND P. PERDRIZET: *Speculum Humanae Salvationis, Kritische Ausgabe*, Leipzig [1907], pp.297, 301-02). For an illuminating discussion of the motif see E. PANOFKY: 'Imago Pietatis, Ein Beitrag zur Typengeschichte des "Schmerzmanns" und der "Maria Mediatrix"', *Festschrift für Max J. Friedländer*, Leipzig [1927], p.302.

<sup>61</sup> See too, for example, the annotations to Chapter IV (on Cant. 7:8, 'Thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine', and 8:1 'O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother') of the 1647 Dutch translation of ST TERESA'S *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares*: *Bruydegoms Vrede-Kus oft Bemerckingen vande liefde Gods. Ghemaect door de H. Moeder TERESA van IESUS op sommige veerskens van Salomons Sanghen. Met Annotation vanden Eerw. P. Hieronymus Gratianus . . . Carmeliet; Overgheset uyt dese Spaensche in onse Nederlantsche tale door den Eerw. P. Antonius van Iesus, Carmelit. Discals.*, Antwerp, Widow Jan Cnobbaert [1647], 12<sup>o</sup>, esp. pp.66-67.

<sup>62</sup> 'Considera 2. quam gloriosus fuerit hic Virginis in coelum ingressus, & quam admirabilis triumphus', *op. cit.*, COSTERUS, p.342.

<sup>63</sup> 'Considera 3. sanctissimam Matrem in ipsos coelorum aditus a Filio introductam, Filij sui gloriam, loci maiestatem, Angelorum ordines, omnem illius beatissimae regionis dignitatem longe maiori gaudio admiratam fuisse, quam olim Regina Saba . . . Itaque admirabundi clamabant; Quae est ista quae ascendit de deserto . . . Quae est ista quae progreditur sicut aurora consurgens', *Ibid.*, pp.343-44 (the final two questions here from Cant. 8:5 and 6:9 respectively).

<sup>64</sup> 'Admirantur 1. tantam gloriam de huius mundi deserto ac sterilitate 2. tantas spirituales delicias in homini 3. tantos honores Matris, quae a Deo in coelos veheretur', COSTERUS, *op. cit.*, p.344.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.345-47.

<sup>66</sup> Usefully discussed in J. HECHT: 'Die frühesten Darstellungen der Himmelfahrt Mariens', *Das Münster*, IV [1951], pp.1-12.

<sup>67</sup> COSTERUS, *op. cit.*, pp.348-49.

<sup>68</sup> THOMAS had been absent from the death and burial of the Virgin, and so 'a collegis suis Apostolis ceteris obtinuit, ut corpus Virginis exhumeretur, verum aperto sepulchro, nihil repperit est praeter pannos sepulchrales, quales Christus Dominus a mortuis resurgens in monumento suo reliquerat', *Ibid.*, pp.348-49. Cf. note 41 above.

<sup>69</sup> COSTERUS, *op. cit.*, pp.364-71.

<sup>70</sup> This process is probably to be seen as a simplified spiritual version of the *ars memorandi*; for the extent to which the process could be carried, see F. A. YATES: *The Art of Memory*, London [1966].



representations of the *Coronation* do not show them), but the fact that this was possible at all provides a remarkable demonstration of the psychological complexity of the response to images. Even if subliminal associations, and those which have nothing to do with religion are omitted, the complexity of choice open to the beholder of images in the seventeenth century could not be more clearly attested.

Now in purely psychological terms all this is perhaps rather obvious, and the foregoing may seem to be couched in terms of truisms which need not be analysed. But the aim of this article is to show that the response to images is amenable to historical investigation as well, and to a greater extent than is generally recognized. There is no reason (other than the difficulty involved) why art historians should not be concerned with the response of people who did not actually write about such matters.<sup>71</sup> But here we are confronted again with the full weight of the problems which an analysis of this kind must raise.

The two texts I have considered were both written by Jesuits, and for fairly specific groups. Nadal's work was originally written for a Jesuit audience,<sup>72</sup> and for novices in particular, while Coster's book was intended for the young (male) members of the Sodality of the Virgin at the College in Douai.<sup>73</sup> But we know from the prefaces to Nadal's book that it had a wider circulation than the audience for whom it was at first conceived, and there can be no doubt that the same applies to the work by Coster, one of the most popular and prolific writers of small devotional handbooks in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.<sup>74</sup> Now although both works would only have been immediately accessible to the Latin reading public, they provide evidence of a mode of response which was not restricted to this audience alone. They are not, of course, unique; indeed, their value depends on their very typicality. They may be counted amongst the most representative works in this period of a tradition which has its roots in much earlier meditational methods (there are some striking similarities, for example, with the *Meditationes de Vita Christi* attributed to St Bonaventure<sup>75</sup>) and which found its expression in a great variety of outlets, ranging from meditations on the rosary to the Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius Loyola, as well as to the meditative practices of

the other religious orders.<sup>76</sup> But the works discussed here are two of the fullest and most complex handbooks of the Counter Reformation in Flanders, with the clearest exposition of their subject-matter. Nadal's book is, of course, of special relevance, as I suggested at the beginning of this article, not only because of its use of actual images and their relationship with paintings by Rubens, but also because of its sophisticated method of annotating these illustrations. In this it was followed by many other works, such as the even more popular books by Johannes David, Antonio Sucquet and Jodocus Andries, all of which were translated into the vernacular, thus ensuring a still wider audience. But the evidence they provide is much less complete, and their illustrations of a decidedly lower quality.<sup>77</sup> The fact that Coster's book was written specifically for youths, rather than restricting its applicability (as one may at first be inclined to think) makes it all the more useful, precisely because it has to spell out all the guidelines for minds not yet practised or proficient in the associative process.

At this point one may encounter several objections which an analysis of this kind is likely to raise. In the first place, have we not here been dealing with the responses of theologians or, at best, the responses which they would have liked to be present in the minds of the populace? In other words, is there not a distinction to be made between what writers such as Nadal and Coster *wanted* people to think and what associations they actually made? The answer is surely that the distinction cannot have been so absolute that there was no common ground between them – especially where one is concerned with popular and thoroughly known sub-

<sup>76</sup> One thinks especially of DAVID's *Veridicus Christianus*, Antwerp [1601], translated as *Christelycken Waerseggher, de principale stucken van t' Christen Geloof en Leven int cort begrijpende, Met een rolle der deugtsaemheyte daer op dienende. Ende een Schildwacht teghen de valsche waersegghers, Tooveraers, enz.*, Antwerp [1603], 8°; of his *Paradisus Sponsae et Sponsae, in quo messis myrrhae et aromatum ex instrumentis ac mysteriis Passionis Christi colligenda ut commoriamur. Et Pancarpium Marianum, septemtriplici titularum serie distinctum, ut in B. Virginis odorem curramus, et Christus formetur in nobis*, Antwerp [1607], 8°; and his *Duodecim Specula, Deum aliquando videre desideranti concinnati*, Antwerp [1610], 8° (all from the Plantin press); of SUCQUET's *Via vitae aeternae . . . iconibus illustrata per Boetium a Bolsuert*, Antwerp, M. Nutius [1620], 8°, translated as *Den wech des Eeuwich Levens*, Antwerp, H. Aertssens [1623]; and of ANDRIES's *Necessaria ad salutem scientia, partim necessitate medi, partim necessitate praecepti, per iconas quinquaginta duas repraesentata*, Antwerp, C. Woons [1654], 12°; and his *Perpetua Crux, sive Passio Jesu Christi a puncto Incarnationis ad extremum vitae; iconibus quadragensi explicata* (together with *Altera perpetua crux Jesu Christi a fine vitae usque ad finem mundi in perpetuo altaris sacrificio*), Antwerp, C. Woons [1649], translated as *Het ghederigh Krus ofte Passie Jesu Christi*, Antwerp, C. Woons [1650]. Most of these received a number of subsequent editions and translations into other languages. The works of David and Sucquet have often been called emblem books, but the description is perhaps not entirely accurate. The above is only a small selection of these author's works; for their other writings, and for concise discussions of their lives, see, in the case of David (1545–1613), F. A. SNELLAERT, in *Bibliographie Nationale de Belgique*, IV, Brussels, [1873], cols. 721–32; the case of Sucquet (1574–1626), A. PONCELET, *Ibid.*, XXIV, Brussels, [1926–29], cols. 237–41; and in the case of ANDRIES (1588–1658), AUGUSTIN DE BACKER with C. SOMMERVOGEL and ALOIS DE BACKER, *Bibliothèque des Ecrivains de la Compagnie de Jésus*, Liège-Lyons [1869–76], I, pp. 18–20, VII, p. 24. Several of these writers – all Jesuits – are referred to briefly in the work by NICOLAÛ cited in note 12 above, pp. 174–9.

<sup>77</sup> Although David in particular merits further analysis, for the evidence that may be found in his works of other aspects of the response to images, especially the sorts of allegorical interpretations current amongst the less visually sophisticated sections of the public.

<sup>71</sup> I hope to deal elsewhere with further aspects of this problem, and in particular with what may be deduced from the strictures of the literate on the responses of the illiterate.

<sup>72</sup> See note 19 above.

<sup>73</sup> *Cuius Virginis patrocinium, ut alacrius imploretis, has vobis offero de vita laudibusque eius L. Meditationes ut pro hebdomadarum totius anni numero, eis si placet utamini*, COSTERUS, *op. cit.*, p. 23 (concluding the 'Praefatio Sodalitati Beatae Virginis Matris in Acquicinctensi Collegii Academiae Duacensis').

<sup>74</sup> Along with Ludovicus Blosius (1506–1565) and Jodocus Andries (1588–1658), to name only two of the most popular of all. For Coster and his writings, see the reference in note 51 above; for the others, see note 76 below.

<sup>75</sup> A useful modern translation is the *Meditations on the Life of Christ, an illustrated manuscript of the fourteenth century*, Paris Bibliothèque Nationale and MS. Ital. 115. Translated by Isa Ragusa, completed from the Latin and edited by R. B. GREEN and I. RAGUSA, Princeton [1961]. For an examination of earlier Netherlandish representations of the Passion which takes into consideration meditational and other literature, and which raises several of the problems outlined here (in addition to raising further notable issues such as the whole question of the use of Old Testament imagery in New Testament contexts), see J. MARROW: 'Circumdedunt me canes multi. Christ's Tormentors in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages and Early Renaissance', *Art Bulletin*, LIX [1977] pp. 167–81. On the thirteenth-century meditational handbooks, see his p. 167 and note 7.

jects.<sup>78</sup> And here a further problem may arise. Clearly, in the case of a subject like the *Assumption*, where the pictorial, literary, and liturgical tradition is of so wide-ranging a nature it would be impossible to determine all the thoughts which such a subject might have generated, or to isolate them. Social groups must also be a determining factor, and I am aware that I have omitted reflections which could have been engendered by the purely aesthetic qualities of the work of art concerned – an omission which may be especially serious in the case of Rubens. But despite the particular affiliations of the writers I have considered, they are inseparable from the general cultural matrix, and they offer meticulous documentation of notions which were current but which would otherwise not have been committed to paper (to a large extent because they were taken for granted). On the other hand – and here one encounters a third objection – it might be argued that few would have paused long enough before a particular work of art to make any of the associations suggested above; perhaps, it might be maintained, most people bestowed no more attention on an image of the *Assumption* than they do in any small village in one of the Catholic countries now. But we are concerned precisely with those who did pause to look, for however long; and I suspect that this argument is an oversimplification of the question of the response to images, even today. Religious images always partake of at least some totemic or supernatural qualities. People may not consciously be aware of the associations they make when they see an image; they may even appear to be more concerned with other things

<sup>78</sup> On the other hand, account has to be taken of the possibility of garbling even the most common and well-established traditions. Just how easily this could happen (in the case of those who were not widely literate but drew on only a few texts for their learning) may be seen in the remarkable example of the miller of the Friuli whose testimony before the Inquisition in the 1580's has been documented by C. GINZBURG: *Il Formaggio e i Vermi, Il Cosmo di un mugnaio del Cinquecento*, Turin [1976].

(even if they are not obviously impressed by its aesthetic qualities). But no mind could free itself of all the associations that any image, especially a religious one, generated. These are complex psychological questions, but they have a historical dimension which art historians have for too long overlooked. Why are some images more venerated than others? What is the relationship between the works of artists acknowledged to be great and popular prints? Between art and pilgrimage, art and healing objects and relics, between art and iconoclasm – to mention only a few possibilities? But such matters must be dealt with separately. Here I have simply been concerned with one aspect of the status of images in the seventeenth century and the response to them. It would be wrong to imply that this is anything else but one of many ways of looking at such problems.

In a field already encumbered with a bibliography larger than most, this article is intended to be no more than a proposal of the direction which future research might take. Instead of the manufacture of increasing numbers of attributions, or the seeking out of yet more influences (both of which areas have been well developed), one might turn to the more immediate context of the art of Rubens. There is much to be discovered about the ways in which people of all social classes and groups responded to it. Most of the illustrated books and devotional literature of his time remain to be explored and would repay close reading. Examination and analysis of these, as well as of run of the mill graphic production in the Southern Netherlands will yield much not only about popular response to religious subjects, but also about levels of expectation, about attitudes to the greatest artists of the time, and so on. The preceding discussion has been intended merely as a sketch of one of the ways in which the vast and still largely unexplored field of seventeenth-century Flemish imagery may be used to illuminate the status of those works of art which are already and rightly well known.

GINO CORTI

## The Agdollo Collection of Paintings: an inventory of 1741

THE name of Gregorio Agdollo as an art collector in Florence during the late 1730's appears in the printed catalogue of an exhibition which took place in that city in 1737.<sup>1</sup> On that occasion Agdollo contributed seven pictures.<sup>2</sup>

The complete list of his collection is now available to scholars,<sup>3</sup> having been found among the papers of a Florentine family. Agdollo's collection was to have been acquired by this family but, as we shall see later, adverse circumstances prevented this.

By the time of the inventory of 24th April 1741, the

Agdollo collection numbered seventy-eight pictures by thirty-seven artists, all specified except for one case. The predominance of seventeenth and eighteenth-century artists reveals the collector's personal taste, especially for Baroque art. However, the Renaissance was also represented by a few but celebrated names: Schiavone, Sarto, Veronese, Titian. The Baroque examples range from the most famous names, such as Reni, Rubens and Poussin, to minor or quite unknown masters such as Monsieur Pitré (probably French) whose name I have been unable to find in any of the contemporary artistic repertories.

The number of pictures by a given artist in the collection varies from a maximum of seven paintings to a single example.

This inventory is a model of its kind because with rare exceptions it is accompanied by the essential information: the subject represented, dimensions and name of the author. No monetary estimates were made, but for the most import-

<sup>1</sup> *Nota dei Quadri e Opere di Scultura esposti per la Festa di San Luca dell' Accademia del Disegno nella loro Cappella e nel Chiostro secondo del Convento dei Padri della SS. Nonziata di Firenze*, Florence [1737].

<sup>2</sup> FABIA BORRONI SALVADORI: 'Le Esposizioni d'Arte a Firenze, 1674-1767', in *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz* [1974], I, p.136. Five out of the seven works exhibited in 1737 are to be found in the 1741 inventory.

<sup>3</sup> See Document No.II.