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Lucian's ἔκφρασις in view of *Critical Reflections* by Du Bos

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In his *Zeuxis or Antiochus*, Lucian composes ἔκφρασις which describes the picture *Centaur* by Zeuxis. Ἐκφρασις, one of the literary techniques, typically describes plastic arts through language. While many poets or authors employ this technique in different ways, Lucian's *Centaur* is salient in that his ἔκφρασις itself constitutes the main part of the work without being subordinate to the plot or story. My essay attempts to consider

ἔκφρασις which can be called 'painting through verbalizing,' so that the correlation between the literature and the picture will be more obvious and as a result, the sphere of literature will be enlarged. In this consideration, I refer to the reflection of Du Bos in order to theorize on the literature and the picture.

According to *Critical reflections on poetry, painting and music* by Du Bos, the art is mimesis which represents the real world. This does not mean that the art simply replicates the real. Far from it, the art creates the fictional but plausible world, achieving the emotional effect on the audience. The art adopts signs for this purpose, language in literature and figures in pictures. Du Bos insists that language is the artificial sign, while figures are the natural sign, and therefore pictures have instant and direct impression on the viewer, though literature has deep and intense significance by means of affluent descriptions.

Ἐκφρασις is indeed the picture painted in the mind by language, but of course cannot be identical with the true picture, and cannot produce the same effect as the picture itself, because seeing is more believable than listening or reading. Despite this limitation, ἔκφρασις is capable of fixing and retaining the critical moment and further of explaining the situation by words to lead the viewers in the right direction. It is said that verbal explanations are unessential to pictures, but you cannot deny that ἔκφρασις is less liable to cause misunderstanding than real painting. Ἐκφρασις creates the virtual appreciation of pictures and should be regarded as a unique genre of literature rather than a spurious painting.