

CONSTRUCTING CICERO¹

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RESUMO: Este artigo ocupa-se da construção da imagem de Cícero, ligada ao *êthos* do rétor Cícero. Estudei esta questão baseado na ideia de homologia, já que tal procedimento é muito utilizado por poetas e rétores antigos como recurso para consolidar suas argumentações. Como exemplo, observei como essa é construída por Simônides de Céos e em Aristóteles. Daí, para trabalhar com a função da homologia, desenvolvi o mesmo conceito no tratado *Sobre a Invenção* de Cícero, no livro II, em que encontrei a construção do *êthos* ou da *auctoritas* de Cícero como rétor. A fim de iluminar o tema, usei um fragmento de Dionísio de Halicarnasso do *Sobre a Imitação*, uma vez que Cícero compara sua própria obra retórica à pintura de Zêuxis (Helena) e Dionísio usa a mesma pintura para explorar o conceito de imitação.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Cícero; *De Inventione*; Zêuxis; pintura; retórica; homologias.

Introduction

*H*omologies between verbal discourses and non-verbal *images* are frequent in Classical Antiquity. Among the ancients, paintings and sculptures were quite often displaced from their primary function of visual fruition, in order to compose homologies either with poetry or with prose.

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Regarding poetry, Simonides of Ceos, via Plutarch,² is a reference, and Horace³ turned into a canon the maxim: *ut pictura poesis*. Aristotle,⁴ in the *Poetics*,⁵ establishes similarities between painting and poetry, and between poets and painters in order to analyze poetry, and in the *Politics*,⁶ he considers the relation between painting and poetry as a determining factor in children's education. Thus, he brings up the paintings of Pauson, Polignotus, Dionysius and Zeuxis. Quintilian, in his turn, despite the genre difference between his *Institutio Oratoria* and the Aristotelian doctrines, also includes the knowledge of figurative arts as a key element in the orator's education.

This paper intends to discuss a homology elaborated by Cicero in the *De Inventione*, Book II, which concerns the relation between his rhetorical project and a painting by Zeuxis. This discussion seems appropriate, since the points made on the issues concerning this homology tend to sound impressionistic or imprecise, and even problematic, as the term of comparison to Cicero's *opus* no longer exists.

Thus, I intend to interpret Cicero's *auctoritas* as a preceptor, according to the homologies he proposes concerning the elaboration of his doctrines in his *De Inventione*, taking into consideration the type of painting produced by Zeuxis, revising the material culture of that period and observing textual references about it.

Since his work was conceived in his youth, the *auctor* Cicero would lack the authority necessary to confirm his arguments. In this sense, by extension, he borrows Zeuxis' authority in order to compose his *persona docta*, so that, in this treatise, he becomes a painter and his painting is his project of *Ars bene dicendi*.

I. Presuppositions

Before I come to my issue, it is convenient to distinguish three concepts in the anecdote of Zeuxis, which could give rise to misinterpretation. Let me explain, then, why I consider the relationship between painting either with poetry or with prose as homology rather than analogy, or metaphor/ simile.

² Plu., *Ath. Gl.*, 306F.

³ Hor., *Ars* 361 *et seq.*

⁴ Cf. Martins, *op. cit.*, 2008, p. 75.

⁵ Arist., *Po.* 1448a; 1450a; 1461b.

⁶ Arist., *Pol.* 1340a.

The term analogy implies a relation of similitude between pairs of different concepts, as we can observe in the proposition: “As intelligence to opinion, as is science to belief”. In an analogy, we can see that the relations are restricted to the combinations, which join specific pairs intelligence/ opinion and science/ belief. However, the semantic relations are not extended to science/ intelligence or opinion/ belief.

In a metaphor or in a simile, the meanings contained in one subject are transferred to another. Aristotle,⁷ in the propositions “Achilles is a lion” or “Achilles is as a lion”, imparts to the *Iliad*’s hero qualities, which are inherent in that fierce, untamed and wild animal. Therefore, both the metaphor and the simile alter the semantic field of a word. Such process is similar to the construction of an allegory, since, according to Quintilian,⁸ “a continued metaphor develops into allegory”. In this case it is relevant to observe Marcos Martinho’s paper on the sense of allegory in rhetoricians and grammarians.

Homology itself is neither a mechanism intended to alter the meaning of the terms involved (as happens in metaphors, similes or allegories), nor it is an operation, which produces similarities in dissimilar structures (as happens in analogies). When Simonides and Horace approximate painting to sculpture they are suggesting that the compositional structures of both arts must be observed from the same vantage point, since they have the same referent (object of imitation), just operating the same mechanism, imitation, which, nevertheless, results in different types of composition, since they are different arts. The same idea is found in Plato, Aristotle, Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

Homologies between verbal discourse and non-verbal arts, then, are frequent in Classical Antiquity, not only as a way of establishing some artistic unity between diverse techniques, but also as an argumentative procedure which teaches, persuades and delights. However, despite the fact that homology, due to its syntax, has a distinct goal from the figures which work by similarity (metaphor, simile and allegory), it assumes the same functions as these figures. It is, therefore, common to see together metaphorical, allegorical or similar homologies.

It seems that this procedure is at the core of our discussion, since the discursive homology serves discursive argumentative procedures, in diverse discursive genres from lyric poetry to treatises on rhetoric and poetics.

⁷ Arist., *Rhet.* 1406b.

⁸ Quint., *Inst.* 9.2.46. Cf. Martinho, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

When Simonides of Ceos argues that “painting is silent poetry, and poetry painting that speaks...” he first points out that painting is deficient in comparison to poetry, since one is silent while the other, being verbal, speaks. However, in the first half of the homology, which says that “painting is silent poetry”, the poet amplifies the magnitude of the importance of painting, since it contains poetry itself: in this manner, besides being painting proper, it is also poetry. Consequently, despite being deficient, the pictorial core is amplified, since it contains poetry. It is noteworthy that the poet both validates the rules of poetic composition of painting, and proposes a metaphor, since there is a transference of qualities from one element to another.

The second half of this homology is concerned with poetry in proximity (or approximation) with painting. But now, in relation to the first half of the homology, the roles are inverted: what was the subject becomes the predicate, and the predicate becomes the subject. The poet, still amplifying, operates now in the characterization of poetry, having painting as a starting point. However, it should be considered that the predication of the first homology had already made explicit the primacy of painting over poetry, whereas in the second homology he amplifies that which would serve as the amplifying element, since poetry (which is able to supplement the lack of speech of painting), can also possess specific qualities of painting which certainly respond for its capacity to propitiate, let us say, “mental” visualization. In this way, Simonides presents, so to speak, a thesis on his conception of *phantasia*,⁹ since painting is a predicate, target, of poetry.

Aristotle, in his turn, presents some homologies between painting and poetry in his *Poetics*,¹⁰ and at least one in the *Politics*.¹¹ Let us see, then, those in the *Poetics*, since the homology presented in the *Politics* does not seem fitting to our discussion. So, in the *Poetics*, the first homology, 1448a, concerns the object of imitation and brings into discussion Polygnotus’, Pauson’s and Dionysius’ paintings in order to clarify and establish relations between such paintings and the elevated, medium and low poetic genres classified according to *the object of imitation*

⁹ See Arist., *De. An.* 427b.

¹⁰ Arist. *Po.*, 1448a, 1450a, 1461b: only 1448a and 1450a will be discussed in this article.

¹¹ Arist. *Pol.*, 1340a. This excerpt, however, will not be discussed here.

only.¹² Therefore, Polignotus is elevated, Pauson is low and Dionysius is medium according to the objects, which they depict:

Ἐπεὶ δὲ μιμοῦνται οἱ μιμούμενοι πράττοντας, ἀνάγκη δὲ τοῦ τοῦτος ἢ σπουδαίους ἢ φαύλους εἶναι τὰ γὰρ ἦθη σχεδὸν αἰεὶ τούτοις ἀκολουθεῖμόνοις, κακία γὰρ καὶ ἀρετὴ τὰ ἦθη διαφέρουσι πάντες, ἥτοι βελτίονας ἢ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἢ χείρονας ἢ καὶ τοιούτοις, ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς· Πολύγνωτος μὲν γὰρ κρείττους, Παύσων δὲ χείρους, Διονύσιος δὲ ὁμοίους εἴκαζεν.

And since imitators imitate men in action, and such persons are necessarily men of either high or low character – because they, and they alone, almost always develop definite character [for all men differ in badness and goodness of character] – <they imitate men either above or below the average/ or also men like (it?)/, as the painters do. For Polygnotus¹³ used to paint men better than the average and Pauson¹⁴ men who were worse [and Dionysius representative ones] and it is evident that each of the forms of imitation mentioned above also will have these differentiations within it and will be different by virtue of imitating different objects in this way.¹⁵

Consequently, rather than using a simple homology, as Simonides had done, he employs a homology by means of a simile to predicate to poets: “They imitate...as painters do” (ὥσπερ οἱ γραφεῖς).

Aristotle had already said in the *Rhetoric* that a metaphor is more poetic than a simile. What he then did was to distance himself from the use of such poetic language in order to make the doctrinal comparison explicit. Curiously, the above cited paragraph does not place the poet’s image above the painter’s: poet and painter share the same set of qualities – there are no qualities showed by one that are not also showed by the

¹² It is important to observe that Aristotle does not use homologies in order to exemplify imitation, in accord with both media and modes of imitation, but only in accord with the object, as M. Martinho especially pointed out to me, when I presented this paper at the King’s College London.

¹³ Cf. Paus., 1.18.1; 1.22.6; 9.4.2; 9.25.1-31.12. 5th century b.C. wall painter Cf. Plin., *Nat.* 35. 42; 35.58 and 35.122-3. Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 113: *Polignotus was introduced at 48a5 as an example of painter who idealized his figures.*

¹⁴ According to Lucas, in his commentary of the *Poetics*, these are the characters commented by Aristophanes in *The Acharnians*, 854. Lucas, *op. cit.*, p. 64: “[H]e corresponds to Hegemon the parodist, it is possible that he painted caricatures”.

¹⁵ Translation: Else (1957).

other. So, to Aristotle, painter and poet are not only at the same level but also their function as imitators is performed in the same manner.

The second excerpt, 1450a, refers to the constitution of character in tragedies. Aristotle claims that there can be tragedy without characters but not without action:

Ἔτι ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἀγγένοιτο τραγωδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἡθῶν γένοιτ' ἄν· αἱ γὰρ τῶν νέων τῶν πλείστων ἀήθεις τραγωδίαί εἰσίν, καὶ ὅλως ποιηταὶ πολλοὶ τοιοῦτοι, οἷον καὶ τῶν γραφέων Ζεῦξις πρὸς Πολύγνωτον πέπονθεν· ὁ μὲν γὰρ Πολύγνωτος ἀγαθὸς ἠθογράφος, ἡ δὲ Ζεῦξιδος γραφή οὐδὲν ἔχει ἡθός.¹⁶

Both tragedy's verbal art and painting's visual art can be contrived with or without characters. Consequently, while the first (that is, with characters) singularizes, the second (without characters) generalizes.

In other words: the existence of a “characterless” tragedy, on the one hand, does not indicate the absence of dramatic persons but only a tragedy without specific dramatic persons, which are, thus, generalized types; on the other hand, a tragedy with characters is that whose action is enacted by specific and easily recognizable characters; for instance: anger makes Achilles, wit makes Odysseus, piety, Aeneas¹⁷ and so on and so forth.

The paintings of Polygnotus, an ἀγαθὸς ἠθογράφος, can be equated to tragedy that is constituted by characters with historic and mythic status, who are, in consequence, more faithful to their model features. For its part, Zeuxis' paintings, which I would call “generalizing”, present themselves devoid of historically and mythically established specific features. Helen's beauty is a generic beauty, let us say, a *simulacrum*¹⁸ of Beauty and, therefore, not “Beauty” itself, which, if I think platonically, could not be represented, since it exists only as an idea.

The absence of models of tragedies and paintings with these specifications, however, prevents us from assessing the Aristotelian

¹⁶ Arist., *Po.*, 1450a: “Further, a tragedy cannot exist without an action; it can without expression of character. In fact, tragedies of most our modern dramatists are ‘characterless’ and in general many poets are of that sort, like Zeuxis among the painters in relation to Polygnotus; for Polygnotus was a good portrayer of character, while Zeuxis’ painting has no expression of character in it” [translation: Else (1957)].

¹⁷ Aeneas is also known for his capacity to found cities.

¹⁸ Cf. Martins, *op. cit.*, 2011a, p. 156 *et seq.*; Martins, *op. cit.*, 2011b, p. 124 *et seq.*; Martins, *op. cit.*, 2012, p. 19 *et seq.*.

lesson in this instance more accurately. Nevertheless, the reutilization of the homology between Zeuxis' painting and verbal art, recycled centuries after the composition of the *Poetics*, might help to unveil its meaning. Now, let us move on to Cicero and Dionysius of Halicarnassus.

II. Zeuxis in Cicero

At the beginning of book II of his treatise *On Invention* (*De Inventione*), Cicero proposes an anecdote for the book's *exordium*, whose purpose is to establish an allegory,¹⁹ thus, a discursive homology (between verbal and non-verbal images), which is intended to present to the reader his *auctoritas* and his ethos of a rhetorician of unquestionable capacity. This homology, in its turn, certainly diverges from Aristotle's lesson, since Cicero approximates Rhetoric, a theoretical genre, to Zeuxis' specific pictorial art. Therefore, in the place of a homology which would approximate two congeneric arts – painting in different levels and tragedy, comedy or even lyric poetry –, we should accept now a homology between painting and a prose genre whose focus is men like ourselves.

In 2.4, Cicero, right after narrating Zeuxis' anecdote, proposes his conception of Rhetoric reproducing exactly the same operation given by Zeuxis concerning his painting of Helen in Croton:

[2,4] - *Quod quoniam nobis quoque uoluntatis accidit, ut artem dicendi perscriberemus, non unum aliquod proposuimus exemplum, cuius omnes partes, quocumque essent in genere,²⁰ exprimendae nobis necessarie uiderentur; sed omnibus unum in locum coactis scriptoribus, quod quisque commodissime praecipere uidebatur, excerptimus et ex uariis ingenis excellentissima quaeque libauimus. Ex iis enim, qui nomine et memoria digni sunt, nec nihil optime nec omnia praeclarissime quisquam dicere nobis uidebatur. Quapropter stultitia uisa est aut a bene inuentis alicuius recedere, si quo in uitio eius offenderemur, aut ad uitia.²¹*

¹⁹ See Baxandall, *op. cit.*, p. 31-37. Curiously, Victorinus, *RML Halm, op. cit.*, p. 257-258, points out that this whole *praefatio* is a *quasi similitudo*, and so he argues: *Crotoniatae Romani sunt... Zeuxis Tullius*. These relationships there seem to be really a simile, but they form an allegory, since they propose many approximations in the anecdote, constructing a metaphor extended over time.

²⁰ *Genus, generis*: species, quality, type.

²¹ 2.4. "In a similar fashion when the inclination arose in my mind to write a textbook of rhetoric, I did not set before myself some one model which I thought necessary to reproduce in all details, of whatever sort they might be, but after collecting all the works on the subject I excerpted what seemed the most suitable

The first piece of information, which seems to be useful, is the relationship between what is presented in the anecdote, as we shall see, and that which will be observed by Cicero from that moment on. This *quod* – anaphoric *par excellence* – brings back the anecdote of 2.2 and recaptures the idea expressed in the previous paragraphs, in the exordium: “In a similar fashion”, or less literally, “in the same manner”. Thus, the introduction points to what Zeuxis did when painting and to what Cicero, when writing an *Ars dicendi*, will do. The allegory, therefore, repeats the operation of previous homologies, with the difference that it is not a metaphor or simile, but an allegory, since it is a narrative, and thus extended over time. The features of the paintings of the first will be present in the *Ars rhetorica* of the latter.

Zeuxis’ painting, in this way, is a predicate of Ciceronian rhetoric. The qualities contained in the first art are applied to the second. But, what are the qualities of this painting? How does Cicero describe it? Is there a convergence between Cicero’s reading of Zeuxis’ painting and that expressed in Aristotle’s *Poetics* or the one introduced by Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the *De Imitatione (On Imitation)*?

Let us see, then, at the beginning of Book II (1.1), how Cicero describes such painting: first, he presents Zeuxis as a painter who surpasses all the other painters of his time due to the quality of his work (*longe ceteris excellere pictoribus existimabatur*) and reports that he had been invited by the city of Croton to paint a picture of Helen of Troy in the temple of Juno of that city. He says: *Vt excellentem mulieris formae pulchritudinem muta in se imago contineret, Helenae pingere simulacrum uelle dixit* – “He said he wanted to paint a representation (*simulacrum*) of Helen so that the mute image [*muta imago*], in itself [*in se*], would contain the outstanding beauty of the female form”.

The first aspect, which seems fundamental here, is the presentation of the painter: he is superior to all the other painters of his time. If Cicero’s intention is to establish a convergence between his Rhetoric and Zeuxis’ painting, it seems obvious that he will also avail

precepts from each, and so culled the flower of many minds. For each of the writers who are worthy of fame and reputation seemed to say something better than anyone else, but not to attain pre-eminence in all points. It seemed folly therefore, either to refuse to follow the good ideas of any author, merely because I was offended by some fault in his work, or to follow the mistakes of a writer who had attracted me by some correct precept”. [translation: Hubbell (2006)]

himself of the painter's *auctoritas*. Accordingly, Cicero also exceeds all the other rhetoricians (*rhetores*) of his time.²²

The second question which must be addressed concerns the painter's wish (*dixit uelle*) and, consequently, Cicero's wish as a rhetorician, who says: "To paint a representation of Helen (*simulacrum*) so that the mute image, in itself, would contain the outstanding beauty of the female form". This information approximates allegorically the beauty of female form to the excellence of representation of the rhetorical art desired by Cicero, that is: an *Ars rhetorica* which would contain in itself the outstanding beauty of rhetorical form.²³

In a subsequent moment, the artful orator relates that the people of Croton, the receptors of the painting, consider the painter to be the best in the genre of painting whose object is the female form and/ or beauty. Quoting Cicero: *Quod Crotoniateae, qui eum muliebri in corpore pingendo plurimum aliis praestare saepe acceperunt, libenter audierunt* – ("This delighted the Crotonians, who had often heard that he surpassed all others in the portrayal of women"). So, by means of this allegory, Cicero brings into his text the audience's assent to his proposition of Rhetoric in the same manner that the Crotonians had done with the famous painter.

In 2.2, we find the core of both the allegory and the Ciceronian homology:

²² Cf. Grube, *op. cit.*, p. 234: "The early unfinished work must be the *De Inuentione*, which must then have been published when Cicero was, at most, in his early twenties. It is a study of *inuentione* only, that is, of various types of issues and arguments to be used on different occasions; but the introductory chapters to each of its two books clearly express some important general principles to which Cicero remained faithful to the end of his life.

The introduction to the second book might well be called the creed of an eclectic; it is typical of the times as well as of Cicero, and he followed this method in philosophy as well as in rhetoric. He tells the story of the painter Zeuxis who, before proceeding to paint a picture of Helen of Troy, chose, from the most beautiful women of Croton, not one model but five. (...)

There is no reason to doubt that this is a true account of Cicero's method. He undoubtedly read a great deal. We should not, however, picture him working like a modern scholar, carefully verifying his references at every step. That was not Cicero's way, nor indeed the way of ancient writers generally. They trusted their well-trained memory, and Cicero's memory was excellent, but not infallible."

²³ Cf. Benediktson, *op. cit.*, p. 170-177.

[2] *Nam Zeuxis ilico quaesiuit ab iis, quasnam uirgines formosas haberent. Illi autem statim hominem deduxerunt in palaestram atque ei pueros ostenderunt multos, magna praeditos dignitate. Etenim quodam tempore Crotoniatae multum omnibus corporum uiribus et dignitatibus antisteterunt atque honestissimas ex gymnico certamine uictorias domum cum laude maxima rettulerunt. Cum uerorum igitur formas et corpora magno hic opere miraretur: 'Horum', inquit illi, 'sorores sunt apud nos uirgines. Quare, qua sint illae dignitate, potes ex his suspicari'. 'Praebete igitur mihi, quaeso', inquit, 'ex istis uirginibus formonsissimas, dum pingo id, quod pollicitus sum uobis, ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo ueritas transferatur'.²⁴*

This amusing passage raises a few questions: one of them concerns the pre-requisites for model selection in Zeuxis and Cicero. As the representation of Helen is a *simulacrum* of the beauty of female form, it would be only natural for the painter to look for the model among the most beautiful Crotonians in order to compose his own Helen. His intention to search for his models among the Crotonians is fundamental, since it would not be plausible for the painter to ignore their criteria for female beauty; however, he also needed to verify the validity of his own beauty precepts among his so called “clients”.

More than just amusement, both the initial negative of the city’s inhabitants to present the maidens and Zeuxis’s refusal of the maidens’ brothers as models, demand a more attentive analysis to determine more than just the effect that this passage provokes. The painter seeks a model that, as such, must contain in substance the elements, which represent beauty for the inhabitants of Crotona. The model sought must be of the same gender – female – of the element to be painted (Helen of Troy).

To Cicero, maybe, neither the first nor the second question interfere with the homology he wants to establish, but this homology deserves a more detailed investigation. If we understand that Zeuxis is

²⁴ Cic., *De Inv.* 2.2.2: 2.2 “For Zeuxis immediately asked them what girls they had of surpassing beauty. They took him directly to the wrestling school and showed him many very handsome young men. For at one time the men of Croton excelled all in strength and beauty of body, and brought home the most glorious victories in athletic contests with the greatest distinction. As he was greatly admiring the handsome bodies, they said, ‘There are in our city the sisters of these men; you may get an idea of their beauty from these youths’. ‘Please send me then the most beautiful of these girls, while I am painting the picture that I have promised, so that the true beauty may be transferred from the living model to the mute likeness’” [translation: Hubbell (2006)].

not concerned with Beauty in itself, but with beauty as seen by the inhabitants of the city, the idealistic tone frequently attributed both to this passage and to Zeuxis' painting will be eliminated.²⁵ Beauty itself cannot be represented, *doxa*, in the world of the senses, so neither Zeuxis nor Cicero are dealing with it.

On the other hand, in Cicero's terms, or rather, rhetorically, it is impossible to establish a homology between unequal subjects. Thus, what to Zeuxis is determined by the gender of the model, to Cicero will be, within the allegory created, determined by the textual genre of the model. Accordingly, the passage is essential to the comprehension of Cicero's project.

The last question raised by this short passage is Zeuxis' final statement: *Dum pingo id, quod pollicitus sum uobis, ut mutum in simulacrum ex animali exemplo ueritas transferatur* – “While I paint that which I promised you in order that, to the mute portrait from a living model, truth is transferred” (*ueritas transferatur*). The transference of truth to the represented being, achieved from the observation of concrete reality, is the delimitation of a Ciceronian verisimilitude. Again, the question here is not Truth in itself, but solely the attribution of a certain truth – the Crotonian truth – to the *simulacrum*. It is necessary to seem true and not to be true. Moreover, Zeuxis knows that such a thing is impossible (to be true), since he is painting Helen's portrait and Helen is dead. Therefore, such model, so to speak, is a “ruined ruin”. Besides that, it belongs to the mythical realm, and consequently, is essentially *res ficta*, or better still, in this specific instance, *res picta*, since it is a simulacrum. Even if it were the portrait of an existing model and, as such, based on visual and concrete reality, it would still be a representation which, mediated by the painter, is and will always be subject to idiosyncrasies, being, thus, always in the sphere of verisimilitude, no matter how much it is based on a model which might even be historical and not mythical.

But what would be the importance of this question, presented in the anecdote, to Cicero's project? It seems to us that in Cicero's works there is an indication to the interlocutor that what is being proposed as a doctrine is, from the delimitation of the models studied at the Roman schools of rhetoric, a possible synthesis, a gathering which, according to the common pattern among Romans, is admittedly *apta* besides being

²⁵ Against Benediktson's arguments. See Benediktson, *op. cit.*, p. 70-177.

dulce et utile. That, thus, delimitates a verisimilitude and ascribes Cicero's *auctoritas*:

[3] *Tum Crotoniatae publico de consilio uirgines unum in locum conduxerunt et pictori quam uellet eligendi potestatem dederunt. Ille autem quinque delegit; quarum nomina multi poetae memoriae prodiderunt, quod eius essent iudicio probatae, qui pulchritudinis habere uerissimum iudicium debuisset. Neque enim putauit omnia, quae quaereret ad uenustatem, uno se in corpore reperire posse ideo, quod nihil simplici in genere omnibus ex partibus perfectum natura expoliuit. Itaque, tamquam ceteris non sit habitura quod largiatur, si uni cuncta concesserit, aliud alii commodi alique adiuncto incommo muneratur.*²⁶

Cicero shows the construction of what I would call the “Zeuxis’ paradigm”, since the painter who selected the most significant items of beauty in each one of the maidens he had previously chosen (*ille autem quinque deligit*), as an *auctoritas* in this genre of painting, puts these elements together in a single representation. The transference of the allegory, thus, continues, and Cicero not only points out how he constructed his own repertoire,²⁷ but also indicates that his authority rests in his power of selection, which is conceded to him by his public (*potestatem elegendi dederunt*), as it had happened to the painter of Heracleia, Zeuxis.

Another question raised by this passage is the capacity of *techne* to correct, so to speak, nature. If Nature does not concede to a single form all the elements capable of giving the form of Beauty to the whole, it is necessary that the artist gathers them, constructing his paradigm of perfection or his model of beauty. Thus, *auctoritas* is based on *potestas elegendi*, which on its turn is based, as we have seen, on the *aptum* with which both the painter and the *rhetorician* build up their objects. In the first case, an end in itself; in the latter, a means to an end.

²⁶ Cic., *De Inv.* 2.2.3: (3) “Then the citizens of Croton by a public decree assembled the girls in one place and allowed the painter to choose whom he wished. He selected five, whose names many poets recorded because they were approved by the judgment of him who must have been the supreme judge of beauty. He chose five because he did not think all the qualities which he sought to combine in a portrayal of beauty could be found in one person, because in no single case has Nature made anything perfect and finished in every part. Therefore, as if she would have no bounty to lavish on the others if she gave everything to one, she bestows some advantage on one and some on another, but always joins with it some defect” [translation: Hubbell (2006)].

²⁷ *Copia rerum et uerborum*.

Let us now observe how and why Dionysius of Halicarnassus uses this same anecdote about Zeuxis in his *De Imitatione*.

IV. Zeuxis in Dionysius of Halicarnassus

“Οτι δει τοις των αρχαιων εντυγχάνειν συγγράμμασιν, ἴν’ εντευθεν μὴ μόνον τῆς ὑποθέσεως τὴν ὕλην ἀλλὰ καὶ τὸν τῶν ἰδιωμάτων ζῆλον χορηγηθῶμεν. Ἡ γὰρ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος ὑπὸ τῆς συνεχούς παρατηρήσεως τὴν ὁμοίότητα τοῦ χαρακτήρος ἐφέλκεται. Ὅποιόν τι καὶ γυναῖκα ἀγροίκου παθεῖν ὁ μῦθος λέγει· ἀνδρὶ, φασὶ, γεωργῶ τὴν ὄψιν αἰσχυρῶ παρέστη δέος, μὴ τέκνων ὁμοίων γένηται πατὴρ· ὁ φόβος δὲ αὐτὸν οὗτος εὐπαιδίας ἐδίδαξε τέχνην. Καὶ εἰκόνας παραδείξας εὐπρεπεῖς εἰς αὐτὰς βλέπειν εἴθισε τὴν γυναῖκα· καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα συγγενόμενος αὐτῇ τὸ κάλλος εὐτύχησε τῶν εἰκόνων. Οὕτω καὶ λόγων μιμήσεσιν ὁμοιότης τίκεται, ἔπᾶν ζηλώσῃ τις τὸ παρ’ ἐκάστῳ τῶν παλαιῶν βέλτιον εἶναι δοκοῦν καὶ καθὰ περ ἐκ πολλῶν ναμάτων ἐν τι συγκομίσας ρεῦμα τοῦτ’ εἰς τὴν ψυχὴν μετοχετεύσῃ. Καὶ μοι παρίσταται πιστώσασθαι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον ἔργῳ· Ζεῦξις ἦν ζωγράφος, καὶ παρὰ Κροτωνιατῶν ἐθαυμάζετο· καὶ αὐτῶ τὴν Ἑλένην γράφοντι γυμνὴν γυμνὰς ἰδεῖν τὰς παρ’ αὐτοῖς ἐπέτρεψαν παρθένους· οὐκ ἐπειδὴ περ ἦσαν ἅπασαι καλαί, ἀλλ’ οὐκ εἰκὸς ἦν ὡς παντάπασιν ἦσαν αἰσχυραί· ὁ δ’ ἦν ἄξιον παρ’ ἐκάστη γραφῆς, ἔς μίαν ἡθροίσθη σώματος εἰκόνα, καὶ πολλῶν μερῶν συλλογῆς ἐν τι συνέθηκεν ἡ τέχνη τέλειον καλὸν εἶδος. Τοιγαροῦν πάρεστι καὶ σοὶ καθὰ περ ἐν θεάτρῳ παλαιῶν σωμάτων ἰδέας ἐξιστορεῖν καὶ τῆς ἐκείνων ψυχῆς ἀπανθίζεσθαι τὸ κρεῖττον, καὶ τὸν τῆς πολυμαθείας ἔρανον συλλέγοντι οὐκ ἐξίτηλον χρόνῳ γενησομένην εἰκόνα τυποῦν ἀλλ’ ἀθάνατον τέχνης κάλλος.²⁸

²⁸ D. H., *De Im.* 31.1: “For this reason, we must put together the ancient works in order that we are not only oriented towards the argument matter but also to the desire to surpass the particularities of each of these works. In fact, through continuous observation, the reader’s mind assimilates the genre’s characteristics, as legend says happened to a peasant’s wife. It is said that a peasant, who was very ugly, was afraid to father children that would be as ugly as he was. This same fear, though, taught him the art of fathering beautiful children. He gathered beautiful images and made his wife to grow used to contemplating them. Then, when he united with her, he was able to generate the beauty of the images. In the same manner, similitude is

The first observation that must be made about this passage of the *De Imitatione* is precisely the alternative ending, which is determined by the work where the reference is inserted. Whereas in Cicero the reference appears in a rhetorical treatise, which addresses invention, in Dionysius it appears in a treatise on imitation. So, the first is part of a rhetorical construction, since it is the moment of selection of both arguments and its respective *topoi*, and the latter deals with the observance of tradition in the work's execution.

Dionysius also counsels those who wish to compose a rhetorical piece to be in constant and direct contact with ancient works so that they can derive from those both the matter and the will to emulate. Besides, he says: "Through continuous observation, the reader's mind assimilates the genre's characteristics".

To illustrate, initially the author presents a *narration*, which tells the story of an ugly peasant who was afraid his ugliness would be passed down to his offspring. This fear led him to show, innumerable times, beautiful images to his wife so that she would learn to have beautiful sons and daughters. To this story, the author adds Zeuxis' anecdote, with some variations in relation to Cicero's account. However, he presents an excellent conclusion, saying that, "from the selection of several parts, *techne* realized a unique, perfect and beautiful form".

One of the statements that, if not fundamental, is at least important, refers to Helen's nudity and, consequently, to Zeuxis' painting models. The fact that the painting was a nude reinforces the argument of transformation of nature by *techne* at all levels and, in this sense, it is in perfect agreement with Cicero's, despite the lack of such reference in his text.

generated by the imitation of discourses, whenever someone seeks to rival with that which seems to be the best in each one of the ancients and, as if uniting several streams in a single torrential flow, canalizes it to his own mind. It occurs to me to confirm with an example what I have just said. Zeuxis was a painter highly admired by the inhabitants of Croton and those, when he was painting a nude of Helen, told him to look at the girls of the city, naked, not because they were all beautiful, but because it would not be natural that they should be ugly in every aspect. That which existed in each one that was worthy of being painted, he put together in the representation of a single body. Hence, from the selection of several parts, *techne* realized a unique, perfect and beautiful form. You also, in the same way, have the possibility to look in the theater for the forms of ancient bodies, to gather the best of its spirit and, when adding to all that the gift of erudition, to mold not a figure which will be spent by time, but the immortal beauty of art".

Another question, now in disagreement with Cicero's text, has to do with the fact that the models were not necessarily beautiful in all parts of their bodies; it was enough, thus, to be beautiful in some aspects. This indication contributes to the idea of beauty constructed in parts or fragmentarily. Thus, the correction of nature is highlighted by the painter's selection criteria. In the same excerpt it can also be noted, through the comparison of the two authors' versions, the passive role of the painter in relation to his choices: the most beautiful maidens are offered to him. This points to a criterion of rhetorical *aptum/ decorum* much stricter in the Greek than in the Latin author: the selection is given beforehand and the beauty criteria of the Crotonians must be apprehended by the painter. Conversely, in Cicero, the painter has an active role in the selection, which leads to a previous reading of the *aptum*.

Therefore, I conclude that both Cicero in the *On Invention (De Inventione)* and Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the *On Imitation* and, naturally, Zeuxis, operate a technique mediated by *ingenium* in order to build up paradigms of perfection, compositional canons, which are not related to the Platonic thesis of perfection and beauty.

Cicero's approximation to Zeuxis', specifically, usually contributes to an interpretation of his works only through a Platonic point of view, which is a misconception; instead I must nuance it, proposing, perhaps, a Ciceronian canon at the service of rhetorical *decorum*, as the painting of Zeuxis will also be for its respective art.

Finally, it happens that the reflection raised by the anecdote, and, consequently, both the construction of the Ciceronian allegory and the establishment of a discursive homology are at the service not only of the perfection and beauty which are resultant of this art – which, in fact, can produce images that are superior to those offered by nature – , but also of the construction of a rhetorical authority which is not built up from a similitude between techniques, but between artists. Thus, Cicero builds up his image as a Zeuxis of Rhetoric, not due to the type of painting developed by the latter, but, rather, due to his position among the pictorial authorities.

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