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EDITOR’S NOTE

This text belongs to the conference proceedings of « Charles de La Fosse and the Arts in France around 1700 », edited by Béatrice Sarrazin and Olivier Bonfait.

1 Louis XIV allegedly drew the difference between his royal residencies in the sentence: “J’ai fait Versailles pour ma Cour, Marly pour mes amis.” Jules Hardouin-Mansart, who directed the architectural works at the Château of Marly, strove to satisfy the sovereign’s desire for a residential space of sumptuous intimacy and controlled privacy, where the governing protocols Versailles were subverted.

2 The Grand Salon, situated in the centre of the château’s cubic structure, was a locus of social activities that emitted what we might now call “vibes” to the private quarters of the palace. The Salon housed musical recitals and theatre performances, among other events, to which the king invited only select guests. By 1699 the king increased his visits to Marly throughout the year, and the structural changes, including for the heating system, became necessary. Jules Hardouin-Mansart, Surintendant des Bâtiments du Roi and already the administrator at Marly for ten years, was in charge of the rapid renovation and redecoration of the Grand Salon before the winter of 1700. The architect had attended assiduously to the king’s wishes for decorating the château’s central space. When the king could not find any combination of tableaux from his collection pleasing to his taste, Hardouin-Mansart proposed commissioning four new paintings by
The king replied on 14 September 1699:
"Je suis de votre avis, il faut faire travailler à quatre tableaux comme vous le proposez, il faut bien choisir les peintres et ne pas les presser pour qu’ils soient beaux."

The king’s response did not reveal whether the theme of the Four Seasons had been previously discussed between him and his architect, or if the latter had proposed the theme, which seemed well-suited for the chateau that was designed to offer the king the pleasures of rustic tranquillity all year round.

The transitoriness of time as well as the transformation of matter was much on Jules Hardouin-Mansart’s mind during the 1699. A rapid refurbishing of the Grand Salon in Marly demanded by the king, was only one of many tasks that Hardouin-Mansart had to attend to that year, when he became the Surintendant des bâtimens du roi. Yet Marly, a “private” royal project, was no less important than “les grands travaux” in progress, such as the Hôtel des Invalides, as both types had to create two complementary images of the king – a private, ageing man seeking the pleasures of solitude, on the one hand, and the eternal ruler of the nation and the most Catholic king, on the other. Hardouin-Mansart trusted the task of a speedy execution of the paintings for the Grand Salon to the artists he had known since the decoration of the Trianon de marbre in 1688. As Hardouin-Mansart wisely decided, there was no better subject for the project than to orchestrate the four lead artists around the Ovidian theme of transformation and cyclicity. Charles de La Fosse, the oldest, and naturally the foreman of the group, painted Autumn, Jean Jouvenet, also a student of Le Brun, Winter, Louis de Boullogne, Summer, and Antoine Coypel, the youngest artist in the group, Spring (figs 1–4). The decoration of the Grand Salon became a collective work of four contemporaries united by a propitious theme, relatively free of pressure with respect to its iconography or the harmonization of individual styles.
Fig. 1: Charles de la Fosse, *Bacchus and Ariadne*, 1699, oil on canvas, 241 × 185 cm. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon.
Fig. 2: Antoine Coypel, *The Spring, or Zephyr and Flora*. 1699, oil on canvas, 242 × 185 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv 8685, déposé au Musée-Promenade, Marly-le-Roi.
Fig. 3: Louis de Boullogne le Jeune, *Summer, or Ceres*, oil on canvas, 235 × 180. Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen, D.819.4.

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The four paintings in the Grand Salon were placed well above eye level, over the new chimneys topped with high mirrors. None of the individual paintings aspired to the singularity of a tableau hung in a gallery or a cabinet that had to “pull the viewer in”, as Roger de Piles had suggested a painting should do thirty years earlier (fig. 5). The tableaux in the Grand Salon had to perform as an ensemble, a kind of a musical quartet, though differently from the uniformed visual orchestras of Versailles. In this new type of ensemble, the paintings had to pitch their own timbres and reach the viewer not in a linear manner of the didactic allegories in Versailles, but in a harmony of different voices.
This essay examines Charles de La Fosse's *Bacchus and Ariadne, or The Allegory of Autumn* as an example of the artist’s allegorical thinking that had evolved resonantly in his late style. It analyzes the artist’s mode of allegorization in two interrelated aspects: La Fosse’s individual visual *poiesis* and its bearing on a certain period in the development of French painting at the end of the seventeenth century. Through the example of La Fosse’s *Autumn*, the paper seeks to show how the ensemble of paintings from the Grand Salon signals the moment when the French academic school, represented by its leading artists, coalesces into its new stage, and how these artists’ practice turns from a logos-driven allegories and symbols to more complex, introspective allegories grounded in a pictorial medium.

The theory of allegory developed by the literary historian Paul de Man serves here the purpose of separating “allegory” as a conventional genre of seventeenth-century painting from “allegory” as a mode of pictorial thinking, a contributing factor of visual *poiesis*, through which the visual meaning is produced. De Man’s concepts of allegory are instrumental to my study of a specific work by La Fosse, because they allow shifting the emphasis to the rhetorical definition of allegory, one that could enrich the hermeneutic, or typological approach, an established interpretive tool in art history. For De Man, “l’allégorie nomme le processus rhétorique par lequel le texte littéraire se déplace d’une direction phénoménale, orientée vers le monde, à une direction grammaticale, orientée vers le langage.”

The orientation towards the rhetorical fluctuation of language, if one thinks of this language in visual terms, highlights several pertinent aspects in the development of the
French school of painting at the cusp of the eighteenth century. This includes its growing recognition of the multiplicity and heterogeneity of sources and the insufficiency of certain authoritative theoretical approaches, often unresolvable in practice instead of a belated partisanship in the quarrel between the supporters of the disegno (drawing) and coloris (colour), a model that had been already extensively studied in history. The doubts in the infallibility of theory and claims for liberty in choosing the models from the past contribute to the peculiar stance of French painting at the dawn of modernity.

**Ovid in The Seasons of Marly**

Two of the seasons in the Marly cycle, those of Autumn and Spring, were represented by couples communicating in the gallant mode: Antoine Coypel’s Zéphir et Flore as Spring posited opposite La Fosse’s Bacchus et Ariadne as Autumn. Louis de Boullogne and Jean Jouvenet represented, respectively, Summer and Winter by a single figure also in a corresponding fashion. To the seventeenth-century viewer, the mythological couples from Spring and Autumn were distinctly associated with *The Metamorphoses* of Ovid, one of the most influential texts in seventeenth-century culture. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* supplied a plethora of themes for the baroque arts. In the France of the second part of the seventeenth century, Ovid became one of the prime sources for the gallant mode in poetry, with examples often tinged with elegiac and sentimental tones. The *Fasti* and *Ars Amatoria*, rendered in French translations (France also championed other modern European cultures of the period in making these translations available in parallel texts), equipped learned society with the language to express love in an abundant, prolix and sophisticated manner. The *Art of Love*, translated into modern French, expanded the emotional stimuli of the public as much as it enriched literary and other modes of artistic expressions. Painting, sculpture, poetry, music and theatre propagated the mode of elegant love and sensual responsiveness to courtly and intellectual audiences. The 1697 re-edition of Isaac Benserade’s oeuvre recalled in the memories of Louis XIV’s generation his 1676 *Les Métamorphoses d’Ovide en rondeaux* commissioned by Louis XIV for the education of the Dauphin, along with the numerous ballets invented by the poet in which the king shined in his younger years. The redecoration of the Grand Salon continued the Ovidian themes that had already infused the fabric of life at the king’s private retreat.

The theme of the revolution of nature had been already developed in Marly’s majestic gardens. The divine cosmology was confirmed by the symmetry of the general plan of the chateau and axial connections with the garden. No power of geometry however, could secure the monarch from the melancholy of ageing. The official propaganda that claimed the reign of Louis XIV had achieved its pinnacle made the idea of change even more sensitive. Charles Perrault’s 1687 poem “Le Siècle de Louis le Grand”, a eulogy to the reign of Louis XIV, alluded to the immortal, static image of the king, that the decorations of Versailles, among others, helped to fabricate. By contrast, the setting of the Château of Marly subdued the Versaillian permanence and constructed a more “organic” image of the king, that of a private persona tinged with a lyrical palette. By fleeing to Marly, as Marc Fumaroli remarked, “the king signified symbolically not particularly his age but the fact that his state, neither in the times of war nor in peace, no longer needed his visibility and physical mobility, but existed by itself as a panoramic site greater than any historical incidents”. 12
The theme of the seasons was important in Louis XIV’s political iconography. The evocation of the seasons in the gardens and Château de Marly’s Grand Salon recalled the premise, if not the iconography, of the cycle *The Seasons* woven at the Gobelins in 1664 after the designs of Charles Le Brun and Adam Frans van der Meulen. Each of the four seasons as depicted in the tapestries represented the king through one of his domains, and two of them, those of *Autumn* and *Spring*, had portraits of the twenty-six-year-old king on horseback set in medallions held by the allegorical figures. The designs of the *Seasons* and the *Elements* series were circulated as prints before the first edition of the tapestries was issued. The publication of *Les tapisseries du Roi*, which explained the tapestries’ complex allegorical programs, was a cultural monument to the glorious debut of Louis XIV’s reign. In the Château de Marly, however, the allegories of the seasons required no explanatory texts or guidance, as the setting precluded any specific interpretive code but called for intuition and introspection.

Not by mere accident, the king’s correspondence with Hardouin-Mansart on the subject of the redecoration of the château intensified in September 1699. The autumnal motif of the harvest, with its liberating and renewing power of the bacchanal, had earlier been used in the iconography of the king. By the late 1680s the king began embracing the concept of otium, which had been already present in the culture of Parisian salons for at least a half a century. The theme of Bacchus, as Eleutheros, a liberator of energies and desires, matched the function of Marly as a counter-space to the official Versailles. The first grand fête de Marly, on 1 November 1683, marked the king’s secret marriage to Madame de Maintenon, although the birthday of the Dauphin served as an official pretext for the event. The king’s marriage fulfilled the premises of *galanterie* and *préciosité*, the concepts that pervaded the minds of aristocratic salons for some time.

In 1699 La Fosse was the oldest in the quartet of artists selected by Hardouin-Mansart to decorate the central space of Louis XIV’s private palace. Only two years older than the king, he was a true contemporary of the Grand siècle of Louis XIV and witnessed the apogee of French political and aesthetic hegemony. La Fosse, who assisted Charles Le Brun in almost every major project after his return from Italy in 1664, appeared as a pundit of colourism despite his master’s adhesion to the values of *disegno*, though La Fosse seemed to cull all of his intellectual considerations into practice rather than theory. His nomination as director of the Académie Royale de Peinture et de Sculpture in 1699, soon after Hardouin-Mansart became the institution’s official Protector, has been interpreted as a “victory” of the colourists in art-historical narratives, though one might doubt that such nomination would be awarded as a prize for theoretical battles fought thirty years earlier. The legacy of the *disegno-colore* debates along with La Fosse’s sensuous application of colour in building forms left its enduring stamp on the construction of his artistic personality, that the 2015 exhibition of his works in the Château of Versailles effectively developed.

If the eloquence and consistency of La Fosse’s colourist vocation still calls for qualifiers such as “light and charming”, and as such opposite to theoretical concerns of logocentric defenders of *disegno*, the visual delights produced by his brush do not contradict his potential to work “allegorically”. La Fosse’s *Allegory of Autumn as Bacchus and Ariadne* bears, at first sight, no iconographic enigmas. The figure of Bacchus, the god of the vine and harvest, and the zodiac sign of Libra, corresponding to the month of September, assure the emblematic meaning of the
work. The warm tonality of the tableau, enriched by burnt-gold hues, connotes the glow of the descending sun and further supports the certainty of the iconographic sign.

**Allegory or symbol**

The word “allegory” added to the title of La Fosse’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* in current catalogues seems redundant but still, if we continue to qualify it as an allegory, what meaning does it evoke? In literary theory allegory signifies “other speech”, or an allegory allows the speaking of something other (*allegorein*), or to speak other than publicly (*allos agorein*). Paul de Man, in his classic essay “The Rhetoric of Temporality”, drew attention to the difference between allegory and symbol as theorized especially in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries:

In the world of the symbol it would be possible for the image to coincide with the substance, since the substance and its representation do not differ in their being but only in their extension: they are part and whole of the same set of categories. Their relationship is one of simultaneity, which, in truth, is spatial in kind, and in which the intervention of time is merely a matter of contingency, whereas, in the world of allegory, time is the originary constitutive category. The relationship between the allegorical sign and its meaning (*signifié*) is not decreed by dogma.\(^\text{21}\)

In the light of De Man’s statement, the first and the most obvious layer of meaning in La Fosse’s painting functions more as the symbol of the season, granted that the sign of Libra induces immediate recognition in the viewer.

The two figures in La Fosse’s painting bring more complexity to the first layer of meaning. Identifying the figures of Bacchus and Ariadne in them would not be a problem for his viewers, particularly those who were fortunate enough to be invited to Marly. Whether they refer directly to the season of harvest, or if they imply other considerations at once is a question worth considering. Who plays Bacchus and who becomes his Ariadne in this case? Unquestionably, both figures originate in Titian’s iconography but at the same time evoke Rubens, in the manner La Fosse treats the glow enveloping Ariadne’s body and the streaming of her hair. Thematically, both figures make the viewer anticipate the glorious finale of the Ovidian story – the marriage of Ariadne and Bacchus – that received its iconic representation in the Palazzo Farnese painted by Annibale Carracci.

The iconography of Carracci’s famous fresco stood as a shared visual resource for the late-seventeenth century artists and connoisseurs. Beside the distribution of the printed images from the Palazzo Farnese, copies from the famous ceiling were on display at the Hôtel de La Vrillière, ten on the ground and two at the extremes of the upper gallery. These copies were modelled after the *Album of Drawings* executed by François Perrier and his assistants in Rome during the decoration of the Farnese gallery.\(^\text{22}\) A copy of the Carracci ceiling served as a frame to La Vrillière’s gallery, where contemporary Italian masters of Bolognese and Roman extraction, such as Reni, Guercino, Pietro da Cortona and Alessandro Turchi, were displayed along with Nicolas Poussin, the harbinger of French art. The gallery, in its many cultural functions, was also a site for study for the young French artists of La Fosse’s generation.

La Fosse made Titian’s *Bacchus and Ariadne* recognizable enough to establish its role as his prime reference point (**fig. 6**). By retaining the pink cape of Bacchus, La Fosse alluded to the riches of the Venetian master’s lush palette. Placing the figure of god with its floating
cape against the muted ochre, instead of blue, horizon the French painter subdued the boisterous ambiance of the original. The French artist also transformed Titian’s alert panthers leading the chariot of Bacchus into a couple of lethargic animals tucked into the back of the canvas; then he dispensed with the noisy cortege of satyrs and nymphs, leaving only the dog – significantly of a different colour though the same type as Titian’s – to bark at the god intruding upon his crying mistress.

Fig. 6: Titian, Bacchus and Ariadne, 1520–1523, oil on canvas, 176.5 × 191 cm. National Gallery, London, NG35.

In choosing the stances of his figures, La Fosse created his personal trajectory of references, one that looped from the Venetians to the Bolognese. As a learned artist, he could not omit another famous type of the seventeenth-century Ariadne, that of Guido Reno. Reni’s multi-figured composition Bacchus and Ariadne on the Isle of Naxos (1637–1640) for Queen Henrietta Maria of England, was presumably destroyed in France by the widow of Michel Particelli d’Emery. In Reni’s invention that Malvasia described as the last great work of the Bolognese master survived, however, in the print by Giovanni Battista Bolognini (fig. 7).
Referencing a destroyed painting, or a legend of its destruction, might have been an allegorical gesture as well, as the painting was meant as a wedding gift to the Bourbon princess, Louis XIV’s aunt. The laudatory poem composed by Gioseffo Maria Grimaldi highlighted the painting’s “forma dilicata, d’aspetto reale, e di grazia divina” making the emulation of these poetic qualities rather than the painting’s formal components even more desirable. La Fosse was perhaps too young to see Reni’s painting in the flesh but its myth, supported by the etched copy, made it a considerable reference for the future renditions on the subject. La Fosse’s evocation of the destroyed Reni was fluid and transitory: the attitude of the head of the French artist’s Ariadne and her stretched right arm recalled the figure of Venus from the destroyed painting, while the draperies of the cape echoed the figure of Ariadne in Reni’s earlier painting on the same subject (fig. 8). The earlier Bacchus and Ariadne, as Stephen D. Pepper proposed, rendered the theme of love in the scherzo mode, tinged with irony and a slight leer towards the characters.
24 The differentiation among the pictorial modes instead of the genres became an important theoretical concern of seventeenth-century art, which inspired Poussin, among other artists, to rethink the art of painting in terms of lyric poetry and music.27 The theme of modes and, more generally, of a theoretical rapprochement between painting and music circulated in La Fosse’s artistic milieu. These themes deserve to be considered further, particularly in relation to the growing melomania of the court of Louis XIV, and especially in his family.28

25 In La Fosse’s cultural formation, the process of allegorein – that is, speaking of “something other” – presumed also looking back to classical prototypes, the lingua franca of seventeenth-century art. There was no big revelation for the seventeenth-century enlightened viewer that La Fosse’s Bacchus and Ariadne resembled The Apollo of Belvedere and The Sleeping Ariadne, better known as A Dying Cleopatra to the early-modern students of antiquity. Earlier seventeenth-century artists had already used these staples of classical vocabulary to remake them into other mythological characters by adding certain formal inflections of personal styles. These inflections probably meant for La Fosse as much as the originals, because the Ariadnes and Bacchuses of Titian, Carracci or Reni for that matter, created their own authority of poetic totality, different from the ancient prototypes. These multiple visual references – modern and ancient alike – functioned for La Fosse not like a Warburgian sequence of involuntary returns but as a work of his artistic imagination legitimized by his own schooling, his artistic lineage, and a preference of his taste. La Fosse might not have been considered an art theorist of his
period either by his contemporaries or later critics, but he acted with an amazing theoretical awareness in summoning the multiple constituencies of the modern school of French painting in a single image, which did not pretend to be the embodiment of a set of rules but rather a delectable visual tale. These were his constituencies—various and abundant—that were already ingested by a living school, that of French painting circa 1700.

La Fosse was well aware of the validity of tradition(s) and of the perilous route of a single-origin imitation, just as his artistic maturity corresponded fully with the formation of French school, in which the principles of imitation and emulation of the best traditions of the past were considered a foundation of the school. The first presentation of Philippe de Champaigne’s conference “De l’éducation de la jeunesse suivant son génie naturel (Contre les copistes des manières)” on 11 June 1672, which La Fosse most probably attended, denounced pure copying (however agile) of a single manner of a particular author (de la manière d’un auteur particulier) in favour of the creative transformation of multiple models, such as in the Seneca’s metaphor of bees, producing honey from the pollen of multiple flowers (l’imitation des abeilles). As an artist, La Fosse successfully merged into diverse artistic teams decorating the royal domains, which were formed under his teacher Le Brun. Neither the mythic autocracy of Le Brun, nor the currents of fluctuating public taste, led him to change his natural inclination to be a sensuous colourist and an emotive narrator of religious and mythological stories. As a teacher, he perhaps encouraged his students to follow their innate génie, as Philippe de Champaigne had suggested in his academic lecture of 1672. Late seventeenth-century aesthetics understood génie as an inner condition that stood outside any temporary party lines or a mere schooling in a precise tradition.

In 1699, when La Fosse became director of the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture, following the appointment of Jules Hardouin-Mansart as the Académie’s Protector, he had good reason to look to the future, particularly his pedagogical future, by casting a gaze back into the past, literally into the anterior artistic and theoretical models. The school that he had been selected to lead was essentially the institution of the moderns. The Académie was already coming of age and it gained a considerable historical distance for self-reflection. Here, the temporality of his construction of allegory comes into play.

Let me return to De Man’s definition of allegory. Allegory in some cases, as he explained, establishes:

a relationship between signs in which the reference to their respective meanings has become of secondary importance. But this relationship between signs necessarily contains a constitutive temporal element; it remains necessary, if there is to be allegory that the allegorical sign refer to another sign that precedes it. The meaning constituted by the allegorical sign can then consist only in the repetition ... of a previous sign with which it can never coincide, since it is of the essence of this previous sign to be pure anteriority.... Whereas the symbol postulates the possibility of an identity or identification, allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin, and, renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference.

La Fosse’s evocation of the prototypes for his tableau could thus have been a strategic poetic choice as well. An elusive familiarity of La Fosse’s Ariadne and Bacchus combined with the uncertainty of their specific evocations underline the difference between then and now, between prototype and copy, and between source and performance. As a modern artist, La Fosse essentially believed in the freedom and sagacity of the moderns to
avoid the slavish imitation of the ancients, or of the recent canonical artists. As a modern, he put his stakes in the transmission of knowledge, transformation, and metamorphoses. (At this point, around 1700, he might no longer share much with De Piles’s theoretical musings.)

30 The king’s taste authorized such a modus operandi for modern artists. In November 1700, Louis XIV ordered from the Gobelins two tapestries from the series *The Triumphs of Gods* for the decoration of his apartment in Marly, for which Noël Coypel painted the cartoons after the originals from Raphael’s workshop, that the king had acquired two years earlier.

33 Following the king’s interest in producing a modernized version of the papal edition of *Arabesques de Raphael*, or *Triomphe des dieux*, Noël Coypel added his own composition to the series, that of *Triomphe de la philosophie*, based on “the ingenious imitation” of the Italian master. Given that he term “arabesque” denoted a never-ending ornamental line, the possibilities of remaking the old masters by the moderns appeared to be endless.

Lamentation as pictorial mode

31 When La Fosse discovered his inspiration in the paintings of the Venetian masters – Titian and Veronese in particular – of whom he was considered an admirateur, disciple and émule, he must have been aware of the path of creative emulation developed in contemporaneous theory and practice. In Rubens he found one of the most compelling examples of how a judicious copying contributed to the formation of an integrated artistic personality. Rubens’s copies, even the most faithful, such as after Titian’s *The Rape of Europa*, transgressed the literal resemblance to the originals as they established the Flemish painter’s own artistic terrain. Prior to Roger de Piles’s re-evaluation of the Flemish painter, however, Rubens remained outside the canon propagated in the French Académie. The absence of pictorial evidence of La Fosse’s direct copying after the Venetians, other Italian masters, or Rubens, points to other emulative mechanisms of the artists, such as visual memory and the imagination.

32 The royal commissioning of Marly summoned La Fosse to work on the subject that also had venerable painterly and poetic sources. La Fosse streaked this fluid chain of references with a lyric mode of representation – one that thrived in contemporaneous music and drama, and particularly in the *tragédie en musique*, or sung drama. Restaging the characters in a sensuous lyric mode was La Fosse’s individual response to the pitfalls of direct imitation. No learned artist attempting a classical theme, Philipp P. Fehl noted in his essay “Imitation as a Source of Greatness”, could ever forget the difficulty of their task of imitation: it does not matter how many other great artists tried this theme before, as in conjuring up a vividness or likeness from a visual prototype and from a literary text, as their own “ekphrasis”.

33 What then is the place of literary sources in La Fosse’s poiesis? Painting an allegory did not require La Fosse, or anyone else in the group of artists working on the Grand Salon, to stick to a specific literary text. La Fosse, however, complicated his task by fusing an allegory with *peinture d’histoire*, as his composition of Ariadne and Bacchus recalled a particular moment from Ovid’s story, that of Ariadne’s lament. The story appeared in three different poems by Ovid – in *Metamorphoses*, *Ars Amatoria* and the *Fasti* – but was also treated by Catullus. Literary sources were important in this instance not only because of La Fosse’s adherence to Titian’s model but also because of the bifurcation within the
Adeline Collange-Perugi has already pointed out that La Fosse’s source for depicting a gallant encounter between Bacchus and Ariadne comes from the Book III of the Fasti. In late seventeenth-century French culture, Ovid’s poetic tales consistently reached the public through the different arts and became cross-referenced in the public’s imagination. Take the example of Lully’s and Quinault’s creations. Les Fêtes de l’Amour et de Bacchus, the first spectacle of the Académie Royale de Musique in 1672, or Acis and Galatea, with its famous lament by Acis that was favoured greatly by the king, immersed the viewer into more complex experiences of Ovid’s poetry than any linear allegorical sequence of pictorial images. Acis and Galatea was restaged in Marly twice, in 1684 and 1686. Quinault’s libretto for the opera was based on the Fasti as well. Acis’s lamentation, among other musical pieces, might have graced the space of the Grand Salon before La Fosse’s creation of a pictorial analogy to this emerging genre in music. Theatre and particularly the tragédie en musique, with its multi-sensorial effects of staging, contributed to the creation of the modern spectator in France with variegated imaginative and emotional expectations.

New translations of Ovid helped spreading cross-references between music, painting, and poetry. The lamentation of Ariadne, a long soliloquy by the distraught princess, appeared in the new translation of Ovid’s Les Fastes by De Martignac in 1697. This translation was not slavishly precise, albeit printed alongside a parallel Latin text, but ebullient in rendering the lyrical mode of Ariadne’s plaintive monologue. As in Martignac’s translation, La Fosse seized on Ariadne’s languid body, her face “fondoi en larmes” and “les cheveux épars le long d’un rivage” at the point when “elle exprima sa douleur par ces paroles”.

The restrained, monochromatic range of colours – beautifully balanced within a narrow range – corresponded to Ariadne’s particular complaint about the colour of her body: “Je m’imagine que mon teint brun fait préférer ma rivale à l’amour de vôtre femme.” With the “teint brun” Martignac’s translation corrected that of Michel de Marolles, in which Ariadne whined about the blackness of her skin: “Mais, n’est-ce point qu’on préfère à une noire comme je suis, une personne blanche comme celle qu’il amena? Je souhaite pourtant la couleur de ma Rivale à mes Ennemis.” Ovid’s text points to the etiolation of her flesh: “At, puto, praeposita est fuscae mihi candida pellex/Eueniat nostris hostibus ille color”, presenting a challenging task for a sensuous colourist of the flesh, such as La Fosse, to render. In the third book of Fasti, Ovid described the festivals of March and not those of the autumnal period. In the setting of Marly, Ariadne’s tearful story of abandonment lightly contrasted across the room with the jubilant courting of Zephir and Psyche, also an Ovidian couple that was not burdened with pains of the past.

The allegorical openness of La Fosse’s Ariadne and Bacchus is confirmed by Ariadne’s typological role in La Fosse’s repertoire. Remotely Titianesque or Reniesque in form, Ariadne becomes a type upon which La Fosse patterned some of his other mythological characters of feminine beauty and sweetness, such as Tethys, Iphigenia, and the figure of Vice in the painting Hercules Between Vice and Virtue. The head of Ariadne from Marly repeated almost exactly the head of Tethys at the moment of her encounter with the...
glowing Apollo painted for the Cabinet du Couchant au Grand Trianon a decade earlier (fig. 9). Thetys, who provided Apollo with a secret retreat at the crepuscular hour, metamorphosed into Ariadne, a granddaughter of Helios, now exemplifying the shattering of nature in the cycle of The Seasons in Marly.

Fig. 9: Charles de La Fosse, Apollo and Thetys. 1688, oil on canvas, 170.5 × 151.2 cm. Musée National des Châteaux de Versailles et de Trianon, Versailles, MV 7352.

Conclusion: Libra and Liberté

38 One might argue that constructing this auspicious chain of cross-references for a salon decoration that was remote from the sight of true connoisseurs, would have been a laborious intellectual effort characteristic of an artist like Poussin. And La Fosse was no Poussin in so many ways. The riches of allegorical thinking that he demonstrated in this as well in some other paintings were free expressions of his individual visual poiesis. Arguably, this freedom of painterly associations came to his working method with maturity, at the age when he, like Rubens, one of his heroes, enjoyed making a painting speak of several things at once. By departing from the immediate coincidence between the sign and its substance, La Fosse let his allegorical intuition inform his pictorial thinking. The transitoriness of the theme of the seasons was fully Ovidian, but variations in its performance mattered. La Fosse claimed the liberty of the modern artist to cite selectively, to transmit from the old and recent canon, and to assimilate the others into his own language. Autumn, in the end, was a season for harvesting.

39 In the painting, a male figure carrying a scale, the attribute of balance and harmony, turns his back on the crying Ariadne as if deferring the story’s outcome. Despite the
autumnal tones of the painting, Ariadne’s lament led to a happy ending. Bacchus liberated her from the imprisonment on the island, although with the metamorphic precondition of being changed into someone else:


The sense of liberation informed the cycle of the Four Seasons as whole. The collective performance by four academic artists thoughtfully emphasized the difference in their respective manners, while all four paintings had scattered signs of the earlier Italian masters: Louis de Boullogne let Parmigianino-looking angels play at the bottom of his Summer, Jean Jouvenet pulled the cape over the figure of his Winter as if he was thinking of Bernini’s Nile from The Four Rivers’ Fountain on Piazza Navona, while the pose of Flore in its frolicking spirit in Coypel’s Spring alluded to Domenichino’s Renaud et Armide (figs 10). By 1700 the French school had left behind the fears of imitation but sensed its own freedom and ease at demonstrating the fruits of creative assimilation. The fall, or better the metamorphosis of the old gods, was written in a book (liber) or books about liberation (libertas) that La Fosse brought to light under the sign of Libra. The king and his friends might have found this complex allegory most fitting to the ambience of Marly, a temporal site of royal divertissement and the locus amoenus of his reign.

Fig. 10: Parmigianino, Study of the Head of the Christ Child for the “Vision of Saint Jerome”, c. 1526–1527, black chalk or charcoal, red and white chalks, and pastel, 23.6 × 19.8 cm. Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna, inv. 2615.

Notice: http://sammlungenonline.albertina.at/?query=Inventarnummer=[2615]&showtype=record
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Fig. 11: Gianlorenzo Bernini, *The River Nile, The Fountain of the Four Rivers*, 1645–1647. Piazza Navona, Rome.

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Fig. 12: Domenico Zampieri (Domenichino), *Renaud et Armide*, 1617–1621, oil on canvas, 121 × 168 cm. Musée du Louvre, Paris, inv. 798.

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The decoration of the Grand Salon of Marly in 1699 signalled that the aesthetic of the moderns, with its liberation from the institutional rules, gradual dissolution of the genre system, and the pleasures of taste, belonged not only to private salons and collectors' cabinets. It also belonged to the imaginary centre of cultural politics in France, the royal residence. The aesthetics of the moderns succeeded in decentralizing the traditional axial structures as well as licensing the interiority with a greater power of expression. In 1699 the academic artists Charles de La Fosse led on the Grand Salon project in Marly, an “interior” commission from the king, had a chance to demonstrate their “exterior” stance at the Salon of 1699, a public exhibition of the Académie de Peinture et de Sculpture heralding the new century of French art. The king never set foot in the official 1699 Salon, but he unquestionably sided with the aesthetics of the moderns as displayed by La Fosse and his colleagues in his residence in Marly.

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NOTES

2. Ringot and Sarmant 2012.
3. The Journal du marquis de Dangeau recorded the quick transformation of the château during the summer and autumn of 1699. See Finet 2008, pp. 18–19.
4. Piton 1904, p. 117.
6. From 1699 Roger de Piles was Conseiller Honoraire at the Académie. I refer here to his statement “la véritable peinture est donc celle qui nous appelle (pour ainsi dire) ... comme si elle avait quelque chose à nous dire.” De Piles 1668, p. 4.
7. I maintain, however, that these two modes of allegorical thinking are not mutually exclusive. The notion of the poetics of painting as an ensemble of pictorial effects is developed in Campbell and Koering 2014, p. 9.
8. Among many enlightening writings on the conflation of allegorical reading with iconographic interpretation as a perennial issue in art history, especially for the seventeenth-century studies, see particularly Sheila McTighe’s introduction in McTighe 1996, pp. 1–17.
12. Fumaroli 2010, p. 19. “Signifier symboliquement, non son âge, mais le fait que l’État, en guerre comme en paix, n’avait plus besoin de sa propre visibilité et mobilité physiques, mais existait par-lui-même, en un site panoramique supérieur aux péripéties historiques.”
14. A special volume Les Tapisseries du roy, ou sont representes les quatre elemens et les quatre saisons : avec les devises qui les accompagnent et leur explication was published by S. Mabre-Cramoisy in the Imprimerie royale in Paris in 1670 with engravings by Sébastien Le Clerk. An introductory text by André Félibien explained the at times unwieldy allegories composed mostly by the four members of the Petite Académie. This luxurious edition was subsequently re-issued several times through the reign of Louis XIV.
15. The Bacchic elements penetrated Louis XIV’s iconography early in his reign and featured particularly in festivities and ballets. See Annex 1: Tableaux des distributions in Christout 2005, pp. 197–203. In one of the later costumed festivals of the Four Seasons, that of 1686 in Marly, the members of royal family incarnated the seasons: the Duke of Bourbon was Spring, the Dauphin represented Summer, the Duke and Duchess of Bourbon played Autumn, and the Duke of Maine and Madame de Maintenon embodied Winter. Nickeler 1996, p. 98.


17. For the Italian journey, see Stufmann 1964.

18. La Fosse is a “theoretical” draughtsman in some accounts because “his drawings can be seen almost as visual demonstrations of De Piles’s texts”, as Jo Hedley claimed in Hedley 2001.


22. Paris 1988, p. 44.

23. Pepper 1984, cat. 169, pp. 278–279. In Rome, Cardinal Francesco Barberini, who acted as the proxy of Henrietta Maria, thought the painting emitted lasciviousness. When the queen went into exile, the painting turned up in France in the collection of Particelli d’Emery. After d’Emery’s death, his widow inherited the “lascivious” tableau. In a fit of chaste sentiment, she supposedly ordered it shredded to pieces. See Banta 2004.


25. La Fosse might have seen a contemporaneous copy of it executed by Francesco Gessi in the Villa Albani in Rome. Pepper 1984, cat. 66, pp. 138–139.


31. On the category of genius in the late seventeenth-early aesthetics, see Becq 1994, chapter 1, “Génie, Beau, Raison”.


33. Vittet in Los Angeles 2015, p. 15.


37. La Fosse sent his Italian drawings to his father who showed them to Colbert. See Stufmann 1964, p. 11.


39. On Titian’s treatment of literary sources for his Ariadne and Bacchus, particularly Catullus, see Campbell 2006, p. 264.


42. The inventory of La Fosse’s library mentioned at least two copies of Ovid’s Metamorphoses – a three-volume set in octavo in French and the Italian quarto volume as an edition by Giovani Andrea dell’Anguillara. Collange-Perugi in Versailles-Nantes 2015, pp. 54–63. Among the multiple French translations of Ovid, the three-volume set corresponds to a versified translation by Thomas Corneille published in Lyon in 1698.
44. Ibid., p. 215.
46. Ibid., p. 217.

ABSTRACTS

La Fosse’s Allegory of Autumn as Bacchus and Ariadne, painted for the ensemble of The Four Seasons conceived by Jules Hardouin-Mansart for the Grand Salon of Marly in 1699, brings into focus the artist’s means of allegorization. This essay analyzes the painting in two interrelated aspects: it considers the mode of temporality in La Fosse’s individual visual poiesis and its bearing on the development of French painting on the cusp of the eighteenth century. Considering the temporality of allegory, the essay seeks to demonstrate how the ensemble of paintings from the Grand Salon signals a new stage in the development of the French academic school, marked particularly by a departure from logos-driven allegories and an embrace of more complex, temporal allegories grounded in a pictorial medium. In addition, the essay points to the emergence of the pictorial mode of lamentation adapted by La Fosse from contemporaneous opera.


INDEX

Mots-clés: allégorie, Ovide, lamentation, émulation, poïésis, peinture d’histoire
Keywords: allegory, Ovid, lamentation, emulation, history painting

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