

sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Thus the enormous influence which his characterization of Pyreicus, the proverbial painter of barbers' shops, as a 'filth painter'<sup>27</sup> had on the subsequent estimation of genre painting in academic theory is familiar to all students of Italian artistic literature. The label of '*rhyparographos*' was transferred from master to master and from school to school with monotonous insistence. But despite the condemnation which it implied, even the influence of that passage was certainly not entirely detrimental to the development of *genre* painting. Through it the specialist in that kind of subject had received a place in the rigid world of artistic theory. And if a painter such as Pieter van Laer was ready to put up with this identification with the mythical Pyreicus, his position in the world of art was assured.<sup>28</sup> For does not Pliny concede that his works were full of gay vitality and that they achieved a higher price than the greatest works of many other painters?

This process of identifying living artists with figures from Pliny had already begun in the fifteenth century.<sup>29</sup> In the sixteenth the habit was well established. The whole world of art was seen through this pre-existing screen. Whatever could be made to fit—and Pliny's terse and obscure references lent themselves to many interpretations—could find entry into the collector's consciousness. The utterly strange and bewildering art of Hieronymus Bosch, for instance, became identified with the humorous category of the *Grilli*, to which Pliny alludes in rather cryptic terms—and thus the first Northern 'specialist' was assured a niche in the painter's pantheon.<sup>30</sup>

Now among the specialists mentioned by Pliny a landscape painter figures rather prominently. It is the Roman painter Studius (or Ludius), who flourished under the Emperor Augustus and earned fame, but little money, with wall paintings.

. . . He painted villas, porticoes and parks, groves, copses, hills, fishponds, straits, rivers, shores, as anyone could wish. And there he painted all kinds of people walking or going by ship, riding by land towards the villages on donkeys' backs or in carriages, also fishermen, fowlers, huntsmen or vintagers.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that a master of the Golden Age had made a speciality of this kind of subject matter could not but influence the appreciation of landscape painting among the educated public of the Renaissance. Luckily this is a point where we need not rely on mere conjecture. When Paolo Giovio, the great arbiter of art and inspirer of Vasari's *Lives*, describes the work of Dosso in the late 'twenties or early 'thirties,<sup>32</sup> we clearly feel that he perceived his art through the medium of Pliny's account:

The gentle manner of Dosso of Ferrara is esteemed in his proper works, but most of all in those which are called *parerga*. For devoting himself with relish to the pleasant diversions of painting he used to depict jagged rocks, green groves, the firm banks of