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For

STELLA MARY

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What! Another history of art?

Yes. Why not? The facts at every art historian's disposal are the same, but his selection of them and his interpretation of them must always depend on himself. I am certain that many of the facts that seem to me important are not quite the same as those that have seemed important to previous writers. And if some of them are the same, I am certain that the conclusions I shall draw from them will be different. The historian-critic sees art very much as the artist sees nature. No two artists see nature and no two critics see art from the same angle.

Moreover, I have definite ideas as to the purpose to be served by a history of art. I suspect that out of a hundred people who know quite a lot about pictures and statues not half a dozen know what painting and sculpture really are. They think of the Mona Lisa and the Elgin Marbles as beautiful objects, things to be looked at and admired and perhaps (if art is their 'subject') studied. But they do not think of them as transmitters and of themselves as receivers.

My hope in writing this book is to turn a few admirers into receivers: not to describe pictures and statues or to relate facts about them so much as to induce my readers to tune in to painting and sculpture in whatever form they may manifest themselves, at whatever period or in whatever country. And I can do so only by giving an account of the working of my own receiving set. I do not pretend that it is an exceptional receiving set. On some wave-lengths, I am ashamed to say, it gives me rather poor results. When that happens the reader will at once be aware that something has gone wrong. He will notice patches in this book in which the reception is dull and blurred. They may perhaps stimulate him to a higher pitch of sensitiveness than I am capable of myself. In that case even the dull patches will not have been written in vain.

This is not a student's book. For persons with an appetite for facts there is an abundance of reference books. I have not hesitated

to draw upon them myself. I have not seen Rembrandt's birth certificate with my own eyes. I do not even care whether it exists, but I believe the eminent art historians who tell me that Rembrandt was born in 1606. To them I am indebted for most of the facts that appear in the following pages.

For my opinions, on the other hand, I am less conscious of indebtedness. It is not the ingredients but the flavour of painting and carving that I have tried to communicate. If I have failed to do that, it must be for one of two reasons. My palate may be to blame; or the distressing fact that a flavour, like a tune, can never be accurately described in words.

Nevertheless, paintings and sculptures are not quite like tunes. They seem to me to be . . . but what they seem to me to be is set forth in my first two chapters, which were written in order to clear the ground for the history that follows. The reader who feels that the ground needs no clearing can profitably skip them and turn at once to chapter three.

London, 1940

Foreword to the Fourth Edition

Ever since this book was written, fifteen years ago, I have become increasingly conscious of its inadequacy. It was always too short. True, there are virtues in brevity, the chief of which is that the ruthless omission of detail may help an author to keep his sense of proportion. He hopes, at least, that the main outlines of his story will be clear and that its outstanding incidents will retain their true importance. But clarity can be too dearly bought, and when those main incidents are made to stand out by the simple method of omitting secondary but by no means negligible incidents, then, perhaps, too much has been sacrificed to brevity.

I had hoped to enlarge this little book by adding a certain amount of detail to the original bare outline and by filling in some of the major omissions. But I found that the task was not as simple as that. To dismiss Titian or Velasquez in a single paragraph, as I was compelled to do in the original edition, was at least possible. A few generalizations had to do duty for the whole output of a man of genius. One could only hope that the generalizations would not give a false impression, even though they could not fail to give an incomplete one. But to expand that paragraph involves one in something more specific than generalizations. And having begun to add qualifications to generalizations, where is one to stop? And what will happen to one's original sense of proportion? For example, to add a paragraph or two about the Ferrarese painters (omitted from the first edition) involves one in doubling the space originally assigned to Giovanni Bellini.

Such problems are familiar to any author who attempts compression. I only mention them here by way of apology to readers who may complain that much of what was contained in the first edition has been rewritten rather than enlarged. This applies particularly to the chapters on the High Renaissance in Florence and Venice.

Moreover, in fifteen years one's own opinions inevitably change. One hopes that they may have ripened: it is just as probable that they have been influenced by fashion. To take an obvious example,

Caravaggio's stock has gone sharply up during the last decade: and the term 'Mannerist' has shifted its meaning. Such variations of emphasis cannot be ignored. Whatever the explanation, one's sense of relative values in 1954 cannot be quite what it was in 1940, and, in all honesty, if one is enlarging, one must also revise.

Lastly, the century in which we live is now fifteen years older. Even in 1940 I was conscious of having treated it too cavalierly. To-day there is no excuse for not rewriting and enlarging the last chapter. Also, as a result of many requests from readers, I have added an appendix containing notes on 250 painters whose names and dates seemed to me most worth recording.

The earlier chapters remain, virtually, unchanged. The enlargement of the book occurs, mainly, in the section from the beginning of the Italian Renaissance to the present day. Perhaps I was wrong to allow that to happen, but the historian is always tempted to write most fully about those periods in which there are most known facts: and he always yields to the temptation. We know so much more about Giovanni Pisano than we do about his anonymous contemporaries who were at work on the Gothic cathedrals in France. Unfortunately what is known is not always the same as what is worth knowing.

London, 1955

I

The Nature of the Arts

A postage stamp, the overture to the Magic Flute, a suburban villa, Guerlain's latest perfume, Leonardo's 'Last Supper', an innings by Sir Don Bradman, Shakespeare's 'Hamlet', a performance of 'Les Sylphides', St Paul's Cathedral, a Walt Disney cartoon – all these are works of art.

Niagara Falls, on the other hand, is not a work of art, nor is the afterglow of the snows of Monte Rosa, nor the sound of breakers against a cliff, nor the dance executed by washing suspended from a clothes-line in a stiff breeze, nor the scent of a pine wood on a summer day.

These two classes of phenomena are different in kind. The first are man-made and man-designed. They had to be conceived in the mind of a man (or group of men) and then made communicable to other men by the skill of the designer, working in some medium that could be perceived by the senses of other men – the eye, the ear, the nose, the palate.

The other set of phenomena – Niagara Falls, the sound of breakers and so on – are neither man-made nor man-designed. They may be equally beautiful or equally pleasurable. They may be, indeed must be, the result of design by God working through the Laws of Nature, but they have not that double element in them of conception and parturition. They were not imagined first and then made manifest through the medium of visible materials, visible movements, audible sounds, perceptible smells.

In trying to tell the story of art I shall start with an initial advantage. I have no preconceived theories about the artist's purpose: therefore I have no prejudice against the artist who runs counter to such theories. If the artist tells me a story I shall exclaim 'how interesting!'; if he wishes to overawe me with mystical conceptions of the Godhead I am ready to be impressed; if he wants to construct a purely formal pattern of line and colour

or mass or sound, I will admire its beauty; if he preaches I am ready to be converted; if he wants to be of use to me I shall be grateful. Art has done all these things at various times in the history of civilization.

But if the story of art is to be told, it is certainly necessary to know what art is, and if I define it briefly as a human conception made manifest by the use of a medium; and if I define good art as a noble (or arresting, or interesting, or valuable) conception made manifest by the skilful use of a medium, I can then have done with definitions and proceed with the story.

This is not the history of the whole family of the arts. It is merely an outline of the story – in so far as it concerns Europe – of two members of that family – painting and sculpture. Rather odd members, as we shall see later – curiously different from their next-of-kin in many ways and for that reason frequently misunderstood. But conscientious biographers should start with an introductory chapter on their hero's family and pedigree, and this brief chapter is an attempt to state the case for the arts as a whole.

The artist, then, is a man of double activity. He has to have imagination and he has to have craftsmanship. He has to imagine (in his mind's eye, or his mind's ear, or his mind's nose) the thing he is going to make; and he must also have the power to translate what he has imagined into terms of his medium. Those are not separate activities. On the contrary, they affect one another in unpredictable and unanalysable ways, so that when an artist is at work he cannot possibly say at a given moment which part of himself he is using. Did the fact that he was working with chalk or charcoal on rough paper give a breadth to Tintoretto's line, or had the image in his mind's eye already formed itself with that breadth of sweep? Did Mozart, in his mind's ear, conjure up a quality of sound that could be translated into music only by a certain combination of bassoons and strings? Or did his memory of that combination, heard perhaps by chance while an orchestra was tuning up, prompt him to make further experiments with it?

No one can possibly answer these questions, since no one but Tintoretto himself knew the precise quality of the image in his mind's eye and no one but Mozart ever heard what was in Mozart's mind's ear. The work of art, the drawing or the overture, is all we have to judge by. A marriage has taken place between the visionary and the craftsman and one can judge of the success of the marriage only by examining the fruits of it – the work of art.

The quality of an artist's vision has no other limit than the imaginative equipment of the artist himself. Whatever the human eye is capable of observing or the human mind of conceiving is the potential raw material for the work of art. But the limitations of the medium are definite and physical. What the dancer can express is circumscribed by what his body can achieve in the way of movement. He is bound by the law of gravity, the nature of human anatomy and the behaviour of his muscular equipment. Each medium has its own inherent limitations and potentialities. The artist as craftsman must accept those limitations, and by accepting, exploit them. For the sculptor, each of the materials at his disposal – marble, stone, clay, wax, or metal – has its own way of behaving; each responds to the artist's control of them by controlling him in turn. The true craftsman is not necessarily he who can most skilfully force his medium to obey him: equally important is his willingness to allow his medium to dictate terms to him.

Some media are more flexible – and therefore more insidiously tempting to the virtuoso – than others. Mosaic and stained glass are stubborn; oil paint and water colour more capable of obedience. But all of them have physical characteristics of their own which condition the physical appearance of the work of art. It would therefore be misleading to pretend that the virtue of a work of art depends on the artist's power to translate his inner vision into visible form. The reverse is equally true: the quality of his vision is also conditioned by the behaviour of his medium. The mental picture the fresco painter conjures up in his mind's eye is of necessity different from that of the painter in oils. By

their very nature his imaginative processes are hidden from us, and since we cannot see them we cannot judge them. But as soon as he begins to translate his vision into visible terms, we have the right to pass judgement, for we can note the degree of harmony between the artist as visionary and the artist as craftsman: we can also note the degree of harmony between the artist as servant and the artist as master of his medium. Such judgements are intuitive rather than logical, but they are usually trustworthy. At a glance we can tell that Rembrandt's handling of oil paint is miraculously appropriate to the quality of his vision: and that the handling of Franz Hals is just a little too aggressively skilful to be appropriate.

Critics of all branches of the arts, however much they may differ from each other in their admiration of what the artist has communicated, generally agree in their estimate of the quality of the communication. 'Good draughtsmanship' in a drawing, 'good orchestration' in a symphony, 'good style' in writing – these are recognizable qualities. So are deficiencies in this kind of 'goodness' – the slickness of the man whose craftsmanship has become an end in itself, the incompetence of the man who does not realize its importance.

But this artistic activity – this making of drawings and overtures and books and postage stamps – is not something done just for the fun of doing it. No doubt it *is* fun to write a book or compose an overture, but no artist was ever content to have his fun and then throw the result of it away. The book has to be read, the overture performed, the ballet or picture seen. Art is a communication. Behind every work of art is the artist's appeal to his fellows, 'Don't you see what I mean? Can't you see what I'm getting at?'

The story of art is therefore not merely the story of men who make things and of the kind of things they make. It is also the story of the relationship – the very complicated and always shifting relationship – between these men and their fellow men. It is a relationship full of contradictions and difficulties. For no workman can afford to produce unless he is paid to do so:

therefore the artist has to have an employer. And no employer can afford to pay a workman unless he is producing something that he (the employer) needs. It follows therefore that (except in the rare case of artists of independent means) the artist's work of art is not merely the child of his own personal fancy, the embodiment of a message that he, personally, wants to communicate. It must also be something that his employer wants him to communicate to himself or to others. The work of art must be not only the result of an urge on the part of the producer, but also of a need on the part of the consumer. Here is a strange state of things indeed! For how can the consumer feel a need of something so personal and so (on the face of it) unnecessary as an artist's expression of his inner vision? And even supposing he does feel the need strongly enough to induce him to pay an artist to produce a work of art, how is the artist going to reconcile his personal and private desire to communicate his own personal and private vision with his employer's or patron's specification of what he wants the artist to produce? In any other branch of human activity the question would not arise. No maker of chisels would say to his employer, 'My whole nature rebels against the idea of making the kind of chisels you want. You wish me to make sharp chisels. I, on the other hand, can only express myself to the full by making blunt chisels. You want steel chisels; I, as a craftsman, feel irresistibly drawn to the use of lead as medium.'

The more materially useful a man-made thing is, the more chance there is of complete agreement between artist and employer. But material usefulness is not the only kind of usefulness: there is such a thing as spiritual usefulness. To the maker of chisels the employer can justifiably say, 'Make your chisels exactly thus', but to the maker of crucifixes he must say, 'Let your crucifix conform to the minimum requirements of all crucifixes – a cross, a male human body, an impression of suffering, but also a sense of nobility. Beyond that I leave it to you. Add your own personal thoughts and feelings. Embody your own vision.'

In totalitarian countries during our own century, a strange tightening up of this artist-patron relationship has produced a situation that would be ludicrous if it were not tragic. The totalitarian State, as patron of the arts, not only insists on using the artist for propaganda purposes but also dictates the style he is to adopt. Personal thoughts and feelings are forbidden: personal vision is regarded as dangerous and must be suppressed. The artist who paints a field of ripe corn against a thundery sky is to be reprimanded because he has made a pessimistic statement about the climate of the country. Dictatorship of that kind, though it may seem to us unreasonable, is not very different from the rules laid down in the past for the painting of religious subjects or the instructions given to-day by the manufacturer to the poster designer. But when the State also insists that the cornfield must not only be depicted under favourable climatic conditions but must also be painted in the style of Constable (since that is the style that is most easily understood by the layman), the whole nature and purpose of art have been misunderstood. To suppress the artist as visionary and to use him only as craftsman: to compel him merely to repeat what has already become accepted and to forbid him to make any contribution of his own, is to deny to him the freedom without which he cannot be, in any serious sense of the word, an artist at all. There have been periods in the past – notably in the middle and later periods of the Egyptian civilization – when a similar situation arose and art became stylistically 'frozen', but never to such an extreme extent as in Nazi Germany and never with so stultifying an effect on the artist's integrity.

But, in general, as long as the artist is an employed workman, he must compromise, never losing touch with life and its requirements yet never sacrificing his own integrity in doing so. For compromise of that kind is not a concession: it is a dangerous holding of the balance between two sets of forces. The artist, like the maker of chisels, serves a master (Palestrina served the Pope, Shakespeare wrote his plays for the Earl of Leicester's company of players), but in doing so he gives his

master something he never bargained for. When Rembrandt painted the 'Night Watch' he was ostensibly painting the portraits of a certain Captain Banning Cocq and the members of his shooting company. Presumably something corresponding to a group photograph of the school hockey team would have satisfied the club, but Rembrandt had much to say that had nothing to do with the likenesses of the captain and his friends. How light falls in dark places, how it strikes hard here and gently caresses there – these were his real obsessions and he refused to sacrifice them to the demands of objective portraiture. In doing so he began to lose sight of the original purpose of his picture. Banning Cocq and his friends became excuses for an essay in chiaroscuro. The club, so the story goes, was offended; and whether the story is true or not, it would certainly be normal for the sitters to be more interested in themselves than in chiaroscuro. We, on the other hand, are delighted. We have lost interest in seventeenth-century shooting clubs, but what Rembrandt has to say about the play of light on flesh is as fascinating to-day as it was in 1642. Michelangelo, faced with the same kind of criticism of his statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano de' Medici, answered that in a thousand years' time nobody would know what the two Medicis were really like. Pope Clement VII, however, who ordered the statues, *did* know; he had asked for portraits and he was given symbols of mankind. Michelangelo was unwilling to make the compromise. We are indebted to him for his unwillingness. His employer's approval was less whole-hearted.

This necessity of serving two masters has always been one of the artist's difficulties. He must deliver the goods he is asked for, and he must also be true to himself. And rightly so. Whenever either is sacrificed to the other the work of art suffers in quality. There are plenty of instances of both kinds of sacrifice in the art of to-day. There are commercial artists who produce flavourless trash in an attempt to give their employers what they want: and there are artists who, through lack of employers or through unwillingness to be employed, have nothing to serve

but their own impulses, and whose work can only be described as psychological exhibitionism.

It is not by chance that the greatest periods of art have usually occurred when the artist was most firmly harnessed to a master or to a cause. Necessarily the pace of a man in harness is slower than that of a free man. He is less able to choose his own direction, but he has the satisfaction of knowing that he is an indispensable member of society – or of a particular section of society – and the further satisfaction of knowing that because society needs him, society will understand him – at any rate that portion of him that is in service. His double service gives him a double message and a double appeal. A Palestrina, left to himself, will merely further the cause of music: employed by the Pope, he also enriches the texture of Christian ritual and enlarges the meaning of Christianity.

The present-day cleavage of artists into two groups, those who are so enslaved to their employers that they 'can't call their souls their own', and those unfettered spirits whose souls are so much their own that they are no use to anyone but themselves, is a comparatively new phenomenon. It has led to the division of artists into two kinds known as 'commercial' and 'fine' artists – i.e. men who work only to please the man who pays them and men who have no one to please but themselves – though the latter always hope that they will happen to please someone else sufficiently to induce him to pay them enough to go on pleasing themselves without starving. Three-quarters of the films made, about a quarter of the books published, ninety per cent of the music composed are 'commercial' in the true sense that they were created primarily in order to be turned into money. The bulk of the remainder, the 'fine' works of art, are genuine attempts at self-expression largely unaffected by the requirements of society. In some cases they succeed so well in impressing themselves on society that society begins to require them. In others they are so personal and so remote from average human experience that society, far from requiring them, complains of their uselessness, their unintelligibility, their

divorce from 'life'. That complaint, so often heard nowadays, is not a measure of the genuineness or sincerity of the works of art in question. It is an index of the unfamiliarity of the language in which those works of art are couched. For a personal vision demands a personal set of idioms to express it. Not infrequently a generation or so must pass before those idioms become understood and accepted by the average man and pass into general currency. The time-lag between the appearance of an unfamiliar artistic message couched in an unfamiliar artistic idiom, and its acceptance by the average man can be reduced only when the artist can be harnessed to a cause that the average man understands. Giotto's innovations may have been as fundamental as those of Picasso, but since they were harnessed to Christianity (while Picasso's are harnessed to nothing more stable than Picasso) the average contemporary of Giotto, shocked though he may have been by the new Giottesque idiom, felt that he could at least understand the cause that idiom served, and could dimly see how the new idiom somehow served the cause in a new and valuable way. The more the artist is willing to compromise between his own set of values (in Rembrandt's case, a study of light, in Banning Cocq's case a set of recognizable portraits) the more immediately acceptable his work will be. A cubist whose picture conveys nothing but the cubiness of things in general is apt to leave the average man cold and puzzled. But a cubist who uses his cubism to advertise the merits of A's petrol or B's beer is understood at once. The one is merely an artist's visual adventure, the other is a voyage of discovery that carries the spectator along with it and deposits him surprisingly at his destination. Once the artist has harnessed himself to society, society at once begins to regard him as a workman performing a useful function and not as a playboy amusing himself in a vacuum.

In the same way a scientist's discovery that an electric current passed through a metal coil will heat the metal, leaves most people uninterested, but the man who uses that discovery to boil a kettle arouses an immediate interest.

This double function of the artist is the key to the story of art. Many learned books about art have been written which fail to tell the story because they lose sight of the perpetual adjustment that goes on in the artist between art-as-expression and art-as-service.

Meanwhile before examining the particular kind of adjustments that take place when the artist happens to be a painter or a sculptor, one other fact must be noted about the arts in general. A work of art may be an expression of the artist's inner vision, and it may also be useful to society, but beyond both these it is a thing-in-itself. Apart from its function as a means of communion between one human being and another it exists in its own right. It consists of a series of sounds or words or movements, or of a set of shapes made of pigment applied to canvas, or of a set of masses carved out of stone or modelled out of clay. In a word, it has form; and it must obey the laws of form as dictated by whatever medium the artist uses. A sentence may embody an idea in the writer's mind, but it must also obey grammatical laws. A drawing may say what the draughtsman wanted it to say but it must also say it in the pencil's way. A statue may represent a man in a lounge suit, but, if it is made of stone, both flesh and cloth must be translated into terms of stone: stone must not be tortured into an imitation of flesh and cloth. Every medium has its own set of laws, and the work of art must obey them or perish.

Moreover, a work of art is self-contained. A picture must have edges, a play or piece of music must have a beginning and an end, whereas the experience it embodies has no edges, no beginning nor end. It is just an indeterminate slice of an endless ebb and flow. But the work of art is capable of being isolated from its surroundings. A picture occupies a square yard of space, a symphony three-quarters of an hour of time, a play several cubic yards of space and a couple of hours of time. Having 'edges', therefore, in space or time, it follows that it must also have a shape. E. M. Forster, in his remarkable essay on the novel, points out that Anatole France's 'Thais'

is shaped like an hour-glass. ('We do not see it as an hour-glass – that is the hard jargon of the lecture room – but if it were not for this hour-glass the story, the plot and the characters of Thais and Paphnuce would none of them exert their full force, they would none of them breathe as they do.') Percy Lubbock's 'Roman Pictures' is shaped like a 'grand chain'. ('What is so good in "Roman Pictures" is not the presence of the "grand chain" pattern – anyone can organize a grand chain – but the suitability of the pattern to the author's mood.') Observe the word 'pattern'. The arts are difficult to write about because there is no adequate terminology that fits them all. 'Pattern' is a word taken from graphic art, 'rhythm' from music, 'phrasing' from literature. But all have their counterparts in each other and they have all been invented by people who want (as I do) to talk about the work of art as a thing-in-itself, a thing with form, as opposed to a thing with content. Pattern, for example, is visual rhythm, a set of relationships set up in the eye of the beholder. A drawing of a flower is just a drawing that imparts a certain amount of botanical information. But repeat that drawing three times side by side on a square of paper and you have a pattern. You have established a relationship between three things and not only between three things but also between them and the four edges of the paper, and that relationship can be pleasant or unpleasant without any reference to botany. As long as a work of art has a shape it must also have a pattern. Pattern is a subdivision of shape. The parts within the shape must be related to the shape and to each other.

The artist's feeling for form and shape has given birth, in all the arts, to a host of conventions that are on the face of them fantastic. Why should poets have invented a shape called the sonnet? Why should the ear have to be tickled with an elaborate system of rhymes? What is the virtue of fourteen iambic pentameters if thirteen or fifteen would equally well express the poet's thought? Why should Edward Lear, in recounting the brief but poignant story of the old man of Aosta, have decided to fit his story into the shape of a limerick with its attendant pattern

of rhythms and its parallel pattern of rhymes? What gave birth to Sonata form? One can only answer that deep down in mankind is a thirst for something we have agreed to call aesthetic pleasure, a thirst for order, harmony, balance, rhythm, pattern: and that certain of these patterns have proved so satisfactory that they have become crystallized into conventions.

Each art has its own set of conventions, but this brief chapter is not the place to examine them in detail. Those that apply to painting and sculpture will be considered in the next chapter. Meanwhile it is sufficient to remember that the artist, in the act of creation, is perpetually obsessed with this question of the form his work of art is taking. His picture is not merely a representation of an object, or an expression of his feeling about an object. It is a thing-in-itself, equally worthy of contemplation even though it is an inaccurate representation, or a representation of something that lies outside the spectator's experience as, say, a picture of a snow scene would be to an inhabitant of the Sahara Desert. It can justify itself by its shape alone and by the obedience of that shape to the laws of the medium in which it is made.

2

The Representational Arts

So much for works of art as a whole. They communicate their maker's message in terms of a medium: they serve society; they have form and all the attributes that the word implies; and their form must not contradict the nature of the medium in which they are made.

This book is about painting and sculpture; and this chapter is about the special laws that govern the painting of pictures and the making of statues. In what way do these two differ from the other arts?

The first thing that occurs to one is that they are both capable of representing objects known to or imagined by their creators.

They are under no obligation to do so, of course. There are sculptors and painters to-day whose carvings and pictures do not represent known objects. But on the whole it has been the practice of painters and sculptors to produce works of which one could say, 'Look! that is a man; there is a tree and a bank of cloud; that is surely a representation of the goddess Venus.' And, in case of doubt, pictures and statues usually have titles to help one to identify the object represented. These titles are not an integral part of the work of art, though they may cause disturbance in the mind of the spectator when taken in conjunction with the work of art. A picture of a fat monk surrounded by hens may please the spectator immensely until he finds that its title is 'St Francis preaching to the birds'. Whereupon his pleasure is modified and may turn to puzzlement or even disgust. But what really puzzles and disgusts him is not the picture but the relation between the picture and the title. On the whole, however, titles are added to works of visual art to eliminate puzzlement. 'No. 27: Hampstead Heath' in the catalogue simply means, 'Don't waste time wondering what part of the country

this landscape represents. It is a picture of Hampstead Heath. Now you can enjoy it as a picture.'

This situation does not arise in the case of the other arts. Literature can describe but it cannot represent. Music uses representation (I mean the representation of audible things, like the baa-ing of sheep in Strauss's 'Don Quixote' or the nightingale's song in Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony) so rarely that musical representation need not be taken into account. But painting can be entirely dependent on representation, so that a passage in any picture which cannot be identified as a known object may become a source of irritation to the spectator.

Painting and sculpture therefore differ from the other arts in that they are, in the main, representational arts. But if that were all that could be said about them the affair would be simple. The most accurate representation would be the best work of art. All works of art would tend to the condition of portraiture and the climax of portraiture would be the waxwork. The object of painting and sculpture would be to deceive the eye, and since sculpture is three-dimensional while painting is only two-dimensional, sculpture would be the greater art of the two. Madame Tussaud's would contain more masterpieces than the National Portrait Gallery.

Such a theory is manifestly absurd, because it leaves out of account all that we have already found to be common to all the arts. A waxwork does not communicate a message. Or rather its message is so simple ('this is what So-and-so looked like') that it can be ignored. It serves no special need except that of idle curiosity. Its form is not created in the interests of shape or pattern or harmony of mass and colour. It is not a thing-in-itself. It is merely a copy of something already in existence. It may be work of extraordinary skill, but as a work of art it has no importance.

And yet the will to represent is part of the average painter's or sculptor's creative make-up and the desire to recognize his representation is equally part of the average spectator's. If we define art as the communication of a conception in terms of

a medium, we must define a painting as the communication of a visual conception in terms of pigment. And since most visual conceptions are based on the memory of the appearance of natural objects, the painter will usually end up by painting pictures that refer to or remind us of visible objects. Yet, though his picture will be a set of references to actual appearances, its *raison d'être* will not be to impart information about appearances. That is the camera's job. The painter must use those references in order to communicate his message, and he must impose form upon them however unwilling they may be to accept such an imposition.

At once it becomes clear that in painting and sculpture we have to do with two rather clumsy, unmanageable members of the art family. Music can be poured into any mould. The mind's ear is free to conceive any set of rhythms, any sequence of sounds or qualities of sound in any degree of loudness. But in painting the artist is tied down by a set of obligations – obligations to the appearance of things, their shapes, colours, and sizes – which are almost certain to conflict with his sense of form. A painting 'about' something (whether it be 'about' the assassination of Julius Caesar or a couple of onions and a glass of water) cannot also be whole-heartedly 'about' the purely formal set of values that music takes as its starting point. Nor can it even be quite whole-heartedly 'about' the more permanent and universal side of the artist's visual experience. As was said in the last chapter, a Rembrandt painting the 'Night Watch' is torn between producing a set of likenesses of certain citizens of Amsterdam, and painting the play of light on a complex series of surfaces. To Rembrandt, the painter of light and shadow, it is irrelevant that those surfaces happen to be the faces, hands and clothing of Banning Cocq and his friends. To Rembrandt the portrait painter, the play of light is of little consequence. But to Rembrandt the master of *form*, the *designer*, both likeness and play of light are of no consequence whatever. He is concerned with covering an area of canvas with pigment in such a way that the disposition of lights

and darks (not lights and shadows), of colours and lines, is pleasing to the eye. He is doing exactly the same as the composer who fills in a section of time with a disposition of sounds, rhythms, timbres, etc., in such a way as to please the ear. From the point of view of form the only difference between a painting and a piece of music is that the one occupies space, the other time. Both are decorations, existing only in their own right and existing only to satisfy the innate hunger of the eye and the ear for formal harmony.

What distinguishes the painter's problem from the composer's is that whereas music is a formalized expression of what is in the composer's mind's ear, the picture is a formalized expression of what is in the painter's mind's eye *plus*, in the majority of cases, a recognizable representation of certain objects. The painter, instead of serving two masters, has to serve three – expression, form, and representation. The result of this threefold obligation is a splitting of loyalties on the part of the painter which only the greatest artists have been able to survive: and a confusion of mind on the part of the spectator which has led to endless misunderstanding. If it were not for this particular complexity, I should not have considered it necessary to preface a history of art with a philosophy of art.

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Imagine an artist commissioned to paint an altarpiece of a Madonna and Child in a space of a certain shape and size.

He has four tasks to perform, the first three as an artist, the fourth as a craftsman.

(1) He has to invent a set of shapes and colours which will express his feeling about the Madonna-and-Child theme.

(2) He has to invent a set of shapes and colours which will (however vaguely) remind the spectator of a woman holding a baby.

(3) He has to invent a set of shapes and colours which will fill the required space pleasantly, and

(4) Having reconciled the conflicting claims of these three sets of inventions, he has to translate them into pigment applied to a flat surface.

The difficulties of reconciling 1, 2, and 3 are, of course, enormous. Take task No. 1. The Madonna-and-Child theme is a purely emotional affair. What he has to express, put in its simplest terms, is a certain kind of tenderness, motherliness, and sympathy, together with a sense of divinity. Now tenderness, motherliness, sympathy and divinity have no shape, colour, size, or pattern. And yet the artist can express himself only in terms of shapes, colours, and patterns. Task No. 1 is therefore to invent a set of shapes and colours which will *suggest* to the spectator feelings of tenderness and motherliness and divinity. These shapes and colours are not, and cannot be, representations; they are equivalents or symbols.

Task No. 2 is easy in itself. Almost anyone with good eyesight and a trained visual memory (or even without one, since models can be hired for a few shillings an hour) can conjure up in his mind's eye an image of a woman and a baby; and almost anyone, after a year or so of determined effort, can learn to turn that image into paint so that the picture will look rather like his woman-and-baby image. There have been certain primitive peoples who couldn't have done it if they had tried, though it would never have occurred to them to try. But certainly any competent European painter from the fifteenth century onwards could have painted a woman holding a baby skilfully enough to leave the spectator in no doubt as to what the woman looked like, what the baby looked like, how the woman was holding the baby, what sort of clothes they were both wearing and so on. Task No. 2 is easy enough. The difficulty is to reconcile it with task No. 1 – to paint a picture of divine motherly tenderness, free from the bonds of space and time, and also to paint a picture of two persons with particular features and expressions, in a particular light and particular setting. Manifestly the thing is

impossible. A compromise must be found. But half the virtue of art lies in its power to compromise. The conflicting claims in painting of symbolism and representation are not unlike the conflicting claims in life of body and soul. And just as the finest forms of life are neither the extremes of hedonism on the one hand nor of asceticism on the other, but a balance of the two, so the finest kind of painting is neither pure representation nor pure symbolism but a reconciliation of the two.

Task No. 3 is the artist's basic task, but, alas, it is one that cannot be adequately described in words. The formal relationship of the parts of a work of art to each other and to the whole work can be understood only by the particular sense to which the work addresses itself. Visual form is a matter on which the eye alone can arbitrate. Plates 2 and 3 show four Madonna-and-Child pictures. In each case it is easy enough to point out what sacrifices have been made in effecting the adjustment between the symbolized idea and the represented object. The Russian icon takes symbolism just about as far as it can reasonably go and cheerfully sacrifices visual truth about women and children to symbolic truth about tenderness and divinity. Simone makes further concessions to appearances, and in doing so allows the emotional temperature to drop a little. Raphael insists on the solidity of his figures and on placing them in a landscape instead of the idealized space symbolized by Simone's gold background. Raphael's idea of a picture is a view seen through a hole cut in the wall. Simone's is a decoration painted on the wall. Consequently instead of a symbol of Madonnahood he has made a representation of a Madonna. The symbol of tenderness has given place to a portrait of a woman behaving tenderly. Finally, Tiepolo takes the progression from symbol to representation one stage further. The symbol has now been ousted by the representation. We are given a charming portrait of a lovely signora and her exceptionally fine child. The clouds that conceal the model's throne deceive no one. The artist who thinks that by the addition of a cloud he can turn a portrait into a religious picture knows very little about religion. His picture may be an adequate expression of his

own inner vision of motherhood, but as an example of Christian propaganda, it is a lamentable failure.

This interplay between symbolism and representation is a phenomenon that can be readily grasped by the mind. Both symbolism and representation are references to human experience, and any man with a well-stocked experience can understand them. Whoever knows the meaning of the word 'tenderness' cannot fail to recognize that the Russian icon painter has discovered an adequate equivalent for it in paint. And whoever knows what a beautiful woman and a well-nourished baby look like must admit that Tiepolo has made an adequate pictorial representation of them. But when the critic or historian comes to assess or describe form, words are no longer of much use to him. For form makes no reference to things outside the work of art: it exists in its own right and pleases or displeases the eye for no other reason than that it is intrinsically pleasant or unpleasant. One can say, 'I like that picture because it is a good symbol of tenderness or a clever rendering of a pretty girl', but when one begins to say, 'I like that picture because its shapes, patterns, harmonies, masses, and linear constructure are . . .' one can only finish the sentence with a vague adjective – 'pleasant', 'well-organized', 'bold'. Form is an end in itself. There is something so ultimate about what we are pleased to call the aesthetic emotion that one can only say feebly, 'I like the colour scheme of that picture, because it is likeable.' To say, 'I like it because it reminds me of moonlight on white marble', is to speak of something other than aesthetics. It is to speak of the picture as a reference to something outside the picture.

This direct appeal made by the work of art to the purely aesthetic demands of the spectator, this by-passing of all reference to experience, visual or emotional, is, perhaps, the most formidable barrier that the critic has to overcome if he is to explain just what makes one artist more satisfying than another. One can conceive of two artists, equally inventive when it comes to producing visual equivalents of an emotional mood, equally skilful in creating images that refer back to objects seen or re-

membered, but by no means equal in genius when they begin to organize those equivalents and images on the canvas. Certain of Raphael's contemporaries were no less capable than he of suggesting the meaning behind the Madonna-and-Child theme and of producing a convincing representation of the two persons involved in the picture. But none of Raphael's contemporaries had his power to evolve a form so profoundly satisfying that no single line could alter its direction, no curve be given a different accent, no relationship between masses be disturbed without detriment to the work of art. What could be called the 'architecture' of his picture has a perfection that can only be explained by saying that it completely satisfies the spectator's appetite for architectural organization. And though very few artists can completely satisfy that appetite, the artist who lacks this architectural sense can never achieve the highest rank. Yet the critic, though he may continually insist on the importance of the purely formal elements in a painting, cannot describe just what they consist of in any given case. No vocabulary exists that would explain the thrill of contentment caused by certain rhythms and proportions.

One has only to turn aside to architecture itself and imagine, for example, the columns of the Parthenon shortened by two feet – a modification which would in no way have affected the building's function – to realize how much the eye owes to formal relationships. Yet the critic who undertook to prove that the alteration had impaired the aesthetic value of the building would find that words could not help him.

To a limited extent it is possible to enumerate certain basic aesthetic laws upon which the whole of art depends and which every work of art must obey or perish. They spring ultimately from a universal demand for stability. Our Raphael Madonna, for example, is based on the pyramid, placed centrally in the rectangular space of the picture. Not only is the pyramid, in itself, the most stable of all geometric forms, since it has a firm base and a low centre of gravity, but it has an implied vertical centre line and hence its stability is reinforced by its symmetry.

In order to make his design still more stable, Raphael has, as it were, anchored his pyramid within the rectangle of the frame by using the near edge of the distant lake to connect the sides of the pyramid to the frame by a strong horizontal line. Even the parted hair of the Madonna has a formal value to him by fixing an exact apex to his pyramid.

Elementary formal analysis of this kind is always possible, yet it is almost valueless. No respectable painter is incapable of evolving a pyramidal composition if he wishes to do so in the interests of stability. But analysis as elementary as this cannot explain the difference between the inevitability of Raphael's design and the attempts of his contemporaries to emulate him.

The object of this digression is not to discuss the infinitely subtle potentialities of the architectural element in painting, but to point out its supreme importance, even to the untrained eye. Doubtless many of my readers will regard aesthetics as an almost negligible factor in human affairs, and a branch of knowledge which has provided the critic with a certain amount of jargon but which need not disturb the layman even when he is confronted with a work of art. Yet which of them, asked to place a picture on a wall or a piece of furniture on a floor, would not instinctively obey the human appetite for balance by placing them in the centre? Which of them would not hang the picture, instinctively, with its top and bottom horizontal and its sides vertical? We are far more conscious than we suppose of the purely formal stresses and strains that are offered to our eyes every time we look at a building or a painting, or even at a tree or a human being. Destroy the symmetry of a human face and at once we begin to regard it as 'ugly', and for no other reason than that it refuses to satisfy out aesthetic appetites.

Yet, even though the basic 'architecture' of a painting has very little connexion with its references to human experience, it is never quite divorced from it. Our longing for horizontals is linked with our satisfaction at feeling the firm horizontal of the earth under our feet. And the satisfying vertical we insist on when we build a house or hang a picture on a wall is a reflec-

tion of our experience of the law of gravity which compels us to hold ourselves more or less vertically. Such purely formal responses to the laws of nature are almost unconscious.

But the artist, whose sense of form is never quite unconscious, can use his design to *reinforce* his own power to refer to human experience, as when Forster says about the form of Thais, 'If it were not for this hour-glass, the story, the plot and the characters would none of them exert their full force.' There is a drawing by Picasso called 'Zephyr', in which the basic idea of the form is one of fluttering lines contrasted with lines that just deviate from the vertical. The result is that the eye is given a sense of tremulous movement accompanied by slight instability which *reinforces* the subject-matter. In the final analysis, the aesthetic emotions are themselves deeply rooted in human experience. Seurat worked out detailed theories of how horizontal lines were associated with peace, vertical lines with energy, and so forth, but theorizing of this kind can never take us to the heart of the matter. In the case of the four Madonnas I can say with conviction, but without being able to give reasons that, considered for form alone, the Russian icon pleases me most, with the simple yet sinuous sweep of its lop-sided pyramid, the placing of the hands, the contrast between the light pattern of folds in the child's robe and the dark unbroken surface of the Madonna's, the combination of delicacy and strength in the lines, the queerness of the shapes (queer, again, in their own right, not merely queer in their violent distortion of human anatomy) and the relation between the mass occupied by the two figures and the plain background broken only by the hairline of the Madonna's halo and the monogram. Next I feel drawn to the Raphael with its much greater complexity and yet much greater monotony and lower vitality. The basic form is a more obvious, a less subtle pyramid. There is a 'rightness' in the choice of just where the horizontal of the water's edge cuts across the edges of the pyramid. There is a lack of those delightful contrasts between plain and patterned, between sinuous and angular, that one finds in the icon. Everything has a calculated perfection,

but the calculation behind the perfection is a shade too apparent. For example, the blocking of the horizontal water-line by the trees at either end, and the emphasis given to the two angles at the base of the pyramid by stressing the Madonna's foot on the right and St. John's foot on the left, are just a little too easy. They strike one as tricks. Simone's Madonna has none of the bigness of form of these two, though it is more refined and sensitive than either. Tiepolo's compared with the other three, is almost formless. It is nicely placed within the four bounding lines; there is a smug kind of balance in the disposition of the masses, but it is the reflection of a commonplace vision. The artist's perpetual problem of reconciling the claims of representation and the claims of decoration has hardly been tackled in this case.

The purely formal element in painting and sculpture is therefore one which the critic and historian must always be content to take for granted. It is of the utmost importance, and yet its precise nature can never be fully explained, however painstaking or penetrating his explanation. This unfortunately is bound to limit the scope and upset the balance of any book about the arts. The author, with the best will in the world, can do justice to only one half of his subject. Not only is every man's aesthetic sensitiveness different in degree from that of his fellows, it is also different in kind. The aesthetically insensitive man will derive little enough pleasure from the formal values of the Russian icon, and such pleasure as he feels will be more than counteracted by his annoyance at its failure to do justice to human anatomy. But beyond that, even the aesthetically sensitive man may not be sensitive in the same direction as the creator of the Russian icon. The icon happens to set up in me an instant aesthetic response – a response much more intense than I can give to any picture by Rembrandt, though I recognize that Rembrandt is a far greater artist than the icon painter. I regret my limitations, but I should be ill-advised to attempt to disguise or conceal them. My own hope in writing this book is not so much to set forth the facts of the story of Art as to communicate my enthusiasm

about it. The dates of Michelangelo's birth and death, whose pupil he was and whom he influenced can be stated briefly and accurately by any art historian. It is not my main object to do so in this book, for I can see no value in such knowledge if it is not accompanied by an estimate of what Michelangelo stood for – what contribution he made to the vision of his time. And this realization of what a given artist stands for must of necessity be accompanied by a love or a hatred of what he stands for, an enthusiasm for or against him.

It follows, then, that no account of the arts can escape the bias of the author's own personal enthusiasms. I am not ashamed of mine. I would rather distort my theme because of the limitations of my enthusiasms than render it colourless by suppressing them.

Take, for example, the Raphael Madonna. The art historian's business is to be, as far as possible, factual – to announce the names and dates of the artist, to state to what 'school' of painting Raphael belonged, to describe the general style of that 'school', and the particular style of the artist in question. Thus: 'Raphael Sanzio, 1483–1520. Umbrian School. Worked in the studio of Perugino and was influenced by him in his early work. Later came under the influence of Leonardo and Michelangelo. Shared with Perugino his sweetness but not his innocence. A master of linear composition but less inventive in his colour, which is often mediocre.' All that is true enough, but it leaves the reader still wondering in what respect the world would have been poorer had Raphael never lived, and what particular pleasure he will have missed if he never sees the Dresden Madonna or the Disputa. It leaves out of account the fact that Raphael was a man with a certain quality of vision, who, whenever he made a mark with brush or pencil, could not help giving that mark a Raphaelesque flavour: that whatever he did bears the imprint of his personality, that the result of that imprint in the work of art is a personal style, and that a personal style is the final index of personal vision.

What matters then, in telling the story of art, is to examine

the phenomenon of style, to find out what interplay of forces went to the making of it in any particular case. And that brings me to the artist's final task in the making of his work of art – the translation into paint of this amalgam of symbol, representation and form; an amalgam which (the reader must forgive me if I repeat myself, but it is an important point) exists only in the artist's eye until the process of translation begins.

In order to get this question of 'making' clear it is necessary to imagine that the artist has a complete picture in his mind's eye of what he is going to paint. We have to suppose that in painting his Madonna he has conjured up his symbols of tenderness and divinity, has also conjured up a mental image of a flesh-and-blood mother and baby, has decided how the two can be dovetailed together, and has imagined the result of this dovetailing as having certain formal or architectural qualities which may reinforce the subject-matter but are virtually independent of it. It then only remains for him to mix his paints, take up his brushes, prepare his flat surface and transfer the mental image to it.

Unfortunately that is not only an over-simplification of the problem but also a slight falsification of it. Unfortunately words can convey only one thought at a time. I have been compelled for the sake of clearness to pretend that tasks Nos. 1, 2, and 3 are separate (though interdependent) tasks and that task No. 4 – that of painting – is a separate and subsequent process. In the same way in a technical exposition of the three-colour process of reproduction one would show separate prints of the yellow, red, and blue blocks, although none of them has any real meaning except as a contribution to the final print.

Imagine the artist as a sort of chef, a man whose purpose is to achieve an amalgam of three interdependent yet conflicting ingredients, and who adds to this amalgam a fourth ingredient – his medium – and then stirs all four together into a kind of dough, which he bakes in the oven of his craftsmanship. The result is a dish in which all the ingredients play their part but which is not a mechanical mixture (as chemists say), but a chemical

compound. Once the stuff is baked it cannot be separated again into its component ingredients. Nor, of course, is it necessary to do so in order to enjoy it. And yet, even though the proof of any particular pudding may be in the eating, if we are to trace the history of puddings down the ages we must have some knowledge of what ingredients were used and how they were mixed – how chef A despised eggs so that all who followed him produced eggless puddings, until that great artist, chef B, reinstated the egg, and an eggy period followed, modified later by C, whose passion for currants and raisins altered, for the time being, the attitude of mind of half a continent towards the making of puddings: how the chefs of the East based their puddings on rice and invariably served them cold, while those of the West made them of flour and liked them piping hot. What is important for us is to enjoy the pudding, not to analyse it, but at least one approach to enjoyment lies through analysis, provided it is the kind of analysis that always keeps the end in mind and is not content to think only of the means. It must be an analysis of *flavour*, the means of communicating pleasure, not of *cooking*, the method of practising a craft. Every work of art – every picture or statue – has its own flavour – its style. An artist's style is not something he deliberately adopts. Like a man's handwriting or the tone of his voice, it is an inevitable part of himself. It is his personality made manifest. Ask a dozen artists to draw a curved line on a piece of paper and you will get a dozen different results – different flavours of line. Some will draw boldly, others hesitatingly, some of the lines will be hard and steely, others delicate and sensitive, some will remind one of a thread of silk laid on the paper, others of a piece of bent wire. Each of those twelve lines will be an index of a different kind of man, and from the qùality of the line – its style – one can deduce the man.

If a mere curved line can give so much evidence about its author, how much more complete will be the evidence of a complex work like a painting of a Madonna and Child. At every turn the artist will give himself away. He will reveal his

attitude to his employer, his feelings about Madonnas, his keenness of observation, the retentiveness of his visual memory, his sense of design and, finally, his capacity to control his brushes and his paint and, in turn, to be controlled by them and to adapt himself to their natural behaviour. Style is the accumulated result of all this evidence. To take the evidence supplied by a single picture or statue is no easy task. To write the story of art is to take the evidence supplied by all the works of art created by man since civilization began – a manifestly impossible thing to do. Within the narrow limits allotted to me I can hope to do no more than select a few outstanding works, typical of their creators, of their period, or of the race to which their creators belonged, and note what seems to me to be most important in what they reveal.

So far I have scrupulously avoided the word 'beauty', though I have come perilously near it in discussing aesthetic emotion. I previously expressed the following sentence: 'Form exists in its own right and pleases or displeases the eye for no other reason than that it is pleasant or unpleasant.' In writing that sentence I was uncomfortably aware of standing on the edge of an abyss. If I had written 'for no other reason than that it is beautiful or ugly', I should have been over into the abyss, a lost man, whose only chance of climbing out again would be to formulate a definition of beauty. Having no such definition, believing indeed that no definition is possible, I shall not venture into the abyss, but merely stand on the edge and look down into it. It is an abyss in which many a writer on aesthetics has been lost, and I see no reason to take so dangerous and so futile a plunge.

And yet the words 'beauty' and 'ugliness' are on every man's lips and especially when art is under discussion. There seems to be a general assumption that what the artist wishes to produce is beauty. And tangled up with that assumption is frequently another – seldom admitted, but one reads it between the lines – that a picture of an ugly thing is an ugly picture, regardless of the fact that masterpieces like Velasquez's 'Las

Meninas' and Rembrandt's 'Carcass of an Ox' (to take extreme cases) are 'about' subjects generally recognized as ugly. There is a pretty general agreement about beauty and ugliness in nature. Waterfalls, shady glens, sunsets, snow-mountains, beech trees in spring seem beautiful to most people. Dwarfs, dustbins, dungheaps, and flayed oxen strike most people as ugly. It would be futile to ask why. Nor has the reason why any bearing on the present inquiry. I suspect in each case that nothing is beautiful or ugly but association makes it so. A flayed ox is associated in one's thoughts with death and a dustbin with uselessness. No doubt if a vegetable marrow could express an opinion it would become lyrical in praise of dungheaps. Faced with a flayed ox, Rembrandt *did* become lyrical, for, though to his mind it may have been a symbol of death, to his eye it presented a colour scheme of blushing pinks and translucent creams as delicate as any rose garden.

A sense of beauty to the artist is merely the result of an attitude of mind. If the painter's visual responses are quickened by the play of light, then a dustbin can be, to him, as beautiful as a débutante. If structure and the interplay of planes excites him, then a pair of boots is, to him, more exciting than a wood carpeted with bluebells, and an old pair of boots more exciting than a new pair.

This is a commonplace of art criticism, but it does not explain the curious fact that our sense of beauty changes. Even with regard to natural objects like waterfalls and mountains it changes. Dr Johnson and his age regarded a mountain as a rather uncouth object. 'Frowning' or 'horrid' were the kind of adjectives the eighteenth century applied to precipices. Much more does the spectator's sense of beauty shift with regard to works of art. The kind of controversy that sprang up every time Mr Epstein carved a new statue is not evidence, for it is not certain that posterity will ever regard Mr Epstein's statues as beautiful. The chances are, however, that posterity will,* for

* Sir Jacob Epstein received his knighthood in 1953. He died in 1960.

all the evidence goes to show that a man who feels intensely and expresses unhesitatingly something that has not been felt or expressed before will eventually persuade the rest of the world to share his feeling. And – this is the crux of the matter – once mankind has accepted a new type of vision and expression as valid, it invariably agrees to call the work of art embodying the vision 'beautiful'.

One has only to draw up a list of artists who were in their day innovators and who have since been generally accepted as good artists and then to look up the contemporary criticism of their works to see the process at work. Turner's 'Fighting Téméraire', Constable's 'Hay Wain', Whistler's etchings of Venice, Manet's 'Olympia', are obvious instances. To-day's opinion generally agrees to call them 'beautiful'. Their contemporaries on the whole were puzzled and hostile. 'Tawdry' was the adjective applied to Turner's picture, 'unnatural' to Constable's, 'obscene' to Manet's. The pictures themselves remain the same. What has happened is that they have persuaded us to accept them. They have changed *us*.

Curiously enough, while the number of works we agree to call beautiful is always increasing as this process of persuasion goes on, the reverse process rarely happens. We do not, on the whole, discover that works previously thought beautiful no longer seem to us to be so. In a few cases it has happened, as when the Bolognese eclectics, so admired by Sir Joshua Reynolds and the connoisseurs of his time, fell from favour. It happens, too, by a mysterious law which makes fashionable things look dowdy the moment they have gone out of fashion. But that is a mere temporary eclipse. Another generation goes by and what was once fashionable and later became dowdy emerges from both the artificial light and the artificial shadow. Doubtless to an Elizabethan dandy the modes of Henry VIII's day seemed deplorably unlovely. To us they are simply different, and the difference is not one that can be expressed in terms of greater or less beauty.

Beauty, then, is an almost meaningless word if one attempts

to attach to it any absolute value. It is merely a convenient and ingenious piece of shorthand. 'That picture of the Madonna is beautiful' is merely a compressed way of saying, 'In that picture the artist has succeeded in communicating to me certain of his own personal excitements about Madonnahood and about line and colour. In looking at it I begin to share those excitements. The picture has enlarged my experience. Having looked at it I shall never feel quite the same again about Madonnas or about the interplay between dark blue and gold.'

Beauty in a work of art is not an inherent quality but an attribute we read into it the moment it begins to communicate its message. One can even watch the process, in oneself, of a work of art *becoming* beautiful as its message gradually dawns on one. I can remember my own early failure to understand the Post-Impressionists and my consequent feeling that their works were ugly, followed by a gradual comprehension and the consequent gradual birth in myself of a new sense of beauty.

The artist who is capable of being moved or excited by something – some aspect of visual experience – that has never moved or excited any artist before him, is certain to be either ignored or detested until he has succeeded in persuading others to share his excitement, unless he is serving so vital a social need that his originality of vision passes unnoticed. At first a few exceptionally sensitive people will grasp the new message and welcome it. Others, slower in their response, will follow, until there is a general acceptance. At that moment the artist's work becomes (literally *becomes*) 'beautiful'.

It is for that reason that the very word which has attached itself most firmly to the arts, which seems indeed to provide the ultimate test of their validity, must be viewed with the utmost suspicion. 'Beauty' is a word that does good service in everyday conversation. It ties together in a haphazard but useful way a host of human experiences. In my book *The Meaning of Beauty* I have endeavoured to clarify my own conception of its meaning and to define some of the tenuous links between 'life' and 'art' for which it is responsible, but in telling the

story of art I shall try (doubtless not always successfully) to avoid it. It leads its users into too many pitfalls.

3

East and West

Roughly speaking, the story of art is the story of two unconnected groups of artists with quite different points of view. There is the Oriental group and the European group, and though this book confines itself to Western art, it will be as well, before going any further, to consider briefly the main differences between the two groups. Oriental art is rather like a complicated system of canals that run parallel with each other but sometimes intersect. Occidental art is like a river in which there is a single central current to which new tributaries are constantly being added and whose character is constantly modified by them. The study of Oriental art, therefore, involves the historian in a set of separate journeys: the study of European art is the study of a steadily evolving organism. A Chinese painting has in it an air of finality; a European painting always seems to have evolved from a set of earlier conceptions and to contain within itself the seeds of later ones.

These two groups do not, of course, cover the whole field of human art-activity. Man, in whatever part of the earth, at whatever period of history, and in whatever stage of civilization, has always evolved (among other kinds of language) a visual language. Negro art, Mexican and Peruvian art, to take two random examples, belong to separate branches of the language. But for the purposes of this chapter they can be left out of account. Asia and Europe have provided the bulk of the world's art, and the best of it. It is not easy to describe the difference between the two approaches to the problem of expression, but if almost any two Oriental and European works of art be set side by side, one feels at once the gulf between them. A portrait or a landscape by a Chinese artist of the Sung period and, say, a portrait by Velasquez or a landscape by Constable seem to have been called into being by two different sets of forces working in different

directions. So do a carving from an Indian temple and a statue by Donatello, or a Persian miniature and a page from Richard II's Bible of the late fourteenth century. To define those forces and indicate the directions in which they operate would require an exhaustive comparison between Oriental and Occidental states of mind, religions and social structures that would be out of place. It will be more profitable to point out a few obvious differences between typical works of art of the East and West.

There have been occasional instances of a link between the two, the most obvious being the Byzantine artists who managed for a time, and somewhat precariously, to keep one foot in each camp. But eventually the Italian Byzantines were occidentalized, while the Russian Byzantines were either orientalized or else proved sterile. But such links are exceptional. The two main schools have been, for the greater part of recorded history, unconnected.

Contrast, for example, a typical Chinese with a typical European landscape. It strikes one at once that the European has been trying to describe a particular stretch of country seen at a particular season of the year and state of weather, observed from a particular spot, while the Chinese painter has preferred to suggest an aspect of nature in a certain mood. The one is a personal record of a given scene, the other a formalized expression of man in communion with nature.

That is not to say that the Oriental painter does not observe nature as closely as the Occidental. He observes her with perhaps even more concentration, but in a different spirit. Where the European is content to translate a given scene into paint, the Oriental absorbs the whole district into his system and then gives it off again in terms of brushwork.

'But that is what you said all artists do,' the reader may object. Certainly. But where the European artist seems to feel the need for the specific case and wishes to tie up his symbol as firmly as possible to a particular personal experience, the Oriental shuns the particular case and his symbol seems to represent the pooled experience of mankind.

The result is that Oriental art is not concerned with the nature of visual experience as is the art of the West, and therefore the laws that govern visual appearances are of very little importance to it. The discovery of the laws of perspective seemed to the Florentines a major landmark in the progress of art: perspective is largely absent from Oriental art. The Persian miniaturist who wishes to indicate that one thing is *behind* another (i.e. further from the artist's eye than another) indicates the fact not by making the distant object smaller but by placing it higher up the picture. After all, who is the artist that his eye should determine the relative size of things? Why should he expect everyone who looks at his picture to accept his personal, temporary point of view? Why should the eye and not the mind be the final arbiter?

Again, Oriental art is not seriously concerned with light and shade, since light and shade are accidents that have no connexion with the objects on which they fall. For the painter's purposes there are no cast shadows east of Constantinople. The result of this Oriental preoccupation with the essence rather than the appearance of the subject is to give the work of art a look which Europeans call 'decorative', though decoration is not the Chinese artist's primary concern. Like Constable, the Chinese landscapist is concerned with truth, but truth of a different kind. Constable takes the utmost pains to be faithful to what his eye sees: the Eastern artist to what his mind knows.

The effect of this difference of outlook between the two is to make the one static and the other evolutionary – or as I have already said, to make one resemble a system of parallel canals, the other a river. For the Eastern, 'development' or 'progress' in the art of painting can hardly be said to exist. He is not engaged, as the European is, in a struggle with the image on his retina. One half of the story of European painting is concerned with the gradual discovery of what things 'look like'. Rembrandt knew far more than Giotto about the 'look' of things, and most art students of to-day know as much as Rembrandt. That does not make Rembrandt a greater artist than Giotto nor does

it make the art student the equal of Rembrandt, but it alters the equipment they bring to the job of painting, and therefore it alters their style. But to the Oriental artist style does not develop through the centuries in order to keep pace with the development of the artist's grasp of 'appearance'. To him style is a tool that can and must be modified according to the requirements of the subject. A European painting can usually be dated to within a couple of decades. It is difficult to place an Oriental painting to within a century.

In contemplating so static an art one has no sense of a battle against odds. The Oriental mind's eye does not snatch greedily at what the physical eye offers it. It digests it calmly, and a curious refinement and sensitiveness of line, and especially of spacing, result, which make almost any European painting look rough and clumsy by comparison. Even the most controlled and ascetic of European painters – even a Mantegna or an Ingres – seems uncouth by contrast.

But the most noticeable difference between the two approaches to painting is that whereas the European has always insisted on making every square inch of his picture a reference to the artist's visual experience, the Oriental feels no such need. An unbroken area of paint above a European landscape is a *representation* of a cloudless sky. A corresponding unbroken area in an Oriental landscape simply means that the Oriental artist did not choose to make any statement whatever about the sky. It is not a representation of a cloudless sky but a portion of the painting in which the artist had not given any visual information at all. It is a resting space for the eye, as a pause in music is a resting space for the ear.

A comparison between the Sung artist's picture of ladies preparing silk and Courbet's of girls preparing for a wedding on Plate 4a and b, shows exactly what I mean. The contrast between the two subjects is in itself an index of the difference between a race of men that contemplates a generalized activity and one that observes a particular incident. The groups – remarkably similar in the 'story' they tell – of women holding

a length of cloth, are seen in utterly different ways. Courbet's women are in a room, standing on the floor, surrounded by air. Unimportant though their environment may be in itself, Courbet has no alternative but to describe it. Not so the Chinese artist. He paints his women and the stretch of cloth they hold, and beyond that he has no obligation. The blank space behind them does not mean that they are floating in mid-air or that they have no surroundings or environment. It is not a painter's description of a vacuum but an artist's provision of a resting place for the spectator's eye and mind.

Instances could be piled up indefinitely of how the difference between the two points of view gives the two families of art a difference of direction. Freed from the obligations imposed on the Western artist by his gross visual appetites and his nagging visual curiosity, the Eastern artist is not distracted by the tug-of-war between his aesthetic duty and his descriptive duty that has been described in an earlier chapter. A green robe is to him a green robe, not a surface whose colour is modified by the impact of light on one side and the absence of it on the other. He can therefore rejoice to his heart's content in its greenness. He does not have to wonder, as Leonardo did, whether green in shadow is best represented by the addition of black to the basic green or by hinting at its complementary colour, red – a problem that was not solved until the Impressionist tackled it in the nineteenth century. Unhampered by an urge to explore the nature of light (which is a branch of optical science) the Oriental is free to explore far more thoroughly than the European the possibilities of colour (which is a branch of aesthetics).

In sculpture where, for obvious reasons, there is a less violent line of cleavage between the thing-in-itself and the thing-as-it-appears-to-the-eye-of-the-artist, the difference between East and West is not quite so startling, but it is never in any doubt. Behind every Western carving of a human figure is the implication of a portrait; behind every Oriental statue is the implication of a mood. The idea of serenity has never been quite so intensely

caught and held by any European sculptor as it has by countless of the cross-legged Buddhas of Ceylon. Nor has the idea of sinuous movement as expressed in Indian carvings of dancers ever been equalled in the West.

From all this the reader may gather that I consider Oriental art to be somehow on a higher plane than European, and that consequently I find it somehow more admirable. What I have said might certainly give that impression. And yet the reader would be wrong. The bulk of Oriental art by its very calm and detachment leaves me cold. It is too exquisite, too inhuman. The Chinese ladies who hold out that lovely length of silk with its faintly sagging curve, cutting across its horizontal line with their own vertical lines, are too much like a sample of Chinese calligraphy. Human beings in Chinese art are no longer specimens of *homo sapiens*. They are examples of *homo aestheticus*. In their rarefied presence I begin to long for Courbet's giggling, sweating wenches. Chinese brushwork may be compact of vital rhythms, but I prefer Titian's (relatively) clumsy piling on of paint and his (by comparison) bucolic attempts to make it satisfy his rough-and-tumble needs. To the European, laughter and sweat are a necessary part of art as well as of life. I have seen Chinese paintings made of lines as subtle as a silken thread blown on to the paper, and tones as elusive as the smoke of a cigarette. And yet – and yet I cannot be content with an art that leaves my more material appetites unsatisfied. I like to think of the artist as in some way part of his subject: that Titian, painting his 'Bacchus and Ariadne', was an unofficial member of Bacchus's attendant crew of satyrs, and that half the picture's vitality springs from this close contact with life. No Chinese artist would permit such a sense of contact. He holds himself aloof, and *his* picture's vitality must spring from a set of vital rhythms set up in his mind and communicated by his fingers to the point of his brush.

So much for the fundamental difference between the Oriental point of view with its parallel schools and its contemplative habit of mind, and the Occidental with its evolutionary system in which visual curiosity is always leading the artist towards new

discoveries, each of which becomes embedded in the central tradition, enlarging it, modifying it and deflecting it, but never allowing it to settle down into a rigid system.

4

The Development of European Art

The evolutionary nature of European art makes it necessary to inquire not only into its general characteristics but also into the circumstances of its birth, childhood, and advance to maturity. It must be treated as an organism capable of all these developments and also liable to periods of debility and (the implications of the analogy must be faced) possibly a period of senility and decay.

Its birth is vague enough. The art of Egypt, static and self-contained for centuries in the Nile Valley, had none of the restless curiosity, the search for new worlds to conquer, that characterized European art. But it was from Egypt that the seeds blew across to the Eastern Mediterranean and took root among the Aegean Islands. The first signs of growth became apparent in Mycenae and Crete. After the hieratic perfection of Egypt, the art of the Cretans and Mycenaeans is amateurish, but it is full of vigour and, unlike Egyptian art, it refuses to rely on a set of conventions. Greece caught this vigorous spirit and nourished it with that type of intellectual curiosity that gave the whole of Greek culture its solid foundation and permitted its subsequent growth to be more capable of refinement than anything that preceded it. The rigidity of the early statues of Greek athletes gradually relaxed into dignity, then into grace and finally into prettiness. The same process can be traced in the only paintings that have survived, those on the vases. Greece had to all intents and purposes, only one message to communicate in her visual art – the beauty of the human body. For all her intellectual curiosity – and perhaps because of it – she made no attempt in her visual art to suggest that the perfection of the human body was inhabited by a restless human soul.

Rome, heavier, emptier, less creative, could neither add anything to what the Greeks had said nor had she any desire to

break away from it. Nothing new could be said in the Greek idiom. It seemed for a moment as if the original source – the pagan source – from which the stream of European art was to spring, had dried up.

Meanwhile another and exactly contradictory motive force was gathering momentum further East. Greek paganism adored the body. Christianity equally whole-heartedly adored the soul.

The origin of the Byzantine style presents a problem which has not yet been completely solved. What makes it important is that it marks the beginning of a cycle in art history, a double pendulum-swing of the pendulum, which has, perhaps, just come to an end. It is easy enough to think of European art as progressing from ' primitive ' to ' mature ', from decorative and symbolic to naturalistic and descriptive. The progression seems a natural one, but that I think is only because the pendulum constantly swings backwards and forwards between the two, and we in the twentieth century happen to have just come to the end of a long swing towards the descriptive and away from the symbolic. But at the fall of the Roman Empire, when a materialistic religion was giving way to a spiritual one, the exact reverse was taking place. The seventh and sixth centuries B.C. produced stark archaic figures; the fifth and fourth produced the softened and rounded forms of the golden age of Greece. That seems a natural progression and one would have thought that to whatever extent subject-matter might change, the honeyed perfection of the period from Pericles to Augustus could never give way to a more primitive style. And yet we find the sixth century A.D. producing a style as stiff (though not as stark) as that of early Greece. This backward pendulum-swing embraces the whole of the Byzantine period, which was certainly not an age of ignorance or of incompetence. Craftsmanship in the arts was at a high level, and the Christian Church took the utmost pains to control its direction and turn it into an effective propagandist machine. It is only we, nourished as we have been on a naturalistic tradition, who regard the swing away from descriptive naturalism as a swing *backwards*. Doubtless the devotees of the decaying Graeco-

Roman paganism were also shocked at the gradual rise of the new style spreading westwards from Byzantium, but that did not prevent it spreading. The pendulum swung until Giotto, with one of those magnificent single-handed gestures that make ordinary mortals seem weak and timid, stopped it dead and started it swinging back through the cycle with which we are now familiar, Giotto, Masaccio, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Monet, Cézanne. To draw a line through those seven names is to produce a curve which is the graph of the last full forward swing of the pendulum; the centre of that curve is marked by the Renaissance, and the end of it, if my reading of the evolution of Western art is correct, by the death of Cézanne. The pendulum has now begun to swing back again, but it has not yet swung far enough to justify any attempts at detailed prophecy about the sort of curve it will take.

Any history of art written for the consumption of twentieth-century Europeans must necessarily regard the Giotto–Cézanne period (say 1300–1900) as its most important section and must devote far more space to those six centuries than to any other period – the (approximately) hundred centuries of Palaeolithic art, the eighty centuries or so of Neolithic art, the thirty centuries of Egyptian, the twelve centuries of the Cretan-Roman cycle, or the eleven centuries of Early Christian art. Those six centuries mark the gradual solution of one problem after another in the conquest of appearances. The solution of those problems had nothing whatever to do with the greatness of the artists involved, nor with the potency with which they communicated their message. It revolutionized the artist's means but it brought him no nearer to his end. Giotto, unaware of one half of the problems yet to be solved, is still a giant, immeasurably more potent than a host of later artists who could solve them with the greatest ease. What still matters is the intensity of the artist's vision, not its scope. Nevertheless, the development of period-vision is fascinating to follow and the object of the high-speed journey undertaken in this chapter is to establish a rough outline of its direction, leaving the assessment of genius for later inquiry.

Giotto stopped the pendulum by virtue of his humanity and his sense of drama. The Byzantines, hieratic, aristocratic, conservative, had created an aloof world in which the human body, so devotedly worshipped by the Greeks, had no place. Giotto gave his figures a physique and brought them back to earth; he took them out of the vague indeterminate space in which they had existed for so long and set them in definite places on the earth's surface, set them among rocks or in meadows or houses. They have structure, they breathe. They are the expression in art of the democratic conception of St Francis. Both Giottto and St Francis have much in common with the Salvation Army of to-day. All three base their creed on human nature rather than inhuman dogma. St Francis turned doctrine into parable, Giotto turned it into narrative. The immense twist he gave to the general direction of art was the result of his preoccupation with the story of Christianity rather than its dogma.

After Giotto the current of the stream slackened a little, but Masaccio a century later carried the Giottesque humanity a stage further. The spirit of Greece, with its acceptance of the human body, was latent in the Florentine primitives. It needed only the rediscovery of Greek literature and the digging up of a few Graeco-Roman statues to bring out its full flavour. But harnessed as art was to Christian teaching, Florence could never produce an art based on physique alone. Just as Byzantium had taken the Graeco-Roman idiom and mysticized it, so Florence took the Byzantine spirit and materialized it. Meanwhile Siena, no more than half a day's journey away, had already taken the Byzantine spirit and instead of materializing it had refined it, civilized it, made it elegant and wistful. If Florence took the Byzantine world and pulled it forcibly down to earth, the Sienese lifted the earth, with its pots and pans and houses and gardens and beasts and birds, gently up into the rarefied Byzantine heaven. The method was less robust. Siena provided a delicious little tributary to the stream, but not an important one.

The Renaissance took firmer root in Florence. The harness of Christianity, hitherto universal, proved just a little too irksome

for an adventurous set of men who had rediscovered the pagan world. The Madonna, they realized, was not the whole of womanhood, nor Jesus the whole of manhood. Venus and Apollo must be brought in to take their places by their sides. Again one sees the pendulum swinging back over the same ground. In the early Christian mosaics Jesus had been visualized as a kindly, beardless, rustic Apollo. In the early Renaissance pictures Venus reappears with many of the outward characteristics of the Madonna. The painters of Central Italy alternated happily between the claims of Christianity and Paganism. Michelangelo combined them and intensified their vigour. In him 'physique' reaches its climax, and, as every climax must be followed by an anti-climax, the Florentine High Renaissance ecstasy began, after him, to settle down into something less passionate and less vital. But Michelangelo was not in the centre of the Florentine stream. Its central figure was Raphael, who perfected the science of picture-making in the same way that an engineer might perfect the science of bridge-making. If Masaccio had developed the painter's sense of structure, Raphael developed the painter's sense of balance. With him harmony – the relation of the parts to the whole – is the prime objective.

Meanwhile in the Venetian plain another tributary, bigger than the Sienese tributary, began to make its way towards the main stream. Oddly enough it started in a direction that gave no hint of what was to be its later course. Mantegna, the most ardent 'classicist' of them all, was positively fanatical in his steely austerity of line, and he bequeathed this austerity to Giovanni Bellini, his brother-in-law. But there was something in Bellini that could not be content with austerity. As his art gathered momentum he gradually shed his austerity and adopted a light-laden sensuousness that was new in European art. With light came colour – not the hard Florentine colour that belongs only to objects, but the glowing colour that belongs to light. Bellini turned the Mantegna tributary round. As it progressed away from intellectual austerity in the direction of glowing sensuousness it became more rapid, and in less than ten years from Bellini's

first essays in the new manner, the Venetian school was in full spate, rich, joyful, exuberant. Florentine art always suggests a spring morning: Venetian a summer afternoon. The languor of a Venus by Titian is very different from the wistfulness of a Venus by Botticelli. Raphael and Michelangelo mark the climax in Florence, Titian and Tintoretto in Venice. Again came the anticlimax, again the slackening of the stream, but not such a sudden slackening as in Florence. The two streams joined, became sluggish. Both Florence and Venice had drawn their vitality from excitement at their own visual discoveries – in the one case the discovery of structure, with its attendant emphasis on line, in the other the discovery of colour with its attendant emphasis on surface. To unite the two discoveries was an artistic problem but it was not in itself a discovery. The movement known as Eclecticism had its roots in art, not in life, and therefore it was moribund, for though art can always build on art, it cannot be vitalized unless it also draws its inspiration from life. ' Art built on art ' is as good a definition of the disease known as eclecticism as one needs. Italian art died slowly: it died of eclecticism, though for a time it prolonged its life uneasily, in Venice and Central Italy, by what art historians have agreed to call ' Mannerism '.

The Renaissance radiated from Italy to all parts of Europe, but the rest of Europe had not Italy's splendid acceptance of new discoveries, nor her power to graft a pagan physique on to a medieval mysticism. In Germany, steeped in an uncouth and somewhat macabre mysticism, the Renaissance took strange forms. The intellectual curiosity which was one half of it took firm hold, but not the grace and leisureliness that was the other half. Somehow the Renaissance forms in Germany and the Netherlands never concealed a medieval love of the grotesque. In England the Renaissance came late, and it came as a manufactured import rather than as raw material for a nation to turn to her own uses. In architecture Wren did produce his own personal version of it, but in painting and sculpture it arrived fully grown, introduced through the medium of foreign artists,

Holbein, Rubens, van Dyck, and Lely. England never knew the thrilling early stages of it as Italy did, with new worlds unfolding themselves at every turn. When France adopted it it had already settled down into a comfortable, middle-aged respectability in Rome, where the French painters Poussin and Claude took it as they found it, but gave it the stimulus of their own nervous energy. We must visualize the dancing rapids of art in Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as broadening out into a placid stream and covering most of Europe in the seventeenth.

But there were still plenty of aspects of the visual world to conquer, and the seventeenth century produced men who conquered them brilliantly. It was in the seventeenth century that two more tributaries flowed into the stream, one from Holland in the north, the other from Spain in the south-west. Dutch artists, with their genius for domesticity, succeeded during the brief period when Dutch art was at its height, in presenting a complete portrait of Protestant middle-class Holland.

Spain, aristocratic and fervently Catholic, was not nearly as prolific as Holland, but her contribution to European painting was more in the central tradition than that of Holland. It had the Italian nobility of mood and breadth of structure. El Greco, that strange creature whose personal eccentricities of style were so insistent that he can hardly be said to belong to the conventional pattern of European development, did at least make Spain conscious of what was happening further East. Coming straight from Venice and grasping with uncanny insight the subtle difference between Titian, the last of the Classic painters, and Tintoretto, the first of the Baroque painters, he prepared the ground in Spain for the new Baroque spirit. El Greco was abnormal: he was too individual to found a national school of painting. It was the magnificently normal Velasquez who made the seventeenth-century Spanish tributary important, just as it was Rembrandt who gathered together and intensified all that Dutch art stood for in the seventeenth century. The contribution of both painters towards the solution of the problems of representation was similar. Both had a mental grasp of the visual world which

showed how incomplete had been the visual equipment of all previous painters.

This question of 'grasp' is not an easy one to explain. It depends largely on the painter's power to ignore the separateness of objects, and this power is bound up with the whole conception of 'Baroque' art.

The 'classic' vision of the sixteenth century consisted of an intense realization of each object – its structure, shape and pattern, and of a power to build up a satisfying static whole out of the interdependence of the parts. There is in the Madonna by Raphael (Plate 3a) an extraordinary feeling for the generalized character of each concept – the concepts 'arm', 'foot', 'neck', and so on, all of which added together form the larger concept 'woman' and the still larger concept 'group of figures' and the still larger concept 'group of figures in a landscape'. The sixteenth century at its best could, out of a set of perfect parts, build up a perfect whole. Earlier stages of art found this difficult. The artist could grasp the smaller concepts, but failed to establish the relations between them. An extreme instance of such failure is seen in Egyptian reliefs, where the concept 'head' is represented by the typical view – the front view – of the eye. Both head and eye are correctly seen in themselves, but not in relation to one another. In Egyptian art the whole human body is built up on this system, with a front view of the shoulders leading into a side view of the legs and an unconvincing mixture of the two in the region of the waist. The power of the mind's eye to grasp larger and larger units of form is acquired only after a struggle and only in later stages of development. The fifteenth-century Italian painter's command of the human figure was the hard-won result of an intense interest in and study of the human figure; but the power to relate figures to one another was a later development. In Andrea del Castagno's version of the 'Last Supper' each of the thirteen figures is a separately solved problem. In Leonardo's the figures are tied together in compact groups of three, and each group is linked up with the next by a carefully designed connecting gesture (see Plate 10a and b). It is a masterly

essay in classic composition and any sixteenth-century artist might forgivably have been convinced that the last word had been said in picture-construction.

But the last word had by no means been said. The mind's eye that could merge the concept 'man' in the larger concept 'group of men' was as yet incapable of grasping the concept 'man-in-his-environment'. Leonardo's sense of the relationship between his thirteen figures and the room in which they sit is almost as elementary as the Egyptian sculptor's sense of the relationship between a human eye and a human head. It was a discovery of the seventeenth century (with Rembrandt as its central figure), that the whole complex texture of visible form could be taken in with one comprehensive sweep of the mind's eye. The artist's vision was no longer ruled by concepts. Rembrandt was no longer conscious of painting a set of definable and therefore separable objects. His eye could pass from a figure to the floor under its feet and the wall behind it and the cloud seen through the window in the wall without being conscious of passing from one *thing* to another. The whole texture of his picture is one.

Again, a hundred scraps of evidence can be cited to show how this new type of mind's eye produced a new kind of picture. Leonardo's way of looking at life was essentially the same as the Egyptian sculptor's way of looking at a man. He selected the typical view – the front view, the audience's view of a stage. Leonardo's thirteen men are seated at a table that lies exactly at right-angles to the spectator's line of vision. Like scenery on the stage every plane in his picture is parallel to this table line. And, as in the theatre, one has a sneaking sense that if one went round into the wings the whole thing would lose its apparent solidity. But with the seventeenth century, the breakaway from the method of working by separate concepts also meant a breakaway from frontality. The artist can now paint his picture from any angle. In Tintoretto's 'Last Supper', in the church of San Giorgio, Venice (Plate 14b), painted in the last decade of the sixteenth century, the table is in steep diagonal perspective. And

with the breakaway from frontality comes a breakaway from symmetry. Almost every Renaissance picture and almost no Baroque picture has an implied centre line.

Again, the abandonment of the classic system of using parts in order to build up a whole introduces a larger set of rhythms, which leap to the eye in all the arts but are perhaps most noticeable in architecture. The notion of a building as a structure made up like a bookcase by adding storey to storey gives way to a system in which every effort is made to disguise the separate storeys by such devices as running great columns of pilasters from top to bottom of the façade. Sometimes, not content with the concept 'building', the architect even linked up his structure with the ground on which it stood by a system of terraces of a crowd of statues running forward from it but architecturally related to it.

The earlier faith in line, the system of describing objects by insisting on their contour, has now given place to a faith in surface and an even greater faith in light. For if the artist can take in the whole complex texture of nature at one eyeful, dividing lines between objects cease to have a meaning. If there is no longer an essential differentiation to be made between a man and the shadow he casts on the wall behind him, why draw a line between them? If the two merge in nature, then let them merge on the canvas.

The earlier faith in the picture as a tableau that recedes from the eye in a set of parallel planes has given place to a type of vision in which receding planes are lost in a continuous receding movement. One can think of a sixteenth-century picture as an elevation. To understand a seventeenth-century picture one must also think of its ground plan.

All this, and a good deal more, is summed up in the word 'Baroque', a word which is too commonly used to mean merely 'rhetorical'. Rhetoric certainly was typical of the seventeenth century, for it was a pompous, worldly age and rhetoric flourished in it. But rhetoric is a mere by-product of it. Velasquez was no rhetorician and certainly nothing could be less rhetorical than

the exquisite restraint of Vermeer of Delft. Any formula that will describe the basic spirit of the seventeenth century must include the Vermeers and Watteaus as well as the Rubenses and the Berninis. 'Baroque' art in its deeper sense finally rejects the idea that a work of art is a sum of parts. The unbroken rhythm that runs through a Baroque painting or statue comes into being because there is nothing in the artist's mind – no splitting up of life into mankind and its background – to break the rhythm. A Renaissance drawing is always a drawing of an isolated object – a horse, an angel, or a fold of drapery: but almost any Baroque drawing, even the merest scribble, places the object in its surroundings.

Further progress in this direction being manifestly impossible, the eighteenth century was content to reflect in its arts its own social background. Pedestrian, Protestant Holland had said all she had to say by the end of the seventeenth century. Spain still had one major artist to come – Goya. Italy and Germany had no further contributions to make to the main European tradition. The late seventeenth century saw the artistic centre of gravity shift to Paris where it remained until the outbreak of the Second World War.

Artistically the eighteenth century was a comparatively uncreative period. It was the age of reason. Or rather it alternated between reasonableness and playfulness, neither of which is creative as religion can be creative. Reason can produce refinement: playfulness decoration. With the exception of Watteau no typical eighteenth-century artist produced anything more than good decoration or a refinement on the achievement of previous artists. What the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries expressed was not a way of looking at nature, a habit of sight, but a way of living, a habit of mind. And since the French habit of mind has always been logical and clear-cut, the moods reflected in painting and sculpture since the beginning of the eighteenth century were also clear-cut. First the playful Rococo of Louis XVI, then the cold pseudo-noble Classicism of the Empire, then the romantic Byronic mood of the early nineteenth century, then the school

that called itself 'Realist'. These were not so much styles as fashions. They were reflections of political or social conceptions rather than of an attitude to the visual world. True, they produced new and interesting phases in painting. Classicism produced David and Ingres; Romanticism, Delacroix, and Géricault. Realism was founded by Courbet, but these movements shed no new light on the visible world as the Classic and the Baroque movements had done. They were ways of thinking and feeling, not ways of seeing or visualizing.

It was not till Impressionism turned its attention to the nature of light and especially to the colour of shadow that painters evolved a new way of seeing. The meaning of Impressionism will be discussed in a later chapter. It was not a very important set of discoveries that the Impressionists made, but it had a remarkable effect on the appearance of pictures. The artist's search for a new aspect of truth produces in the long run a new type of what we are pleased to call beauty. The Impressionists were concerned almost to the exclusion of everything else in representing what light and shadow really looked like. To that they were willing to sacrifice, if necessary, most of what precious ages had held dear – form, structure, balance, even humanity. But in the pursuit of this almost exclusively scientific end they evolved a new set of colour schemes and tonalities. The final effect of Impressionism was to clean up the painter's palette, to banish browns and blacks, to bring back the primary and secondary colours and to lighten the whole tone of painting. It is the Impressionists who have taught us to think of the 'old masters' as dark and mellow. They revolutionized the European colour-sense. In their pursuit of visual truth they were the last of their kind; their effort was as it were the death rattle of the cycle of realism that had begun with Giotto and ended with Cézanne.

Cézanne was a beginning and an end. He was in one sense the last of the Impressionists because he adopted their colour-sense and grafted his own discoveries on to it: in another, he was, as he called himself, 'the primitive' of a new way of painting. That new way is little more than half a century old. At present

Picasso seems to be its central figure, but it is too early to say whether Picasso is an isolated phenomenon or is crystallizing the new set of traditions.

But whatever point the new traditions may be heading for, European art since Cézanne has certainly entered on a new phase – the phase we have agreed to call ' modern '; and with its inauguration the artist's six-century-long attempt to capture the truth of appearance with his brush, as an entomologist pursues a butterfly, has come to an end. Whatever the artist of to-day is after, it is not after *that* kind of truth.

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5

The Stone Age

The earliest known examples of representational painting are almost exactly what one would expect them not to be. If the Abbé Breuil's careful copies of the painted animals that were discovered in a cave at Altamira in Spain sixty years ago were to be mounted and framed and hung in a mixed exhibition of contemporary art they would probably pass unnoticed. Possibly some critic might write 'Among the drawings, Mr X's vigorous "Female Bison Leaping" shows keen powers of observation.' But the critic would certainly not suspect that these drawings that seem so much at home in the twentieth century A.D. were accurate copies from paintings made in about the two hundredth century B.C.

For many years after their discovery the authenticity of these paintings was suspected by critics and archaeologists alike. But in 1895, similar drawings were discovered in the caves of La Mouthe, and to-day more than fifty caves are known to contain drawings from the same period. Among the most impressive of the series are the recently discovered paintings in a cave at Lascaux. Those at Altamira in Spain are the most animated. Most of the paintings are done in a limited range of colour, black and red predominating. How long ago they were done is not known to within a score of centuries; the probable limits of the Palaeolithic period which produced them are between ten and thirty thousand years ago.

Our imaginary critic who had airily dismissed these drawings with his stock adjective 'vigorous' and his stock phrase 'keen powers of observation', making perhaps a mental note to look out for Mr X's promising work in other mixed exhibitions, would certainly change his tune on being told that the artist lived before writing, before cloth and pottery, perhaps before cooking had been invented. Certainly if the artist could speak

at all, his command of spoken language must have been more primitive than his command of graphic language.

Even so, why should the critic change his tune? After all, whoever made these drawings, and whenever he lived, the drawings would still be the same. Yes, they would be the same, but would they mean the same? I think not. If Egyptologists were to discover near Cairo a building rather like St Paul's Cathedral which could be proved to belong to the Fifth Dynasty, if in an early manuscript of Plato's Republic there suddenly occurred a sentence in pure English, if among the thirteenth-century windows of Chartres Cathedral one, hitherto unnoticed, were found to represent St Peter using a typewriter, all one's theories would have to be revised. It would be necessary to show that the resemblance between St Peter's thirteenth-century typewriter and a modern typewriter was a pure coincidence, like the resemblance between a chessboard and a crossword puzzle. The two things look the same but they were produced for different reasons; functionally they have no connexion.

Or, to put the problem another way round, a drawing of a bison is interesting for two reasons, firstly because it tells us something about the bison, secondly because it tells us something about the man who drew the bison. A prehistoric drawing of a bison might give very much the same kind of information about a bison as a drawing by a contemporary art-student, but they would give us quite different information about the two artists if we were wise enough to interpret them correctly. Unfortunately we are not wise enough. Show me a drawing by Mr Jones of the Slade School and I will tell you something about Mr Jones, but about Mr X of Altamira I can tell you very little on the evidence of his drawings. He is altogether too remote. He does not fit into the usual theory of art development, the theory that primitive man is content with a symbol, a mere diagram of his mind-image, and that as he emerges from primitiveness the diagram becomes more realistic and less decorative. My four Madonna-and-Child paintings bear out such a theory admirably, but not the bison. It is emphatically not a diagram of

a mind-image. It is a descriptive record of a momentary pose observed with the swiftness of a snapshot. Until the late nineteenth century, when, influenced by the camera, artists began to specialize in capturing the swift momentary gesture, only a few exceptional draughtsmen had been capable of making this kind of drawing. How Palaeolithic man managed to do it is a mystery. It seems almost as though civilization had somehow robbed man of his power of seeing; as though the later activities of thinking and feeling had deadened his sight so that only after a struggle lasting many centuries could civilized man see with the same penetrating eye as uncivilized man. Roger Fry has put forward an ingenious theory that with the development of language man began to see things in terms of concepts and that the use of words like 'eye', 'neck', and 'leg' tended to concentrate his intellectual attention on each separate portion of the object seen and prevented him taking the whole thing at a glance. The theory may be correct but it can only be speculative. To imagine a creature with the unthinking eye of an animal but with the creative urge of a man is too difficult. What is certain is that though in these drawings uncivilized man and hyper-civilized man have arrived at precisely the same goal, their way of reaching it must be different since their starting points are different.

Equally obscure is the reason why these Palaeolithic paintings were made at all. That Palaeolithic man could have done them for the same reasons that would prompt an art student of to-day – for the fun of doing them, for personal profit, or in order to train the eye or the hand – seems inconceivable. And yet our only reason for refusing to believe that Palaeolithic man would make drawings for fun is that contemporary savages usually make their drawings and carvings for religious, superstitious, or magical ends. Naturally Palaeolithic man's interest in bison cannot have been purely aesthetic. The bison was his enemy and his dinner. Therefore he wanted to have power over bison: therefore he drew bison in the same spirit in which waxen images of a man's enemy were made in order to give him power over his enemy. Again the theory is plausible but purely speculative.

If it is correct one would have thought that Palaeolithic man would have been content with the crudest symbols instead of going to the trouble of making these extraordinarily vivid essays in realism.

What is just as remarkable and just as unexpected is that Palaeolithic drawing is almost aggressively non-decorative. In the art of savage tribes and of children there is almost always a feeling for spacing, balance, and organization, but in most of the more ambitious paintings, notably the complex hunting scenes at Cogul and Almeria in Spain, the confusion, the complete absence of organization is quite painful. Deer, cattle, men and women sprawl in confusion across the wall on which they were painted. Evidently the faculty of organizing which involves a certain amount of thinking was beyond the scope of these artists, though mere seeing was well within their power. And evidently they had evolved a visual language to record what they saw long before they evolved a spoken language to record their thought.

Palaeolithic man also carved in ivory and modelled in clay, and here again he showed considerable power in creating realistic single images and unexpected feebleness in relating one form to another.

Centuries later the New Stone Age that followed the Old Stone Age left behind very little representational art. Neolithic man was an architect, not an artist. The building of Stonehenge is a very different kind of achievement from the drawing of bison and one that shows fairly clearly the direction in which primitive man was evolving. Survivals of representational Neolithic art are rare, and the few specimens we have – like the little decorated human figures found in Rumania – are covered with stripes and spirals as though to represent some elaborate system of tattooing. The Neolithic artists were evidently more interested in pattern than in shape. In the history of the representative arts their surviving achievements are hardly worth recording.

6

Egypt and Mesopotamia

For purposes of convenience (and what historian can resist the insidious temptation of convenience?) I have divided the art of civilized man into two families, that of the West spurred on by visual curiosity, and that of the East governed by contemplation. It would make the history of art tidier, if one could attach the art of Egypt and Mesopotamia to either family, but neither curiosity nor contemplation provide them with their motive force. Aesthetically they belong to neither group. Geographically and culturally they belong to the West if only because when the art of Egypt was decaying the artists of the Eastern Mediterranean were taking hints from its craftsmanship and copying its mannerisms. For that reason it is appropriate to begin the story of European art with a note on the arts of Egypt.

In an earlier chapter I insisted that healthy art is always harnessed to a set of social needs. That is truer of Egyptian art than of any other. The Egyptian artist was as much a servant of the Egyptian State-religion machine as the modern poster artist is of the modern commerce machine. That is even an understatement. For the modern poster artist is at liberty to invent symbols to express the desirability of the product advertised. (It is a sad comment on the poverty of his inventiveness that he can usually think of only one symbol of desirability – a pretty girl.) The Egyptian artist had not even this liberty. The symbols he used were dictated by the king and the priest. Egyptian state and religion were indivisible and the artist served them faithfully and prolifically for over thirty centuries.

For thirty centuries the Egyptian conception of both state and religion remained pretty much the same. Consequently for the same astonishing period Egyptian art hardly changed its character. It was rather like an impressive and trusted family butler who knows his place and keeps to it with a perfect but

highly artificial code of manners. Its duties remained unchanged: its way of carrying out its duties hardly varied: therefore its style was incapable of real development.

The comparison between Egyptian art and a butler would be a good one if it were not that we are rather fond of butlers. Beneath the impassive façade of the perfect butler we feel that there lurks a heart of gold. We know that down in the servants' hall he unbends, and that if ever his master is in serious trouble the façade will vanish and reveal the human being behind it. But the polished and frightening perfection of Egyptian art is not a façade. It is solid. Instead of the butler's ' Certainly, my lord. I hope I shall give satisfaction ', in Egyptian art there is an implied ' It shall be done '. It is the robot's response. Egyptian sculpture (and to a less extent Egyptian painting) is cold. It bears the same sort of relation to humanity that a man's last will and testament does to his deathbed mood.

The land of Egypt and its backbone, the Nile, were as indissoluble as Egyptian state and religion – and as self-contained. To the south was the source of the river, and beyond that were barbarians, but the Egyptians were not a nation of soldiers, so the barbarians were left in peace. To the north was the Nile's delta, and beyond that the sea, but the Egyptians were not sailors, so the sea was left uncharted and unexplored. Fresh ideas infiltrated with difficulty at either end. Egyptian civilization rolled on, like the Nile itself, for century after century, teeming with life like an anthill, trusting to the momentum of its own rhythm, extraordinarily efficient but completely conservative.

To be sure, Egyptologists will divide Egyptian history into three periods, with a prehistoric period at the beginning, two intermediate periods between them, and a period of decay tacked on at the end. And art-historians, exaggerating the importance of detail as art-historians tend to do, will describe how the Egyptian style changed with those periods, now vigorous, now refined, now pompous, now trivial. That is true. Even the family butler has his moods. Even the robot is not quite consistent. But to the average European, Egyptian art has one of the most

unchanging flavours in the whole history of art. There is less difference between a seated statue of King Khephren, carved in 2800 B. C., and one of King Rameses II done fifteen centuries later than there is between a Doge's portrait by Giovanni Bellini and one painted by Titian fifteen years later. It is therefore more important in this condensed sketch to think of Egyptian art as a whole than to split critical hairs about the difference between the styles of the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom, and the New Kingdom.

The keynote of Egyptian religion was a mystical materialism. That is not a contradiction in terms. The Egyptian belief in a life inhering in the corpse after death is a mystical one. But the Egyptian conception of that life as an exact replica of life on this earth as he knew it is completely materialistic. Egyptian art centres round the tomb, of which the pyramid is only one, the most impregnable, form. It is the art of the cemetery into which the idea of decay was never allowed to enter. Death is an unfortunate occurrence that must be recognized but never allowed to break the continuity. When the machine runs down a hundred agents must see to it that the wheels do not cease to revolve; of those agents the most important was the artist.

In the later stages of Egyptian civilization (from the eighteenth dynasty onwards: say from 1500 B. C. to about 500 B. C.) not only tombs, but temples were furnished by the artist; but the ultimate object of both was the same. The tombs served the practical purpose of preserving the dead, together with everything from a saucepan to a musical instrument that he might need in his life-after-death; the temples had the more mystical one of keeping him on good terms with the gods who provided the facilities for this continued existence.

Consequently Egyptian painting and sculpture provide us with a cumulative picture, severely stylized but essentially informative, of Egyptian life as it affected king and priest. And the hard rock out of which the sculptors carved their statues and the dry climate which was kind to the stone and pigment have preserved vast quantities of sculpture and painting. Our knowledge of Egyptian

art is extraordinarily complete. Every brand of it from ladies' dressing-table equipment to colossal statues of Pharaohs can be studied in museums or in countless well-illustrated publications. There is no need, therefore, to attempt the thankless task of describing in detail a set of characteristics that must be well known to everyone who reads this book. Whatever its function – whether it is commemorating the majesty of Rameses II in a statue whose hand is bigger than a man, or describing the busy agricultural life of the Nile valley in a tomb painting, the art of Egypt is always dignified, almost always sensitive, technically superb, hardly ever vulgar, almost never playful or humorous. What it achieves more than any other art is a serene, aloof, polished grandeur that survives even the mustiness of a museum setting. It is the perfect expression of a smoothly working machine.

Only at one moment in its long service to state religion did it lose its character as the combination of robot and family butler. That was when, in the eighteenth dynasty, Akhenaton (the 'heretic king') had the courage to revolutionize and humanize state religion. The result on the art of Egypt was rather as though the family retainer and his master had taken a week-end off in the country together, and the one had at last learned not to 'keep his place' quite so correctly in the presence of the other. Sculpture took on, for a brief period, a new spirit. There is almost the equivalent of laughter in it, or if not of laughter, then of something deeper – enjoyment. But it was only a brief respite. Akhenaton's reign was a short and rather shocking experiment in freedom. Egyptian art soon hardened again into the overpowering, highly stylized perfection that had characterized it for so many centuries.

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Mesopotamian art is as old as that of Egypt. Its best known form is that of Babylonia and Assyria. Here, as in Egypt, the artist was the official state propagandist, and had to work within

a highly elaborated set of conventions. But the spirit of Babylon on the Euphrates and Nineveh on the Upper Tigris was very different from that of Egypt. All three were highly organized despotisms. In the case of all three one is in the presence of a relentless organization, but whereas in Egypt it was productiveness and continuity that were organized, in Babylon and Nineveh it was power. It would not be difficult to find modern counterparts to the creed of Mesopotamia. Lust for power and a merciless code in using and enforcing it give Mesopotamian sculpture an odd flavour. As in Egypt, it is entirely commemorative or descriptive, but its theme is conquest and the strength of the conqueror. The human body is lumpy and thick set, as though fitted only for the shooting of arrows and the hurling of javelins. It has none of the Egyptian leanness and litheness. The biceps and muscles of the calf are what attract one's attention. Women have hardly any place in it. Lions and bulls with human heads become symbols of this will-to-power.

It is a heavy, depressing art, technically skilful but completely earth-bound. To the archaeologist in us all, these records of military and kingly prowess are fascinating. But if art is to be regarded either as a communication of the nobler aspects of the human spirit or as a means of creating formal harmony, then it must be admitted that if the later phases of Mesopotamian art had been destroyed the world would have been little the poorer.

7

The Aegean and Athens

It was in the Aegean islands, with Crete as the centre of focus, that one can first see the beginnings of that restless visual curiosity that was to determine the course of European art. Doubtless the Cretans found their first inspiration in Egypt, but they did not nourish it from Egypt. Behind almost all Egyptian art there is a sense of ceremonial; in Cretan art the men and women (especially the men) seem just to be having a good time; they are behaving like individuals. They are no longer performing parts allotted to them by the state machine. One can detect in their behaviour the beginnings of democracy. The frozen stylization and the refinement of Egyptian art have disappeared: so has the domination of king and religion. Cretan art radiates from neither the tomb nor the temple, but from the palace and the villa. The Cretan artist was more like the artist of to-day in that he seems to have chosen as his subject the things that pleased and attracted him, or caught his roving eye.

The civilization that centred in Crete spread itself widely along the Aegean coast. The most lively of the paintings are Cretan, but the man whose name is most closely linked with the age was not an artist, but a poet. Homer had no connexion with Crete nor had Crete any part in Homeric legend, though the Cretan Minotaur and the Labyrinth were incorporated into Greek mythology. It is possible that while the Homeric sagas were crystallizing, the Cretan empire and the great palace of Cnossus had already succumbed to some nameless raider who had no Homer to celebrate his victory. The *Iliad* happens to deal with the sack of Troy on the coast of Asia Minor by raiders from the Greek mainland. But Homer's picture of the Aegean way of life on the early part of the first millennium before Christ (his detailed descriptions of armour, for example) apply almost as closely to Crete as they do to Tiryns and Mycenae, the home of Agamemnon

on the Greek mainland, or to Ithaca, the home of Odysseus, or to Troy.

Compared with the enormous mass of painting and sculpture that survives from Egypt and Mesopotamia, what is left to us from the Cretan and Homeric ages is fragmentary. Intrinsically it would hardly be worth more than a paragraph in so short an account of European art. But its importance is not only intrinsic. It was the first beginning of an art-cycle that was to culminate in the age of Pericles and was to be killed in the end by Christianity, the cycle of which – as I have already suggested – the keyword was ' physique '. There are no important statues left from the Minoan age, but the little faience statuettes of priestesses found at Cnossus and the frescoes at Tiryns and Cnossus showing figures engaged on some kind of ritual are Egyptian only in their proud bearing. The women are tight-laced and they flaunt their bare breasts as though conscious for the first time of being individuals. The men, too, are not merely males. They carry their broad-shouldered, small-waisted bodies exultingly, like ballet dancers. A famous gold cup from Vaphio shows these men hunting bulls as though they were engaged in sport rather than business. Any Egyptian artist would have given the impression that hunting bulls was part of the endless round of human duty or religious ritual. The Vaphio cup suggests that bull-hunting was rather a lark. A steatite vase from Crete shows a crowd of peasants engaged in a choric ritual dance. Here again the effect is of country bumpkins enjoying themselves individually: the disciplined pattern usually associated with ritual is, surprisingly, absent.

The most remarkable stylistic change in this breakaway from the Egyptian art machine is the attempt at foreshortening and perspective. The bulls on the Vaphio cup swing their heads toward the spectator, the dancers are no longer severely processional. They are grouped casually, one behind the other, more like picnickers than a purposeful organization.

What remains of the palaces of Mycenae and Tiryns suggests that they were destroyed by fire and siege. Little is known about

the Greek invaders who destroyed them and ousted their occupants, but their art, for all its inevitable derivation from Homeric art, was a cruder and more primitive affair. It was not spirited and gay, but intensely serious – the early Greek statues of athletes give an impression that the men who carved them had bitten off more than they could chew. They were trying to solve no less a problem than the complete and free representation of the naked human body for its own sake and not as hitherto for the sake of illustration or symbolism. The Cretans had solved their problem of depicting life and movement brilliantly and, as it were, instinctively, like born linguists who plunge courageously into speech before they have studied grammar. The early Hellenic sculptors make dogged and by no means brilliant attempts to learn the grammar of the human body before they try to make it speak. Their earliest statues of naked boys or girls dressed in a single simple garment, stand strictly to attention, staring into space with a meaningless smile that confines itself to their lips. These two types of adolescent are the only ones that interest the early Greek sculptor. It was a restricted field within which to work. The earliest Greek sculptors rately attempted to step outside it, but they were determined to exploit it to the full. Art, to the Greek, was more specialized and restricted than it ever had been before, and for precisely the reason that the texture of life was remarkably rich and full. Consumed with curiosity about his surroundings, not content merely to get on with the work like the Egyptians, or with the battle like the Assyrians, the Greek began to split his life into watertight compartments, and for each compartment he had a carefully elaborated mode of expression. For pure thought, philosophy, for telling stories, epic poetry, for emotional expression, lyric poetry, and so on. He even imagined a sort of ministry of fine arts with its headquarters on Mount Parnassus and the nine Muses as heads of departments, though significantly enough painting and sculpture had no Muses.

The Greek theory that each art should be confined to its own department of experience, and that the province of painting

and sculpture was to express the Greek admiration for physical perfection in the human adolescent and (later) in the human adult, was a specialist's theory, and with characteristic thoroughness the Greek began to work it out in practice.

Slowly these archaic Greek statues, looking at first as if they had been confined within coffins or the hollow trunks of trees, so cramped are their postures, and so rectangular or circular their cross-sections, begin to come to life. Very tentatively they advance the left foot, and in doing so they take on the exact position adopted by one type of Egyptian statue (see Plate 5a). But the effect is different. The Egyptian statue looks as if its maker knew all about the human figure and had deliberately stylized it. The Greek sculptor seems to be in perpetual difficulties. Pygmalion-like he does his best to bring his statue to life, to make it look natural. His eye searches out the beginning and end of each muscle, the boundaries of each plane, the formation of each lock of hair, and in his struggle to come to terms with each separate limb stylization creeps in against his will. The Egyptian statue stands easily and commandingly, like a man engaged in ceremonial who chooses to be motionless in order to add to his own dignity; the Greek is taut and holds its breath like a man sitting to an unkind photographer who insists on a half-minute exposure. One senses this desperate struggle to grasp the construction and the potentialities of the human body, and somehow one's heart is melted by it. There is a queer pathos about these early stone youths and maidens. They are not just nameless embodiments of dignity, like their Egyptian counterparts. They are real boys and girls – or they would have been had their makers only had the power to free then from their stone prisons. The Pygmalion myth takes on a new meaning in their presence. One is reminded of the pain caused by warm blood trying to circulate in a frostbitten finger.

Soon the girls manage to sit down, still rigidly staring into space, and those that remain standing take hold of a fold of the dress with the fingers and thumb of the left hand and twitch it delicately upwards. Over a period of two centuries the Greek

sculptor plodded on like a slow-witted but conscientious schoolboy determined to master his task however long it took him. And gradually he did master it. Gradually his figure began to thrust out an arm, turn its head, lean forward to make a spear-thrust or kneel on one knee to shoot an arrow. Not that the Greek sculptor was particularly interested in the shooting of arrows – that belonged to a different department: that was archery, not art – but that he wanted an excuse to show off his physically perfect adolescent. Moreover the low triangular pediment of the Greek temple provided a space which had to be filled with statues of different heights so that a mixture of standing, sitting, kneeling or recumbent poses was obligatory. Doubtless the Egyptian or Mesopotamian would have solved the pediment problem in another way, by varying the actual scale of the figures according to their social or religious importance. But such a procedure was contrary to the democratic spirit of Greece.

There is plenty of first-hand evidence about archaic Greek art. Statues of the seventh and sixth centuries B. C. exist in large enough numbers to provide a firm basis of knowledge. But of the later stages in the development of Greek sculpture our knowledge is more fragmentary. Roman taste in sculpture was very like mid-Victorian taste. Rich Romans liked the mature, the rounded, the graceful, and after the downfall of Greece they carried the bulk of later Greek statuary (the collective noun somehow conveys their attitude) across to Italy as villa furniture, not scrupling to order copies of their favourite pieces and to re-emphasize their roundness and gracefulness in the copying. The later downfall of Rome completed the destruction and dispersal of Periclean and post-Periclean Greek carving, and to-day our available data are limited to fragments. What we know about Golden Age Greek sculpture is comparable to what we should know about Florentine painting if we possessed no original work by any artist from (and including) Botticelli to (and including) Michelangelo, with the exception of a fragment of a Raphael Madonna, a set of seventeenth-century engravings after Leonardo's pictures, a couple of bronze medals translating portions of the

Sistine Chapel ceiling into low relief, and the upper half of Piero della Francesca's 'Nativity'. Doubtless this fragmentary evidence together with Vasari's *Lives of the Painters* and a host of documents about their dealings with their patrons would provide our art historians with an inexhaustible mine of speculation. The speculation would harden into legend, the legend into fact, until in the end we should feel that, though it was a pity to have lost so much, we had a pretty good idea of what the fine flower of late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Florentine painting was like.

Moreover the taste of to-day, whetted by our later knowledge of Negro sculpture, our comparatively recent understanding of *naïveté*, and our own experiments in a more angular set of rhythms, no longer admires Hellenic maturity quite as whole-heartedly as it did. That moment in the development of art when the initial set of problems has been solved, when the sense of struggle has given place to a sense of achievement, and the upward climb has been rewarded by a brief spell of basking on the summit is no longer the only moment that interests us. It is a good moment to live in, but to those who, like ourselves, look back on it, it suggests a slackening of the tension, and a hint of smugness behind the achievement. Particularly does this apply to such of the Golden Age Greek art as has come down to us after passing through the sieve of Roman taste. The nature of the summit towards which the Greeks were toiling upwards is so familiar to us that it is no longer a matter of wonderment that they reached it. We have seen the same kind of ascent to an even higher summit achieved by the Italian painters. We know how they too made it their business to give their work 'naturalness'. We know the stages through which art has to pass on this journey. But the Italians had a more complex set of problems to solve. They were not only concerned with physique, as we shall see, but with a set of spiritual values which lay outside the Greek view of life.

What the Greek had to do in his progress from the naked seventh-century boys of the Acropolis to the technical perfection

of the Elgin marbles is, to us, a foregone conclusion. Given the seedling and the flower in full bloom it would be easy for us to deduce the intermediate stages even if we had no evidence at all. The Greek artist had three things to learn. He had to learn to see his statue in the round instead of from the front only; he had to study movement as well as anatomy; he had to see his figure as a whole instead of a sum of parts. Those three problems are the problems common to all art development. In addition there were the self-imposed problems that were peculiarly Greek, of making the type as beautiful as possible and of avoiding the suggestion of individuality. For individuality implies a departure from the norm, the one thing to be avoided if your aim is physical perfection.

All that art historians can give us is a list of names of the sculptors who contributed most to this development. There was Myron who specialized in movement and made a bronze statue of the discus-thrower well known through Roman marble copies. Myron was evidently far in advance of his time. The ' Discobolus ' still clings to the ' frontality ' conception (i.e. one feels that there is one ' best ' point of view from which to view it) but the twist of the torso is done with complete assurance. There was Polycleitus who specialized in physical beauty and grace of posture and is said to have produced a statue called the Canon or Standard in which the proportions were so 'correct' that no sculptor who copied them could go wrong. There was Pheidias to whom tradition assigns the supervision (though not necessarily the execution) of the Parthenon carvings and who is supposed to have been a master of restrained nobility of gesture. There was Praxiteles (his ' Hermes ' is the only surviving Greek statue assignable to a known Greek sculptor of the Golden Age) who gave his statues more charm and a little more individuality than his predecessors. There was Lysippus (court sculptor to Alexander the Great) who gave the human figure a new suppleness. At this point (say 350 B.C.) it can be said that all technical difficulties have been solved and that a Greek sculptor is now capable of doing with bronze or marble exactly what he likes. What he did

like varied with the sculptor. Some of it, like the famous Laocoön group or the frieze from the altar of Zeus at Pergamon, strikes the twentieth century as a wild and rather vulgar display of virtuosity which could have been paralleled by many a baroque sculptor of the seventeenth century. Some of it, like the Victory of Samothrace or the lovely relief of Victory bending to tie her sandal (see Plate 5b), is felicitous in design: some of it, like the statues of Niobe and her children, is just boring.

Fragmentary though our knowledge is of the total achievement of the Greek sculptors, we need have no doubt that from what does remain we can estimate quite accurately the full strength and weakness of Hellenic sculpture at any point between its origins and its final decay. What it achieved was so remarkable that it set a standard by which we unconsciously judge the whole of the subsequent development of art in Europe. And it is only when we compare its achievements with those of the greatest sculptors of the Italian Renaissance that we realize its limitations.

Those limitations are, in fact, an inevitable consequence of the self-imposed objective towards which the Greek sculptor was making his way. One of the most admired single figures that has come down to us is the Pheidian recumbent figure of Dionysus, carved in about 440 B.C., from the pediment of the Athenian Parthenon. No trace of the archaic sculptor's struggle towards naturalism is to be found in it; nor is there, as yet, any hint of the restless virtuosity of half a century later. It represents, for us, a moment of perfection. Perhaps no other male statue in existence combines so completely the elements of physical power, physical perfection, and physical nobility. Yet when we set beside it the recumbent figure of Night by Michelangelo from the Medici Tombs in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence, we realize at once that the very perfection of Pheidian sculpture is, in our eyes, a limitation. For the Dionysus lacks precisely the quality with which Michelangelo's carving is so furiously charged. It has no ' mood '. To put the difference in its simplest possible terms, it has no soul. Despite the many attempts on the part of later Greek sculptors to make their work dramatic or

to give it narrative content, the one ingredient that would make the drama convincing, namely the suggestion of an inner life and an inner conflict, is always missing. What the Greek artist achieved so superbly – the final and unchallengeable expression of physical beauty, the inherent grandeur of the human animal – was a necessary foundation for every subsequent phase in European art. Medieval art protested against it, but the protest would have been meaningless had the Greek triumph not been so complete. Renaissance art absorbed it and added all kinds of spiritual or Christian significances to it: but Renaissance artists and aestheticians never ceased to proclaim their indebtedness to the Hellenic foundation on which they built.

What Greek sculpture of the Golden Age discovered was, of course, nothing so simple as a ' canon ' of physical perfection. It was a presentation of the human being ideally adjusted to its environment. Not merely beauty of limb and feature but beauty of rhythm and gesture is what remains in the memory. All the problems of life, for the Greek sculptors, seem to have been solved in the gymnasium. Michelangelo's embodiment of ' Night ' is troubled by uneasy dreams. Even the lovely relaxation of her pose expresses a sharp division between soul and body. Her body is a vessel whose form is subtly disturbed and made more expressive by her thoughts. The Pheidian Dionysus is not only incapable of thought: his magnificence would be destroyed, his serenity troubled had even a hint of thought been allowed to creep into the statue's ' meaning '. The weakness, to me, of the Greek theory of sculpture is that it was pursuing an aim that was attainable. Beyond a certain point nothing more could be done. It was heading, along a difficult and fascinating road, straight for a *cul-de-sac*. It took three and a half centuries to reach the end and, having reached it, it was bound to perish, not as other schools of painting and sculpture have perished, from a slackening of tension in the artist's own vision, but because it had literally accomplished all it set out to do. It had attained perfection, the most dangerous thing that a human being can attain, for perfection brings immobility and immobility implies death. Greek

sculpture not only idealizes but also isolates the physical. When we see a headless Greek statue we do not wonder what the head was like: we know that the head would tell us nothing. It would not alter the statue's mood, for the statue has hardly any mood. An armless Greek Venus is not incomplete; it arouses no curiosity as to what she was doing with her arms. We know perfectly well she was doing nothing. She was just being Venus – and even that in the mildest way. The intensity of physical love provided Greek tragedy with some of its bloodiest themes, and yet the statue of the Cnidian Aphrodite can boast no more than physical perfection. She has no intensity. She is in essence no more than the perfect chorus girl. If we knew the Greek way of life only through their sculpture we should judge them an unemotional race whose interests were largely centred in the gymnasium, and whose sense of beauty depended on a highly specialized search for a physically ideal set of rhythms contained within a physically ideal form.

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It is easy – perhaps too easy – to insist on the limitations of the Hellenic genius. If the reader assumes that I regard the Greek sculptor's achievement as a minor one, let me hasten to correct the impression. To worship physical beauty and to use it as the raw material for sculpture may seem to us a not very difficult or subtle programme, though the Greeks were the first artists to do it. But to divine the infinite rhythmical possibilities of the human body in action demands vision of a very high order. To impose those rhythms on the art of a whole continent and over a period of many centuries is a proof of genius. The Greek worship of man compelled him to make even his gods in man's image. In Greek art Man and God are indistinguishable, for they depend not on their function but on their appearance.

An art that could produce carvings as charming as the flute

players on the Ludovisi throne, as monumentally noble as the three Fates on the Parthenon Pediment, as rhythmical as the Niké tying her sandal or one or two of the Athenian funeral Stelae makes so massive a contribution to our visual experience that we cannot help accepting it as a measuring rod. My contention is merely that Greek art, by excluding from its province what is known as the human soul, set itself a task that could be, and was, completely and perfectly accomplished. It headed all the time for a point well within human reach, and the journey to that point was more interesting than the arrival. Was Pygmalion, once he had brought his Galatea to life, crushed to death in her arms?

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If there is little enough of mature Greek sculpture left to us, there is nothing at all of Greek painting, but it is not difficult to imagine its characteristics and limitations. From contemporary writers one gathers that the painters of ancient Greece were as much admired as the sculptors, though not for the same reasons. The art of painting is not so closely tied as that of sculpture to the human body, and for that reason it is not so dependent on a canon of ideal beauty. One gathers that what compelled the admiration of the Greeks was not so much the idealism as the realism of the famous painters. To-day we are no longer impressed by the kind of legend that relates how a bunch of grapes was so realistically painted that birds pecked at it. Photography has accustomed our eyes to the kind of realism that deceives the eye. Moreover there is a limit to the degree of realism possible in painting and one can justifiably doubt whether the Greek painters who were so highly praised for their *trompe l'œil* achievements could have pushed them further than later artists like Caravaggio and his followers in the seventeenth century.

We can only guess at the nature of Golden Age Greek painting

from the considerable body of fresco painting that has survived in Roman villas, especially in Pompeii. When the town was buried under the ashes that rained down from Vesuvius in A.D. 79 the wall paintings were preserved. To-day we can estimate with some confidence the stage that painting had reached in the first century A.D., and we can assume that the Pompeian frescoes, largely executed by Greek artists, bore a strong resemblance to the kind of painting practised in Greece a century earlier. Much of it follows a conventional decorator's formula. All kinds of subjects, including still life and even landscape, are treated with considerable skill, but the only frescoes that are in any way memorable are the figure compositions. Some of these – in particular a series relating to the mysteries of the Dionysian festival in the House of the Mysteries at Pompeii – have a dramatic expressiveness and a strangeness that cannot be found in classical sculpture. They belong to the end of a great period in the history of art. As one examines them and their like in the huge section of the Naples Museum devoted to pre-Christian wall-painting one cannot help wondering what these rooms would look like could they have contained as many examples of similar painting done in Greece itself two centuries earlier.

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Roman sculpture is equally derivative from Greek prototypes. The very fact that wealthy Romans insisted on transporting Greek carvings to Italy and on producing innumerable copies of whatever pleased them most is an index of Roman taste. But behind Roman sculpture one senses a different source of inspiration. The search for beauty is overlaid with an expression of power. The heavy seriousness of an imperialist people creeps in. Military exploits of Emperors, crowded and restless, became favourite subjects. And a new interest in the personality of individual men takes the place of the old idealization of mankind

and gives rise to a school of realistic portraiture. Except in the realm of portraiture Rome had little to add to what Greece had already said. She copied Greek forms but without Greek restraint and imitated Greek grace but with an added dose of ponderous sweetness.

8

Byzantine, Romanesque, and Gothic

No period in the history of European civilization is more obscure than that which saw the slow break-up of the Roman Empire. Men must have worked, eaten, built houses, written books, sung songs, carved statues, and painted images during those few centuries we call the Dark Ages, but it is difficult to picture them at it. There seems to be no centre of focus, no peg on which to hang our thoughts about those queer, flavourless centuries. Rome was dead as a cultural centre of gravity, the pagan gods were moribund. Christianity was a growing but an underground power; it had not yet become, as it was to become later, a pivot round which every form of human activity, good and bad, could revolve. What was life like in the fourth century A.D. in St Albans, Aix-en-Provence or Athens? What clothes did the men wear, how did the women dress their hair? It is no use asking the antiquarian such questions. He will answer them but our mental picture will be no clearer for his answers. An artistic vacuum had occurred, and one realizes for the first time how dependent on the art of a period is one's mental picture of the period.

A vacuum can be filled only if material for filling it is ready to hand, and at this blank moment between the shrivelling of paganism and the budding of Christianity such material did not exist. Art needs a harness, and during this dead interval of time there was nothing for the artist to harness himself to. Even in places where Christianity had already taken root he could do nothing, for the language he had been accustomed to use, the language of physique, could not be made to apply to the new creed. If art was destined to serve Christianity it must evolve a new language – a symbolic language to replace the old descriptive one.

At this moment of crisis, of fundamental change in the very

essence of what the artist had to express, it was, perhaps, an advantage that the immense virtuosity of the Hellenic artist had to some extent fallen into decay. The break-up of the Empire was accompanied by wars, invasions, and immense dislocations of the social stability of Europe. Under such conditions it was inevitable that the sense of security without which skill and craftsmanship cannot flourish, should be undermined, and with it the traditions on which the cultural languages of mankind are built. At such times not only the arts of painting and sculpture and architecture become chaotic but also language itself and with it, literature, enter on a state of hesitancy and confusion.

Out of that confusion new styles can be born whose development would have been difficult in a more stable society. The earliest examples of Christian art in the Roman catacombs are crude and timid, but for that very reason they are not hampered by the weight of a strong stylistic tradition. Before Christianity could evolve an articulate artistic language of its own it was necessary that the pagan language of art, so carefully perfected by the Greeks, should disintegrate. And it was fortunate that at the very moment when the earliest Christian artists were groping for a means of expression, that disintegration was already in an advanced stage. The symbolic language for which the Christian was searching would have been strangled by the descriptive language of pre-Christian art.

As long as Christianity had no official status it could produce no art of any permanence. In the Roman catacombs a few tentative experiments in evolving the new symbolism were made but they are of little aesthetic interest. There was, however, one exception to the confusion that reigned over most of Europe. There was a patch that was comparatively peaceful and comparatively civilized round the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt formed an area within which, given favourable circumstances, the new art could develop. It needed the stimulus of a state-protected religion, and the consequent appearance of a set of state-approved churches to give such art a dwelling-place.

It was at this moment that the pendulum that had swung steadily from Egypt to Crete, from Crete to Athens, and from Athens to Rome, stopped swinging and hung in the balance, waiting for the advent of a fresh impulse to reverse its movement. If the impulse can be attributed to a single man, that man is the Emperor Constantine, who had the good sense to choose this moment (A. D. 330) to move eastwards into the area that still showed signs of civilization, and to transfer the seat of the Empire to Constantinople, and at the same time to adopt a protective and tolerant attitude towards Christianity. At last it was possible for Christian art to attach itself to something permanent – to the church wall. There it could find a home for itself more fitting than the art of Egypt had ever found in the tomb, or the art of Greece in the temple. The art of Egypt belonged to the tomb only in the sense that a bundle of share certificates belongs to a fire-proof safe; and Greek statues had belonged to the temple only in the sense that easel-pictures belong to a room. But early Christian art belongs to the church as the text of a book belongs to the paper on which it is printed. The Christian artist had an opportunity given to no other artist before him, the opportunity of creating a complete iconography of the visual side of religion, and not merely of illustrating it. It was an opportunity almost too big for any man to grasp, and at first it was done fumblingly. If it had been left to Rome to do it, it would have been badly done. All Rome could do was to apply worn-out pagan symbols to the new religion, to depict an Apollo or an Orpheus and label him Jesus, or to make Christ and His disciples look (as they do in the early mosaic of S. Pudenziana in Rome) rather like an informal meeting of the Roman Senate. Fortunately the Oriental section of the Empire was much better fitted for the task.

Even before Christianity had been recognized, a mysticized version of paganism (known as Mithraism) had been developing in Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, and it was easy enough to adapt this mystical frame of mind to Christianity. It is difficult to fix a precise date at which the pendulum can be said to have begun to swing back. One of the earliest major works of Christian

art is the mausoleum of Galla Placidia at Ravenna of the fourth century. Here, in a tiny brick building no bigger than a country cottage, the Roman idioms are used with a purely Oriental effect. The Saints look like Roman philosophers, the beardless Christ is nothing but a rustic shepherd sitting in rather vapid bucolic contentment among his sheep, and yet to enter the brick shell and to find oneself in an unearthly gloom encrusted with blue and silver and gold mosaics is to be taken at a leap right across the Greek peninsula into an atmosphere that only a semi-oriental vision could have conceived. This is the earliest successful attempt to serve up the old pagan wine in the new Christian bottle. The pendulum has begun to swing, but only just. A more spectacular impulse was given to it by the building of the great church of Sancta Sophia in Constantinople by the Emperor Justinian and his pious ex-actress wife Theodora. I am not here concerned with the church as a landmark in architectural construction, and the mosaics which cover its interior have only recently been freed from the coat of whitewash with which Islam insisted on covering them after the Turkish occupation of Constantinople. But Justinian erected an equally significant though smaller example of sixth-century Byzantine art in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna. Here the new symbolism is beginning to gain the upper hand. The Roman idioms are still there but they have ceased to count for much. They are supplanted by a new orchestral use of colour. Colour, treated by the Egyptians and Greeks merely as a useful descriptive or decorative addition, is here used for full-blooded emotional ends. What is significant about this building and its successors is that it was regarded, architecturally, as a set of interior wall-spaces. It was built from the inside outwards. It had no significance whatever until one entered it. The Greek temple was an object of deliberate self-contained beauty, to be looked at from the outside, a building of self-conscious perfection which a little added sculpture would certainly improve, but which could easily survive the absence of it. The church of San Vitale is a blank brick book whose pages are meaningless until they have been lined with mosaic.

The Christian artist was being given his opportunity with a vengeance.

The new attitude to mosaic is of the utmost significance. Mosaic was not an unknown medium before the Byzantine era, but it had been thought of by the Greeks and Romans as a means of decorating a surface unsuitable for paint – a floor where paint would have been worn away, or the inside of a fountain, where paint would have been washed off. But now it became not only a structural part of the wall, but the *raison d'être* for the wall. The wall was built for the sole purpose of holding it up, and windows were pierced in the wall for the sole purpose of illuminating it.

Mosaic, unlike paint, is a rigid, inflexible medium; it imposes a fierce discipline on the artist who uses it. The Romans, who used it in places where paint was unsuitable, tried to make it express painterly ideas, and the early Christian artists of the West (see the upper panels of Sant' Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna and in Sta Maria Maggiore in Rome) continued so to use it. Even in San Vitale, where the general effect is remote and unearthly, the two famous groups of Justinian and his ecclesiastical attendants and soldiers on one side and of Theodora with her handmaidens on the other are relics of a Roman view of life in which the Emperor's image could find an appropriate home on the walls of the church, and the earth was as worthy of the artist's attention as the heavens. But as the Byzantine pendulum continued to swing, and as the influence of the Eastern group of artists spread, mosaic began to be used as it should be used, as the perfect vehicle for visual symbolism on a large scale. William Morris once said it was like beer in that it was no good unless you had a lot of it. In the churches of Parenzo on the Adriatic opposite to Ravenna (sixth century), of Sant' Agnese in Rome (seventh century), Santa Prassede in Rome (ninth century), at Daphni, near Athens (eleventh century), at Cefalù, in the Capella Palatina and in the Cathedral of Monreale in Sicily (twelfth century), in St Mark's, Venice (mainly thirteenth and fourteenth centuries), to pick out a handful of typical examples from a host of others, what counts for as much as the quality of the design

and the richness of the colour is the sheer profusion of the mosaic. It is overpowering, as a big Bach fugue is overpowering, through its cumulative effect. Some of it is not particularly interesting in detail, but almost always it is impressive in its general planning, in the placing of its climaxes and in its genius for being glowing and remote at the same time.

From the dates of the churches in the list given above, it will be seen that as the chief vehicle for Christian propaganda it lasted for about eight centuries. Throughout that period the Byzantine pendulum continued to swing in a fashion that belies all the accepted theories of art development. The idea that an art cycle progresses from primitive to mature, and from mature to decadent: that the primitive period is one in which the expression of emotional sincerity interferes with the discovery of visual truth, that the decadent period is one in which visual truth has killed emotional sincerity and that the mature period is one in which sincerity and truth are happily married – this delightfully simple theory is not borne out by the history of Byzantine art. It is only on the forward swing of the pendulum, the Discobolus-Laocoön swing, or the Giotto-Cézanne swing, that this happens. The backward swing is governed by a different set of laws. It is not that the process is reversed. It is a different process. It begins, as we have seen, by a deliberate breakaway from the realism that had come before it, necessitated by the fact that realism will no longer serve the purpose of the new art cycle. It works its way gradually to a set of forms so remote from visual experience, so engendered by a state of mind, that it becomes almost purely abstract. And finally these abstract forms gradually harden into a set of artistic clichés and become incapable of further development. They are valid only as long as the ideas they express are valid. In the Byzantine case this schematization was imposed on the artist from above, so that from being the creator of a mystical mood he became the illustrator of a series of incidents for the benefit of an illiterate people. Types of these three periods of development in the Byzantine cycle are (1) the upper portions of the sides of the apse of San Vitale (sixth

century), where a beardless Moses standing on an impossibly symbolic mountain watches the hand of God emerge from impossibly romantic clouds; (2) the wall above the apse of Santa Prassede, Rome (ninth century), where the twenty-four elders stand in a pattern as formal, and as violently distorted, from the point of view of visual truth, as anything Picasso has ever dared to attempt with the human figure; (3) the mosaics in the domes of the Narthex of St Mark's, Venice (thirteenth century), in which the story of Genesis is told in concentric circles, each divided into square compartments like a modern comic strip. The first is a half-hearted attempt to depict an actual scene by a man who is not interested in actuality, but cannot think how to dispense with it; the second is pure symbolism without a thought for actuality; the third is an attempt to use symbolism for the purposes of narrative by a man who has been out of touch with actuality for seven centuries, but whose employers are beginning to demand it once more.

During the whole of this period no name emerges, no mosaicist of genius to whom one can point as having produced the perfect flower of Byzantine art. It is an anonymous art. Even more than in Egypt is the artist submerged in his task and even more than in Egypt is he compelled to work within a set of established formulas. He is serving a cause, not exploiting his personality. For this very reason it is not easy to write the history of Byzantine art. To do so is like trying to make a map of a wide landscape with a distinctive character of its own but without milestones or landmarks. Its course is marked by none of those discoveries that the typical European artist always tries to make and which the art historian delights to record. It is as little capable of being translated into words as a melody; and, worse still, it almost refuses to be translated into reproduction. A photograph of an Egyptian statue gives one a fairly accurate sense of the original, a photograph of a fresco by Giotto or a painting by Velasquez supplies more information about the originals than pages of laboured description. But a photograph of the interior of the church at Cefalù (Plate 1) bears as little relation to the church

itself as a Walt Disney drawing of Donald Duck does to a Donald Duck cartoon. Similarly, a photograph of a Byzantine mosaic may illustrate the boldness of Byzantine formalism, but it fails to convey Byzantine impressiveness. Add to this the unfortunate fact that Byzantine mosaics are not portable and that no important examples exist within several hundreds of miles of this country and it becomes plain that to write an adequate account of this – by far the most important – aspect of Byzantine art is almost impossible. And yet, to me, the whole corpus of Byzantine mosaic from the sixth to the twelfth century is one of the most deeply moving of all manifestations of the human spirit.

Recently, replicas of portions of the Ravenna mosaics have been exhibited throughout Europe. They are as faithful in detail as a replica needs to be, and even detached from their architectural context their effect is remarkable. As samples they leave nothing to be desired, yet a considerable imaginative effort is needed if they are to have the same emotional effect as their originals. The Oriental colour orchestration and the encrusted surfaces that catch and reflect the light like jewels, survive: but the cumulative power, the great visual crescendos that depend for their effect on sudden changes of scale and the relationship of flat wall to curved semi-dome, are inevitably lost.

What they illustrate quite clearly, even to those who have never seen them *in situ*, is that here is the only instance of a style in which Eastern and Western elements meet and are fused. Art historians have been at considerable pains to analyse the various ingredients – Greek, Roman, Syrian, Semitic, even Mesopotamian – which have been fused together in different proportions in the best of Byzantine art. But, as always, analysis of this kind is only valuable historically. What makes the Byzantine experiment unique is that it achieved the full expression of a mystical Christianity in terms of Oriental opulence. In theory, the asceticism of the former should have been contradicted and nullified by the sensuousness of the latter. In practice the two opposing elements reinforce and intensify each other. The perfection of formal physical beauty that had been the Greek achievement has

been abandoned in favour of the formless, timeless, Christian conception of a religion in which perfection was, by definition, unattainable. The artist, tethered for so long to the material world, finds himself free to exploit an entirely different world of form. Yet because that very freedom from the old mimetic duties might create confusion and chaos, the mimetic discipline is replaced by an equally strict iconographical discipline.

Perhaps the nearest counterpart to-day to this strange mingling of the spiritual and the sensuous is to be found in Christian Catholic ritual, where both mystery and miracle are expressed in terms that could hardly be more formal, so rigid and prescribed is their pattern, and yet the symbolic ingredients – the vessels of gold, silver, and the embroidered vestments – could hardly be more materially precious or gorgeous.

Students can study elsewhere the strict iconographical rules laid down for the guidance of the Byzantine mosaicists and fresco painters, and the purely technical processes involved in the manufacture and the handling of the medium – how tesserae of glass and marble were fixed into their bed of mastic, and how gold-leaf was fused between an upper and a lower layer of transparent glass. The whole of the later Byzantine era was characterized by a respect for tradition in both iconography and craftsmanship. The level of craftsmanship in ivory carving, low relief sculpture (the Byzantine decorative genius was mainly two-dimensional: expressive sculpture in the round was outside its scope), metal-work and jewellery and painting of miniatures, frescoes and icons was remarkably high.

The influence of Byzantine mannerisms was widespread in the East. All over the Balkans, especially in the area that was once Serbia, provincial schools of fresco painting took root, but the form of Byzantine painting that specially concerns us here is the painting of icons which developed so surprisingly late and continued for so long in Russia.

When Constantinople passed into Mohammedan keeping it was Russia which became heir to the Byzantine view of life, and the forms which for centuries had ceased to mean anything in

Europe became the central Russian tradition. Again, it is an anonymous art, and though provincial schools of icon painters developed slightly different ways of treating the given themes, the only famous name among the painters of icons is that of Rublev, a monk of the Spaco-Andrankov Monastery in Moscow. The Madonna and Child shown in Plate 2a shows how simple and intense in feeling the icon could be at its best, and though as far as design is concerned the whole school seems to have developed out of itself (it is the only example I know of art based on art that did not immediately perish for lack of outside stimulus), the harmonization and distribution of colour in the best of the icons are among the most adventurous and subtle experiments in the history of painting.

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So much for the eastern half of Europe. Meanwhile the continued social and political chaos in the western half made it impossible for a parallel set of traditions to evolve until much later. Again, the development of a western European art was dependent on the building of churches. In the East there was no break in output between the final collapse of Rome and the rise of Constantinople, but in the West there occurred a real hiatus filled only by the carving of a few stone crosses in Northumberland and on the Scottish border, or by a few illuminated manuscripts from Ireland or from Central Europe. One has to wait for the advent of Romanesque architecture before the representational arts can find a new *point d'appui*.

Christmas Day, A.D. 800, when Charlemagne attended Mass in St Peter's at Rome and was crowned by the Pope as head of the Holy Roman Empire, was a significant day. Not that anything resembling unity in Western Europe was accomplished by the symbolic event, but after the year A.D. 800 there was at least a potential rallying force for Western European culture as soon

as it was ready to emerge. Charlemagne himself was an unashamed eclectic who could think of nothing better to do for art than to produce a stone church in Aix-la-Chapelle based on San Vitale in Ravenna, to hire Byzantine mosaicists to fill it with decorations which have long since disappeared, and to base his ornamental motifs on Irish illuminated manuscripts. It was not till the beginning of the eleventh century, two hundred years after the establishment of the Holy Roman Empire, that Romanesque architecture had evolved its own language.

It was a language of stone – a three-dimensional language, whereas Byzantine was on the whole a language of brick, coated with two-dimensional decoration. Like Byzantine art, the main body of it is ' applied ' art. It belongs to the building and cannot be divorced from it. But being conceived in stone it consists largely of sculpture. Generally speaking, the nearer it approaches to the East the more apt it is to emphasize surface and take the form of low relief; the further West it penetrates, the solider and more fully rounded it becomes. But whether it is in low relief and consequently conceived as line, or sculpture in the round and therefore conceived as mass, it is essentially an art in which form counts rather than colour. This, of course, is roughly true of all European as opposed to Oriental art, but the history of Romanesque art and its development into Gothic art (there seems no adequate reason to separate the two: they are phases of the same movement) is essentially the history of an art whose main concern was with *shape*.

What is more noteworthy still is that it is an art with no centre of radiation, no main stream traceable to a definite source such as Nineveh or Cnossus or Athens had been. If ever there was a period when one could speak of a United States of Europe it was this period between the fall of Rome and the recentring of European culture in Italy. In medieval Europe national boundaries were so fluid and national consciousness was so weak that cultural movements found no difficulty in flowing freely across them. Consequently one can find fully-developed expressions of the Romanesque and Gothic spirit in almost any corner of Western

Europe at any moment. The façades of the Church of St Trophime at Arles in Provence, of the Cathedral of Chartres in north-western France (see Plate 5c), of the Cathedral of Santiago in Spain, of the Church of San Zeno in Verona are all variations on the same theme. Romanesque and Gothic art are dependent on the vast organization of the Catholic Church and not on the inspiration of a geographical centre as Florence was to be later and as Paris was until the spring of 1940.

As in Byzantine art, the output is enormous but anonymous. And, as in Byzantine art, what we have to examine is a slowly changing mood rather than a succession of independent masterpieces. What characterizes the whole Romanesque movement is a perfect co-ordination between the carving and its architectural setting. The spacing of the statues on the façade of St Trophime, the richness of their surface contrasted with the smooth stone wall above them, the manner in which they alternate rhythmically with the supporting columns of the overhanging porch, the distribution of the shadows, the controlled freedom of line give the eye a thrill of satisfaction. There is nothing profound in Romanesque carving, but it invented a set of rhythms and textures which make archaic Greek sculpture look pedestrian by comparison. In no other period can one find such masses of carving, affectionate, and meticulous in detail, yet held together by a breadth of design that includes the whole carved area and enables the eye to take it in at a single glance.

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'Gothic' is a word with a queer history and even queerer connotations. Naturally the builders of Chartres or Canterbury had never heard the word. They may have thought of themselves as moderns (as compared with the builders of St Trophime or Durham), but they would have been surprised to know that four centuries later, men of culture looking for a word to describe

their style would choose one with the same connotations that the word Vandal has for us to-day. It is equally odd that Sir Henry Wotton could use the adjective in this derogatory way and that two and a half centuries later Ruskin could use it to imply the highest praise.

To the average man it implies neither scorn nor praise: it is just a technical term for the kind of building in which the arches are pointed. Or ask the average man to go a little deeper and ignore pedantic tests of this kind and he will tell you rather hesitatingly that he supposes the Gothic style is on the whole a vertical style whereas the Romanesque style is a horizontal style. And he will be correct as far as he goes. But if he suggests that vertical and horizontal are two irreconcilable systems of thought and that the first was the result of a sudden act of rebellion against the second, he will be wrong. Architecturally the possible shades of transition from Romanesque to Gothic and even from Byzantine to Gothic are infinite. Venice is full of buildings that are Gothic by definition, but Byzantine in spirit. The pointed arches of Monreale in Sicily are more closely related to Byzantium than the round arches of Durham.

This book, however, is not concerned with buildings or arches, but with representations in paint and stone. If the word Gothic has any permanent meaning it must be applicable not only to a cathedral, but to a statue or a painting. Isolate an angel from the cathedral of Rheims, remove the Chichester roundel from its architectural context and how is one to know whether they are Gothic or not? There is no neat answer to such questions. Gothic is a relative, not an absolute term. It is a flavour that can be either hardly detectable, or, in extreme cases, overwhelming. What began to produce the flavour was another outburst of that spirit of visual curiosity which I have more than once said is among the chief motive forces of European art. Curiosity about the human body had produced Greek art; another kind of curiosity was responsible for the Gothic spirit. Greek curiosity was that of a scientist: Gothic curiosity was that of a lover. It was an affectionate curiosity, full of little whimsies and extravagances.

Instead of limiting itself to humanity it could range playfully and capriciously across the whole of creation, picking out details, a monstrous form here, a charming turn of the wrist there. Greece had developed in the direction of greater breadth and simplicity: Gothic developed in the direction of complexity and preciousness, and gaily mingled the grotesque with the elegant. It is this mixture that gives it its true flavour, and for that reason it can be summed up in no single statue or painting. If Byzantine mosaic is like beer in that one needs a lot of it, Gothic art is like a cocktail in that its separate ingredients do not fairly represent its final flavour. It has all the complexity of life itself.

'Romantic' is the obvious word for it, but 'romantic', like 'beautiful', is a word that will not survive the process of definition. To see Gothic at its impressive best one goes, of course, to the great cathedrals, especially the cathedrals of northern France.

Those cathedrals are among man's most extraordinary and moving creations, whether one sees them from afar, rearing themselves proudly above the city that surrounds them and breaking upwards into spires and pinnacles, whether one examines them at close quarters, noting the restless infinity of sculptural detail and fretted texture, or whether one enters them to find oneself in a complex architectural system whose soaring pillars and ribbed vaults arrest the eye so effectively that the walls are hardly noticeable and the effect is rather that of a formalized forest than of an enclosed room.

What concerns us here is not their shape or their function but their capacity to provide an ideal setting for certain kinds of sculpture. The Gothic spirit is not merely vertical; it leaps and soars like a rocket. Its essence lies in its power to suggest, not the final perfection of classic reason, like a Greek temple, but a dynamic search for the unattainable. The secondary arts of sculpture and stained glass which it fostered so easily, seem to grow organically out of it rather than to be imposed upon it. Like a living plant, a Gothic building can enrich itself from its own roots, throwing out foliage, tendrils, and flowers without losing its central unity. And that same leaping, nervous energy on which the

whole of a Gothic structure is based, communicates itself to every part of the building but particularly to those portions of it which, however firmly they may be embedded in the design of the whole, can at least be thought of as belonging to the separate category of sculpture.

It is not easy, therefore, to detach a given piece of carving, however expressive it may be, from its architectural parent without robbing it of a good deal of its meaning. Those nervous flowing rhythms which still remain in it even after it has been detached, were part of a larger, overriding rhythm. Yet for the purpose of a book that is concerned only with the fine arts of painting and sculpture, it is necessary to think of Gothic sculpture as being detachable.

In a purely physical sense, a great deal of Gothic sculpture can be removed from its architectural context and still claim our admiration not only for its vitality, its fantasy, and its grace, but also for its inherent, self-contained meaning (see Plate 5d). A host of carved statues of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries could be taken out of their niches and set beside the best of the Italian statues of the early Renaissance without suffering by the comparison. But because the sculptors were largely anonymous and because their creations were almost invariably contributions to a conception that was greater than themselves, it is difficult for us to think of even the best of the Gothic sculptures as a series of masterpieces; yet masterpieces they are, both in the assurance of their craftsmanship and in the grace and nobility of their conception.

The anonymity of Gothic art in general and of Gothic sculpture in particular offers an obstacle to the art historian of which he himself is hardly conscious. The reader of this book will find, in the chapter on Italian Renaissance sculpture of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, references to work by individual Pisan and Florentine sculptors whose carvings, had they been by an unknown artist and embedded in the façade of the cathedral of Rheims or Amiens, would never have been mentioned at all. The three great west doorways of Rheims cathedral alone contain 33

life-size and 200 smaller figures, each of which is the product of a passionately creative mind and a fully developed tradition of craftsmanship. And when one remembers that this sculptural exuberance is contained within a comparatively small area of one among a hundred similar buildings, one is amazed at the extraordinary fecundity of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries in north-western Europe. Much has been written on Gothic carving since Ruskin's famous chapter on 'The Nature of Gothic' in the *Stones of Venice*. But inevitably the art historian, faced with a mass of anonymous sculptural masterpieces, tends to regard them as the products of a period rather than of a set of exceptional individuals. Despite himself, he takes refuge in generalizations. Doubtless there existed in medieval France, Germany, and England, individual sculptors, each of whom is as worthy of separate study as Giovanni Pisano, Jacopo della Quercia, and Donatello, but since they are nameless, their work lacks the spotlight that would direct the art historian's full attention on to it.

I am aware that in devoting a whole chapter to certain named Tuscan sculptors and at the same time dismissing the whole of Gothic carving in a few paragraphs, I am sinning against my own sense of proportion. The reader will, I hope, respect my reasons for doing so.

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Gothic sculpture can reasonably be compared with Italian sculpture of a century later; no such comparison can be made between the painting of medieval Europe and Renaissance Italy. To see Gothic at its impressive best one goes to the cathedrals, especially those of Northern France.

But to see it at its most typical and intimate (for intimacy is one of its most endearing characteristics) one must study the illuminated manuscripts that were poured out from the Scriptoria of the various monasteries from the beginning of the thirteenth

century: Books of Hours, Missals, Apocalypses, Psalters, and Bibles. In them the Gothic artist, no longer a mere contributor to the architectural ensemble, can unleash his fancy and indulge all his whims. The figures are sometimes elongated to the verge of caricature, like fashion drawings of to-day (see the second part of the Arundel Psalter in the British Museum): grotesque creatures, humorous or macabre touches abound. As the type develops it becomes more restless. The eye is not given a moment's peace. Diaper backgrounds, borders of ivy leaves made even more spiky than nature had designed them, later on, landscape backgrounds (about the middle of the fifteenth century), with clumps of elaborate flowers in the foreground, scenes from contemporary life, sports and pastimes, feasting, travelling, cooking (the Luttrell Psalter of 1340 in the British Museum is crowded with such miniatures) can be found everywhere. One would think that in the fourteenth century life in north-west Europe was one vast confusion of gay delightful detail, a nursery packed with living toys.

Oddly enough the style in which these miniatures are executed remains formal and stylized up to the middle of the fifteenth century. The passionate Gothic curiosity about *things* left the artist no time or thought for a parallel curiosity about *appearances*. One would have expected that this questing Gothic spirit would have led to discoveries of perspective, of light and shade, and that romanticism would have given way to realism long before it did. It is not till the second half of the fifteenth century that research into appearances ousts research into things and that the word Gothic finally loses its meaning in the northern section of Europe. Giotto had been dead four years when the Luttrell Psalter was being decorated.

One other manifestation of the Gothic spirit was the development of the stained glass window, and this in its turn was the result of a discovery in engineering – the discovery of the vaulted roof supported not by walls but by pillars. Having learned how to build a roof without walls, the Gothic architect was free to do what he liked with the spaces between the pillars, the areas which

hitherto had been filled by walls. The discovery could never have been made in southern Europe, where one of the architect's duties was to keep the strong sunlight out. In the North he needed all the light he could get, and he welcomed the opportunity of turning his new dummy walls into window frames, What the wall was to the Byzantine the window became to the northern Gothic builder — an excuse for introducing colour. Here the Gothic artist was faced with a problem similar to that of the Byzantine mosaicist. He had to work in a medium that imposed its own laws on him. Smallish pieces of coloured transparent glass held together by narrow bands of lead made an excellent basis for colour decoration but were incapable of producing realism. The problem was one of pattern and colour-organization with a minimum of representational accuracy or narrative interest. Naturally iconography could not be kept out, for the church demanded it, but one cannot feel that the stained-glass craftsmen of the thirteenth century took their iconographical duties very seriously. It is impossible to regard the windows of Chartres as an illustrated Bible, as one can easily do in the case of the contemporary mosaics in the Narthex of St Mark's in Venice. In Chartres the colour is too intense, the patterning too insistent. One cannot comfortably 'read' Gothic windows. One has to let them evoke a mood. They do so quite overpoweringly, but since the representational factor plays so small a part in their impact on the senses they can be justifiably ignored in this account of Gothic art. By the time artists had learned to treat the windows as a surface to paint a picture on, the Gothic spirit was dead.

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The Fourteenth Century: Florence and Siena

It is at this point that the art historian settles himself comfortably in his chair, projects his mind to Assisi somewhere about the year 1290 when Giotto, aged twenty-four, is busy on the frescoes in the Church of St Francis, takes out his pen and addresses himself to his task with a sense of relief. Everything is now plain sailing. The Renaissance is within sight. From 1290 till the present day the course of European painting is clear. Hardly a decade will pass without some famous name to fill it, some masterpiece familiar to a million readers. In 1290 the foundations of modern art were being sketched out and the shape of the whole structure was becoming inevitable, and, what is more to the point for the art historian, describable. There is a full technical vocabulary ready to his hand. The story has been written a thousand times, and who am I that I should shrink from writing it again?

It starts, unlike the story of every other art-cycle, with a giant. Giotto (?1266—1336) did for Florentine painting what Myron did for Greek sculpture. But he did it at the very beginning instead of profiting by a century of experiment. He suddenly saw life in the round. Painting, after 1300, needed no longer be an exercise in two-dimensional design; it could be an adequate representation of objects in space, objects that possessed not only shape and colour but weight and volume. Here it is worth while to digress for a moment in order to inquire into the mechanism of evolution in the arts. I have suggested that during what I have called the forward swings of the pendulum the artist is obsessed with a desire to come to grips with appearances, to concern himself with what he would call visual truth as opposed to symbolic truth on the one hand and to visual harmony on the other. In

theory it ought to be one of the artist's easiest tasks: on the face of it there is nothing to prevent him 'copying' nature with the utmost accuracy whenever he wishes to. Doubtless, the eyesight of the sculptor who carved the archaic boys and girls of the Acropolis was not unlike that of Praxiteles, and the eyesight of Giotto must have resembled that of Rembrandt. Looking at the same object, all four would presumably have much the same image on the retina. Why then does the first pair produce entirely different statues and the second pair entirely different pictures? How is the stylistic difference between Greek sculpture of the seventh century B.C. and of the fourth century B.C. to be explained? Assuming that the archaic Greek sculptor is doing his best to fashion a stone image of a naked man exactly as his eyes see him (and the supposition seems reasonable in view of the later developments of Greek art), how can we account for the fact that any given statue of the period bears a much closer resemblance to any other statue of the same period than either of them does to the object represented? Why cannot sculptor B, noting the stiffness and immobility of sculptor A's attempt to carve a male athlete, and the system of frontality from which A seems unable to escape, immediately carve a statue that has none of these 'defects', using his eyes to observe and his chisel to carve exactly what he sees? The answer appears to be that the eye is, as it were, one end of a complicated passage, at the other end of which the brain stands on guard, refusing to admit anything with which it is not already familiar. The eye admits the whole visible world in a chaotic torrent of undigested visual information. But before the artist can deal with the information so admitted it must be sorted out. Now at any given moment in the development of vision, only certain limited quantities or aspects of that information are acceptable. What *is* acceptable at once becomes the artist's visual raw material, what is *not* is unusable and is therefore automatically rejected. It is useless for him to intellectualize the problem and to tell himself that the whole visible world in all its aspects is at his disposal. The sentry in his brain stands on guard in spite of him. In Leonardo's notebooks are analyses of the nature and colour of

light which, if he could have acted upon them, would have led to his painting with the palette of the nineteenth-century Impressionists. But Leonardo, giant though he was, could not *visualize* the conclusions to which his intellect had led him. He could *see* exactly what Monet and Pissarro saw, and he could *think* clearly enough to anticipate the nineteenth century, but the invisible sentry in his brain would admit nothing into his visual experience that was not already part of the common visual experience of the late fifteenth century. His vision would not travel at the same speed as his thought.

Period-vision can develop only by gradually persuading the unseen sentry that such and such aspects of what the eye has let through are respectable and trustworthy. They must arrive with proper credentials, and the highest credential they can have is that they have been used already by other artists and have passed into the accredited currency of art. To admit anything that is not part of contemporary currency is to take grave risks, and it is the mark of the adventurous spirit in art to be prepared to take such risks. Most artists will take infinitesimally small risks of this kind, and then only under the influence of a strong aesthetic emotion that positively beats down the sentry's defences.

In the whole history of art I can think of no painter who has taken more of these risks than Giotto, none who was less dependent on the artistic formulas of his time, none who made possible so long a stride forward in period-vision. For that reason he is one of the art-historian's most cherished figures, for he makes an unmistakable starting-point for a new epoch in art-history. Florentine painting starts, like a sprint, with a pistol shot. In 1280 it hardly exists. By 1300 it is racing ahead. In fact it is racing ahead altogether too fast. Usually when a great artist has the audacity to admit a new set of visual experiences and embody them in his art, his followers are only too ready to profit by his daring. Within a few years his discoveries are already part of the tradition of his time. But here was a man who had gone too far ahead for his followers to catch him up. Or perhaps he arrived on the scene too early.

The pistol shot went off, as it were, before the other runners knew that a race was in progress.

I have referred, in the preceding chapter, to the rigid Byzantine formula current at the end of the thirteenth century in Italy. It was as complete as the Church could make it. Not only were the permissible subjects for Christian iconography carefully tabulated, but their order of precedence, the manner of their presentation, and even the colours to be used. Giotto, in breaking all these rules, was not quite alone, though he was alone in the world of painting. It was St Francis who made the first attempt to break the chains by which medieval Christian dogma had deliberately fettered itself. St Francis in humanizing religion doubtless gave Giotto the courage to humanize art. These two innovations, the new capacity to see life in the round, and the new desire to infuse warmth into the Byzantine conception of religion, were opposite sides of the same medal. Giotto could conceivably have introduced either into his painting without the other, and either taken by itself would have made him an important figure. But his power to combine the two made him gigantic. His command of the three-dimensional world was a by-product of his humanity and, in particular, of his sense of human drama.

He regarded himself as a narrative painter. His concern was to tell his story by establishing the emotional relationship between the persons depicted in his frescoes. Now it may be said that this is already fully accomplished in the Russian Madonna and Child (Plate 2a). But it is done in a different spirit. If I simplify the icon painter's problem by saying that his task is to find a set of visual symbols for the idea contained in the word 'tenderness', it must be admitted that he has solved the problem and penetrated to the very core of the idea. Giotto could do that too, but it was not enough. He then proceeded to project *himself* into the orbit of the idea. Without losing any of the intensity of the symbol, he translated it into terms of life. What had been disembodied became embodied. The spirit of tenderness began to inhabit the tangible Madonna and Child of his own imagination. Every figure in Giotto's *œuvre* is, so to speak, an agent of the emotion, a vessel

specially created to contain it, so that however 'badly drawn' (according to academic standards) it may be, it is still performing its complete function. One has the same feeling in reading Shakespeare. Psychologically his characters are so intensely and completely realized that the arbitrary and often absurd behaviour they indulge in passes unnoticed. Dickens too, in his smaller way, can persuade his readers that a character like Micawber, based on a purely artificial formula, is really a flesh and blood creature abounding in life.

Giotto never failed to produce this effect, not only in his individual figures but in his groups of figures. With the period-vision at his disposal, and notwithstanding the new material he added to it, he could not possibly have the grasp of the visual world that came so easily to a Tintoretto or a Rembrandt. Yet in spite of these limitations one can walk all round his figures, one can gauge their distance from the eye, feel their weight on the ground, sense the solidity of the limbs under the draperies. Nor does this apply only to his figures. Their settings too have something of the same reality. The hills, trees, houses, and meadows among which they find themselves are equally convincing.

When one adds to this Shakespearean *completeness* which makes everything credible, a Shakespearean *profundity* which makes everything deeply moving, one can take something of the measure of this extraordinary painter. He sowed so many and such various seeds that there is hardly any aspect of art during the next few centuries that is not traceable to him, and though in any given direction he was destined to be outstripped by later men, no other painter ever held quite so many trump cards at once. Fra Angelico developed his sweetness, Masaccio his sense of drama, Raphael his balance, Michelangelo his sense of gesture, Piero his sense of space, many later painters made use of his feeling for landscape, but in none of them were all these gifts combined. To study the frescoes in the Arena chapel at Padua is to realize that a new era in art has been born capable of growth in any number of different directions; that here is the starting-point for

a new set of adventures and that Giotto provided signposts for them all.

It has not been given to many men to achieve a revolution single-handed. It is no exaggeration to say that Giotto did so. He was probably born in the late sixties of the thirteenth century. He died on 8 January 1337. What is known about his early training and his movements is fragmentary. The authenticity of many of the frescoes usually ascribed to him is doubtful. Yet he left behind him a body of work that establishes him as both one of the world's greatest artists and one of the world's most courageous innovators.

It is important to distinguish between the two. Genius can either be conservative and refine or perfect an existing tradition, or it can be revolutionary and suddenly create a new one. Raphael is an outstanding example of the first kind of artist, Giotto of the second. Both kinds are equally precious and equally necessary if we regard the artist as a creator of masterpieces. If, on the other hand, we think of him as a man who not only expresses the spirit of his age but also helps to shape it, then the innovators must be acknowledged as having given to the world a more valuable legacy than the traditionalists.

It is a legacy that is difficult to explain. We can follow the workings of Raphael's mind as he forged those miracles of perfection that mark the climax of Renaissance art. But we cannot so easily account for Giotto. He was born into a world whose art was hieratic or symbolic, whose craftsmanship was magnificent, but whose vision was rigidly confined between the fanciful and vital but conservative Gothicism of the North and the impressive but even more conservative Byzantinism of the East. He left behind him an art that was concerned with human beings. He altered the focus of the human mind, tore down the veil which for centuries had hung between man's soul and his body, and revealed the new set of possibilities which were to be explored by painters and sculptors for centuries to come. Each event he describes in his narrative frescoes at Assisi, Padua, and Florence is an event that manifestly takes place in a given environ-

ment on the surface of the planet on which we all live, and the personages who take part in the event are men and women whom we recognize as belonging to the human family. They move, speak, breathe: we know from their attitudes and their gestures that they are subject to the same hopes, fears, loves, hatreds, sorrows as ourselves. This had never happened before in the history of art.

To marvel at Giotto for introducing this new focus is one thing: to estimate his worth as a creator of pictorial masterpieces is another. He could have been the first humanist and yet have been a mediocre artist. It happened that he was not. He was outstanding both as an innovator and as a creator. His immediate followers accepted his innovations, realized their importance, and pursued the path he had indicated; yet many of them were mediocrities. Giotto dominates the fourteenth century as far as Tuscan art is concerned. His message, new though it was, was not misunderstood. On the contrary, his Florentine contemporaries and his immediate successors found it so attractive that they could do no more than repeat it, parrot-like, and in the repetition it became a little stale and arid. For that reason there is no need to describe them. They are many, and their names are known: Taddeo Gaddi, Bernardo Daddi, Maso, Giovanni da Milano – but it is the purpose of this book to describe the progress of painting rather than to enumerate names of artists. The followers of Giotto are not lacking in charm or technical ability. They produced, for example, that enchanting interior, the Spanish Chapel at Santa Maria Novella in Florence. Yet, if it had never been painted, the course of Renaissance art would hardly have been altered, whereas without the Arena Chapel at Padua one wonders how the art of the Renaissance could have got into its stride at all.

A new style cannot be invented. Giotto, so tradition has it, was Cimabue's pupil. And Cimabue himself, shadowy though he is, was evidently something of an innovator despite his Byzantinisms. Yet Giotto was in Rome in 1298, and in Rome he must have absorbed the more plastic Roman tradition of painting

as practised there by his contemporary, Pietro Cavallini. This is not the place to discuss influences, but influences there must have been. Bricks are not created without straw, though there is no space here to analyse the nature of the straw Giotto used.

Three sets of frescoes sum up his achievement. The St Francis cycle in the Church of St Francis at Assisi is justly popular, largely because it seems so appropriate that the first humanizer of Christianity should be portrayed by the first humanizer of painting. The Arena Chapel frescoes at Padua are in every way finer. Moreover, when Enrico Scrovegni built the chapel in 1305 on the site of a Roman arena, he intended its interior to be painted by Giotto. Architecture is here subservient to painting and Giotto had a completely free hand. It is here, in the thirty-eight scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin Mary (see Plate 6a), that his immense dramatic power is most fully manifest. Every gesture is significant, every glance has a meaning. Nothing is redundant, nothing is overstated, nothing is introduced merely for its decorative effect. Joachim's slow, shamefaced stride, the puzzled, questioning looks of the shepherds that intercept each other at his approach, the welcoming dog, the stage scenery that suggests exactly the kind of environment required and contains the action without disturbing it: the awful moment when Christ and Judas, incarnations of Good and Evil, regard each other face to face, alone in the midst of an agitated crowd of men and spears: the grief-stricken Virgin gazing into the dead face of her Son, taken down from the Cross, framed by those two impassive back views of seated women, as simple and immovable as boulders, while the drapery of the woman who stands over Mary descends in a waterfall of vertical folds that carries the eye down with it: the fluttering, hysterical angels that fill the sky overhead with lamentation – all this is Shakespearean in its strength and intensity. And throughout the whole series, the grouping of the protagonists in the centre of the stage and of the minor characters at the sides, the nobility and expressiveness of the gestures, the simplicity and effectiveness of the scenery would strike any producer of stage plays as the ideal solution

of the difficult problem of how most effectively to convey the dramatic content of each given scene.

The chapel was finished in the early years of the fourteenth century. It is said that while Giotto was working there, Dante, passing through Padua, visited him. The meeting strikes us to-day as strangely significant. The last and greatest of the medieval poets must have been impressed by the vivid narrations of the lives of Jesus and Mary on earth. Indeed, Dante has recorded that he considered Giotto had eclipsed Cimabue. Yet he must also have been a little puzzled by the solidity and the earthiness of Giotto's characters.

More than ten years later those characters become even more solid and begin to inhabit an even more convincing spatial environment in the frescoes of the Peruzzi Chapel in the Church of Santa Croce in Florence. They are the work of an older man than those of Padua. They are not as memorable and not as human in their behaviour, but they are more accomplished.

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A comparatively barren period for Florentine painting followed Giotto's death, but that same period was by no means barren in Siena. Indeed there were moments during the course of the fourteenth century when it looked as though Siena and not Florence was going to decide the future of European painting.

It would be silly to exaggerate the difference in spirit between the two cities. Historians of art have been tempted to say that Florence looked forward to the coming Renaissance while Siena remained medieval at heart. There is a grain of truth in the overstatement. The two cities are different and their art is different, but the difference is not so much between two conceptions of life as between two conceptions of art. There is more than a suspicion of ' art for art's sake ' in Sienese painting. In Giotto there is none. In the struggle between truth and beauty which underlies all art, beauty is inclined to get the upper hand in Siena, truth in Florence. If Siena clings to the Byzantine tradition it is not

through conservatism but through intellectual laziness. What the Sienese have to express has nothing to do with Byzantium, but here is a serviceable set of idioms to hand, so why not use them? Nothing in the Sienese spirit has made them obsolete. Florence throws them overboard without hesitation or regret, Siena adapts them to her needs. Occasionally a particularly intense emotional conception, like the angel seated on the tomb in Duccio's panel of the 'Three Marys', or the shrinking Madonna in Simone's 'Annunciation', seems to demand a new set of shapes, a complete departure from tradition. Giotto would have gone straight to nature in such cases. Not so the Sienese artists. They produced the new shapes by a sheer effort of invention. They had a sense of rhythm which could, when necessary, dispense with a sense of actuality. When that sense failed them the result was mere affectation. When it did not they reach imaginative heights attained by no other school of painting.

As for the kind of life depicted in their narrative painting, it is an altogether more delicate, aristocratic affair than in Florence. The Sienese seem to have richer furniture in their houses, finer needlework on their brocaded dresses, gayer patterns on their tiled floors. Lorenzetti's 'Nativity of the Virgin' in Siena gives the impression of a family that had spared no expense when setting up house, still more so Sassetta's picture of the same subject at Asciano. But the Sienese school had none of the stamina of Florence. It could see life in the round, but it could not set that life firmly on the earth's surface. Sienese figures may be round but they are not solid. They are no longer cardboard like Byzantine figures: they have the three-dimensional existence of a balloon but not the weight of a boulder. Sassetta, the last of the great Sienese painters, could paint the betrothal of St Francis to his three mystical maidens, who immediately and without giving the spectator the faintest spasm of surprise float gaily away through the air. If Giotto had tackled the subject one would unconsciously look for the mechanism that enabled them to perform this charming act of levitation. In the end the robuster art of Florence was bound to win. Sienese art enjoyed

its moment of exquisiteness and then succumbed to Florence.

Duccio (active *c.* 1278–1319) was born a year or two earlier than Giotto. His great masterpiece, the Maestà, was ordered for the cathedral of Siena and completed a year or two later than the Arena Chapel at Padua. It was carried in triumph into the cathedral in 1311. It consisted of a biggish double-sided panel, now in the Opera del Duomo at Siena. On one side is the Virgin and Child enthroned, flanked by orderly rows of adoring saints and attendant angels. The reverse side was divided up into a series of smaller narrative panels of the life of Christ and the Virgin Mary. To-day these panels are scattered among the museums and collections of Europe and America.

Even allowing for the inevitable stylistic difference between large areas of wall covered with fresco and comparatively small tempera paintings on panel, it is quite evident that Giotto and Duccio are very different personalities and that the schools of painting they founded are different in character. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that the temperamental difference that undoubtedly existed between the two cities of Siena and Florence accounts for the difference between the two artists, but it would certainly be almost true to say that all that we think of as typical of Sienese art – the refinement, the delicacy, the aristocracy, the conservatism, and the charm – can be traced to Duccio, while the robust humanity, the virility, the drama, the intelligence that are characteristic of Giotto are, with slight variations and exceptions, expressions of a Florentine point of view.

The traveller in Italy to-day who makes the journey from Florence to Siena is not merely covering sixty miles of Tuscan soil. He is exchanging a city of philosophers and intellectuals for a city of poets and mystics. The spirit of the Middle Ages still clings about Siena, and though the paintings produced by Duccio and his successors are certainly not medieval, what differentiates them from the paintings of an earlier century is not the brave, robust curiosity that was to be so characteristic of Renaissance man but a self-conscious pursuit of refinement and beauty.

When in certain works by Sienese painters of the fourteenth century we seem to find beauty itself in isolation, we realize how necessary to the full development of Italian painting was the Sienese contribution. By itself it achieved much that is precious, but only when it became incorporated, as eventually happened, into the mainstream of Florentine art did the Tuscan artist of the fifteenth century find it possible to exercise his full power as philosopher-poet. There is a strain of Sienese refinement in Fra Angelico, in Botticelli, and in Perugino: there is none in Masaccio and Michelangelo. Perhaps the greatest manifestations of genius can afford to dispense with sweetness, yet without sweetness the flavour of Italian painting would be incomplete.

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But the Sienese painters of the fourteenth century had more than sweetness. The orderly, hieratic gravity of the Madonna and her attendants in Duccio's Maestà owes much to the power of the Byzantine tradition which lingered on in Siena long after it had been ousted from Florence. And in the narrative panels on its reverse side one finds in addition touches of poetry based on the most sensitive kind of observation of human behaviour. In Duccio Byzantine formalism seems to be breaking down. The Christ of the *Noli Me Tangere* is clothed in formalized Byzantine drapery but his gesture has a tenderness that is even more expressive, even more studied, than one finds in Giotto. The maidservant who pauses at the foot of the stair to listen to Peter's denial and the unforgettable gesture of the angel seated by the empty tomb are creations of poetic genius rather than of dramatic imagination. Giotto could never have discovered the purely linear rhythms that inspired Duccio at these moments. Nor could he have imagined the shrinking Madonna of the *Annunciation* by Simone Martini, born a decade later than Duccio, nor the breathless reverence of the angel Gabriel, nor the clear-cut, fashionable elegance of the wreath in his hair, nor the attenuated pathos of the outline of Pietro Lorenzetti's dead Christ in the *Deposition*

fresco at Assisi, nor the lovely line rising like the curve of a breaking wave that encloses the group gathered round him.

In Simone's exquisite art there is less of Byzantine and more of Gothic than in Duccio's. Such a generalization is easy to make and it is certainly true, yet its importance should not be exaggerated. During the fourteenth century the cities of Northern Italy were crossroads where cultural currents met and intersected. Siena was particularly sensitive to the Byzantine influence brought from the East by craftsmen, Crusaders and merchants and to the French culture that flowed southwards across the Alps and northwards from Naples. Duccio was more influenced by the former, Simone by the latter, yet, in a brief survey of the whole course of European painting, the difference between the two is less remarkable than the similarity. The Gothic and Byzantine flavours are in both cases subsidiary to the dominant Sienese flavour. That flavour is strong in Duccio, stronger in Simone, and is immediately recognizable in Pietro Lorenzetti and his brother Ambrogio. It continues throughout the fourteenth and persists into the first half of the fifteenth century, where, despite its poetic charm, it begins to look a little demodé, as though an island home of a family of aristocrats and exquisites were being invaded by the rising tide of Renaissance democracy. Finally it disappeared, but not without leaving behind it, in the very heart of Tuscany itself, memories of a fairy tale. Sassetta's *Birth of the Virgin* at Asciano is one of the last full statements of the Sienese spirit. No Florentine household, one feels, could have been as tastefully furnished as this or as sophisticated in its conduct.

Second only to this Sienese refinement is the Sienese gift of colour. In Duccio it glows Orientally – almost barbarically. In Simone it achieves an exquisiteness so precious that it actually interferes with his narrative content and threatens to turn a religious statement into a decorative object. To a less extent all Sienese artists are colourists. An acute sense of colour harmonization is the mark of a sensuous, refined way of life, just as the draughtsman's power is the sign of intelligence and reason. Not until another school of poet-painters arises in Venice at the end

of the fifteenth century does colour achieve the same importance that Siena gave to it in the early fourteenth.

10

Fifteenth-Century Florence

I do not propose to follow in detail the course of Italian painting during the one hundred and thirty-six years between the death of Masaccio and that of Michelangelo. The list of considerable artists, both painters and sculptors, is a long one – longer than in any other period of the same duration. Each of them has his own particular kind of excitement to spur him on, and all of them give the same exhilarating sense of being proud to be in a movement, to be caught up by it and to contribute to it.

Those two streams that had their sources in the robust genius of Giotto and the sophisticated poetry of the early Sienese were destined to amalgamate, but at the beginning of the fifteenth century they still pursued their parallel courses. In the long run the intelligent strength of the Florentines was bound to gain the upper hand, but the two painters who next appear in the sequence of early Renaissance development are Florentine neither by birth nor by temperament. Gentile da Fabriano (*c.* 1370–1427) took his name from the town in the Marches of Umbria in which he was born. It is significant that he gravitated to Venice where he painted in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio in the Ducal Palace, but his masterpiece – indeed the crowning achievement of what is now known as the International Gothic style – is his *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. Here is all the energy and grace of an awakening Italy combined with the lavish ornament, the feeling for flowers and animals and rich brocades which the Gothic artists loved, and which may have made its way into Northern Italy from the court of the Dukes of Burgundy. Pisanello's (active 1430–55) version of the same Gothic spirit was even livelier than Gentile's. Not quite enough of his painting survives to reveal his true stature, but his medals, his drawings of animals, and of the fantastically stylish costumes of his generation combine affection with fastidiousness so

remarkably that he seems to raise Gothicism itself to a higher power.

To the same transitional school of half-medieval, half-early-Renaissance painters belongs Lorenzo Monaco (*c.* 1370–*c.* 1425), a Dominican friar, trained in an environment whose most accomplished products were illuminated missals. Lorenzo rose charmingly to the demands made on him for something larger and more ambitious than illuminations, and in doing so added a touch of sophisticated grandeur to the current tradition. His colour can be exquisite, his line flowing and tender, but in the general progress of Renaissance painting Gentile, Pisanello, and Lorenzo Monaco seem to insert themselves parenthetically. Gentile certainly stimulated the early Venetians and gave them courage to develop the lyrical strain that was to blossom so remarkably at the end of the century. And one Florentine at least must have taken Gentile's *Adoration of the Magi* as his model for an even more ambitious version of the same theme. In Benozzo Gozzoli's decorations in the Riccardi Palace Chapel in Florence there are too many echoes of Gentile's picture of thirty-five years earlier to be a coincidence. The same crowded tapestry of trees and mountains, dogs and birds, and the same holiday spirit appear again. Gozzoli (1420–97) was an anachronism – the last of the International Gothic artists, who produced an odd mixture of Italian realism with Gothic fantasy. Any painter who chose Gentile as his model in 1450 was a generation out-of-date. Yet Gozzoli's frescoes in the Riccardi Chapel are done with such conviction and such childlike delight that they are among the most popular productions of mid-fifteenth-century painting in Florence, even though they are among the least profound.

Gozzoli's master, Fra Angelico, was a far greater artist. The word ' great ', though less liable to abuse than the word ' genius ', is still a word to be used with caution. Yet the Blessed Brother Giovanni of Fiesole, a friar of the Dominican order, certainly merits the adjective, though his strange gift is not easy to explain. He too looks back into the medieval world – not into a world

of birds and flowers and gaiety like Gentile and Pisanello but into a world in which holiness is the dominant theme and reverence for holiness the dominant emotion. One can rarely say with assurance that an artist owes all his power of expression to an emotion so remote from visual experience, yet in the case of Fra Angelico it is true (see Plate 7b). Had he not chanced to work in and near Florence at the beginning of the one century of all centuries that could stretch an artist's powers to the utmost, he might have been merely the prince of miniaturists. But the walls of the Convent of San Marco enlarged his grasp of the painter's problems, and he developed in his later years (little is known of his early work) a breadth of design, a grasp of essentials and a contempt for inessentials that give his best work a kind of monumental graciousness. It is this simple grandeur, added to his purity, that makes him memorable. A radiant serenity of colour derived from the illuminator's art and an unashamed delight in burnished gold are characteristic of his tempera paintings. Had he not also possessed a very personal and deep devotion he would have been merely the suavest and most gracious of religious painters, but the intellectual clarity of the early Renaissance was also part of his equipment, and by virtue of that clarity he almost succeeded in uniting the two parallel streams of Gothic mysticism and Florentine humanism which Simone and Giotto had done so much to develop. Occasionally he does succeed. The great *Crucifixion* in San Marco and the *Annunciation* that awaits the visitor at the top of the staircase in the same building have a perfection both of sentiment and of pictorial organization that are not easy to forget.

More than ten years before Fra Angelico had started to work on the walls of the monastery of San Marco, a young Florentine painter died, at the age of twenty-seven, whom the world unhesitatingly agrees to honour with the name of genius. Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine Church are neither suave nor gracious. There is no trace in them of the radiance of the illuminator, the gaiety of Gentile, the stylish fantasy of Pisanello or the purity of Fra Angelico. If we were

told that they were by a mature artist working in the third quarter of the fifteenth century we would not be surprised. When we know that they were done by a youth in his twenties at the end of its first quarter we cannot help being astounded. For here, after a pause of a century, is the first true successor to Giotto, and the first painter who leaves us in no doubt that the Italian Renaissance has at last become articulate.

If we compare Giotto's Paduan frescoes with Masaccio's series in the Brancacci Chapel of the Carmine Church in Florence, (see Plate 6, a and b) it becomes evident that during the century that had elapsed between the two, man's intellectual grasp of his environment had taken a considerable stride forward. And it is at this point that the historian must pause and examine the nature and the cause of that stride. He is, in fact, faced with that remarkable phenomenon in the history of European culture which we have agreed to call the Renaissance.

It would be absurd to attribute so complex a movement to a single cause or to give it a precise beginning in time. It is true that Renaissance ways of thinking and feeling were, cumulatively, a revolt against the whole spirit of the medieval world and that they laid the foundations of what we think of as the modern world. But the process which culminated in the fine flower of Renaissance art was a gradual one. Even in the very core of the medieval world one can detect the seeds germinating. And even at the peak of the High Renaissance traces of medieval mysticism linger on.

No department of human activity was unaffected by it. In the realms of politics, religion, literature, and science not only the tempo but the very direction of life began to change. In no branch of human activity was the change more radical than in the visual arts: in no century did the change take place more swiftly than in the fifteenth: and in no city of Europe was the cultural climate more favourable to that change than in Florence.

In order to reduce this all-embracing phenomenon to its simplest terms, one could say that the Renaissance in Italy meant two things in particular. It meant first of all the rediscovery of

Greece and Rome, and that in its turn meant not merely the digging up of a few Greco-Roman statues and the discovering of a few Greek and Roman writings. It meant the realization that civilization was a continuous process stretching back into the past and therefore to be visualized as stretching forward with magnificent possibilities into the future. It gave the Florentines a sense of belonging to history, and of being both competitors and spiritual descendants of the Athenians. Secondly, the Renaissance meant freedom of mind, freedom to gratify curiosity about everything under the sun, freedom to question everything old and to invent anything new. It meant the habit of asking 'Why?' and 'How?' and the consequent question so admirably condensed by America, 'So what?'

In a word, the two qualities which gave the Italian Renaissance its distinctive flavour were a passionate desire for knowledge and a passionate belief in experiment, especially the kind of experiment that puts knowledge to the test. And it was the special gift of Florence to be able to combine the two in her art and to add to that combination a self-conscious and equally passionate pursuit of beauty.

Knowledge by itself can easily lead to pedantry: experiment by itself to mere novelty. The Florentines balanced the two and escaped both pitfalls. They had the wisdom to use both as means and not as ends. If you had asked any of them 'As means to what end?' they would probably have found it difficult to give a neat answer, but to-day with our bird's-eye view of the massive accomplishment of the Italian Renaissance (the hundred best years of Florence, from 1430 to 1530, plus the hundred and fifty best of Venice, say, 1440 to 1590), we can answer, 'To an expression of the fullness of life.' It is one of those grandiose phrases from which an Englishman instinctively shrinks, but the spirit that produced the Colleoni statue, the Dresden Madonna, the Sacristy of San Lorenzo and the Last Supper is too big to take English self-consciousness into account. It requires grandiose phrases.

Two factors which made for continuity of tradition during the High Renaissance must be mentioned. One was the Bottega

system whereby each well-known artist in fifteenth-century Florence had his own studio, with apprentices as young as ten or twelve years of age who learned the whole business of picture-making from grinding colours, preparing grounds, and transferring cartoons to painting portions of the master's pictures. The other was the general level of enlightenment among patrons, who managed, with a minimum of interference, to stimulate artistic production to a remarkable degree, both in quantity and quality. A list of the princely patrons of the arts in fifteenth-century Italy would be a long one, but none of them provided a more intelligent or adventurous stimulus to the artists who worked under them than the three generations of the Medici family – Cosimo, Piero, and Lorenzo – in Florence, between the years 1434 and 1492. It would be roughly true to say that while the artists themselves were enlarging their means through technical and semi-scientific research, patrons were spurring them on to use these means to new and exciting ends.

It was in the first year of this critical century, and in Florence, that young Masaccio had the good fortune to be born.

Brunelleschi in architecture, Donatello in sculpture, and Masaccio in painting can be said to initiate a new era in the visual arts. In particular, Brunelleschi, by formulating the laws of perspective, made it possible for a painter to grasp the complex spatial relationships involved in his picture. Giotto's intuitive approach to the problem of space and the International Gothic refusal to consider the problem at all at once became obsolete. The painter was given an intellectual tool by the aid of which new worlds could be conquered.

It may seem absurd to suggest that the art of painting, which owes so much to the creative imagination, should be dependent for its power on the discovery of a mathematical formula. The artist of to-day rightly shuns the tyranny of perspective. Matisse was at pains to ignore what Masaccio was so anxious to learn. But there is a difference between defying law and being ignorant of its existence. Giotto had pushed the empirical method of painting to its furthest limit. Masaccio, with the discoveries of

optical science at his disposal, could not only organize his space with more precision and more conviction, but he could bring a new kind of observation to bear on it, for precision begets precision. To understand the nature of space leads to a deeper understanding of the objects that occupy space. Giotto's figures look generalized beside Masaccio's: his landscapes and architectural backgrounds are even more so. For the first time in the history of painting the Brancacci Chapel frescoes present us with a completely articulated world.

Science is a tool: genius resides in the hand that uses it. Masaccio's memorable achievement would not have been possible without the tools at his disposal, but the ends for which he used those tools are his own. His *Adam and Eve*, heroic in their nudity, were not the first beings of their kind. Their purely physical counterparts could have been matched by any competent Greek sculptor of the generation that preceded the age of Praxiteles. What Masaccio did was to recapture, after a lapse of centuries, the central belief of Hellenic art – that the human body is both noble and beautiful. But no pre-Christian Greek, painter or sculptor, could have visualized, as Masaccio did, these two noble animals in the grip of an overpowering human emotion. Masaccio fused his new grasp of material reality with Giotto's sense of expressive gesture. Even more potent is that same fusion in the fresco of *St Peter Distributing Alms*. As one looks at the mother carrying her child one feels not only that this is how a real mother would behave – Giotto could achieve that too – but one experiences oneself the weight and bulk of the woman's body, its perfect balance, and the weight and bulk of the child's body on her arm. One realizes her muscular freedom to swing her head round, to shift her weight from one foot to the other should she wish to do so.

Again, as after the sudden appearance of Giotto, the revolution inaugurated by Masaccio was followed by a pause, as though the imaginative equipment of the artists who immediately followed Masaccio could not rise to the new demands made on them. But this time the pause was shorter: it lasted no more than a

decade. The future of Florentine painting was now assured, though the first response to Masaccio's challenge came from an artist of a very different calibre.

The most useful way, for once, to cover the period that follows will be the conventional one of picking out a few major figures and describing their personal contribution to the art of the century. And the easiest way to visualize its developments is to picture it as a river system in which many tributaries are drawn gradually together, until their separate waters mix in the achievements of Michelangelo, Raphael, and Leonardo.

Paolo Uccello (1397–1475) has achieved fame as the man who worked out and applied to his pictures the principles of perspective, already formulated by Brunelleschi and Alberti. One almost wishes he had not done so. In his sense of decoration he is almost Oriental. In his affectionate love of detail and incident he is Gothic. His rather absurd insistence on vanishing points does perhaps help him to *organize* his painting in depth, but I cannot feel that his painting of the 'Rout of San Romano' in the National Gallery was ever *conceived* in depth. It is surely strange that the man who made possible the change from the panel-on-the-wall to the window-cut-in-the-wall belonged so wholeheartedly to the first, though his chief recorded contribution to the science of painting was in the direction of the second. Everyone who has seen them succumbs to the delightful pageantry and heraldry of the three famous battle pieces he painted for the palace of the Medici, of which the National Gallery's 'Rout of San Romano' is the most familiar, but one can hardly regard them as examples of Renaissance progressiveness. The 'vanishing point' on which he so pedantically insists is rather the device of a theorist than of a man who wishes to insist on the idea of spaciousness. Perhaps we misjudge Uccello. His frescoes of the Deluge, in Florence, now mere ghosts of their former selves, may have been nobler works than we realize.

Of Domenico Veneziano (*c.* 1400–61) even less is known than of Uccello. We are told that he had a considerable influence on the painting of his generation and that he was the master

of Piero della Francesca. What little remains of his work has a lyrical beauty and a carefree yet studied harmony of design, but in the absence of more evidence about him we can regard him as no more than a link in the chain of development. Yet, if recent scholarship is to be trusted and we can ascribe to him the little 'Judgement of Paris' in the Burrell Collection, Domenico did produce the first known example of one of the most typical and fruitful themes in Italian Renaissance art, namely the naked human body used not as a symbol of shame, as medieval artists – and even Masaccio himself – had used it in Crucifixions or in telling the story of Adam and Eve, but as a symbol of nobility and grace.

It is not easy for us, who remember vividly the Venuses of Botticelli and Titian, the naked athletes of Michelangelo, the nymphs and goddesses of Raphael, to realize how complete a breakaway from the medieval state of mind was necessary before such a step could be taken. Here was the first frank act of homage to Greek paganism and Greek sculpture, and the first indication of how pre-Christian mythology was becoming familiar in the minds of the fifteenth century Italians. Veneziano's goddesses are slender in form and Gothic in gesture, but they look back across the medieval void to the age of Pericles and forward to the age of Rubens.

After him, Andrea del Castagno (*c.* 1420–57) emerges as a figure of great significance and the originator of a new mood in painting. It is a mood of stark, fierce, dramatic realism, prophetic of the same kind of harsh drama that was to be typical of Spanish painting in a later century. Happiness and serenity are outside his range: his vividness can sometimes manifest itself as a kind of human agony.

At this point, as we approach the crucial middle years of the century, it is worth pausing to examine the pattern of development in North Italian painting that was to lead so rapidly to the supreme moment of the High Renaissance in the early years of the following century. It was, as we have seen, a period of expansion in which the human mind was making new discoveries

and coming to terms not only with the visible world but with the world of ideas. At such a moment each new discovery was bound to bring in its train a new technical advance in the art of painting. 'Progress', that elusive word, so often falsely confused with 'improvement', never had a firmer meaning than in the middle years of the fifteenth century. But it must be realized that in such a moment two forces are at work. Progress is the result not only of new ideas but of new personalities. When we say that Masaccio was the forerunner of a revolution, we are seeing him as a man with a new grasp of the visual world which could be passed on and used by his successors. But when we say that he was the creator of a heroic, dignified race of men and women we are seeing him as a personality with an individual point of view which might impress his successors, but could not become part of their tradition unless they happened to share his temperament.

During the first half of the century, the painter's tradition, his stylistic equipment, had been perfecting itself with unusual rapidity. By 1450 one can say that the Renaissance is acutely conscious of its main objectives, as far as painting is concerned. It remained for the second half of the century to produce the artists who would interpret those main objectives in their own way, and use the established tradition as a means of expressing their own separate personalities.

During the second half of the fifteenth century there is no lack of such personalities in Northern and Central Italy. Within the limits of this brief survey only the most outstanding can be mentioned. Those that occurred in Venice must be reserved for a separate chapter, for Venice from an early date had developed a rather different set of emotional attitudes from the rest of Italy. And with them may conveniently be grouped Mantegna, to whose influence the early Venetians owed so much, and the school of Ferrara, which might have developed differently had it not been for Mantegna.

To group artists into schools is perhaps a little pedantic, especially at a time when movement between the cities of Italy

was so free and artists travelled not merely in search of commissions but also in order to study and absorb whatever creative work was being done outside their immediate environment. Yet it is not unreasonable to group together the painters who worked chiefly in Florence and mainly under the stimulating influence, if not the direct patronage, of the Medici family, and to consider as a separate group those who came from the gentler countryside of Umbria.

The earliest of the Florentine group is Fra Filippo Lippi (1406–69) who, though fully aware of the significance of both Masaccio and Fra Angelico, had neither the austere gravity of the former nor the purity of the latter, but introduced a new and charmingly innocent note into painting based on an acute observation of the life and the manners that surrounded him. Lippo Lippi was too modest a painter to lay claim to anything that could be called a 'discovery'. But two decades later the brothers Antonio and Piero Pollaiuolo (Antonio was born in 1432, Piero in 1441) did make two important contributions to the fruits of Florentine research. It is not worth while here to attempt to distinguish between them – indeed they may well have collaborated in some of their altarpieces, and in any case the elder brother probably supplied the initiative – but their pictures invariably make one realize what had hitherto been lacking in Italian painting, a close observation of the human body in movement and a real understanding of landscape. Perhaps the two were unconsciously connected in Antonio's mind, for it is by an emphasis on the muscular ripple of the human body and on the undulations of the countryside that he expresses them. In the big *Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian* in the National Gallery the restless convolutions of the Arno Valley that stretch away into the background are, as it were, a study of Nature's anatomy, while the strained attitudes of the archers in the foreground partake of exactly the same tense and nervous rhythm. In the *Tobias and the Angel* clothing largely conceals this emphasis on muscle, but the tightly-packed folds of the drapery, the angular knees and spread fingers of Tobias are repeated in the angular convolutions

of the path and the winding river in the distance. Even the little clouds share the same nervous agitation.

Verrocchio (1435–88) is less of a personality and more of a craftsman, but we instinctively approach him with considerable respect, for he was the master of Leonardo and so seems to be in closer touch with the High Renaissance than other members of the Florentine group. Verrocchio's was the most important workshop in Florence in the third quarter of the fifteenth century. Moreover he was an eminent sculptor, and his famous equestrian statue of the Condottiere, Bartolommeo Colleoni, immediately returns to our visual memory when we try to conjure up an image of the typical, arrogant but intelligent Renaissance man. Being a sculptor, Verrocchio was certainly more conscious of surfaces and the play of light on surfaces than most of his contemporaries. His meticulously finished paintings, though mainly devoid of imaginative appeal, do give us a new sense of the infinitely subtle gradations of light on the curved surface of a cheek or the back of a hand. It is a small contribution, but it is one which Leonardo was later to exploit to the full and turn into one of the most powerful weapons in the painter's armoury.

It is Verrocchio's position in the development of Florentine art that is significant. Without contributing much to it he stands, as it were, at the junction of all the pioneer tributaries and prepares the way for his pupil Leonardo. Verrocchio has, in a mild degree, the qualities of so many of his predecessors that it is not easy to distinguish his own personal quality. It is only by noting what Leonardo got out of him that one begins to see what he had in him.

With Sandro Botticelli (1444–1510) a new and far more subtle note appears in Florentine painting – a curious suave melancholy on which, by virtue of his extraordinary control of delicately modulated line, Botticelli could play an infinite number of variations. He was Lippo Lippi's pupil, and by comparing his early work with that of his master one can easily see how, with very slight alterations of emphasis, naive prose can become sophisticated poetry.

Botticelli's temperament is a complex one. Basically he belongs to the Gothic, the lyrical side of Italian painting. His prototypes are Simone and Gentile da Fabriano. With Giotto and Masaccio he has no connexion. Yet he lived at the moment when the influence of the Medici was at its height, and he must have been submitted to all the most advanced aesthetic and philosophic theories of that highly specialized circle of poets and scholars. In his early *Adoration of the Magi* in the Uffizi one sees their portraits, with old Cosimo de'Medici as the eldest of the Magi kneeling at the Virgin's feet while his grandsons Lorenzo and Giuliano wait at the sides. Botticelli's Virgins have an unearthly, complicated wistfulness, and when he was persuaded to illustrate pagan themes, his Venus, his Mercury, his three Graces had the same refined sadness as his Virgins. There is a curious contradiction in Botticelli's Christian paganism. In one sense he accepts the Medicean reconciliation of the two attitudes to life, and in another he protests against it. All the vigour of spring is in the air, yet that vigour is tinged with the sadness of twilight.

Equally paradoxical is Botticelli's style. If the quality of his vision was archaistic, in that he was not interested in the solidity of Masaccio or the scientific researches of his contemporaries into the problem of space in a three-dimensional world, his way of translating his vision into paint was more subtle and sophisticated than any of his contemporaries, thereby creating a mood that is peculiarly his own. It combines languor with litheness, voluptuousness with purity. In the 'Birth of Venus', painted for one of the country houses of the Medici, Botticelli could quote the Roman Medici Venus almost line for line in his painting of the nude goddess, yet, by the strangely attenuated modulations of his line, he could turn her into a madonna as virginal as Duccio's. Botticelli, working in the midst of a group of innovators in the science of picture making, was himself no innovator, yet in giving a Christian twist to a world that was rapidly becoming more pagan he bestowed upon the word 'Renaissance' a richer meaning.

After the death of Lorenzo he fell under the puritan spell of

Savonarola. His latest work has a languishing mysticism (see Plate 9) that suggests a Gothic epilogue rather than a prelude to the greatest moment in the history of art.

Botticelli and Ghirlandajo (1449–94) have left us records of Florentine life and thought in the late fifteenth century in much the same way that Gainsborough and Reynolds recorded the cultural atmosphere of England in the eighteenth. Ghirlandajo, incapable of Botticelli's lithe lyricism, left behind him a solid body of respectable but uninspired prose. The two worked together on the Sistine Chapel frescoes where to-day the compelling ceiling by Michelangelo distracts our attention so completely that we hardly notice the difference between them. But Ghirlandajo is not to be despised. He was an excellent craftsman, a safe, even sometimes an inventive organizer of pictures. He is eclipsed merely because he happened to live in an age prolific in personalities more interesting and assertive than his own.

The last two members of our group of Florentines are Piero di Cosimo (1462–1521) and Filippo's son, Filippono Lippi (1457–1504). The latter was, by a happily symmetrical chance, Botticelli's pupil just as Botticelli had been a pupil of Filippino's father. Filippino's talent was not great enough to benefit from the example of his master. He could imitate and even exaggerate Botticelli's wonderful linear arabesque and he could catch a little of his wistfulness, but the vein of elusive poetry was not there. The most unexpected of his achievements was to complete the unfinished frescoes of Masaccio in the Brancacci Chapel. The task, for a painter so different in temperament, must surely have been uncongenial, yet he managed it with surprising success. Piero di Cosimo, on the other hand, was a far more convinced pagan than Botticelli, even though a tender, whimsical pathos that runs through much of his work makes his paganism far from optimistic. The National Gallery's *Death of Procris* is one of the most poignant expressions of his uneven art.

•

Meanwhile, nourished on the soil of Umbria to the South, another group of painters was maturing. Gentler and, with one exception, less adventurous than their Florentine contemporaries, they made, none the less, their own contribution to the pattern of Renaissance art. And when one remembers that Raphael was himself an Umbrian and that his youthful paintings are hardly distinguishable from those of his master and fellow Umbrian, Perugino, it becomes clear that theirs was by no means an unimportant contribution.

The one truly adventurous spirit among them is, of course, Piero della Francesca (?1416–92). Piero has become for us, during the last few decades, one of the best-loved painters of the fifteenth century. His serene, classic austerity, his love of the static and the statuesque, his self-discipline – the product of a mind that worked on a basis of mathematics – his cool, ashen colour, and his renunciation of every emotional overtone that could be called romantic endear him to the present generation. Piero, we feel, is *our* painter. His every effect is calculated and deliberate. With him we need not be on our guard against the insidious attacks of false sentiment, graceful rhythms, flowing lines, wistful expressions, patterned meadows. Piero, we feel, is to be trusted, as all classic art is to be trusted, to appeal to us through our feeling for pure form.

Curiously enough, though we first hear of him in Florence as Domenico Veneziano's assistant, Florence never claimed him as her own. Perhaps his characteristic mood was too lacking in exuberance and enthusiasm to please the Florentine patron. In the National Gallery his *Baptism* and his *Nativity* (see Plate 8) stand out among the pictures by his contemporaries by virtue of their cool clarity and their imperturbability. But to see him at his sustained best one must go to the Church of San Francesco in Arezzo, where the great series of frescoes of the legend of the Holy Cross fills the walls of the Sanctuary. It is one of the most compelling interiors in Central Italy, for it seems to ask the spectator not merely to enjoy it but to study it. These aloof designs seem reluctant to yield up their secret. Their meaning is

completely divorced from their subject-matter. In their presence one hardly remembers to ask: 'What story is Piero endeavouring to tell?' Indeed, regarded as narrative they are baffling, for Piero seems to have been as careless and disorderly in the telling of a story as he was careful and meticulous in organizing its purely formal expression.

Once in the series, in *Constantine's Dream*, he tackles a problem that had never been attempted before in Italian art, the portrayal of a nocturnal scene with artificial light cutting across the solid form. But even here, and even despite the angel in one corner who tries in vain to break the hypnotic trance of the immobile guards and the sleeping emperor, the effect is not of a romantic night-piece but of a deep, silent solemnity. The same solemn quietude broods over the figures in the altarpiece in the Brera, Milan, where the Madonna sits enthroned among saints and the Duke of Urbino kneels before her. An egg, suspended above her head, seems like a concentrated symbol of Piero's desire to give us the principle of life imprisoned in a mathematical solid. It was his last picture. Having completed it he ceased to paint and devoted the last years of his life to the composition of mathematical treatises.

Piero is the most restrained, the least dramatic and the least romantic of all Italian Renaissance painters, but in many ways the profoundest. At the present moment fashionable taste, following an instinct for purity, has transferred its allegiance from Botticelli to Piero. Fashionable taste, which is always to be suspected, but never to be despised, sees in Piero's science and in the intense seriousness with which he worked out the spatial relationships between the component parts of his pictures a firmer basis for painting than the lyrical exquisiteness of Botticelli.

Piero's pupils, Melozzo da Forlì, and Luca Signorelli, inherited none of this magical serenity. Perspective and the careful organization of spatial relationships were obviously an obsession with Melozzo da Forlì, but Piero's suspended animation has disappeared. In fact, no other artist of the time, despite Piero's influence among his Umbrian countrymen, at-

tempted to catch the mood which makes him so precious to us.

Signorelli (*c.* 1441–1523), in the chief works of his maturity, the frescoes in the Cathedral of Orvieto, owes even less to the influence of his master. These highly organized masses of figures must have been inspired, one would think, by the example of Antonio Pollaiuolo, who was surely the temperamental antithesis of Piero. The human body in action is their main theme, but, unlike the pictures of Pollaiuolo, simply constructed despite their emphatic detail, the Orvieto frescoes attempt a vast organization, uncomfortably crowded and tumultuous. Nothing quite so ambitious in the way of massing and grouping had been attempted before. But Signorelli had evidently set himself a problem that he could not quite solve. His groups are restless. They do not cohere. What Signorelli failed to do at Orvieto, Raphael did triumphantly a few years later in the Stanze of the Vatican. Yet perhaps Signorelli, by his courage in tackling the problem, opened Raphael's eyes to the possibilities of a new solution.

Perugino (c. 1445–1523) and Pinturicchio (1454–1513) are the central types of Umbrian painting. Gentle, soft, and wonderfully efficient, they have neither the power nor the inventiveness of their Florentine contemporaries. In Perugino's busy studio the main elements of Umbrian painting were canalized and given permanent form. Everything Perugino painted is permeated by a sweetness that would be cloying if it were not for the perfect balance of his rather invertebrate figures, the serene harmony of their backgrounds, the gentle landscapes and the pale, luminous skies against which they pose. Perugino, too, was summoned to Rome to work on the lower frescoes of the Sistine Chapel. He was the ideal artist for such a commission. Whereas the more vigorous and inventive painters who were working side by side with him became timid and devitalized by the responsibility of the commission, Perugino remained himself and calmly filled the spaces with his perfectly controlled sentiment.

Perhaps it is the destiny of gentle, unambitious artists with a confident but limited creative imagination and accomplished craftsmanship to be the masters of great men. Probably they

are the type of men whose teaching is more inspiring than their work. Verrocchio was Leonardo's master, Michelangelo studied for a brief period in the Bottega of Ghirlandajo, Raphael was so apt a pupil of Perugino that his first pictures are only remarkable because they add a new touch of perfection to something that, in its mild way, was already perfect. It may be no coincidence that just before the astonishing outburst of the High Renaissance in Florence there were so many admirable but not particularly inspired artists to prepare the way for what was to come. In 1490 no one would have suspected that Leonardo was about to create a new world and that twenty years later the sixteenth century would usher in a new era in the history of painting. In 1490 a critical observer might have been forgiven for thinking that the vitality and the adventurous spirit of the fifteenth century had to all intents and purposes exhausted itself. Botticelli, devoting the last years of his life to strained mysticism, Filippino Lippi playing with lively arabesques, Ghirlandajo and Pinturicchio producing accomplished academic frescoes full of interest but devoid of passion, Signorelli attempting something that, until the advent of Raphael, might have been considered impossible, Perugino refining on his own sad sweetness – all this has the appearance of a tired peroration. Yet far from being so it turned out to be the moment of preparation for a new and larger set of adventures.

II

Italian Sculpture of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries

During the two centuries that elapsed between the appearance of Giotto's mature style and the point we have now reached in our story, sculpture had been developing side by side with painting, though not with quite the same steady course. It progressed rather in a series of disconnected outbursts, which is a little surprising when one remembers how vivid a stimulus was given to Renaissance painting by what the Italian artists knew of Graeco-Roman sculpture.

In studying the work of the early Renaissance sculptors it is important to remember that they at least had before their eyes tangible examples of the very work they admired, whereas the painters, anxious though they were to link themselves with the Graeco-Roman past, had no models of Greek or Roman painting to refer to. Giotto had to construct his own foundations. Nicola Pisano (*c.* 1220–*c.* 1278) had the good luck to have foundations ready for him to build on.

Those same foundations – a few Graeco-Roman sarcophagi lying in the Campo Santo at Pisa, and perhaps a superficial knowledge of the great triumphal arches in Rome itself – had been available throughout the Dark Ages and the Middle Ages. What is noteworthy about the appearance of Nicola Pisano's sculpture is that the Graeco-Roman prototypes from which it quite obviously derives had, for all their availability for so many centuries, lost the power to stimulate the imagination of the artists who saw them. The art of sculpture had never been produced throughout the Middle Ages in Italy, though its counterpart in France had been much finer. What Nicola Pisano discovered was not the physical existence of a Roman sarcophagus or two but the fact that suddenly it had achieved a new significance. There could be no

more remarkable proof of the dawn of the Renaissance point of view than Nicola's first high relief carvings in the pulpit in the Baptistery at Pisa, completed six years before Giotto was born, or those in the pulpit of Siena Cathedral, carved while Giotto was in his cradle. There is no lack of technical accomplishment, nothing primitive or hesitant in his work. Beyond a slight tendency to an overcrowding of the forms, and, of course, the Christian subject matter, the carvings themselves might easily look to the casual eye like products of Imperial Rome. The Madonna of the Nativity is a Roman matron, the Magi are bearded Olympians. Nicola himself, one might guess, must have been a Roman Rip van Winkle who had fallen into a coma in the days of Diocletian and having been awakened in the mid-thirteenth century, had instantly set to work in a style that had been dead for nearly a thousand years.

There is something a little unnatural about this sudden appearance of a set of mature classic mannerisms at the dawn of a new era just when one would expect to find hesitancy and immaturity, and it is almost a relief to find Nicola's son, Giovanni Pisano, evolving a more vivid, a more restless, a more Gothic style than his father.

Giovanni (*c.* 1250–*c.* 1320) was certainly a greater, though not a more accomplished sculptor than Nicola. It is in his work – especially on the pulpit in the Church of St Andrea in Pistoia, of 1298, and that at Pisa, finished in 1310 – that we begin to see the true Renaissance yeast at work. These are not thirteenth century versions of Roman carving but attempts to give formal expression to the new questing spirit. On the Pistoia pulpit are Sibyls that have no Roman counterparts. Their gestures and attitudes are full of dramatic tension. They are troubled, nervous, anxious creatures, and it is from them that, two centuries later, Michelangelo was to extract the kind of meaning that he poured into his own Sistine Chapel Sibyls.

One can do no more than refer briefly to the sculptors who fill the gap between Giovanni Pisano, the first great figure in Italian sculpture, and the second, Donatello, born more than a

century later. Andrea Pisano worked with Giotto on the reliefs for the Campanile of the Florentine Cathedral, and later executed the first of the famous series of three bronze doors for the Cathedral Baptistery. They show how the spirit of Gothic was steadily infiltrating across the Alps into Northern Italy and replacing the heavier Roman forms of eighty years earlier. Andrea still belongs to the fourteenth century. Jacopo della Quercia, born about 1367, is the first Italian sculptor of whom it can be said that he understood the full meaning of the Italian Renaissance, and used the human figure neither as a vehicle for restless Gothic energy nor for static Classic nobility, but for deeper spiritual meanings. One sees him at his best in the great series of reliefs that surround the main doors of the Church of San Petronio in Bologna (see Plate 16). Here was a man who could conceive, in carved low relief, figures as solid and expressive as those of Masaccio's frescoes in the Brancacci Chapel which were being executed at precisely the same moment. In some cases, one can compare the approach of the two artists to the same subject and note how similar, for example, is their conception of the expulsion of Adam and Eve. There is the same mastery of the naked human body for narrative purposes, the same grandeur of rhythm, the same preference for gestures that are expressive rather than graceful. Michelangelo, who visited Bologna at the age of nineteen must have seen this great series of carvings, and remembered them when he came to design his Adam and Eve frescoes in the Sistine Chapel.

Lorenzo Ghiberti, born a year or two later, devoted almost the whole of his long working life to the making of the famous second and third pairs of bronze doors for the Baptistery. They are marvels of craftsmanship, and the low relief treatment of landscape and architectural backgrounds in the third pair is skilful and ingenious, but the unfailing suave flow of drapery in Ghiberti's figures becomes a little tiresome. In the second pair of doors the narrative panels are contained within Gothic quatrefoils, similar in shape to those of Andrea Pisano cast ninety years earlier, but more crowded in composition. In the third pair,

begun in 1427 and finished in 1452, the advancing classic tide had swept away the outward forms of Gothicism. The quatrefoils are replaced by square panels, and the treatment – as though a rectangle meant, for Ghiberti, a picture – becomes ingeniously but almost embarrassingly pictorial. Rarely have the frontiers of painting and sculpture approached each other so nearly as in these ten Old Testament narratives. To Ghiberti's contemporaries these *tours de force* of low relief in bronze were astonishing. They still are; yet they reveal an ingenious rather than a creative mind.

Luca della Robbia (1400–82) and his nephew Andrea are names that evoke – like 'Wedgwood' – a factory method rather than an artistic style. They call to mind those charming little works in glazed terra cotta which Luca invented as a cheap substitute for marble and which Andrea exploited in the adorable little putti of the Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence. The method had the advantage of being both colourful and weatherproof. But by far the finest single work done by Luca is his first, the marble reliefs in the Cantoria of the Cathedral in Florence, finished in 1438. Photography and their wonderfully fluent charm have made them hackneyed, but charm is the least of their virtues. The carvings of boy musicians and child dancers have an almost Hellenic purity: yet they reveal a wonderfully observant eye for the behaviour and gestures of adolescence and they are enlivened by touches of quiet humour.

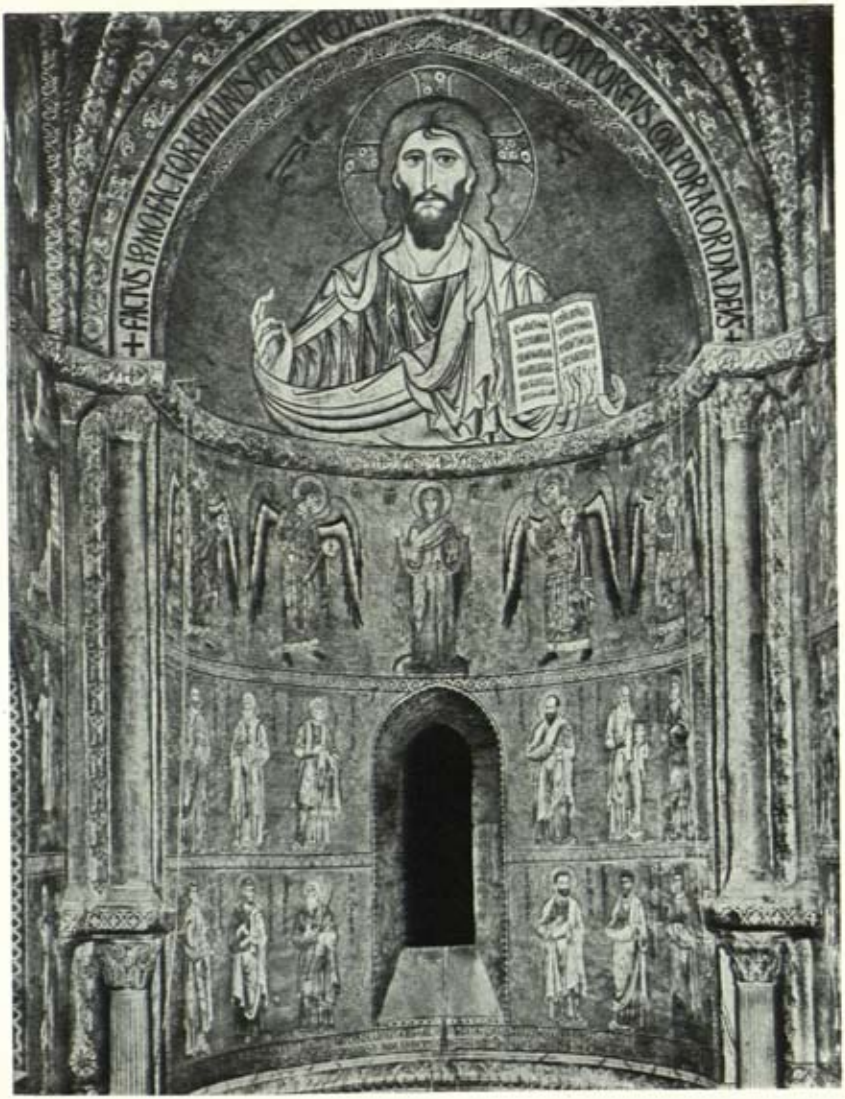
Ghiberti and the della Robbia family perfected and polished the Florentine tradition in the fifteenth century. Donatello (1386–1466) enlarged and enriched it, giving it a new impetus and opening up possibilities never hitherto attempted or envisaged in sculpture.

The questing genius of Donatello led him in many directions and established him, both for his contemporaries and for all time, as the dominant sculptor of his century. Like Luca della Robbia, he fused Hellenic grandeur with northern naturalism. But to this fusion of opposites he added the unique force of his own creative imagination which could produce, at one moment, the

stylish elegance of the boy David, casually resting his foot on the severed head of Goliath (the first free-standing nude figure since Classical times), the undergraduate arrogance of the young St George, the dignity of the seated St John, in which Michelangelo found the inspiration for his Moses, the Rodinesque naturalism of the 'Zuccone' - a bald-headed beggar turned Old Testament prophet — on the Campanile, the animated, ungainly dance of children of the Cathedral Cantoria (executed only two years after Luca della Robbia's) the equestrian statue of Gattamelata in Padua, the prototype of all Renaissance equestrian statues, and by common consent, the grandest, and finally those low relief narrative bronzes done for the high altar of St Anthony's Church in Padua.

These marvellously inventive works could be described as the archtypes of all expressionism in narrative art. The suave Hellenic rhythms of Ghiberti have been abandoned as useless for Donatello's purposes, and in their place we find a new nervous energy, a new dynamism. All kinds of restless, momentary gestures add to the emotional intensity of the story to be told. Compared with these crowded and daring experiments Ghiberti's attempts at picturesqueness on the Baptistery doors are sadly lacking in vitality and imagination.

Donatello towers above his contemporaries. Yet some of them were far from negligible. The carvings of Agostino di Duccio (1418—90) have the same kind of flowing arabesque of line and something of the same wistful delicacy as the paintings of Botticelli. He is a minor poet of sculpture, but he left a memorable mark on the interior of the famous Tempio Malatestiana at Rimini, which owes more than half its loveliness to his great series of gentle, pagan carvings round the walls. Desiderio of Settignano reverted to the charm of della Robbia but added to it an exquisite refinement. Verrocchio (1435—88) worked on an ampler scale but in the same gracious Florentine mood of 'Classical Gothic' that only Donatello had been able to transcend. As a craftsman, a painter, a sculptor, and as the master of Leonardo, Verrocchio is the acknowledged type of the all-round



Apse of Cefalù Cathedral, Sicily

a. School of Rublev

b. Simone Martini

a. Raphael

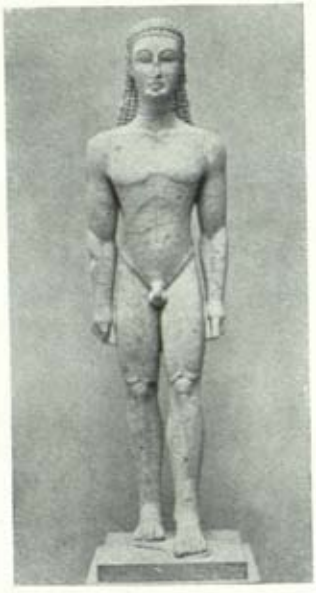
b. Giovanni Battista Tiepolo

EASTERN CONTEMPLATION

a. Ladies Preparing Silk: Sung scroll painting

WESTERN VISUAL CURIOSITY

b. La Toilette de la Mariée: Courbet



a. Archaic Greek Athlete

b. Niké Tying her Sandal.
Periclean Greek

c. Saints: Chartres Cathedral.
12th century

d. Alabaster Carving.
15th-century English

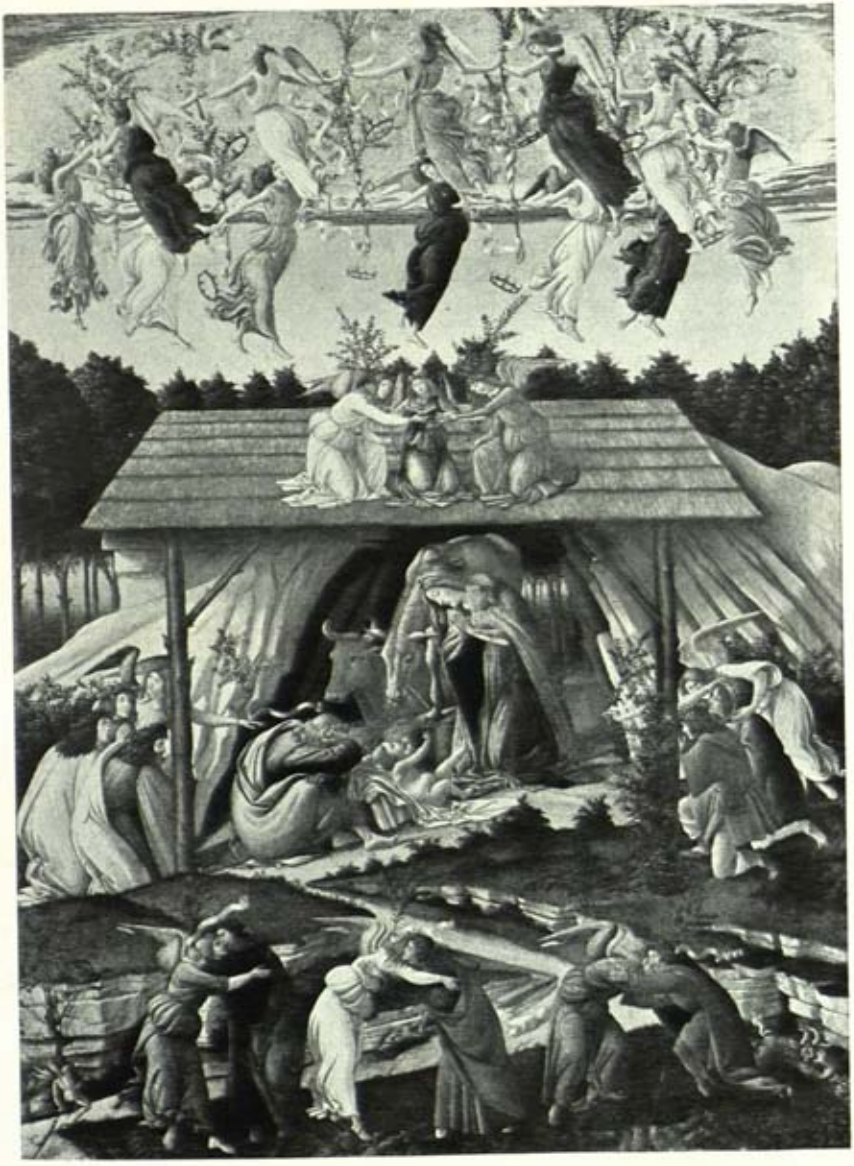
a. The Visitation: Giotto

b. The Tribute Money (detail): Masaccio

a. Musician Angels: Van Eyck

b. Musician Angels: Fra Angelico

The Nativity: Piero della Francesca



The Nativity: Botticelli

a. The Last Supper (detail): Andrea del Castagno

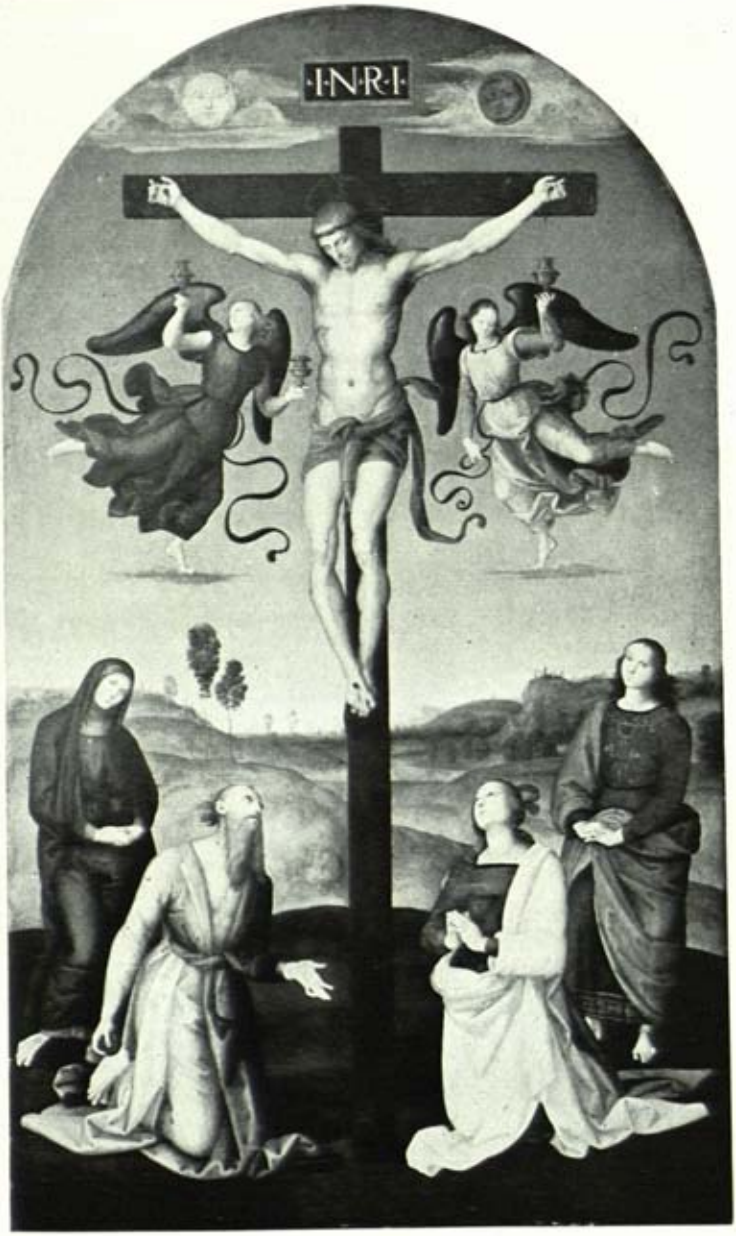
b. The Last Supper (detail): after Leonardo da Vinci

a. Jeremiah: Michelangelo

b. Nude Youth: Michelangelo

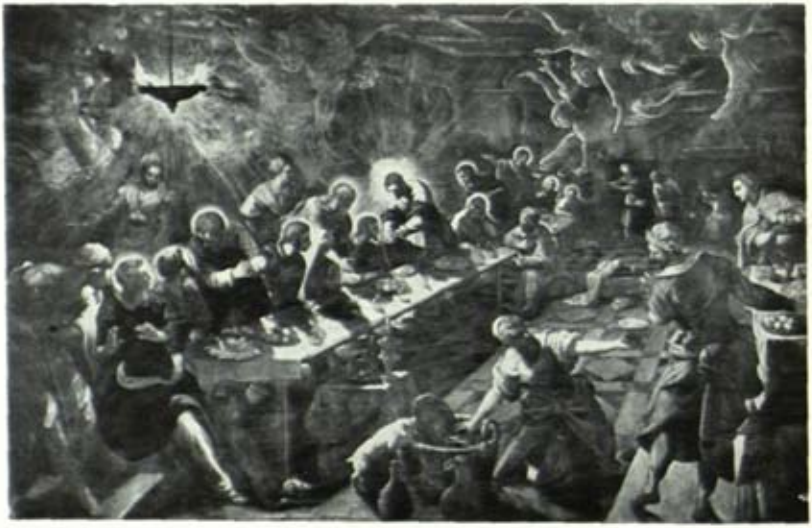
c. Nude Youth: Michelangelo

The Crucifixion: Grünewald



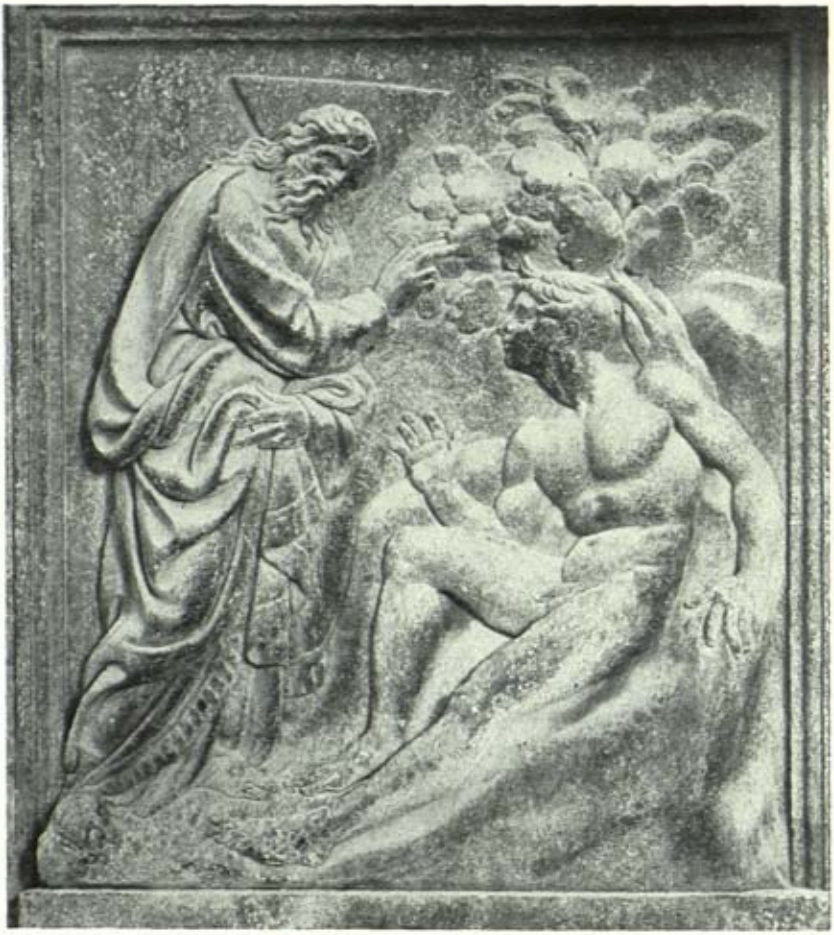
The Crucifixion: Raphael

a. The Entombment: Titian



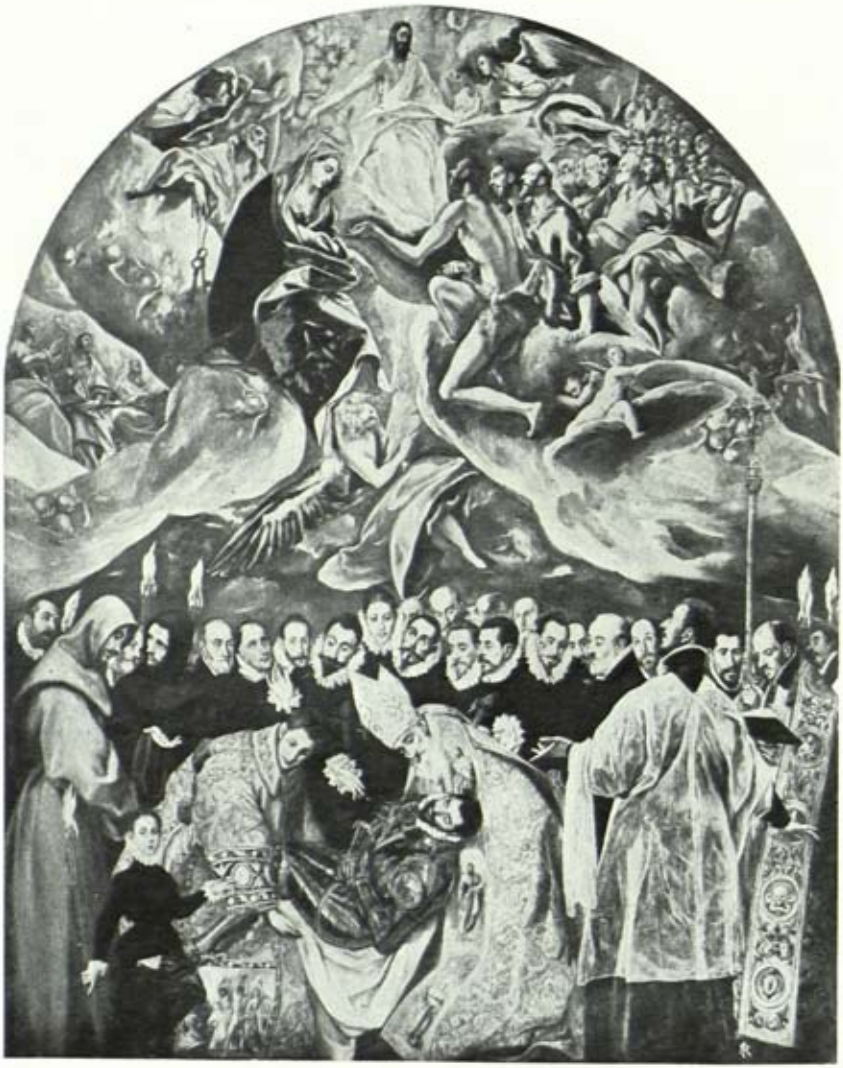
b. The Last Supper: Tintoretto

The Apotheosis of Venice: Veronese



The Creation of Adam: Jacopo della Quercia

The Vision of St Teresa: Bernini



The Burial of Count Orgaz: El Greco

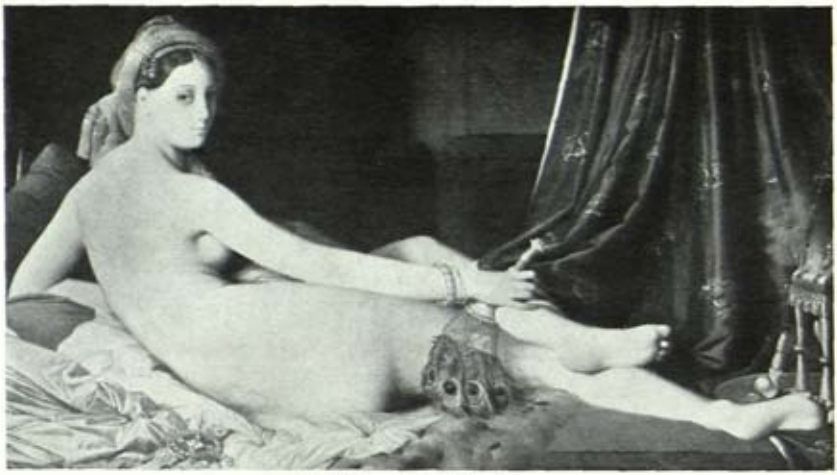
The Assumption of the Virgin: Rubens

Las Meninas: Velasquez

Lady at the Virginals: Vermeer. Reproduced by gracious permission of Her Majesty The Queen

The Music Party: Watteau

The Rake's Progress: Hogarth



a. Odalisque Couchée: Ingres

b. Liberty at the Barricades: Delacroix

a. The Fighting Téméraire: Turner

b. Hadleigh Castle: Constable

a. The Gare St Lazare: Monet

b. Gardanne: Cézanne

a. Le Chahut: Seurat

b. La Toilette de la Baigneuse: Renoir

a. Self Portrait: Rembrandt

b. Jacob Meyer: Holbein

a. Dr Peral: Goya

b. The Postman: Van Gogh

Christ at Emmaus: Caravaggio

Le Tapis Rouge: Picasso

a. Night: Michelangelo

b. Reclining Figure: Henry Moore

Florentine artist, content to refine on his inheritance rather than to widen its scope; yet he left behind him one superb sculptural conception — his last work, which he did not live to see as we can see it now — the bronze statue of Bartolommeo Colleoni astride his horse, on the high pedestal in the Piazza of SS Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. Doubtless, but for Donatello's Gattamelata it would not have been as nobly impressive as it is. But doubtless, also, Donatello himself was inspired by the equestrian statue of Marcus Aurelius which he had seen when he visited Rome in 1432. Verrocchio's ' Colleoni ' is the best loved of all Renaissance equestrian statues. More obviously dramatic in mood than Donatello's, less dignified in its stately forward movement, it seems to belong more closely to the age that produced it. It sums up with a minimum of exaggeration that self-conscious arrogance that we associate with the Italian princelings of the late fifteenth century.

This account of the Italian sculptors who laid the foundations for the High Renaissance is necessarily brief. It was in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Northern Italy that the larger cities were taking shape; architecture flourished and sculptors were more closely linked with architects than they are to-day. It is not surprising that the beginnings of a recognizably Italian style are to be found in sculpture a little earlier than in painting. Nor is it surprising that after the first Pisan outburst, the great sculptors of Italy were almost all Florentines. The keen Florentine mind had a natural bias towards formal and structural problems, which could find their solution as easily in sculpture as in painting. Added to which was the proximity of stone and marble quarries without which a regional school of sculpture cannot easily flourish.

And, just as in painting, it was Florence that paved the way for the High Renaissance, so equally, Florentine sculptors made it almost inevitable that the highest peak of the High Renaissance should be occupied by the one artist who was both sculptor and painter. Michelangelo owed, perhaps, more to Donatello and Jacopo della Quercia than he did to Masaccio and Pollaiuolo.

12

The High Renaissance in Tuscany and Central Italy

What is known as the High Renaissance is easy to recognize but impossible to define. In the last chapter but one, we followed a steep path. Effort and ingenuity, invention and courage, the spirit of research and exploration are involved at almost every point in the upward progress. But never for a moment can the conviction have been absent from the mountaineers who were engaged on the difficult upward journey that something was being achieved that could confidently be described as 'progress'. If there is a definable difference between the second half of the fifteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth it consists in this: that the idea of progress yields to the idea of arrival. The difficulty of the ascent begins to diminish: the obstacles with which it is beset become less numerous and less formidable: the gradient becomes easier, the path smoother: civilization after its long struggle reaches a high plateau with a gentler climate and more luxuriant foliage. Whereas on the mountainside one met with energetic, vivid, agile creatures, the plateau is inhabited by giants — men of great power, graceful in their movements, capable of a kind of effortless perfection in all that they perform. Their gestures are slower but ampler and more generous. The prizes of victory, painfully carried up the mountainside by their lesser brethren, are laid at their feet, but never trifled with, for they are wise giants and they know well enough how dearly those prizes were won and how preciously they must be guarded.

Some such image is, I think, necessary if one is to understand rather than to define the High Renaissance in Italy. It is, at least, an image involving physical appearances and rhythmic movements, both of which have their exact counterparts in painting. Consider, for example, how Pollaiuolo envisages the young

Tobias setting out on his journey. Tobias, with his angular knees, eager expression, jaunty hat and quick movements, is surely a symbol of 'progress'. Compare him with a corresponding figure produced by any of the great men about the end of the first decade of the sixteenth century — say, the seated Apollo who dominates Raphel's *Parnassus*, or the same artist's figure of Galatea setting forth on her sea-borne shell with her attendants. She, surely, has all the more leisurely attributes of 'arrival', a slower tempo, a less eager, less angular body. The interval between the two is less than forty years — a remarkably short time if one is watching a whole civilization on its journey from adolescence to maturity.

The transition, as far as the arts of painting and sculpture in Tuscany and Central Italy were concerned, was brought about by three great men, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, and Michelangelo.

Leonardo himself (1452–1519) seems more like the idealized creation of a romantic historical novelist than a human being. He sums up the spirit of the Renaissance almost too completely. The Leonardo legend is too well known to need elaboration here. The endless inquisitiveness, the ceaseless experiment, the torrent of creative ideas, so few of which came to maturity, the incredible energy that always seemed on the point of achieving so much, but left so little behind and yet stamped that little with an unforgettable flavour – all this excellent material for legend. What is so strange in him is the mingling of relentless scientific curiosity on the one hand with mystical romanticism on the other. The combination seems unnatural. It is as though one were to admire the Parthenon for its classic severity of line and proportion, and then, on entering it, find it filled with the glowing Gothic mystery of thirteenth-century stained glass. If Leonardo's life were not so completely documented, I have no doubt theorists would have attempted to prove that he was not one person but two, and that the hand that painted the Gioconda was not the same that wrote the Note-books.

However, it is with Leonardo the painter and sculptor that

this book is concerned, and though from his paintings one can guess at a massive intellect one could hardly deduce the empirical scientist and inventor.

He was trained, as has been said, in the studio of Verrocchio and the first hint of his genius can be seen in Verrocchio's 'Baptism'. On the left of the painting two angels kneel, and a reliable tradition tells us that the left-hand angel was painted by Leonardo, then a youth of twenty or less. The two heads seem to confront each other across the boundary that separates the fifteenth century from the High Renaissance, and though the picture was painted no later than 1472, it is prophetic. Verrocchio's angel, youthful, practical, robust, gazes in astonishment at his companion's face in which the new spirit seems to be dawning, gentler, more graceful, more troubled yet more serene.

In a famous letter of self-recommendation to the Duke of Milan, Leonardo lists his qualifications, mainly as a military engineer and an architect and town-planner, but adds, almost by way of postscript, that he was also skilled as a musician, a sculptor, and a painter. It is hardly surprising that a man so versatile should have left behind comparatively few finished masterpieces of painting and no major achievements in sculpture: that a mind so teeming with ideas should have produced so many fascinating drawings covering the whole field of his researches, both scientific and artistic: that so restless an experimenter should have made a few unsuccessful experiments, the most unfortunate of which, from our point of view, was his experiment with a new type of medium in the 'Last Supper' at Milan which began to disintegrate during his lifetime: or that a genius charged with such intensity of feeling should have made of each of his few finished masterpieces something unforgettable.

Leonardo's very completeness as a man makes him baffling and unsatisfactory as an artist. The painting of pictures was an activity from which he was too easily distracted, and even when he laid everything else aside in order to produce a masterpiece, he became so conscious of the infinite number of alternative solutions to the particular problem, that we are left more often

than not, with an unfinished work of art and a hundred preparatory sketches. To reach a final solution was, one would think, positively distasteful to him. His path is littered with ideas that point to a destination he never quite reached, yet the few masterpieces he achived are so eloquent of the new spirit in art that they are sufficient in themselves to place him as the first giant of the Tuscan High Renaissance. He left behind a set of stimulating blue prints. It was reserved for Michelangelo and Raphel to make them incarnate. Yet even they could not explore all their possibilities. For them man was the centre and measure of the universe. For Leonardo, man was only an incident in a universe he was never tired of trying to understand. The lakes and valleys and mountain ranges behind the Mona Lisa anticipate by three centuries the later watercolours of Turner. In an earlier chapter (see p. 46) I have already spoken of the 'Last Supper' and of how it marked a climax in picture-construction. It is the supreme example of the 'classic' side of High Renaissance art, just as the 'Virgin of the Rocks' and the 'Mona Lisa' represent its romantic side.

It was inevitable that a personality as powerful and as complex as Leonardo should leave behind him a school of imitators and disciples who copied his mannerisms but could not inherit his vitality. Most of them were Milanese. One recognizes their work at once, for the soft gradations of light and the sweet half-smile for which the 'Virgin of the Rocks' and the 'Mona Lisa' are famous, are not difficult to imitate.

Boltraffio, Solario, Ambrogio da Predis and others form an undistinguished band of pupil-imitators, of whom the only artist to achieve a deserved reputation was Bernardino Luini. Luini's ambitious frescoes are workmanlike but rarely memorable, but his little Madonna and Child panels have a gentle serenity that ensures their popularity. Cloying they may be in their sweetness, but they are perfect of their kind.

Another painter who, at the outset of his career, was deeply affected by the Leonardesque softness and mystery was Antonio Bazzi, better known by his nickname, Sodoma. His imaginative

power raised him well above the level of Leonardo's other followers, and when he moved to Rome and came into contact with Raphael's classicism, he added to his earlier style a certain impressive grandeur. His figure of Saint Sebastian in the Pitti Palace in Florence is an unforgettable conception, and his scenes from the life of Alexander, in the Farnesina in Rome, reconstructed from Lucian's text, include at least one – 'The Marriage of Alexander and Roxana' – that is memorable.

No two characters could be more different or less sympathetic to each other than Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo Buonarroti (1475–1564). Leonardo was universal and diffuse in his quest: Michelangelo passionately narrow and single-minded. Leonardo's desire was to understand: Michelangelo's to create. Leonardo's unwillingness to finish his paintings was the result of a feeling that a painting was in itself too specific, too final a statement of his intentions, to satisfy him: Michelangelo was equally unwilling to consider painting his major occupation, but only because painting was for him neither specific nor final enough. For him the more physically tangible medium of sculpture was the ideal means of expression. Leonardo was a man beset by doubt who, had he lived in the nineteenth century, would surely have been a Darwinian agnostic: Michelangelo was deeply religious, though his Christianity was inevitably coloured by the neo-Platonism of the Medicean circle into which as a boy he was for a short time absorbed. Both men were writers. Leonardo incessantly jotted down description of his speculations and experiments. Michelangelo was a poet whose sonnets are reflective, emotional, and tinged with regret that sometimes intensifies itself into a kind of despair.

There is a rare type of artist on whom the very laws of art seem to impose intolerable restrictions – who always seems to be endeavouring to express something more than his medium is capable of expressing. Such men do not occur often. One's admiration of them is always mingled with a slight sense of discomfort. When Beethoven manages to condense into his late quartets something that is beyond even the capacity of a full

orchestra it seems as if the boundaries of music itself were being overstepped. Not because Beethoven fails as a musician, but because music itself is too small to contain him. The means at his disposal are inadequate for the end in view. In the same way Shakespeare's emotional pressure does, at times, strain the capacity of language to breaking point. For Michelangelo neither marble nor paint was quite adequate for his needs. Among painters he is the exact opposite of, say, Velasquez, whose greatness depends on his recognition of the capacity of paint and his wizardry in handling it.

Michelangelo was a passionate specialist, interested like Pollaiuolo almost exclusively in the male human body. Like Beethoven, who chose to make four stringed instruments the vehicle of his profoundest inventions, Michelangelo chose to make the human body express everything he had to say. His figures inhabit no planet. Such references to landscape as his narrative compels him to make, like the tree in the Garden of Eden, are mere stage properties. The race of men he created resides in the bleak mountains of the moon. No particular quality of light falls on them, no air surrounds them. They have no environment. They exist in their own right. Michelangelo began where Pollaiuolo left off. Or rather Michelangelo used the human body as an empty vessel to pour himself into, whereas to Pollaiuolo it was a piece of machinery interesting only as an admirable example of engineering.

For all its complex architectural cohesion the Sistine Chapel ceiling, which Michelangelo completed in 1512, is essentially a collection of significant single figures or pairs of figures. The Thirteen Men in Leonardo's 'Last Supper' are bound together by a continuous thread of drama and design; each is inseparable from its neighbour. Not so the Sistine Chapel figures. Each one (see Plate 11) is a self-contained invention with a gesture and a mood of its own. If the gesture is more rhetorical than in any previous Renaissance painting, the mood is always intense enough to justify the rhetoric and even to make it inevitable.

Never did an artist set out with a more limited set of objectives,

and never did an artist make more astonishing use of them. The immense curved ceiling of the Sistine Chapel – an area of over 600 square yards – which he completed in the four years from 1508 to 1512, and the huge 'Last Judgement' on the end wall of the chapel painted thirty years later, sum up the whole of Michelangelo's message. It is the most powerful single creative effort ever made by an artist. Only Giotto's frescoes in the interior of the Arena Chapel in Padua, painted exactly two centuries earlier, and Tintoretto's cycle of paintings in the Scuola of San Rocco in Venice, started sixty years later, can be compared with it as artistic units governed by a single creative impulse.

The ceiling, boldly divided into panels in a scheme of painted architectural cornices and mouldings, has a double purpose – firstly to tell the story of the beginnings of the world, the creation of Adam and Eve, the Fall, the expulsion and the Flood: secondly to glorify man as a creature of infinite nobility, beauty, and power. It is in this second aspect that the word 'arrival', as applied to the High Renaissance, first takes on its full meaning. The general arrangement of the ceiling is too familiar to need detailed description. The central panels in which the story of the Book of Genesis is told are contained within a painted cornice that runs horizontally along the length of the chapel and is intersected by pilasters and ribs that cut across it from side to side. On each intersection of cornice and pilaster is seated a nude 'athlete' – a young man of perfect physique in an attitude in which rhythmic grace and power are combined as never before.

But despite the Sistine Chapel, Michelangelo was at heart not a painter, but a sculptor. In fact, each one of the Sistine Chapel athletes, Sibyls, and prophets (see Plate 11a) is a statue *manqué*. What has been said of his paintings is even more true of his carving, and it would be meaningless, in any account of his career, to attempt to separate the painter from the sculptor. The four figures that flank the seated statues of Lorenzo and Giuliano de'Medici in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo in Florence are the most typical examples of his genius. They are not merely human bodies in effectively semi-recumbent poses, as they would

have been had they been carved by an Athenian of the Periclean age. They are unforgettable expressionist interpretations of Day and Night, Dawn and Dusk. A modern sculptor would tackle the same problem by abandoning anatomical accuracy (see Plate 32, a and b). Michelangelo's surprising achievement is to have drawn upon a profound knowledge of anatomy and turned it to expressionist purposes.

His last great work, the Entombment group in the cathedral of Florence, contains the whole of his extraordinary genius – his absolute command of the human figure as a vessel for the most profound emotional content. The noble virility of his early work has not been abandoned, but with it has been fused a pathos, a resignation, and a restraint that are only found in the work of extreme old age. Yet, despite Michelangelo's own conviction that he was primarily a sculptor and despite his avowed reluctance to undertake the Sistine Chapel ceiling, fresco painting released a side of his genius that would never have been suspected had he confined himself to sculpture. When he fashioned his images in the Sistine Chapel of the Almighty at work on the creation of the world, hovering over the face of the waters and transmitting the vital principle to the first created man with an outstretched forefinger, he was doing in paint something that could never have been done in marble. No conceivable organization of solid three-dimensional form could have suggested the lonely, Omnipotent Figure at work in the immensity of the void. Marble would have chained Michelangelo to the earth's surface.

Raphael was born eight years after Michelangelo. He died at the age of thirty-seven, sixteen years before Michelangelo began work on the ' Last Judgement '. Not until the turn of the century did anything he painted come within the orbit of the High Renaissance. For the purpose of this chapter, therefore, he had only twenty years in which to produce the paintings by which we know him best. Yet during those twenty years he created a series of masterpieces which one is tempted to describe as ' perfect '. It is a word one never thinks of applying to Leonardo or to Michelangelo, for perfection is hardly compatible with

the idea of Leonardesque mystery or Michelangelesque *terribilità*.

Raphael arrived in Florence from his native Umbria at the critical moment, the year 1504, when Leonardo and Michelangelo were both at work on the cartoons they had been commissioned to prepare for the Florentine Signoria. The cartoons themselves have disappeared, though we know something about their appearance from copies. The frescoes which were to have been based on them were never completed. Michelangelo was soon to be summoned to Rome to work in the Sistine Chapel, and Leonardo was to take his departure for Milan. Florence was no longer the magnet that it had been during the sixty years of Medici rule. Lorenzo the Magnificent had died in 1492. Rome was henceforth the city to which artists must gravitate if they were to produce on a grand scale. But in that crucial year the three great men of the Tuscan High Renaissance were in Florence, and for Raphael, the brilliant young provincial, the effect of his journey was decisive. Had he remained in Umbria under the gentle but hardly stimulating influence of Perugino he might have become no more than the outstanding master of a minor school of painters. Had he gone straight to Rome his mind would not yet have been prepared for the magnitude of the tasks he would have to undertake there. The Florentine interlude was essential. For Raphael's gift consisted in an acute sensitivity to his artistic environment – a response so immediate and so wholehearted that it amounted to something very near to genius. Already in his Umbrian days he had painted pictures in the manner of Perugino which were well beyond the range of Perugino himself (see Plate 13), so faultless is his sense of spacing, so unerring his feeling for balance and design. Raphael provides us with perhaps the only example in history of a pupil outstripping his master without transforming him by the addition of his own greater, more potent personality.

The Florentine interlude was a necessary preparation for the splendour of Raphael's Roman achievement. In Florence he absorbed some of the spirit of his two great contemporaries, though he had neither the intellect of the one nor the dynamism

of the other. But by a strange alchemy that has no parallel in the history of art, he managed to incorporate something from both of them into his own style without becoming a plagiarist. In Rome, in the Papal apartments of the Vatican which are called Raphael's Stanze, he developed his own extraordinary powers to the full and in doing so produced the fine flower of High Renaissance painting in Italy. He is the perfect example of the all-round artist, never hinting at the unattainable, never overwhelming us with power, but possessing a miraculous golden clarity and using it on tasks that required almost superhuman powers of concentration and organization. The perfect achievement of the High Renaissance is not the Sistine Chapel ceiling but the ' Parnassus ' or ' The School of Athens '. In both of them Raphael pays homage to the pre-Christian past: they are the final, unanswerable statement of the classic point of view in which all the formal elements of the design have been so clearly organized and so closely knit that the result seems both effortless and inevitable. Compared with them even the organization of Leonardo's ' Last Supper ' is child's play. The motive of recession is smooth and steady from foreground to middle distance, the masses of figures are broken up into groups of convenient size, each group coherent within itself, each group related to its adjacent groups, each figure individualized not only in physical type but by the invention of a characteristic gesture that makes it memorable in its own right and yet preserves a generalized nobility of form throughout.

The Stanze frescoes occupied Raphael for seven years. They are the central achievement not only of his own life but of the art of Italy at its moment of most perfect balance – the first decade of the sixteenth century. His last picture, ' The Transfiguration ', raises a sudden doubt. Raphael too, apostle of perfection though he is, cannot remain on the summit. He too must press on. In ' The Transfiguration ' the rhetoric of Michelangelo and the twilight of Leonardo become exaggerated caricatures. The picture marks the end of the High Renaissance in Central Italy. Raphael's contemporary, Andrea del Sarto, has much of his grace but little of his inevitability. Raphael's pupil, Guilio

Romano, can catch enough of inspiration from his master to continue for a while carefully treading in his footsteps, then he grows heavy-handed and the slight vulgarity creeps in that is bound to kill whatever strives for perfection. After Raphael, Mannerism with all its pitfalls and excesses lies in wait for the Italian painter almost everywhere. The moment of perfection has passed, not merely because the artist of perfection has died, in his thirty-seventh year, but because perfection of that kind can only last for a moment. Raphael's famous Dresden Madonna – perhaps the best loved of all his creations – has an inevitability that belongs not only to an exceptional artist but to an exceptional moment in history. In essence it is no more than an amalgam of elements invented by Perugino and Michelangelo, yet the poise and balance of the central figure is so sauve and inevitable that one forgets it is built up of second-hand parts.

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At whatever point in the story of painting one attempts to introduce Correggio (1494–1534) he seems inappropriate – an illogical intruder in a logical sequence. Yet he cannot be ignored. Certainly he misses greatness, but so also do many artists mentioned in these pages who none the less made important contributions to the art of their time. They contribute to the plot of the story. Correggio does not. His qualities – and they are remarkable – are not those of Italian Renaissance art. Neither the virility and intellect of Tuscany nor the sensuous glow of Venice can be found in his paintings. What he had in abundance was a quality that hardly belongs to the art of the sixteenth century at all, but which is typical of the eighteenth, namely a seductive charm. Florence discovered the nobility of the human body, Venice its opulence. Correggio ignored both and substituted for them a frankly sensuous glamour, which he achieved partly by a wonderfully sensitive handling of light, partly by a complete refusal to attempt the monumental and partly by a personal feeling for feminity to which the only parallel is to be found in French painting

of the eighteenth century. In fact, to explain Correggio, one must see him not as a Renaissance artist who missed the true grandeur of the period in which he lived but an Italian Boucher, born, luckily, two centuries too early and into a tradition that could not be tempted, as Boucher was tempted, to turn charm into triviality.

Correggio worked in comparative isolation in Parma. Two centuries later, at Versailles, he would have been a superb boudoir artist. As it was he was employed on frescoes in the Cathedral of Parma where the religious themes imposed on him compelled him to temper charm with dignity.

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There are moments in the development of art when the air is full of promise and each new achievement seems like a stepping-stone to desirable but unattainable ends. Such a period was inaugurated by Masaccio, and it continued, with an ever quickening tempo, throughout the fifteenth century. During those fruitful years problem after problem had been solved by individual Florentines and Central Italians, until the time seemed to be ripe for a grand synthesis of all the separate solutions.

There are moments in which the end has suddenly been reached and the way to further progress is barred. Raphael, Leonardo, and Michelangelo between them produced such an *impasse* in Florence. The perfection of Raphael could not be further perfected, though Fra Bartolommeo made an attempt to do so and Andrea del Sarto half-heartedly tried to add to Raphael's suavity a note of drama. The intellectual side of Leonardo was inimitable, but his romantic side could be reduced to a formula. Leonardo's rockbound, subaqueous gloom and particularly the famous far-away smile became mannerisms that certain Milanese artists adopted only to find that they led nowhere. Michelangelo was even more obstructive to development. Rhetoric is the most dangerous of all modes of expression; only passionate sincerity can justify it. Without sincerity it becomes a mere bundle of

easily imitated mannerisms. Michelangelo's imitators, interesting though they may be to students of Florentine Mannerism, were a set of dwarfish thieves who recklessly borrowed his giant's robe, and collapsed under its weight. Florentine painting ended suddenly in meaningless posturings, after a hundred of the most creative years that art has ever known.

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Padua, Ferrara, and Venice

While Florentine art was exhausting itself by the very splendour of its own achievement, the Venetians were exploring a new set of pictorial possibilities.

At these moments when development pauses because possibilities seem to have been exhausted in a given direction, the new impetus usually comes through what a mathematician would call an enlargement of the bracket. The idea contained in the formula $a + b$ is not quite the same as that contained in $(a + b)$. It has already been seen that the Egyptian formula for 'head' was 'eye plus profile', and that there was no valid reason against combining the front view of an eye with a side view of a face. The Egyptian had not put a bracket around the eye-plus-profile formula. In the same way the Florentines, who had pushed the science of picture organization to its fullest limits, had not yet arrived at the stage of bracketing that science with the science of colour. This is what the Venetians did, and by doing so opened up a new set of possibilities. To a Florentine of 1480 a picture was composed of shape plus colour; to a Venetian of 1520 it was shape fused with colour. To the Florentine, colour, however harmonious, was a quality to be added to design. To the Venetian it was inseparable from design. To the Florentine it was an attribute of the object to which it belonged: a red dress or a green tree were patches of red and green confined within the boundaries of those objects. The Venetians thought of colour as a quality without which the dress or the tree could hardly be said to exist. It permeated everything and flowed across contours like light: it caressed each object like air. The structural unity of Florentine painting gave place to the chromatic unity of Venetian. It is not by accident that the best period of Venetian art produced no great sculptors.

It is in the paintings of Giovanni Bellini (1430–1516) that this

new quality is first seen, but before following the pattern of Bellini's long career it will be necessary to focus our attention on the city of Padua in the middle years of the fifteenth century, when Mantegna was the dominant artistic influence and the Bellini family, Giovanni and his brother Gentile, looked to him for guidance.

Padua – then, as now, a centre of humanistic studies – must have provided a congenial background for the precocious young artist. At the Academy of Squarcione – a mediocrity among painters but evidently a stern and efficient teacher – Mantegna learned his craftsmanship. In the cultural air of the city he acquired an almost fanatical reverence for the legendary power and majesty of ancient Rome. Through the remains of Roman architecture and sculpture, which Mantegna studied assiduously, he was enabled to reconstruct in his mind a vivid picture of the great pre-Christian past, and in his painting it emerged as a world of immense and uncompromising power. His forms are hard and sculptural. They have the same metallic intensity as those of Andrea del Castagno, but they are more finely and even more scientifically constructed. There is a rather frightening effect of ruthlessness behind Mantegna's statuesque nobility. Yet his world is not altogether a world of isolated, sculptural human beings. They move in space through and against equally solid and intense landscapes or architectural settings, which in their turn are seen against hard blue skies and carved white clouds. The space is airless, and a torrid relentless light pours down on the objects in it.

In the Eremitani Chapel of Padua he painted the story of the martyrdom of St James, destroyed, alas, in the Second World War. In Mantua he filled the little Sala degli Sposi in the palace of the Gonzagas with frescoes of the Gonzaga family, and on the ceiling he painted the first *trompe-l'oeil* worm's-eye view, the earliest experiment in a method later perfected by Correggio and Tiepolo. Yet despite the metallic intensity that never deserted him, his harshness was softened by a rather childlike love of detail. Festoons of fruit and flowers soften the edges of his architecture, birds and rabbits add a touch of life to his arid landscapes.

This was the man with whom Giovanni Bellini came into contact during his formative years, and who so deeply impressed the Ferrarese artist Cosimo Tura when he visited Padua that he returned to Ferrara impregnated with the same passion for metallic austerity and set the tone in Ferrarese painting for half a century.

The three central personalities in the Ferrarese school are Cosimo Tura, Francesco del Cossa, and Ercole Roberti. Tura had none of Mantegna's Roman grandeur, but out of his sculptural hardness he developed a tortured and sometimes grotesque fantasy. Mantegna's love of fanciful decoration developed into a spiky elaboration of decorative detail. There is more than a hint of decadence in Tura's painting. He made the same use of Mantegna that, in his smaller way, Beardsley made of Burne-Jones, twisting and intensifying and adding a note of grotesque pain. But the greatest combined achievement of the Ferrarese painters is the delightful set of frescoes in the Schifanoia palace in Ferrara. Here is a gayer note, inspired no doubt by the sporting spirit of the Ferrarese court, whose Duke had something of the same temperament as the typical English country squire. The love of an open-air life, the carefree, pastoral joy depicted on the walls of the great hall by Cossa has no taint of decadence.

The latest of the group of Ferrarese painters, Dosso Dossi, though he belongs to a later generation that has absorbed some of the softness and grace of the sixteenth century and the later Venetian love of embowered landscape, still retains the metallic quality of his predecessors as well as their elaborate fantasy. In the well-known 'Circe' of the Villa Borghese his style is seen at its most fully developed.

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Giovanni Bellini's sister, Niccolosia, had married Mantegna; the two artists were exactly the same age. From the very beginning Giovanni was completely dominated by the power and austerity of Mantegna. Yet even in his early works there is a note of gentleness and pathos that reveals the difference between the two

contemporaries. The difference was to increase throughout Bellini's life until, at the end of it, no one could have guessed at the harsh discipline of his youth. For Giovanni was to lay the foundations of all that was musical, sensuous and glowing in later Venetian art.

Back in Venice, Giovanni moved slowly towards the point where light and colour become paramount ingredients in his art. His pupils, Giorgione and Titian, seized on the new discovery, gradually relaxing their linear tension and their structural sense, and replacing them by a set of glowing harmonies that had their origin in light rather than colour. Florentine colour had never been timid; it was, at its best, as intense as anything the Venetians could achieve but it did not radiate or burn. Titian's colour is often almost subdued, Tintoretto's gloomy, Vernese's muffled, but Titian's greys and dull purples have more fire in them than Fra Angelico's vermilions and pale ultramarines. In fact Titian set his foot on the road that led directly to nineteenth-century Impressionism in that he did not paint the thing-as-he-knew-it, but the thing-as-he-saw-it. A green hillside can be purple if it is in the shadow, a brown field scarlet if it is seen at sunset. Titian did not push his researches anything like as far as the French Impressionists, but in all his paintings there is a sensuous pervasion of light that ties all the parts together in a closer relationship than they ever had before, and in particular binds the figures and the landscape into a single harmony.

Landscape had not yet reached the point where it could exist in its own right without the justification of figures, but Venetian landscape fused itself intimately with the figures, whereas in Florentine painting it was seldom more than a theatre backcloth. The extreme example of this Venetian fusion is Giorgione's 'Tempest', that enigmatic masterpiece which can be classified neither as a landscape in which the foreground figures are disturbingly important nor as a figure painting in which the landscape plays an unusually dominant part. It is in this picture that one first notices a new method of composition which was later to become the landscape painter's favourite system. The normal

Florentine painting is based on the pyramid, the picture piled up more or less symmetrically round a central mass. Giorgione's picture has no central mass; on the contrary, its centre is a gap through which the eye is invited to pass in order to penetrate into the further recesses of the landscape.

A change of mood runs parallel to the change of method. A languor creeps in and an opulence that bear witness to a more worldly view of life. In Giorgione's 'Fête Champêtre' the young men and maidens are no longer alert and eager-eyed. They are creatures of leisure enjoying the summer afternoon; and though this, again, is an extreme case, the same glowing languor runs through much of the later work of Giovanni Bellini, the whole of Giorgione, and a high percentage of Titian.

It was Giovanni Bellini who laid the foundations for the whole of this remarkable change of mood and method. The triple climax of Florentine painting had been prepared for by a dozen artists of the fifteenth century, each of whom had contributed to the cumulative heritage of Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Raphael. The pattern of development in Venetian art was different. In Venice the climax was prepared for by one man: it was from Giovanni that his two famous pupils, Giorgione and Titian, drew almost everything that we think of as being typically Venetian. Yet though Giovanni prepared the ground for his successors, he did so very gradually, developing slowly and steadily, pushing his researches a little further each year in his long career, intensifying the inner glow and adding to it a lyric note that was to be fully developed by Giorgione.

An early landmark in this long progress is the 'Stigmatization of St Francis' (Frick Collection, New York) where the saint steps out from his grotto into a landscape full of light and air and lifts his eyes to the sun. Bellini always liked to place his saints and Madonnas in an open-air setting, and as he grew older the landscapes became warmer, more golden, more habitable. One of his favourite motives was the Pietà – the dead Christ with angels or saints – and even when he was frankly under Mantegna's influence, these pictures have a degree of pathos of which Mantegna

was incapable. In his middle years he painted a series of little pagan allegories (now in the Venetian Accademia), fanciful, steeped in lyric poetry, the earliest examples of the kind of painting in which Venice later specialized – the *poesia* – the picture in which the precise meaning of the subject-matter hardly seems to count: in which the dreamlike pagan mood is everything. Towards the end of his life this pagan note became more resonant till it reached its climax in 'The Feast of the Gods' painted in 1513 for Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Ferrara. This, perhaps, is the Venetian answer to Raphael's 'Parnassus'. It is rustic, pastoral, Dionysian, and it makes Raphael's fresco, for all its pictorial science and its noble grandeur, look a little cold and manufactured by contrast. Bellini's Olympians are gathered together on a summer evening in the wooded hinterland of the Veneto. Raphael's Parnassians exhibit themselves in front of beautifully painted scenery.

These are the expressions of Giovanni's poetic imagination. But throughout his life he continued to paint formal altarpieces – the Virgin enthroned with attendant saints in an architectural setting, glowing with gold mosaic in a subdued golden light. Each time he tackled the hackneyed theme he produced a new variation on it, and each time the Madonna herself achieves a new and tenderer feminity. For the contrast between Tuscan thought and philosophy and Venetian poetry and music is accompanied by an equally significant contrast between Tuscan virility and the Venetian worship of the feminine ideal. The 'St Job' altarpiece, now in the Venetian Accademia, is a typical example of his big altarpieces. It was painted in his prime at the age of fifty. So solemn is it in its general effect that the sensuous Venetian elements in it are hardly perceptible, but they are there. The Madonna and her companions seem to be listening to the music: action is suspended: taken in isolation, the three lute-playing angels below the throne are among the most typically Venetian incidents in Giovanni's *œuvre*.

None of Giovanni Bellini's contemporaries possessed either his nobility or his poetry. They were excellent, conservative painters: craftsmen of a high order, upholders but not creators of the

Venetian tradition. Carlo Crivelli – the oldest of them – was mannered, elegant and precious. Vittore Carpaccio is the most lovable; he is best known for the colourful and animated pageantry of his series of paintings of the legend of St Ursula, which contains one surprising picture, 'The Vision of St Ursula'. Here, for once, Carpaccio achieves a note of magical, quiet intimacy that neither he himself ever repeated nor any other Venetian ever achieved. Other Venetian painters, contemporary with Giovanni Bellini – Basaiti, Montagna, Cima of Conegliano – produced charming but unimportant variations on the Venetian theme.

By the time that Giorgione and Titian, as young men, had entered the Bellini studio as apprentices, the Venetian tradition had been firmly established. Their task was to assimilate that tradition and take it to its logical conclusion, and each of them did so in his own way.

Giorgione was one of the tragic young men of art, like Schubert and Keats, who died young because the gods hate anti-climax. Giorgione would certainly have developed had he lived, but he could never in later life have created anything that so prefectly combined worldliness with purity as the small but precious handful of paintings by which he is best known, and the rather more numerous pictures whose authenticity is hotly disputed by art historians. In his painting he seems to embrace pleasure fearlessly, and yet it is pleasure purged of every trace of grossness by the pastoral sweetness of his landscapes and the lyrical grace of his figures.

Common to them all is a mood that we have learned to call the Giorgionesque. It is a mood often achieved in poetry, seldom in painting. It is as though his pictures had shed their 'meaning' and taken on an incantatory power instead. We do not 'examine' Giorgione's paintings or look to them for narrative content. We submit to them and let them work their will on us as they did on his contemporaries, to such an extent that during his own lifetime his fame eclipsed that of Titian. What Giorgione added to the mainstream of Venetian painting was something that

exactly satisfied the Venetian appetite for the lyrical and musical side of art. The famous Castelfranco Madonna – painted for the little town in which he was born – is quite formal and unadventurous in design, yet it has the unmistakeable introspective, brooding quality we associate with him. The 'Tempestà', his first authentic work, is like the quiet music of a song whose words are too enigmatic to survive analysis. The two figures in the foreground are lost in their own thoughts and pay no attention to each other. The landscape between them is part of their day-dream. 'The Sleeping Venus', naked though she is, has no erotic overtones. Her long, smooth limbs belong to Nature, not to Mankind. The 'Fête Champêtre' in the Louvre is more robust, but even here the picture's subject is the expectant pause before music is heard on a summer's afternoon.

There exist plenty of Giorgionesque pictures painted in or near Venice in the early years of the sixteenth century whose authorship will probably never be decided. They are the inevitable sequel to a new personal discovery. The only artist who need be mentioned as a follower of Giorgione is Titian himself who, in the years immediately following Giorgione's death in 1510, painted one or two masterpieces in the same idyllic vein, of which the most famous is 'Sacred and Profane Love'. Titian had not Giorgione's aristocracy, but his stature was greater still. He lived to be an old man, and his vast output is uneven in quality; the best of it is stamped not by aristocracy, but by energetic nobility. There is less refinement but more big-heartedness in it than in Giorgione's. As he grew older his knowledge of the play of light grew more and more profound; he saw his world less and less in terms of contour and more and more in terms of shimmering surface, and his style grew broader and more impressionist. His imagination was seldom of the highest order. It is only rarely that he can bring one face to face with the tense moment when all emotional threads seem to be tied together. He did achieve it once of twice, as in the 'Entombment' in the Louvre, but such pictures are exceptional. It is the whole glowing corpus of his work that counts, not the isolated masterpiece.

Titian was probably, but not certainly, born in 1477 in the village of Cadore high up in a Dolomite valley. Some authorities are reluctant to accept this date, presumably because the year of his death, 1576, is known and it seems impossible that any artist should be in full possession of his creative faculties in his ninety-ninth year. At least it is certain that he died a very old man, and that, as though he knew that he had no need for precocity, he matured late. He was apprenticed first to the mosaicist Zuccato, then to Gentile Bellini, and afterwards to his brother Giovanni. While Giorgione's talents were ripening Titian's seem to have remained latent. It is only after Giorgione's death, in his early youth, that Titian begins to develop. ' Sacred and Profane Love ' (1515) is full of Giorgione's spirit – an enigmatic idyll with a meaning that each spectator must extract for himself. Yet it could not be by Giorgione. It is too accomplished, too professional, too serenely beautiful, and at the same time it misses that ultimate haunted mystery that baffles us in the best of Giorgione. It is a picture painted under a temporary spell, as though the painter had been trying to prove that he could, for once, produce a *poesia* as potent as anything of Giorgione's, but built on more classical lines.

He was thirty-eight years old when he painted it. At that age Raphael had finished his life's work. Titian had sixty years of productive life ahead of him. During those sixty years he developed as steadily as had Giovanni Bellini in the preceding generation. To examine that development more than cursorily would occupy far too much space in this short outline. To enumerate the major works in each phase of his career would take even more. The reader must take it for granted that Titian was the most truly professional artist in the history of painting, with the possible exception of Velasquez and Rembrandt, that by the end of his life he had explored most of the possibilities of which oil painting is capable, and that he had proved himself a master of every kind of subject, including portraiture, *poesie*, religious paintings, narratives, formal altarpieces, sumptuous allegories, pagan mythologies, and of every mood, ranging from

dreamy lyricism, through blithe erotic paganism, dignified nobility, full-blooded rhetoric, dramatic action to, in the end, tragic resignation. He had certain limitations, the limitations that must accompany such robust strength. But if there is one man whose influence as a master of the full range of expression in pigment has been felt by almost every European artist of note, it is Titian. The heroic Christian energy of the Frari 'Assumption' and the heroic pagan energy of the 'Bacchus and Ariadne' in the National Gallery are typical of his middle years.

Then comes, with ripening age, a new drama – the drama of light, in which contours lose themselves and colour becomes less brilliant but more vibrant. A mysterious profundity pervades both the religious and the pagan pictures of his later years. Among the latter one could single out the 'Rape of Europa', wild and abandoned in composition; among the former, his last tragic picture, the 'Pietà', left unfinished at his death in 1576, in which colour itself has almost been replaced by fitful light, and light has become the brooding expression of an old man's final dream.

Of Titian's minor contemporaries and followers little needs to be said. Palma Vecchio added a touch of opulence and a softer roundness to the Venetian interpretation of womanhood, and occasionally, as in 'Jacob and Rachel', painted a full-scale poetic idyll, softer and less heroic than anything by Titian, but full of space and warmth and the full glow of Venetian colour. Jacopo Bassano introduced a rustic note into those idyllic outdoor scenes, religious or pagan, that the Venetians loved. With Savoldo the grand poetic rhythms begin to run dry. He is a true Venetian in his choice of subject and his delight in colour, but he speaks in prose where his predecessors spoke verse. The most interesting and individual of Titian's centemporaries is Lorenzo Lotto who, though Venetian by birth, broke away from Venice and the strong local influences which might have robbed him of his own strange personality, and painted in Rome, in Bergamo, and in Treviso.

He is a haunted artist. There is little of the Venetian's frank acceptance of the joy of life, and none of their inherent grandeur

in his work. A sadness, an unease, seems to transpose all his pictures from the major to the minor key, and when he is dramatic, as he can often be, it is an anxious, strained, interior drama in which he specializes. Even his portraits often strike a slightly sinister note.

When Titian died his fame had become legendary, not only in his native Venice, but throughout Europe. The old man, who for nearly three-quarters of a century had dominated the art of his time, had surely taken its secret with him to the grave. To his admirers it must have seemed that this was the end of the Venetian school, the unbroken cycle of development that had stretched from the bright, youthful pictures of Giovanni Bellini to the dark tragedy of a century later.

Yet one more giant, Veronese, was to provide a final climax to Venetian sumptuousness and invent a still more elaborate pageantry. And an even more fiery genius, Tintoretto was to make a new set of discoveries and open up a dynamic world that had never been adumbrated before in Venetian painting but which, none the less, became recognizably Venetian in Tintoretto's hands.

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Paolo Veronese (1528–88), a native of Verona, came to Venice in his twenty-seventh year, and there practised his delectable art for the rest of his life. What he achieved during the busy thirty-three years in his adopted city, was something that Venice had been waiting for since the disappearance of Carpaccio – a joyous expression of the colour and pageantry of Venetian life at its gayest and its most ceremonious. Veronese's temperament is like that of Carpaccio in that he loved the urban settings of fine architecture with pageantry in the foreground. Since Carpaccio's day a new spirit had been introduced into painting, a more decorous ceremonial, a more luxurious way of life, larger gestures, richer robes, a franker sensuousness. But, allowing for the changing tempo of life, Veronese is Carpaccio reincarnate. No one has ever

painted grander festal scenes of more colourful mythologies. Like Carpaccio he was incapable of deep emotion; pathos or tragedy were distasteful to him. Like Carpaccio he was an exquisite colourist. Gold and silver, amethyst and coral, peacock blue and olive green sing in his pictures. On the ceilings of the Ducal Palace he provided sumptuous allegories, and in the little anteroom that leads to the Hall of the Collegio is his version of the story of the 'Rape of Europa' – gracious, carefree, and exquisite, a prophecy of eighteenth-century make-believe, which only reveals its superficiality when compared with Titian's version of the same theme. His greatest achievement in the Ducal Palace is the huge 'Apotheosis of Venice' (see Plate 15) on the ceiling of the Hall of the Grand Council – the most stylish and the proudest piece of large-scale rhetoric in a city devoted to rhetoric.

In Chapter 4 I attempted to describe the meaning of 'baroque' – that enlargement of the bracket to include the whole of visual experience which occurred about the beginning of the seventeenth century. In Tintoretto (1518–94) one is getting very near to it. Far more than Titian he is a link between the Classic and the Baroque Age. In him both light and colour are almost independent of structure. Tintoretto will boldly throw a whole group of figures into deep shadow, or allow the light to pick out and isolate a hand or knee. His composition no longer follows the contours, but builds itself up in masses of tone and colour. He breaks away from the Renaissance system of symmetry and frontality and permits himself to paint a Crucifixion from the side or to visualize a Last Supper in which the table is seen in diagonal perspective. He anticipates Rubens in his tumultuous rhythms and Rembrandt in his preoccupation with light.

Jacopo Robusti, called Tintoretto because his father was a dyer, was apprenticed as a boy to Titian, but was expelled from his studio after ten days owing to Titian's jealousy, according to the account of Ridolfi, his earliest biographer. The incident is significant, since it left Tintoretto without a master in an age when studio apprenticeship was almost essential to a young artist's career.

The young man at once set about teaching himself, inventing new devices for training himself as a painter, using small figures of clay arranged in artificially-lit settings like model theatres. The result is immediately visible even in his earliest work, in which a sense of deep space combined with surprisingly dramatic effects of light open up a new set of pictorial possibilities. But apart from these innovations, Tintoretto's dynamic character, his passion for figures in movement, and the furious speed at which he worked introduce a new and turbulent note into Venetian painting. His pictures are no longer the carefully arranged tableaux of High Renaissance tradition. The spectator is, as it were, dragged into the thick of the action like an eye-witness. The essence of Tintoretto is to be found at the Scuola of San Rocco in Venice which contains what is probably the largest collection of works by one artist in any single building; and as a prearranged iconographical scheme runs through the whole series the effect of the three great rooms is one of immense cumulative power. At first sight the rhetoric, the dark and passionate seriousness and the violent movement are almost uncomfortably overpowering, but behind the turbulence is an unusual depth of feeling and an understanding of the narrative content. The great 'Crucifixion' of San Rocco is crowded with action and incident on a Shakespearean scale and of a Shakespearean kind. Each of the New Testament narratives expresses the state of mind of a man who has projected himself imaginatively into the story of the Gospels and relived it in his own terms. The 'Annunciation' in the Lower Hall of the Scuola is an unforgettable conception. The angel Gabriel arrives at full speed, flying through the door at the head of a crowd of attendant angels, while the Virgin leans backwards under the impact of the fiery, airborne messengers. Equally inventive and equally freed from the bonds of tradition are the dark 'Agony in the Garden', the 'Temptation' with its Miltonic figure of Satan, and the 'Flight into Egypt' in a landscape that is outstanding even in this city of potential landscapes.

Tintoretto was not always a painter of dark turbulence. The four allegories of Venice in the Ducal Palace are among the most

optimistic and radiant of Venetian mythologies. As paintings of the nude figure even Titian never surpassed them. The ' Bacchus and Ariadne ' is perhaps the most memorable picture in the long line of Venetian *poesie*.

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So ends the succession of giants in Venetian painting. It would be as futile to discuss whether Venice or Florence produced the greater masterpieces as to discuss whether reason or instinct is the more potent arbiter in human affairs. One factor – a technical one – makes Venetian art seem closer to our own than Florentine, namely the change-over from tempera to oil as the normal medium for paint. Love of surfaces as opposed to love of contour was doubtless a Venetian characteristic, and the oil medium encouraged the development of that side of the artist's vision. Perhaps Florence would have rejected oil painting as unsuitable to her needs, or perhaps she would have adopted it but ignored its possibilities, or perhaps, had it been adopted earlier, it would have revolutionized Florentine painting. Such speculations are vain. The two schools are distinct both in outlook and in technique. Florence had always been a city of philosophers and intellectuals, Venice of poets and musicians, and her lyric genius overflowed into her art. But there was another deciding factor in the difference between the two cities. Florence never had the same kind of civic pride as Venice. She was an art-producing centre, and as such supplied the needs of the Church and to a lesser extent of the noble families. Venice, on the other hand, was a city of merchants and palaces and great civic buildings, and the artists of Venice were called upon to serve the city as much as the Church. The palace of the Doges contains some of the major examples of Venetian painting, and the theme of most of them was Venice herself. Veronese paid homage to her in the great oval ' Apotheosis of Venice ', but even his huge pseudo-religious paintings – the ' Feast in the House of Levi ', for example – are really tributes to the extravagantly colourful texture of Venetian

life. There was nothing in Florence to correspond to this aspect of civic pride – no parallel, for instance, to the ceremony in which the Doge celebrated the marriage of Venice to the Adriatic by throwing a ring into the sea from the state barge, the *Bucentaur*, that appears in so many Venetian paintings.

There was a third factor in determining the distinctive flavour of Venetian art. Venice looked eastwards; her trade was with the Near East. Constantinople supplied her with some delicious material loot, but the loot was not entirely material. Venetian taste had an Oriental tinge. The city that could erect the half-Oriental Basilica of St Mark, pale and glittering like an opal, was bound to develop a very different kind of painting from the city that approved of the stern proportions of young Brunelleschi's dome in Florence.

One might have expected the death of Tintoretto, in the last decade of the sixteenth century, to mark the end not only of the Golden Age of Venetian painting, but also the end of Italy's contribution to the main stream of European art. Yet, a century after Tintoretto's death, just when the Italian mainstream seemed to have become too sluggish to be interesting, Venice again gave birth to a generation of painters who cannot be ignored even in the briefest of surveys.

By far the greatest of them was Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1769), the most audacious and brilliant painter of his time, who could, perhaps, best be described as an eighteenth-century reincarnation of Veronese. If pageantry was the keynote of Veronese, swagger of the most dazzling kind was that of Tiepolo. In all his work, but especially in his vast ceiling paintings, there is an airy stylishness. He inherited all the Baroque mannerisms of the preceding century, including the conception of a ceiling as a hole punched in the roof through which could be seen a sky filled with flying and floating creatures, and the wild rhetoric of gesture for gesture's sake. His immense virtuosity and his elegant, acid colour make him the outstanding figure in this late flowering of Venetian art. He was influenced by his fellow citizen, Piazzetta (1682–1754), who had already pointed the way towards

this new kind of colourful rhetoric, but in playful exuberance Tiepolo far exceeded Piazzetta.

Simultaneous with this outburst of rhetoric was the school of Venetian painters of *vedute*, artists who delighted the rich travellers engaged in the Grand Tour of Europe by producing views of Venetian life and architecture that combined a more or less documentary account of Venetian topography with a great deal of Venetian fantasy and magic. Through the painting of Canaletto (1697–1768) and Francesco Guardi (1712–85) the palaces of Venice, the Piazza of St Mark, the busy pageantry of the Grand Canal and the picturesqueness of the smaller canals became familiar images in every part of Europe, but especially in the houses of English noblemen. Canaletto's views of Venice became so popular that his studio took on the functions of a factory and his style eventually lost its earlier vitality. Guardi's Venice is more romantic and more restless than Canaletto's and his pictures, enchanting though they are, contain more than a hint of the Chinoiserie that was seeping through into Europe from the Far East and giving a new accent to European furniture and interior decoration.

One more artist is just worthy of mention in this group of Venetians. Pietro Longhi (1702–85) is a minor artist, but he added a rather more intimate note to this cumulative record of Venice by painting little *genre* pictures of Venetian life and incident. He is, one might say, the Hogarth of Venice, but a small-scale, emasculated Hogarth.

14

Mannerism, Eclecticism, and Naturalism

To compare the High Renaissance with an arrival on a high plateau that enjoys a climate more bening than that of the mountainside that leads to it is fair up to a point; so also is the corollary that to continue beyond that desirable summit involves an inevitable decent.

But the analogy is only true as long as the travellers are determined to continue their journey in the same direction. A Giulio Romano cannot be another Raphael. If his talent is less than Raphael's he will fail: if it is as great or greater he will waste it by trying to turn himself into a pasticheur.

It is true, of course, that artists of the second rank – men sensitive enough to carry on the great tradition of their predecessors but insufficiently creative to add to it or to see the world through their own eyes – have always existed, and at a period like the one we have reached, they will inevitably produce paintings that are worthy, scholarly, and competent but, because of their unfortunate position on the downward slope, uninteresting. Such a school of artists arose towards the end of the sixteenth century, centred on the workshop of the brothers Carracci at Bologna. Raphael was their inspiration, but a Raphael softened by some of the sensuousness of Correggio and a little of the glow of Titian. Whether they formulated a self-consciously eclectic programme and deliberately attempted to combine all the virtues of the masters they admired hardly matters. Eclecticism need not be self-conscious. It is the natural mode of the artist who is content to be a disciple rather than a leader, but wishes to enrol himself under the banner of more than one leader. Such artists, by their very nature and by their position in the pattern of development, can never achieve immortality. The Carracci had their followers, of whom the most proficient was Domenichino (1581–1641) and the most famous in his day, Guido Reni (1575–

1642), They were prolific, but they added nothing to the creative achievement of their time.

At that moment of climax, therefore, when the high summit has been reached, only two courses are possible if achievement is to be added to. Artists can continue to admire and to emulate their predecessors, and in doing so they are bound to exaggerate and caricature them, and therefore to turn what was once sincere into a set of mannerisms. Or they can start afresh on a new journey exploring new country, climbing a new mountain and aiming at a new summit.

During the sixteenth century, in various parts of Italy, we can trace both movements. The first, Mannerism, was bound to come to an end through sheer exhaustion. The second was capable of new growth, and it continued and flourished during the century that followed, not only in Italy but throughout a great deal of Europe. The two movements, did, of course, merge and intersect, but for the sake of simplification – and with a warning to the reader that simplification usually means over-simplification – they must be kept separate in this chapter.

In Tuscany, Mannerism implied hero-worship and could hardly fail to spread under the shadow of such giants as Michelangelo and Raphael, whose achievement was so ultimate that, in the end, they even barred the way to their own progress.

It is both astonishing and ludicrous to watch Pontormo, Vasari, Bronzino, and Tibaldi parodying the muscular developments and the physical contortions of Michelangelo and inventing, in a spirit halfway between hero-worship and parody, complicated gestures that bear no relation to the subject-matter of their pictures. Their works must not be ignored in a history that aims at a certain measure of objectiveness. As a painter of portraits Bronzino (1503–72) does shed some of the absurd histrionics of his religious frescoes. His portraits are hard, and mainly lacking in humanity, but they have a fine dignity and only betray the influence of Michelangelo in a slight restlessness in the hands and an artificial haughtiness in the turn of a head or the set of a mouth. The accomplished, but over-anxious Parmigianino (1504–40) almost

succeeds in convincing us of his sincerity when he proudly elongates his figures, but he looks sadly hollow when we set him beside El Greco, who used the same elongations in Spain, a generation later, and turned them into symbols of ecstasy.

In Venice, the situation was not quite so desperate. Titian, at his death, had certainly not said the last word in the field he had begun to explore. Even as late as the end of the nineteenth century Renoir was still building on the foundations laid by him towards the end of his life. And Tintoretto had hinted at a new dynamism that was to be used by Rubens, and a new world of light that was to be exploited by Rembrandt. Unless the term 'Mannerist' is to serve a much wider range of meanings than that for which it was originally invented, I cannot agree that it can be appropriately attached to the Venetian painters of the late sixteenth century. Tintoretto, in particular, effected, by the power of his own genius, a natural transition between the Venetian High Renaissance and the fully fledged Baroque of the seventeenth century. To call him a Mannerist, as many art-historians have done, is surely to rob a useful word of its real meaning.

Yet it would be wrong to regard the Mannerists, who filled Italy in the late three-quarters of the sixteenth century with their restless paintings, as impotent and barren. The very fact that one cannot look at their pictures without being acutely conscious of their restlessness is a proof that they had created something new, and had tapped a hitherto undiscovered vein of human emotion. I have described them as men caught in a *cul-de-sac*, and therefore deprived of the full freedom of movement that their predecessors had enjoyed. But restricted movement, like that of a caged animal, has its own fascination, and art historians to-day are becoming increasingly sensitive to it. Mannerism cannot be explained merely by saying that a set of minor artists had chosen to exaggerate the stylistic tricks of their predecessors. Everywhere but in Venice a new political situation had arisen. Small, highly civilized courts ruled over by families who had lost much of their political power but none of their intellectual arrogance, imposed their will on the artists who served them. One can imagine

a Parmigianino in Rome and Parma, or a Tibaldi in Bologna, responding to the sophisticated preciousness of such an atmosphere and reproducing its exact equivalent in formal terms, while in the ampler air of Venice Tintoretto's wild grandeur and Veronese's suave urbanity showed no sign of the taint.

It was a moment in history that could not be prolonged, and it was towards the end of it, in the last quarter of the sixteenth century when the whole tradition of the Renaissance seemed in danger of breaking down, that the arrival of a new personality brave enough to desert the old High Renaissance plateau and to tackle an entirely new ascent altered the complexion of Italian art.

Caravaggio (1569-1609) was no hero-worshipper nor was he a parodist. His advent was even more unexpected than that of Correggio and his influence more immediate and more revolutionary. Throughout the long journey from Masaccio to Titian, art had been guided by a set of principles, sometimes instinctively followed, occasionally consciously stated as in the writings of Alberti and Leonardo. The art of painting, it was agreed, consisted in reproducing the appearance of nature; Alberti even likens the relationship between a painting and the objects it represents to that between the reflection in a mirror and the three-dimensional world that is reflected in it. But since ' nature ' is full of defects, adjustments must be made by the artist in the interests of ' beauty '. Thus there is a perpetual reconciliation to be made and a balance to be struck between realism and beauty. It was Raphael who first upset the balance. All over Central and Southern Italy his formula for ' beauty ' had become so obsessive that art was in danger of becoming a mere search for formal perfection and beauty herself, hitherto a by-product of the artist's desire to express his meaning, began to perish because she had become an end rather than a means.

It was, therefore, a daring step that Caravaggio took when he elected to renounce beauty altogether and to concentrate entirely on truth. Titian's breadth and mastery in the handling of paint and his concentration on the play of light on surfaces were familiar to every artist in Italy by the time Caravaggio had developed his

mature style. It was inevitable, therefore, that Caravaggio's realism should be a realism of light. But whereas Titian's use of light had been 'poetized' and his whole object, like that of his Venetian compatriots, had been to create a world more sensuously desirable, more ideal, than the world of everyday life, Caravaggio used his command of chiaroscuro and his immense technical ability to present the world to us as it is, not robbed of beauty – that would have been to follow a wilfully partisan policy – but certainly not artificially inseminated by it.

The harsh light in which Caravaggio's figures are seen is dramatic enough to impress the beholder and to make even an awkward gesture significant (see Plate 30). His characters emerge, fitfully illuminated, from dark backgrounds that have earned for him the name of 'tenebrist'. But what must have made him seem particularly revolutionary to his contemporaries was his choice of the characters themselves and his emphasis on what the High Renaissance would have called their physical defects. To us, accustomed to the matter-of-fact realism of Velasquez, Rembrandt, or Goya, this frank acceptance of men and women as they are is not at all disturbing; but to refuse, at the end of the sixteenth century, to ennoble or idealize humanity as Titian and Raphael had done, and to deny them leisurely Veronesian opulence or the heroic Tintorettesque dynamism must have seemed both shocking and irreverent. Peasants with gnarled hands and wrinkled brows – painted in all sincerity, for that, surely, was the true physical appearance of the simple men whom Christ chose as His disciples – or young men whose elegance was rather that of a fashion-plate than of a hero, take the place of the demigods of an earlier generation. It is a democratic invasion, an inevitable sign of the times. No sooner did it appear in Caravaggio's work than it began to have its inevitable effect on the next generation of artists. Tenebrist pictures filled with figures of an uncompromising realism make their appearance not only in Italy but in Spain and in Northern Europe. Velasquez himself was to fall temporarily under the spell. Even Rubens, though he was by nature a painter of exuberance and radiance, found himself momentarily attracted by the

dark Caravaggian drama. But these inevitable references, in an account of late sixteenth-century painting, to Caravaggio's influence on seventeenth-century artists, shows that Caravaggio, who seemed to his contemporaries a rebel, was in fact a prophet.

15

Flanders, Germany, Spain, Holland

Tintoretto and Veronese were not only the last of the great Venetians, but the last of the Golden-age Italians. Once they had ceased to paint, Italy was no longer the artistic centre of Europe. The stream and its tributaries, clearly defined so far, now become difficult to follow. A Cretan, Domenicos Theotocopulos, trained in Venice and Rome, went unaccountably to Spain, and there painted pictures so strangely moving that he is still the most disturbingly personal of all painters. A Fleming, Peter Paul Rubens, journeyed to Italy, soaked himself in Michelangelo and Titian, returned to Antwerp, established a kind of picture factory and poured out a series of pictures of astonishing vitality. Thus were the seeds of seventeenth-century painting planted in Spain and Flanders.

Domenicos Theotocopulos, commonly known as El Greco, is the first notable name in Spanish painting, but Rubens's name is by no means the first in Flanders. From about 1400 onwards Flemish painting had been pursuing a quiet course of its own parallel to but only dimly dependent on that of Italian painting. For a combination of complicated political reasons (comparative peacefulness, the protection of the Dukes of Burgundy and flourishing trade were among the most important of them), it happened that the Netherlands at the beginning of the fifteenth century were in a much more favourable position than France to foster the arts. The spirit of the Renaissance as it manifested itself in Italy hardly touched northern Europe. There were none of the new and intoxicating impulses that were to be found in Florence. Nevertheless, something was in the air. Part of the Gothic spirit was dead, but part of it remained and vitalized the early Flemish painters. The superstition, the childish delight in whimsy, the grotesque side of the Gothic spirit had sobered down, but the intense curiosity about things in general remained. And something,

at least, of Italian humanism was beginning to trickle northwards across the Alps – not the Italian sense of man's dignity, but the new sense of man's importance and an emphasis on the character and appearance of the individual. It is natural that the Renaissance should have given birth to a new and absorbing subject for artists – namely portraiture – and it is not surprising that portraiture in its most vivid form flourished more readily in Northern Europe than in Italy. One finds it first in the sculpture of Claus Sluter who worked in Dijon in the last decade of the fourteenth century, and a feeling for portraiture is implicit even in the religious paintings of the Flemish artists of the early fifteenth century. The Swiss painter, Conrad Witz, in his picture of Christ walking on the waves, went so far as to add a landscape background that was a strict portrait, identifiable to-day, of the shore of the Lake of Geneva.

Consequently the Flemish painters who were contemporary with Masaccio and Piero had none of their nobility or serenity, but an abundance of vitality and an avidity for detail that is astonishing. Jan van Eyck, the earliest of them, perfected the use of the oil medium, though he had no conception of its full possibilities or of the effect it was to have on the course of European painting. It gave his pictures depth and brilliance, but he went on painting as the masters of tempera had painted, clinging to the contour, thinking in terms of line. No Italian painter gives the same impression of snatching greedily yet patiently at the charming intricate spectacle of life as van Eyck, or Rogier van der Weyden, or Memlinc, or Pieter Brueghel (the last and greatest member of this subsidiary Renaissance). Their pictures have this common characteristic that they are never tired of *describing* what they see. 'Johannes de Eyck fuit hic' is inscribed on the portrait of Arnolfini and his wife – just as a descriptive reporter's article might be headed 'by an Eye Witness'. The two words perfectly fit the whole school. They are witnesses whose veracity no one would dream of doubting because they have sworn themselves in to paint the whole visual truth and nothing but the visual truth. Arnolfini's circular mirror, his shoes, his hat, his furniture must have been

just like that. Van Eyck ' was there '. The great van Eyck altarpiece, the ' Adoration of the Lamb ' at Ghent, completed in 1432, has no parallel in Italy. Despite its mystical implications it has no mystery. It is no more than a highly organized inventory of earthly experiences seen through the eyes of an acute and sensitive observer who knew what was meant by reverence but was unaware of the existence of ecstasy. Memlinc was more prosaic, Rogier van der Weyden more gentle and lyrical, Hugo van der Goes more dramatic, Gerard David more interested in landscape. All of them are eye-witnesses with voracious, unjaded eyes. I am reluctant to dismiss them so briefly. They form a compact group, united in their devotion to observed fact, admirable in their craftsmanship, the last stronghold of Gothicism in a world that was soon to be invaded by the rising tide of the Renaissance.

Not that there was any conscious resistance on the part of these Northern Gothicists to such an invasion. What accounts for the sharp stylistic cleavage between Italy and Northern Europe was certainly not a mistrust of Italian habits of mind but a temperamental misunderstanding of them. There must have been a growing feeling all over Burgundy and the Netherlands that, artistically, Italy was somehow more up-to-date than the rest of Europe and that closer contact with Italy would, perhaps, remedy the defect. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries artist after artist made the journey from the Netherlands across the Alps in search of what they must have thought of as the latest fashions in painting, in much the same spirit that the dress-designer of to-day feels that the latest fashions are only to be found in Paris. Quentin Massys (1466–1530), Mabuse (op. 1503–33), van Orley (1493–1541), Lucas van Leyde (1494–1533), and Jan van Scorel (1495–1562) were the best among a host of artists who made the journey and made it in vain. They could and did pick up Italian mannerisms but could not assimilate them. All of them were good craftsmen, but they were attempting the impossible. Everywhere the rough northern grain shows through the Italian veneer.

Three northern painters who completely resisted the call of Italy and developed their own northern genius were Patinir

(?1485–1524) who painted fantastic rocky landscapes that have no counterpart in the art of any country, Hieronymus Bosch (1480–1516), the most uninhibited of all fantasists, who created a world crowded with monsters, half animal, half human, behaving in a manner that could only become credible in the world of dreams, and lastly, the greatest of them all, Pieter Brueghel the Elder (*c.* 1526–69), who is unique among painters, and whose painting never fails to produce in me a special thrill. He expresses more of the quality of humble affection in his paintings than any other artist. In his case the word 'affection' has connotations which need qualifying by the addition of the word 'gusto'. He is rollicking, but never flamboyant. He is crisp, but never dry. He gives his evidence with an unswerving respect for truth; he is always on oath; but he gives it with bucolic relish. It is the *happening* that excites him, the peasant sweating in the cornfield, dancing in the village street, swallowing good food at table, skating on the frozen pond. He, too, undertook the journey to Italy but seems to have returned to his native country quite unaffected by it. His 'genre' pictures of the peasants he knew so well are as little Italian as Shakespeare's rustic players in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are Athenian. The only other painter I can think of who can give the impression of delighting (and communicating delight) in the quaintness of human activity is the modern British painter, Stanley Spencer. With both artists Gothic fervour seems to have detached itself from religion and attached itself to life, especially village life. Pieter Brueghel is the greatest of parochial artists.

Meanwhile in Germany the struggle between the native Gothic and the spreading influence of the Renaissance was producing rather a different atmosphere. It is noteworthy that each part of north-western Europe resisted or accepted the Renaissance in its own way. In every country except Italy the Gothic spirit died hard, and the Renaissance, when it did come, came fully fledged. The whole of the Netherlandish school provided a kind of Gothic swan song with Pieter Brueghel as its final climax. Rubens, born eight years after Brueghel's death, brought to Flanders an entirely

new set of values – Baroque at its most exuberant. There is no one to bridge the gap between Brueghel and Rubens.

In Germany there was no such gap, partly because there the Gothic swan song (performed by Grünewald) was more sophisticated than Brueghel's, partly because the only artist outside Italy who managed to absorb more than the superficial aspects of the Renaissance point of view was a German. Dürer (1471–1528) had much of Leonardo's scientific and intellectual equipment. On to his harsh native German realism he grafted something of Italian scholarship. His famous 'Melencolia' engraving is a strange mixture of the new science and the old superstition. Dürer was by temperament a draughtsman rather than a painter. His apprenticeship was served under Michel Wolgemut, the wood-engraver of Nuremberg, and in the workshop of Martin Schongauer, the copper engraver. More than any other artist he lifted the art of engraving on metal and wood on to a higher plane and enlarged it as a means of artistic expression. Looking at his series of woodcuts for the great *Apocalypse*, one feels that everything he wished to say is contained in the magnificent sweep of the design and the wonderful vigour of the line. Like the Flemish artists, he had none of the Italian grace, but, unlike them, he tried hard to catch at some of the Italian nobility; he visited Venice, watched the aged Giovanni Bellini at work and envied him his power to render the glow and serenity of nature, but his own natural ruggedness and honesty would not permit him to copy what he could not genuinely absorb. In most of Dürer's work one feels the medieval world is not far below the surface, though it rarely breaks through. It would be absurd to regret Dürer's inability to turn himself into a Classic artist. What he achieved, partly by his sturdy, Leonardesque intellect and partly by his genuine admiration for Italian painting, was a remarkable enrichment of the German contribution to the main stream of European art. It was by no means an Italian veneer as it had been with so many of his predecessors and contemporaries but a genuine fusion of German strength and character with Mediterranean breadth and nobility. In his famous engraving of the 'Knight and Death' the two

worlds meet. The knight on his charger is more than an echo of Verrocchio's Colleoni statue: it is an excellent translation of it into the medium of engraving. Yet at his side, on a broken-down horse, sits a skeleton holding an hour glass which only a great artist, and only a North European artist could have imagined. What makes the print unforgettable is not the mingling of the noble with the macabre but the fusion of the two into an emotional unity that had never been achieved before.

But the typical German painter was Grünewald, who summed up everything he had to say, and, what is more, gave complete expression to the German spirit, in his great altarpiece now at Colmar. There is nothing at all like it in the whole history of art, unless it be Grünewald's other Crucifixion at Karlsruhe (see Plate 12). Tortured almost to the point of hysteria, grotesque yet sublime, it has the curious effect of looking back to the Gothic artists and forward to the Baroque masters at the same time. It is an uncomfortable but deeply moving work in which cruelty, ecstasy, horror, and compassion meet on an intense level. Everything that is most repellent and most admirable in German art is summed up in it. One has only to compare the Karlsruhe 'Crucifixion' with Raphael's suave interpretation of the same theme (see Plate 13) to realize the profound difference in temperament between Germany and Italy.

Such extraordinary masterpieces, and such an extraordinary artist could not, of course, arrive without preparation. Just as the climax of the Italian High Renaissance had to be prepared for by a century and a half of sustained effort, so, too, in Germany, this climax of German art was built on a long succession of minor painters, who, in their primitive way, had established the tradition of German painting. Their names are known, their works are plentiful and can be found in the museums, great and small, of Germany. The flavour of their paintings is intense. Yet in a brief history of painting it is hardly profitable to distinguish between them. What we find in Grünewald – the sadism, the ferocity, the overstatement, the hectic, tortured narrative – is to be found in them too. What they lack is the monumentality and the pro-

fundity of Grünewald. They were a necessary foundation and taken as a whole, they establish a 'school' that is certainly not lacking in character, but which produced no single man of genius.

Born more than twenty years after Grünewald, another German painter, Hans Holbein the younger, worked in Basel and there produced at least one great altarpiece 'The Virgin with the family of Burgomaster Meyer', in which German realism and Italian dignity are blended. But, for Holbein, as for many of his contemporaries, the Reformation put an end to the old relationship between the artist and the Church. He was tempted to England by the prospect of portrait painting under Henry VIII. It is not easy to define what it is in Holbein's portraits that makes them memorable, but one realizes their quiet strength as soon as one compares them with those of his French contemporary, Jean Clouet. Clouet's draughtsmanship, more delicate and refined than Holbein's is too elegant to be quite honest. Holbein's portraits (see Plate 28b) always seem to be focusing one's attention, quietly but insistently, on the subtle shades of difference between his sitter of the moment and the rest of mankind. Psychologically they do not penetrate very deeply: one cannot hear his sitter's voices or imagine their smiles as one can with the portraits of Rembrandt or Goya. But Holbein could grasp and express the structure of man's skull, the texture of skin, the fleshiness of a cheek by the slightest inflexion of his pencil or brush. One is reminded of those rare actors on the stage who make their points without either raising or lowering their voices. In his restraint and integrity Holbein was not typically German. What stamps him as a German is his robustness and his tendency to stress the character of his sitter by coarsening rather than refining his features.

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With the death of Brueghel the last traces of medievalism disappeared and Europe as a whole was ready to accept the new

discoveries that came to fruition in the seventeenth century. Italy had made those discoveries and then, as it were, lost interest in them. It was perhaps by chance that El Greco introduced them to Spain, or that they took such firm root there, but it was almost inevitable that they should find a foothold in Flanders and Holland. The Church had for long been almost the sole employer of the painter, though Venice had begun to break the monopoly by using him for civic propaganda. But a new force was growing up. Even in Venice the rich merchant was beginning to make himself felt as a power, and with the shifting westwards of the commercial centre of gravity in Europe, the artistic centre of gravity shifted too. It was almost inevitable that the Netherlands should become for a time the art centre of Europe and that the stimulus to production should pass more and more into the hands of the merchant princes, especially in Protestant Holland.

In Catholic Flanders the Church still retained her position as the artist's most reliable employer.

To Rubens, however, it hardly mattered who employed him. If the Church wanted a Crucifixion or an Assumption (see Plate 19) he would paint a dashing but hardly a moving one, for though he was a good Catholic he was no mystic. If a princely patron wanted a 'Toilet of Venus' or a 'Bath of Diana' or a 'Nymphs surprised by Satyrs' he would set about it with equal vigour, crowding the canvas with an exuberant mass of forms which in the hands of any other painter would have been chaotic. Rubens was afraid of nothing, had no limitations except the serious one of having both feet firmly planted on earth. His astonishing powers of invention and organization, his command of movement of grouping, his grasp of textures, his capacity to introduce endless subsidiary elements without interfering with his main theme, and his complete command of his craft never failed him. If sheer ability to create, and to create on the largest possible scale, were a test of genius Rubens would be the world's greatest artist (I do not refer to mere fecundity but to the artist's power to find an equivalent in paint for his visual experience). Like his predecessors in Flanders, he is an 'eye witness', but an eye

witness in the grand manner. If Brueghel's secret was affection, Rubens's was enthusiasm – enthusiasm begotten of wordliness, enthusiasm exclusively reserved for earthly things. Flesh he adored and wild movement that gave all his compositions a diagonal sweep. No one can match him in the latter and only Renoir in the former. Where he fails, I think, is not in his inability to leave the earth behind, but in his failure to realize that he could never do so. His Madonnas strike appropriately noble gestures, but they are none the less Flemich wenches who cannot fill those gestures with meaning. Brueghel never made that mistake. I have noted elsewhere that in an 'Assumption' by Rubens (see Plate 19) the Madonna flings out her arms in a rhetorical gesture that all grand-mannerists consider suitable to the elevated mood of such a theme, but that she might just as well have done so in order to take a frying-pan off the fire. I find this contradiction the chief impediment to my enjoyment of him. He has every sort of equipment for scaling the heavens – except a pair of wings. And yet he persists in trying to fly. Rubens was in fact the perfect worldling – a good churchman, a devoted husband and father, a successful politician, an excellent business man, an indefatigable worker. Perhaps if he had been a social failure, if he had known more suffering, he might have been one of the dozen artists to whom it was permitted to reveal a new world. As it was, he is merely the Prince of Painters.

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It is interesting to compare him in this respect with his counterpart in Spain, El Greco. Since the beginning of our own century El Greco's painting has enjoyed an extraordinary popularity, partly for the insufficient reason that twentieth-century art, having discovered the advantages of distortion in the interests of self-expression, and casting round for justification in the art of the past, has found in him the ideal precedent. No great painter, from Giotto to Renoir, has taken more liberties with the human figure, and no great painter has ever created so easily recognizable a

set of mannerisms. His colour schemes, his lighting schemes, his system of vertical, rippling composition, the set of flamelike curves he invented are ingredients in the most personal of all styles. If one were to assign a date to him on internal evidence alone one would probably guess that he was a contemporary of Rubens and one would make an error of thirty-two years. In El Greco the Baroque style is as fully developed as it is in Rubens. There is the same power to contain all the complex elements of the picture within a single embracing phrase, the same sense of a continuous rhythm running through it, the same feeling that the parts have no value except as contributions to the whole. But regarded as personalities no two men could be more different. If Rubens could not soar, El Greco's feet never touch earth. If Rubens' world is earthly, El Greco's is made out of a mixture of ice and flame (see Plate 18). Rubens's Madonnas and nymphs are Flemish housewives, El Greco's have never even heard of a frying-pan. Writers on art, trying to explain this outburst of mysticism, have said much about the ecstatic, mystical flavour of Spanish Christianity, forgetting that when Rubens visited Spain his paintings proved as popular there as they had been in Antwerp, and that no artist could be less mystical than Velasquez. El Greco's ultimate roots in the hieratic Byzantine world in which he was born are a more probable explanation of his ice-cold ecstasy, his grey-green fire, but surely he needs no explanation. Some artists, like Raphael, are perfect products of their age. Others, like Brueghel, are born too late; others, like Giotto, too early. Others again, like El Greco and Blake, are unrelated to their age. It is not necessary to invent a theory to explain them.

El Greco's reputation has fluctuated with fashionable taste. Not so that of Velasquez (1599–1660), for whom painters and students of every creed have almost always had an unbounded admiration. He is essentially the painter's painter. If, on the evidence of his pictures alone, one would be tempted to put El Greco thirty or forty years later than his actual date, it would be difficult to guess at any date at all for Velasquez. Certainly one would not put him earlier than the last quarter of the sixteenth century, but

he could equally have belonged to the late nineteenth century, not because the late nineteenth century copied his way of painting (though Manet did), but because his impersonal, unimpassioned view of life, and his complete control of his medium make him dateless. He is as free from mannerisms as El Greco is full of them, dividing his allegiance almost equally between the facts before his eyes and the demands of oil paint. For that reason perhaps art history and art criticism contain few purple passages about his paintings, and yet no critic or historian has failed to admire him. He glorified nothing – neither the earth like Rubens, nor the heavens like El Greco – and falsified nothing. He neither loved nor hated. He did not even comment except by implication. He saw things with a steady, imperturbable eye, and translated them with an unerring hand into paint whose quality is the envy of all painters. He was no mere photographer. He could plan his pictures to a nicety, as an architect might plan a building; but lyric poetry, and the remoter realms of the imagination, were beyond him. The famous Rokeby Venus in the National Gallery, compared with a Venus by Titian, is no more than brilliant journalism. In spite of its fame I have always considered it one of his least satisfactory paintings, with its tired, sagging curves and its efficient, joyless handling of paint, but Velasquez at his best (as in 'Las Meninas' (see Plate 20) or 'Las Lanzas'), Velasquez aiming steadily at a point he is sure of hitting, risking no failures through an attempt at poetry, has no rival.

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Spanish painting has always centred itself round the court life of Spain. Dutch painting, even more than Flemish, belonged to the people – the middle-classes of Holland. The heyday of Dutch painting was short-lived (it covered a period of about fifty years), but those few years saw an extraordinary outburst of artistic activity. For the most part Dutch painting is sober, unspectacular, and patient; innumerable little masters recorded the wide skies

and low horizons of Holland, homely interiors with their pleasant comfortable inhabitants, their possessions, their hobbies; the same sober domesticity fills all their canvases, giving them a grave, unhurried dignity that occasionally verges on profundity. It is unnecessary to name these little masters, but among them were one or two of larger stature and one giant.

The earliest of the bigger men was Frans Hals (1580–1666), whose portraits have an unfailing general appeal, though I personally find most of them detestable. They are said to be lively and full of character. Their liveliness seems to me based on a superficial sprightliness and their character on grimace. Portraiture, as the reader will have noticed, has been making increasing demands on the painter since the fifteenth century. In Italy, the Renaissance focus on man as an individual had given rise to unforgettable portraits. In Northern Europe the intense visual curiosity of Flemish artists had made portraiture a test of the artist's powers to differentiate the single individual from his fellows. The courts of Henry VIII in England and of Francis I in France had provided Holbein and Clouet with a busy lifetime of work. Philip IV in Spain and Charles I in England had appointed Velasquez and van Dyck as court portrait painters. Seventeenth-century Holland produced her own, less grandiose but more plentiful crop of sitters. Not only the middle-class burgher and his wife but also the little groups of men who formed the clubs, the local committees, the city councils were anxious to have their portraits painted. And it was in discovering how to translate into paint these groups of sober citizens, undistinguished except for their passionate pride in their own little activities, that Frans Hals showed his genius.

Group after group, in which as many as fifteen personages are gathered together in one canvas, show how brilliantly though superficially Hals could suggest the casual slight movement of an organized crowd, the coherence within the restlessness. These groups, like his single portraits, are painted with amazing facility and *bravura*, but the very complexity of the pattern, the orderly confusion of the whole, diverts one's attention from Hals's

weakness as a reader of character, and focuses it on his mastery of grouping and movement.

Pieter de Hooch and Terborch, both of whom specialized in painting Dutch householders, would be banal if it were not for their sensitiveness to those elusive shades of gesture and behaviour in everything that is implied by the word domesticity. Without this subtle intimacy they would be lost in the undistinguished mass of anecdotal painting to which their work gave birth. Vermeer of Delft (see Plate 21) added to their subtlety subtler qualities still – a sense of the fall of subdued light in interiors so finely adjusted that a fly settling on one of his canvases would produce an intolerable disturbance in its balance of hushed, golden tones. To this he added a technique which always baffled his imitators, despite the momentary success of a recent forger. It is puzzling to know by what process his translucent, liquid surfaces were achieved. They betray no trace of the human hand at work. His paint seems to have floated miraculously on to the canvas. Moreover, there is, in the painting of Vermeer, a curious aloofness, even a refusal to interest himself in the busy domestic life, crowded with trivial incident, that obsessed most of the *genre* painters of seventeenth-century Holland. In Vermeer, as in Piero della Francesca and Giorgione, action is suspended. Life seems to have turned itself into still-life. The lady reading the letter or standing at the virginals is no more and no less important than the white jug that stands on the table or the cello that lies against it. It is this aristocratic stillness imposed on a world made up of domestic trivialities that makes Vermeer so fascinating and so paradoxical a painter.

It was inevitable in a country in which neither the head of the Government nor the head of the Church were formative or influential patrons, that a new type of patronage should arise and a new type of picture should come into being to satisfy it. In the picture intended for domestic consumption, nothing mystical, none of the higher flights of visual poetry could be appropriate. Domestic paintings are necessarily modest in physical size and restricted in spiritual content. It was no wonder, then, that within

these restricted limits artists began to specialize. Landscape painting, marine painting, still-life, *genre*, portrait – each of these categories crystallized itself into a set pattern, and each artist chose his own category and kept fairly strictly to it. Even sub-categories came into being. Saenredam is known for his pictures of the interiors of churches, van Huysum for his opulent vases of flowers: the painter of shipping rarely turns his eyes inland: Adriaen van Ostade specializes in tavern interiors, Pieter de Hooch in elegant drawing rooms.

Consequently it is temptingly easy for the art-historian to become involved in a similar kind of specialization as soon as he comes to describe the art of mid-seventeenth-century Holland. It would by easy enough to produce lists of names and dates of artists each of whom performed his own circumscribed task with a competence and a devotion that approach perfection, and each of whom added his small personal contribution to the remarkably homogeneous flavour of Dutch painting. But to do so would not only overburden this brief account of the Dutch school with detail: it would give a false impression of Dutch art as a whole. For never was a school of painters so single-minded in spirit or so little dependent on the single genius. Far more important than the difference between the landscape painters van Goyen, Jacob van Ruisdael, Cuyp and Hobbema are the similarities that distinguish them, as a group, from the landscape painters of any other century or country. There is a far greater difference of mood between Claude and his Dutch contemporary van Goyen than between van Goyen and Ruisdael born thirty years later.

What unites them is a kind of serene contentment with the surface of everyday life, and what gives them their stylistic common factor is a wonderfully sensitive apprehension of the play of light. Light seems to permeate their landscapes, their interiors, their portraits, and their still-lifes. It is rarely used dramatically or romantically. It is rather a lubricant that binds everything into a visual unity. It emanates from the broad, over-arching skies of their landscapes onto the vast plain beneath: it enfolds the little thickets in the foregrounds, picks out the dimly-seen villages and

towns in the middle distances, explains and enlivens the spaciousness that leads to far-away horizons. It insinuates itself into their little drawing-rooms where the contented burgher makes music or drinks his glass of wine and into their kitchens where cooks and servants prepare unhurried meals. Never was so much solid prosaic material tinged with so much quiet, affectionate poetry.

The giant of Dutch painting is, of course, Rembrandt. And here the art historian has to gird himself for a special task. Not that there is any difficulty in assessing Rembrandt's stature both as an artist and as a painter. By every known test he is the giant not only of Dutch painting but of European painting. But at this point, in my reader's interests, I must make the confession that I have never been able to love him. Love is irrational but for the critic it is essential. Without it he may be just but he must inevitably be cold. If a list of the qualities essential to the make-up of every painter were to be drawn up – a list that would include not only purely aesthetic qualities like a sense of colour, of texture, of design, of how most effectively to dispose light and shade, how to suggest volume, recession, movement, and so on, but also human qualities like psychological insight or an understanding of the dramatic implication in the scene depicted – and if each painter were to be accorded marks in proportion to his possession of such qualities, Rembrandt would undoubtedly head the list with an accumulation of marks that no other painter could approach. Unfortunately in the presence of such a man the critic begins to suffer from his own limitations. It happens that the particular qualities that appeal most strongly to me are precisely those which Rembrandt lacks – among the aesthetic qualities, that of colour orchestration; among the human qualities, that of gaiety. To feel a little unhappy in the presence of a work of genius which has neither quality is my personal misfortune. Having made this apology I shall cease to obtrude my prejudices and attempt to sum up Rembrandt's achievements by the only method open to me under the circumstances, the method of the examiner who coldly accords marks for excellence.

Rembrandt shared with his Dutch contemporaries their intense

love of the sober spectacle of daily life in Holland. Cumulatively the whole school produced a record of the commonplace which achieved distinction only because it approached its task with real devotion and an unusually complete visual equipment. I have already explained (p. 46) what I mean by the word ' grasp ' in its application to the visual world. The Dutch painters possessed it to an unusual degree. With them that sentry in the brain which in most schools of painting refuses to admit certain aspects of visual experience as valid, is almost non-existent. The local, visible world in all its aspects is their province, and to none of them more so than to Rembrandt. But whereas in all other Dutch painters this gift was counteracted by a pedestrian quality of imagination, in the case of Rembrandt there was no such disqualification. Within the limits of his sober domestic world he was capable of rising to imaginative heights reached by no other artist. There was no question with him, as there was with the Italians, of creating a race of men and women more aristocratic or more heroic than those of everyday life. Rembrandt took the world as he found it – a queer place full of slums, castles, merchants, and beggars – and plunged passionately beneath its surface, extracting from the commonplace a wealth of meaning never suspected before and never exploited since. No one ever worked with a more limited range of subject matter – there is hardly anything in his paintings and drawings that could not be found on his own doorstep or in the houses of his friends or within a mile or so of Leyden or Amsterdam. But no one ever made so much out of so little. His portraits, often of middle-aged or elderly people, homely in both the English and the American sense of the word, have a serene profundity that seems to belong more to the realm of literature than to that of painting (see Plate 28a). In his religious pictures (in which all the *dramatis personae* are citizens of Amsterdam) Christianity for the first time since Giotto becomes an affair for ordinary men and women. Just as his eye took the whole world of phenomena in its stride, so his mind seems to grasp the whole of human experience of which religion itself is no more than one aspect. Rembrandt's breadth

of grasp is, in a sense, puzzling. What is one to make of a man who found as many pictorial possibilities in the interior of an old barn or the flayed carcass of an ox as in the human body or the story of the Crucifixion; who could combine in the same canvas a study of the complex and mysterious interplay of light on whatever object happens to lie before him with an essay in psychology or a revelation of human emotion; who could even so contrive it that the one seemed merely an aspect of the other; and who was moreover such a superlative craftsman that, without sacrificing freedom and spontaneity of brushwork, he could suggest the warmth, the resilience, the roundness of flesh, the roughness of cloth, the weight of stone, the depth and luminosity of sky?

By the examiner's standards Rembrandt has no rival. And yet how I wish he could give me more pleasure! How I long for him to be not quite such a heavyweight, and, more than anything else, that he could have had the final gift, accorded to so many lesser men – to Matisse, to van Gogh, to Carpaccio, to Fra Angelico for example – of knowing the meaning of the word colour. Rembrandt can do anything except rejoice. There is no nonsense about him. In that respect alone he is smaller than Shakespeare.

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It would leave a false impression if nothing were to be said in this chapter about baroque sculpture and painting in Catholic Europe. There is plenty of it, and of a high order too, but most of it tends to fade from the memory, not because it is not memorable but because it is, in the fundamental sense, baroque. It is almost always a part of a whole, a detail in a larger architectural conception, and it therefore loses its meaning when it is detached from its context. Who can remember the details of the statues on the west front of St Paul's Cathedral? Or Gaulli's fantastically theatrical ceiling painting, with its hundreds of flying figures, in the Church of Il Gesù in Rome? Yet they are by no means negligible, and both buildings would have a bald look without

them. Names of baroque painters and sculptors do not leap to the mind, for their work is hardly ever meant to be self-contained. They are like stage designers, working as part of a team, content that their contributions should be merged in the bigger ultimate effect.

Yet even as a contributor to an architectural ensemble, Bernini (1599–1680) manages to be arresting. In an age that specialized in rhetoric, at least in those parts of Europe that were not affected by the Reformation, Bernini's rhetoric is a little more pungent, a little more biting than that of his contemporaries. His statues and groups of statues (see Plate 17), his fountains and monuments are *tours de force*, but they are something more. Behind their virtuosity is a kind of swaggering sincerity. Three-dimensional baroque, especially in the churches of Austria and Southern Germany, plunged at the slightest provocation into melodrama, but Bernini and the Roman sculptors and sculptor-architects whom he influenced kept their exuberance in check and saved the currency of Italian baroque sculpture from the dangerous consequences of inflation.

16

France and England

The reasons why at a given time a particular country or city should become the radiating point for artistic activity are always complex, but, as we have seen, there has been only one period of any considerable length in the history of European art when there was no such single point of radiation. In the interval between the downfall of the Roman Empire and the dawn of the Renaissance political power was too vague to concentrate itself geographically and the organization of the Church was strong enough to distribute itself pretty evenly over the map of Europe. Apart from that period art had always harnessed itself to a cultural centre, and now it was the turn of Paris.

To-day we are so accustomed to thinking of the French as the painterly nation (as Germany is the musical and England the literary nation) that it is little surprising to find how small a part France had hitherto played in the history of the representational arts. There had been the magnificent outburst that produced the sculptures of Rheims and the windows of Chartres; and there had been schools of primitives among which that of Avignon produced one of the world's most moving paintings, the famous anonymous 'Pietà', and a 'Coronation of the Virgin' by Enguerrand de Charenton, painted in the mid 1450s, into which the artist has poured whole chapters of medieval imagery, enlivened and polished by a sophisticated French eye. Contemporary with these Avignon artists, Jean Fouquet, born in Tours, educated in Paris, strongly influenced by Flemish painters and miniaturists, but familiar with the work of his Italian contemporaries, produced the most accomplished paintings of his generation. Fouquet was no visionary. In his miniatures he was a passionately observant realist, an interpreter of the active life around him. His larger panel paintings contain some of the most robust and sympathetic examples of European portraiture. Later, the French kings,

especially Charles VIII and Francis I, were caught in the spell of the Italian Renaissance. Francis I induced Leonardo to execute commissions for him in France and when he came to focus the whole of his ambition as a patron of the arts on the great Palace at Fontainebleau, he again imported a group of Italian artists to decorate it.

Rosso (1494–1541), Primaticcio (1504–70) and Nicolo dell'Abbate (1512–71) brought with them to France the restless and rather strained Mannerism that was their Italian heritage, but which was soon tempered by the Gallic spirit. Italian restlessness became French elegance; paganism became sophisticated. The school of Fontainableau was short-lived but it has an undeniable charm, and it provided France with a pointer towards the stylishness of the following century. In Italy, Mannerism formed an awkward link with baroque. In France it led naturally into rococo.

Francis I, like his contemporary, Henry VIII in England, believed in importing his artists. There was little enough native French painting or sculpture in the sixteenth century, and even in the seventeenth Italy still remained a magnet. In France itself the three brothers Le Nain, uninfluenced by the Italian magnet, painted powerful little pictures of peasant families, pictures whose sinister intimacy and pathos have no apparent connexion with the worldliness of the seventeenth century. Their pictures, especially those by Louis, are painted with deep conviction but little pictorial science. It is difficult to imagine to what class of society their patrons belonged in that age of elegant wordliness. They reflect what current phraseology might call the underground movement behind the baroque façade. Of the French painters who felt the pull of the magnet one of the strangest was Georges de la Tour of Lorraine (1590–1652), an artist virtually forgotten until quite recently, but now rediscovered. At first sight de la Tour looks like an ardent disciple of Caravaggio who had exaggerated his master's tenebrist tricks but failed to achieve his vivacity. It is certainly true that most of de la Tour's characteristic effects depend on his delibrate use of candlelight or torchlight: it is equally true that his figures have a wooden look, as though they

were made of some hard material turned on a lathe. But these are merely the outwards symptoms of a temperament that appeals particularly to the taste of to-day. What interested de la Tour was a dramatic simplicity of *tone* which candlelight not only produced but made credible: and when he took the further step of rigorously simplifying *form*, he was able to evolve a style that combined the advantages of startling realism and near-abstraction. Just as the school of Fontainebleau turned Italian mannerism into something chic and elegant, so did de la Tour add a new Gallic stylishness and refinement to the tenebrism of Caravaggio.

But the two French artists of the seventeenth century who were most susceptible to the magnetism of Italy – so much so, indeed, that they abandoned Paris for Rome – were Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and Claude Gelée (1600–82). Poussin, like Raphael, had little of his own to contribute to painting. If the history of art is to be considered as a story of conquest, Poussin counts for nothing, for he made no new discovery. If on the other hand one regards it as a story of achievement he is important in the sense that Raphael is important, as a constructor, an architect of pictures. He would have been supremely happy in the late fifteenth century when all things Greek and Roman were tinged with a glamour that goaded artists to a frenzy of production. Poussin was born a hundred years too late. His painstaking, unemotional ingenuity of design has not even the spontaneity of Raphael. What Raphael did by his acute pictorial instinct Poussin did by an equally acute pictorial intellect. '*Je n'ai rien négligé*' was his smug comment on himself. One can find no fault with his reconstructions of Arcady except that they are so deliberately contrived. The glamour of Greece has gone, and with it the fervour of the Renaissance. He is rather like an earnest young philanthropist who has inherited a fortune and is determined to use it only in the noblest of causes. The solidity of Florence, the glow of Venice, the enlarged vision of the baroque masters were all at his disposal. He used them with infinite tact and discretion and devitalized them in doing so. Yet that devitalization had its compensations. The great artist is necessarily at the mercy of his

own genius. In extreme cases a lack of self-discipline or of restraint may lead him into the pitfalls of overemphasis and a resultant lack of formal coherence. No great artist has ever been unaware of this danger, for the power of art ultimately depends on the discovery of the exact formal equivalent for the artist's own creative urges, but not every great artist has escaped it. What distinguishes the classic artist from his fellows is his sense of the need for formal coherence and clarity, and no painter has ever possessed this sense more acutely than Poussin. His exact counterpart in literature is Racine. Dangerous though it may be to draw parallels between the arts, one can surely say that the steady, dignified beat of the French alexandrine finds an exact equivalent in Poussin's system of composition.

If proof were needed that dignity and clarity alone are not, in themselves, guarantees of greatness, one would only have to glance at Poussin's contemporary, Simon Vouet (1590–1649) who reduced dignity to suaveness and clarity to pedantry. As the founder of the official school of didactic painters under Richelieu's patronage, Vouet and his disciple Eustache le Sueur (1617–55) turned the theory of eclecticism into a chilly science. They attempted to persuade their patrons that an anthology of quotations from Raphael and Titian can pass as an original work of art. In so far as they suceeded it was because their patrons were themselves pedants: but they did not succeed entirely. They constituted a solid conservative body with strong official backing, but an unofficial opposition party soon became vocal. Endless debates on the relative merits of Poussin and Rubens, of form and colour took place in the French Academy. The debates themselves had, of course, no influence on the art of the time, but they provide evidence that classic theory in its extremest form had not captured the whole of seventeenth-century French taste. Poussin was not the only god.

Poussin's contemporary, Claude, has some but not all of the weaknesses that beset the self-consciously classic painters of his day. He at least had the courage to love nature enough to paint landscape for its own sake. It would be untrue to say that he was

the first to do so. Rubens had already seen possibilities in landscape, but Rubens had the voracious eye and questing mind that could see possibilities in almost anything. Claude, in concentrating on landscape, took a step that was to have far-reaching consequences, though he himself could not see what those consequences were to be. His own endeavour was not so much to enter into nature's moods as to show that landscape could in itself furnish material for a satisfying picture in the classical manner. He took the hint provided by Giorgione's 'Tempest', emptied it of figures or else reduced the figures to mere accents of colour or tone in the foreground, built up a framework by massing trees or buildings at the sides and then concentrated all his skill on leading the eye inwards through the centre of the picture into vast, light-laden distances. Claude has not the courage to venture right into the heart of untouched nature. For the purposes of painting, seventeenth-century nature still has to be dominated by man, with a ruined castle or a Corinthian temple to round off the unruly corners, but one can guess from his drawings that in treating her so he was merely following a convention. Those drawings never fail to evoke the surprised comment, 'But how modern!' The notion that a landscape could be a spontaneous expression of a mood or even a topographical record was a much later development and one that Constable was to exploit nearly two hundred years later.

Yet even though, to Claude, a painted landscape was essentially something to be created in the studio, built up out of stock ingredients, there was one element in his pictures that exists independently of this studio synthesis – namely the pervading light. It has already been noted that van Goyen, Claude's contemporary in Holland, and his followers, were becoming increasingly conscious of the impact of light on the broad expanse of landscape that formed the basis of their pictures. Light was, in fact, a seventeenth-century discovery, but whereas the Dutch painters used it to explain the lie of the land, for Claude it was a mysterious element that transformed everything on which it fell. Long after we have forgotten the absurd titles of his pictures, the little

foreground figures that furnish an excuse for those titles and the particular combination of tree, temple, and bridge in the middle distance, we remember the light that pours down mildly from the sky and touches each pictorial incident with a gentle, romantic mystery that is never to be found in Poussin. In Claude, we first discover the seeds of true romanticism. Those seeds were not to germinate till later, and not until they began to do so did Claude's painting enjoy the reputation it deserves.

It was not until the end of the seventeenth century that France began to produce an art that, instead of echoing the faded glamour of Italy, reflected the lively if equally artificial life of Versailles. Such an art could not be the outcome of stern adherence to classical creeds and the grand manner. That it came into being at all is a proof that at last the adherents of Rubens and colour had triumphed over the supporters of Poussin and form.

Watteau's short life (1684–1721) makes a bridge between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. He combines the worldliness of the one with the playfulness of the other. But one is interested in Watteau not because he was a representative of his period but because he penetrated beneath its surface. To be sure, the shiny veneer of the early eighteenth century at Versailles was not difficult to penetrate; but Watteau penetrated it without either hating it or rebelling against it. He accepted court life and court manners without being seduced by them. He is like Hamlet in his detachment, but he has none of Hamlet's gloom. He is merely heartbreakingly sad. It is a measure of his greatness that he reminds one of Mozart who can produce just the same effect of hinting at depths beneath the neat, formal pattern of his music. In Watteau's painting the formal pattern of court life is all there – the foppery, the infinite leisure, the endless round of love-for-love's sake, the elegance and the careful avoidance of material discomfort (see Plate 22), but behind all that is an acute nostalgia. Nothing lasts. His characters, languid and exquisite, snatch at the fading moment but they cannot arrest it. Death – no, not death; that is too blatant, too emphatic a word – oblivion rather, is just round the corner, lurking behind that shady tree, waiting

under the pedestal of the statue of the goddess of Love, ready to steal in and take possession of the scene.

With most painters a straightforward account of their style and mannerims will suffice: with Watteau it is the undertones and overtones that count. Stylistically he was a descendant of Rubens, but one realizes how far removed he was in spirit from Rubens when one finds oneself comparing him to Mozart and Hamlet.

Boucher (1703–70) has no overtones. He took the eighteenth century just as he found it and gave his employer, Madame de Pompadour, the exact brand of playful eroticism thinly disguised as classical mythology that she wanted. As a boudoir decorator Boucher leaves nothing to be desired. He can be frivolous without being trivial, elegant without being shallow, naughty without being salacious. Fragonard (1732–1806), the last of the true eighteenth-century French painters, has all the sensitiveness and sentiment of Watteau but none of his depth. With him the age of pseudo-Venuses and pseudo-nymphs and shepherds comes to an end. Already even in Fragonard there are hints of a more serious view if life. Love is usually his theme but it is becoming a little less flirtatious; his lovers are not quite so idly engaged in wiling away the time.

I have already pointed out that artistically the eighteenth century was not a creative period. Each painter took what he wanted from the material to hand, and out of it evolved a mood that suited the time. There is no such thing as eighteenth-century vision: visual curiosity and aesthetic experiment are alike absent. Their places are taken by the artist's personal reaction to life – Watteau's sadness, Boucher's eroticism, Nattier's flattery, Fragonard's sentiment. Only one painter, Chardin (1699–1779) stands aloof from the rest. Chardin alone interested himself in the more permanent and universal aspects of life, painting a bottle of wine and a loaf of bread with as much interest and affection as he would bestow on a portrait of a mother putting the finishing touches to her little girl's toilette, and finding rich material in both. In outlook he is one of the little Dutch masters of a century earlier; his sense of domesticity is as subtle as Terborch's, but, being

a Frenchman, his touch is lighter, more elusive, more playful. His eye moves to a quicker tempo and is more alert than that of any Dutch painter to those subtle psychological and dramatic relationships that link a mother with her little daughter or a teacher with her pupil.

Chardin is perhaps the only eighteenth-century painter with whom the artist of to-day can feel a close kinship. In his painting all the pompous dialectics that centred round the French Academy, the exaltation of the grand manner and the noble style have been forgotten. At last a saucepan or a dead rabbit will give the painter all he needs in the way of a problem to solve. It is important to note this difference in spirit between the still-lifes of seventeenth-century Holland and those of Chardin. The former are faithful records of an aspect of Dutch everyday life: the latter are merely excuses for a pictorial exercise. They shed no light on eighteenth-century attitudes of mind. They are Chardin's way of asserting that he is primarily a painter, and a superlatively good one. He is neither a recorder nor a moralist. Watteau, looking back to the past, brought Rubens up-to-date. Chardin, prophetic of our own time, anticipated both Courbet and Cézanne.

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French art has always had two characteristics, logic and stylishness. Both are the marks of a civilized people. Logic in French art shows itself in the French artist's habit of formulating a theory before beginning to paint. If Uccello had been a Frenchman he would have foregathered with his friends in the cafés of Montparnasse and announced the birth of a new school of painting – 'Perspectivism'. Paris has given birth to one 'ism' after another in its logical devotion to theory. Stylishness is another matter. It is the result of never allowing the end to be out of tune with the means. Paint is a language: stone is a language. Both speak in visual terms. Paint deals with colour and pattern; stone with shape and mass. Attempt to make those languages express something they were never meant to express and your Frenchman at once loses

interest. He has little use for a Blake who tried to make paint behave like literature. Paint, says the Frenchman, is meant to be seen, not read. It deals with qualities like colour, structure, pattern. Hence the stylishness of men like Matisse, Cézanne, or Ingres. They attempt to solve no problem that is not a painterly problem.

After the airy Rococo of the eighteenth century came the first logical reaction, the Neo-Classic school headed by Jacques Louis David (1748–1825). Neo-Classicism, that curious archaistic movement that resulted from so many divergent causes – the discovery of Herculaneum, the revolt against the frivolity of the court, a dawning sense of democracy inspired by Rousseau – was very much in the air in the late eighteenth century. It was to the political solidity and the republican virtues of Rome, not, as was the case with Poussin, to the cultural splendour of Greece that this subsidiary Renaissance looked. The result was a stiffening up of standards, moral, political and artistic. It is odd that the French Revolution, superficially wild and dishevelled, should have had an ardent supporter in David whose style was so stiff and precise and so conscientiously noble. One would have expected the Byronic romanticism of Delacroix to have been the kind of painting to accompany a social upheaval. But the romantic wave came later. Ingres (1780–1867), David's pupil, equally conscientious in his classicism, and a far more proficient organizer of form within the boundaries of his canvas (see Plate 24a), became human only when he had a portrait to paint. Then his sitter, together with his own supple sense of line, melted the hard Neo-Classic crust. Some of his portraits have a flesh-and-blood vitality that is surprising in view of his self-imposed creed.

Delacroix (1798–1863) headed the Romantics, rebelling against his predecessors not only in his subject matter but in his way of painting. Rubens was his ideal as a painter, but he had none of the organizing power of Rubens. Byron was the poet of his choice, but the lonely, wild-eyed Byronic gloom is more effective in literature than in art. Delacroix's method in painting is more interesting than his individual pictures. It is a method that had

to be evolved if he was to fulfil his ambitions as a painter.

The word 'romanticism' which attaches itself so easily to Delacroix and his contemporary, Géricault, cannot be defined. To us, whose eyes and ears have been trained to detect the romantic overtones, sometimes faint, sometimes overpowering, that are implicit behind all truly creative art, the word is not a very useful one. To the generation that watched the development of Delacroix's art and realized that there was a fundamental cleavage between his outlook and that of Ingres, it was an inescapable word. To feel more at home with Byron and Shakespeare than with Corneille and Racine is not a French characteristic. And when Delacroix began to develop a style in which intensity of emotion counted for more than perfection of form (see Plate 24b), it became evident that a new situation had arisen in which the opposition between Classicism and Romanticism was to become a major issue. Yet Delacroix was by no means the kind of man to imagine that good painting could be done in a fine frenzy. It is true that he rediscovered Rubens and leaned on him more heavily than Watteau had done, but those who have read his journals will know that he was a man of immense intelligence, self-analytical to an unusual degree, and that he pondered on questions of craftsmanship and aesthetics as deeply as Ingres.

Delacroix set himself to become as sensitive in his handling of colour and surface as Ingres was in line and composition. And knowing that in order to succeed in his own programme he must preserve the spontaneity and the energy that Ingres had never tried for, a more vibrant surface, a freer brush stroke was a necessity – never uncontrolled or undisciplined but always charged with the vitality of his original creative impulse. In the midst of his struggle to achieve this vitality, he chanced to see a landscape by Constable that was being exhibited in Paris in 1824. It gave him a fresh insight and a fresh impetus. At once he repainted the big 'Massacre of Scio' on which he was engaged, and in doing so, forged a fresh link in the chain that led finally from the later Titian and Rubens to Impressionism.

One massive figure whose whole tendency was romantic but

who hides his romanticism under a cloak of satire was Daumier (1808–79). Most of Daumier's life was occupied in producing many thousands of lithographs for publication in current periodicals. No man who worked as hard as he did could produce masterpieces consistently, but the best of Daumier has the power of strong acid. His subjects were picked from a wide field, but in all of them he concentrated, with an intensity that is often terrifying, on aspects of contemporary life. Scenes from the intimate daily life of working men and women, biting commentaries on the legal profession, scathing political satires poured from his pen day by day and week by week. It was only at the end of his life that Daumier had leisure to paint and freedom to shake off the emotional and propagandist obligations in which the satirist is always involved. In these paintings he reveals himself as a sort of miniature Rembrandt with a passion for the macabre or the picturesque.

Meanwhile, undisturbed by the rival Classic and Romantic factions, a group of painters had withdrawn themselves from Paris and had retired to the country round Barbizon to experiment in a new approach to the painting of landscape. With the Barbizon painters the historian feels that he is at last within measurable distance of his own day. They are the subject of the opening paragraphs of his penultimate chapter, and for that very reason they have for us the dowdiness that always belongs to the beginnings of contemporary things. An early motor-car is dowdier than a stage coach just because the motor-car is part of to day's currency: the stage coach cannot be old-fashioned, it is merely obsolete. What is 'modern' in the Barbizon landscapes is that, unlike those of Claude or even Constable, they were painted on the spot. The contemplative attitude that creeps in as soon as a painter retires to his studio to 'build up' a picture from the sketches he has made was never allowed to intervene between them and their paintings. Rousseau, Corot, and Millet were the best of them. Rousseau clung with single-minded devotion to nature as he saw it. Corot was a poet and the only one of the group who possessed the classic vision that can turn a record,

however precise, into a picture. In later life he popularized himself by slipping into an easy formula of willow trees and twilight though he still retained his wonderful feeling for harmonies of silver-grey and muted green. Millet preached the dignity of peasant labour, and invented that noble stereotyped figure that persists to the present day as a representative of toiling peasanthood and is known to a thousand front parlours through the medium of 'The Angelus' and 'The Sower'. The art of Millet has travelled a long way from the lighthearted naughtiness of Boucher.

It was at this point that a figure of rather larger stature and more aggressive temperament appeared. Courbet (1819–77) shared with the Barbizon painters their devotion to nature, their avoidance of the artificial or the idealized. But his robust peasant nature had none of their modesty or humility. The realism that they practised quietly he magnified into a programme, with the result that in his larger works there is a certain element of bravado and defiance, and perhaps more than a trace of vulgarity.

Courbet's programme rejected both classicism and romanticism. It was, in effect, a plea for the completest possible expression in art of the appearance and the events of everyday life. Other painters before him, notably Louis le Nain, Chardin, and even Millet and Corot, had made the same assumptions but without feeling the need to adopt Courbet's defiant and revolutionary tone of voice. His enormous canvas of the Burial at Ornans – a scene set in his native village, in which the villagers themselves were neither idealized nor romanticized – was exhibited in the Salon of 1850. Its appearance was the signal for one of those outbursts of indignation which we, to-day, find it difficult to understand. This was neither mythology nor history. It was not even recognizably *genre* painting. Yet surely it must have a moral or political message. Merely to describe an everyday happening had never been, and never could be, an artist's sole purpose. Courbet must be a 'socialist'; he must be what we now know as a 'social-realist'. He must be attempting to undermine the old régime by introducing ordinary men and women into the

places previously occupied by gods and heroes or even odalisques or allegorical symbols of liberty and martyrdom. Even Courbet's landscapes had an earthiness and a density that was suspect. No Venus could rise out of those rough, untidy seas, no nymph could dance under his extremely prosaic trees.

We, who see Courbet only as a remarkably good painter passionately in love with nature, cannot share the indignation of his contemporaries. Yet it is important that their indignation should be recorded here, for it proves that Courbet had made an attempt to break down the pedantic prejudices that had been so carefully built up by the French Academy. Those prejudices now seem to us ridiculous but it is not we but Courbet and his kind who have swept them away.

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Before referring to the history of French Impressionism, the logical successor to Courbet and the Barbizon School, I must turn back to glance at England.

English painting has a queer, disjointed history. It always seems to be getting into its stride and then exhausting itself. Or else it produces isolated geniuses like Blake or isolated movements like Pre-Raphaelitism which refuse to fit into any ready-made art historian's pattern of development. Like France, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, its eyes were turned outwards. Just as France had imported from Italy the artists who decorated the palace at Fontainebleau, England imported a series of painters from Northern and Central Europe. Under Henry VIII it was a German, Hans Holbein (1497–1543), who became portrait painter to the king and Holbein's influence on his English contemporaries was almost wholly in the direction of portrait painting, and curiously enough, of miniature painting. The most distinguished of the Tudor and Elizabethan portrait painters were the miniaturists Nicholas Hilliard and Isaac Oliver. Rubens visited and worked in England under Charles I, who subsequently appointed a Fleming, van Dyck, Rubens's pupil, to be his court painter. Under Charles II,

Sir Peter Lely, a Dutchman, painted court beauties with conventional stylishness but with quite an exceptional sense of colour. It was not until the advent of William Hogarth (1697–1764) that England produced an art as native to herself as his contemporary Boucher's was to France. Hogarth was defiantly insular, refused to pay the customary homage to Italy, detested the grand manner, painted vigorous portraits without a hint of flattery and rarely turned his eyes away from contemporary life. In doing this he became a moralist and was tempted to preach sermons in paint. His pictures are none the worse for that. He is never led away, as Daumier was to be in his lithographs, into flights of moral indignation about the vices of the age. Rather did he see them as amiable, though sometimes sordid weaknesses (see Plate 23), and he laughed at them without any undercurrent of indignation. His laughter was hearty and robust. He cannot be dismissed as a 'literary' painter, for the adjective becomes derogatory only when paint is used for ends that could have been better achieved by a novelist or satirist. Few artists have misused paint less than Hogarth. Even the most didactic of his sermons are painterly in conception though in his insistence on making his narrative and his moral clear he was often tempted to overcrowd his pictures with explanatory detail. His anecdotes are always reconstructions of the drama behind the event, not a superficial rendering of the event itself. His most important innovation was the invention of the 'Conversation Piece', the group in which the personages are linked together by some mildly interesting psychological thread. The Dutch *genre* painters had already pointed the way to this type of painting, but Hogarth gave it a slightly new twist. His Conversation Pieces have a liveliness and an immediacy that the seventeenth-century Dutchmen never quite achieved.

William Blake (1757–1827) must appear at this point in the story, though he has no place in it. Any reference to Blake in a history of art is bound to have the air of a parenthesis, unconnected with what came before or with what was to come after.

Blake appears suddenly, *à propos* of nothing, an isolated

phenomenon, as disturbing as a meteor to an astronomer engaged in cataloguing the fixed stars.

The masterpieces of European art have usually been biggish things. There is, of course, no particular virtue in size, but if one picks a hundred well-known works at random, ninety of them will probably be more than, say, four feet square. Most of Blake's masterpieces are not much larger than a quarto sheet of paper: some of them (the woodcuts to Thornton's Virgil, for example) have an area of less than three square inches. Blake made no contribution to the vision of his time. Indeed it was impossible for him to do so, for he worked, so to speak, with his eyes shut. The kind of straw of which other artists make their bricks – a well-stocked visual memory based on an observant eye – was almost unknown to Blake. The raw material out of which his drawings were made was of the shoddiest. Never having studied the human figure at first hand, he fell back on engravings after Michelangelo and Raphael and the worn-out architectural idioms of the Gothic revival. With this deplorable equipment, but with an exceptional mastery of line, learned through his training as an engraver, he produced some of the most powerfully evocative drawings ever made. Had he attempted to work on a larger scale the incompleteness of his visual knowledge would probably have betrayed him, but working as he did in water-colour or with the engraver's burin he managed to condense whole universes on to a page of a book. They were universes in which only a visionary could move and breathe easily. Yet it is not the visionary quality but the vividness of his art and his poetry that makes both so memorable. To Blake, the timeless world of his mystical imagination was just as concrete as was the material world of eighteenth-century London to Hogarth.

Reynolds (1723–92) and Gainsborough (1727–88) are too well known to Englishmen and Americans to need appraisement. What is significant about them as a pair (and their names like those of Dickens and Thackeray are so often linked that one is inclined to think of them as ill-assorted twins) is that they seem to foreshadow the cleavage, frankly admitted to-day, between academic and

non-academic art. I shall not attempt to define the terms, but the word academic implies a reverence for the art of the past which too often acts as a brake on spontaneous creative impulse. Academic painters (Reynolds is an excellent example) do frequently succeed in maintaining their own creative head of steam in spite of this reverence: and non-academic painters have been known to fail because they had no sense of tradition to back up their own creative impulses. But it was at about this time that the opposition between the two became apparent. Reynolds thought (or professed to think) that a portrait could be admirable because it caught the spirit of Raphael or Annibale Carracci: Gainsborough considered that a portrait should catch the spirit of the sitter as seen through the particular temperament of Gainsborough.

Perhaps both were deflected into portraiture from their natural spheres by the demands of their day. Portraiture has flourished in England since Holbein's time, but never to such an extent as in the second half of the eighteenth century. It seems fairly clear that had both artists been released from their obligations to paint the men and women of their time, Gainsborough would have gravitated into landscape painting, Reynolds to history pictures and the Grand Manner. Each of them followed his chosen side-track far enough to show what he could do when he was 'off duty' (if Sir Joshua could ever be said to be off duty), and it is by no means certain that either of them would have enhanced his reputation if he had been allowed to follow his bent. Sir Joshua's best portraits solve the pictorial problem with scholarly mastery and considerable human insight: his history pictures do not. Gainsborough had an intuitive, opportunist genius and a gently caressing brush stroke better adapted to portraiture than to landscape. Both stand head and shoulders, as painters and as portraitists, above their contemporaries. The imitators of the academic Reynolds possessed neither his scholarship nor his technical ability: imitators of Gainsborough were few and all of them lacked his genius for improvisation.

I have perhaps overstressed the distinction between the two attitudes in so far as it applies to Reynolds and Gainsborough,

but there is a very real and a very disheartening distinction between them to-day. Tradition-worship can be dangerous if the tradition-worshipper forgets that new traditions can be brought into being only by men whose reverence for what is old can give way before their urgent desire to create something of their own. No one would deny that if Giotto had felt more respect for Byzantine tradition, or if Bellini had not outgrown his reverence for Mantegna, European painting would be considerably poorer. And yet our contemporary academies are filled with work that adds nothing (because it has nothing to add) to the Impressionist tradition established by Monet and Pissarro sixty years ago.

Impressionism as a technical term dates back to 1874; but as a way of looking at nature its roots can be traced as far back as the beginnings of baroque art. Many of Michelangelo's unfinished statues are impressionistic in essence; so is most of Titian's late work. All Constable's innovations led in the direction of Impressionism. Delacroix's modifications of Rubens's technique came from hints picked up by Delacroix from Constable. Turner's work from, say, 1840 onwards is purely impressionist in method though not in intention.

Impressionism, as a self-conscious creed, is simply an attempt to emphasize a particular aspect of visual truth that had been either overlooked or not consciously emphasized by previous painters. By the year 1863 the sentry which allows the visual messages transmitted by the eye to penetrate to the brain only after a rigorous censorship, had admitted most aspects of visual truth by a process of gradual infiltration, but there were two that had not yet officially passed the censor. They were (1) the colour and vibration of light and (2) the density of air. No one had ever painted the true colour of sunshine and shadow, no one had fully exploited the sensation that light *dances* (though Watteau, Constable, and Delacroix had all hinted at it) and hardly anyone had thought it worth while to suggest that the density of the air is not always constant, that a picture could be painted, for instance, of a landscape seen through a heavy mist or fog. But both these visual discoveries were, fundamentally, subheadings of a larger

discovery. What the Impressionists did, almost without knowing it, was to realize the phenomenon of *transitoriness*. The artist who carries his canvas out into the open air and attempts to record every nuance of what his eye sees is in a very different frame of mind from the artist who constructs his picture in his studio from a series of preparatory sketches or studies. His eye may not be more searching but it becomes conscious of a different set of visual data. He becomes less and less concerned with the nature of the object – figure or landscape – he happens to be painting, and more and more conscious of the *appearance* of the object at a particular moment of time. For Monet, at work on a picture of Rouen Cathedral, what his eyes encountered was not a Gothic structure but an envelope of air of a certain density through which the Cathedral could be seen and by which its appearance was modified with every shift of light. For him, therefore, his very subject matter was altering its nature at each hour of the day. Since, therefore, the emphasis in every Impressionist painting, is on the moment of time, it was natural that the Impressionists should deliberately seek out momentary effects. In a painting by Monet of the entrance to the Gare St Lazare (see Plate 26a), the most arresting features are not the iron bridge and the building behind it, but the steam that drifts under the bridge and the locomotive, deliberately placed on the extreme left in order to give the impression that it is on its way out of the picture. Such selected moments in time are the keynote not only of those landscapes by Monet, Pissarro, and Sisley in which one is always aware of the time of day, the season of the year, the precise strength of sunlight or the density of the atmosphere, but also of the figure compositions of Degas and the later work of Manet, in which the true 'subject' of the painting is the sudden turn of the head of a waitress in a café, the momentary gesture of a dancer or a woman ironing or trying on a hat in a milliner's shop.

These problems were tackled by Claude Monet (1840–1926) and Camille Pissarro (1830–1903) to the exclusion of a great many of the qualities which previous artists had considered essential. What made their pictures seem queer and unacceptable to their

contemporaries was as much the omission of these old qualities as the inclusion of the new ones. If, for example, Monet had built up his compositions on classical lines with a stone pine on one side and a ruined temple on the other, instead of painting a haystack at sunrise or a slice of the west front of Rouen Cathedral at sunset, the storm aroused by the first Impressionist pictures might have been avoided. But it was by no means the first storm of the kind. When Constable, in his endeavour to render the exact state of the English weather, the tumbled clouds, the vivid green meadows, the foliage of trees sparkling as it moved in the wind, evolved for his purpose a nervous, shimmering brush-stroke, with broken tones flecked with pure white, there was plenty of violent protest, although Constable was experimenting solely in the interest of truth. It was precisely that same broken brush-stroke that the Impressionists used in their attempt to carry Constable's innovations to their logical conclusion.

There is no need to repeat here what was said in an earlier chapter about the effect of Impressionism on the painter's palette. But it is worth repeating that the movement furnishes the clearest instance in the history of art of a new visual discovery, made in a spirit of pure research, which produced in the long run a new kind of beauty. In the short run it produced what most critics of the 1860s were pleased to regard as a new type of ugliness. To them it seemed ugly, not because its colour schemes were more violent and its outlines more vague than in the art with which they were familiar, but simply because they themselves were too insensitive to recognize the essential truth of these new qualities, and because they were still hankering after their tree in the foreground and open space in the centre.

Impressionism then is the final attempt of the nineteenth century to paint just what the eye sees. 'Monet is only an eye. But what an eye!' said Cézanne, fastening in these few words on the virtues and weaknesses of the whole school. Its virtues were that it enlarged visual experience, widened the bracket once more. Its chief weakness was that its exponents were entirely at the mercy of nature. The *kind* of truth it fastened on was the truth of the

passing moment, the 'impression' that a man would retain on his retina if he allowed himself to look at a given scene for a few seconds only. The brooding, contemplative attitude (which accounts for instance, for Turner's later paintings of light) is utterly rejected by the Impressionists. Monet carried out the Impressionist programme conscientiously. It was the painter's supreme attempt at complete objectivity. If nature, during any particular quarter of an hour, was 'off colour' (and nature is often guilty of surprising lapses) Monet would blindly follow her into a morass of chromatic bad taste. His own sense of colour harmony was sometimes deplorable. Camille Pissarro had not quite the same brilliantly objective attitude to paintings; in him there is an undercurrent of affection that tempers the ruthless analysis of Monet. Sisley (1839–89) was an equally clear observer, but his range, was narrower; he was content to record the more 'normal' conditions of light and in consequence his landscapes avoid the appearance of being 'stunts' that Monet's often give.

These three formed the shock troops of Impressionism. Manet (1832–83) and Degas were associated with the movement but they specialized less furiously in telling the Impressionist truth and nothing more. They were better artists if only because their interests ranged beyond the mere 'look' of things. Complete objectivity is an impossibility; even the camera cannot achieve it, for the man behind the camera who selects his length of exposure, his subject matter, his time of day, cannot help imposing his choice even on the machine. As far as a human being can achieve it, Manet did so. Before him perhaps Velasquez was the painter who least obtrudes his own temperament, and it was to Velasquez and, to a lesser extent, to Frans Hals, that Manet turned at first; and it was in homage to Velasquez rather than to Titian that he painted his 'Olympia'. He was more conscious of the impact of light than Velasquez, and of the way in which light interferes with local colour, but except in his later, *plein air*, sketches done under the influence of the Impressionist landscape painters, he did not adopt the 'divisionist' technique by which Monet strove to render the vibration of light. Degas arrived by a different route

at the effect given by the Impressionists, of having taken a random eyeful of nature and pinned it with one swift movement on to canvas. Degas was not particularly interested in the impact of light, but he was fascinated by something equally transient – the unpremeditated gestures of everyday life. His eye pounced with the swiftness of a hawk on such gestures, and he gave them an additional air of naturalness by picking up at least one hint from the camera. The camera cannot compose a picture. It merely takes a portion of what is before it and cuts it off like a slice of cake. It has no compunction in slicing, say, right through a figure it has no sense of balance, of symmetry. Out of this haphazard treatment Degas evolved a new system of composition. He gives the impression of a snapshot, casual and fortuitous, but for all that there is nothing casual in his design. The balances is as careful as in any composition by Poussin, and much more daring. I have no space to analyse his pictures here, nor is it necessary to do so. Degas made a subtle art of seeming casual. His characters have the air of being taken unawares, yet they never have that appearance which the camera invariably gives, of having been frozen in mid-gesture. Degas's most able follower was the English Sickert, who, without having Degas's hawk-like pounce, saw life in much the same way – taking unawares the fascinating little accidents that make up its sum. Degas recorded them with some measure of disillusionment; Sickert did it with a kind of painterly chuckle.

It might be supposed that this central discovery by the Impressionists of the phenomenon of ' transitoriness ' would be outside the scope of sculpture, yet one great sculptor can certainly claim to belong to the movement. Auguste Rodin (1840–1917), like all great sculptors, was basically concerned with the expressiveness of the human body as ' form '. Had he belonged to an earlier generation (he was born in the same year as Monet) he would no doubt have been an avowed follower of Michelangelo, for he had the same feeling for nobility of gesture. But he too became fascinated by the play of light and the bronze surfaces of his figures are designed to catch it in an elusive rippling movement

unlike that of any other sculptor. Instinctively Rodin discovered those momentary gestures – the determined stride of a St John the Baptist, the tired stretch of an Adam, the proud defiance of a Balzac – that would give added meaning to this ripple of light. But it is his surfaces rather than his gestures that link him so firmly with his painter contemporaries.

The reader may perhaps have gathered from my introductory chapters that this intense pursuit of the thing seen that characterizes the whole of the Impressionist movement is not particularly sympathetic to me. Brilliant though the best exponents of Impressionism were, there is something essential that they lack. Merely to record, to be ' only an eye ' is not quite enough. If you ask what else they could have done, in what way they could have harnessed themselves to the less superficial strata of life, I cannot answer. I can only say that the men who came after them, the Post-Impressionists, seem to me to penetrate deeper. Perhaps I can make the distinction clearer by saying that when Cézanne or van Gogh painted they *created* something, whereas Monet and Sisley merely *caught* something. That, of course, is only half the truth, but it is an important half-truth to grasp. It constitutes the turning point, as I see it, in the whole direction of art at the end of the nineteenth century. It is perhaps too early to be dogmatic, but I believe that with Cézanne the pendulum that Giotto started swinging in the direction of realism came to a pause and that it has now begun to swing back, just as it did at the beginning of the Byzantine era.

Monet and Degas snatched at visual experience; Cézanne and Picasso construct and reconstruct *on a basis* of visual experience. In doing so they are far closer to the main tradition of art than their predecessors.

The one Parisian artist in the Impressionist group who is firmly established in the main tradition is Renoir, who made free use of the Impressionist palette and its heightened range of colour for his own sensuous purposes. Paint to him was a medium – the only possible medium – for expressing his optimistic and half pagan attitude to Nature and his worship of feminity. In his

particular feeling for the splendour of the human body he was almost a Greek, but instead of thinking of it as a noble splendour he felt it as an adorable splendour. His women are neither goddesses like Titian's, nor bourgeois amazons like Rubens's, they are not naughty like Boucher's, nor exquisite like Watteau's. They are women seen as a child might see its mother, soft and rounded and radiant (see Plate 27b). All Renoir's paintings have this quality of radiance – his landscapes and his portraits as well as his *baigneuses*. Above all, Renoir's art was the exact opposite of Monet's, in that it was not at all concerned with the transient. His sunshine is eternal sunshine, and even though, for him, feminity happened to have taken up its abode in the ample pink and white body of his cook, or his model of the moment, it was still the eternal feminine.

I have written as though the only significant art produced by the nineteenth century were Impressionist. That is by no means true. From my chapter on Spain I have omitted Goya, the last twenty-eight years of whose life were lived in the nineteenth century. And in describing the Impressionist movement in France in this chapter I have broken both the logical and the chronological sequence. The reader will have noted occasional references to Turner and Constable as unconscious pioneers of the movement. It will be appropriate at this point to refer in more detail to those two giants of nineteenth-century British painting and to add a note on British art during the second half of the century, in particular that strangely anachronistic movement, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, and the slow infiltration, through the medium of Whistler, of Impressionism into England.

Goya (1746–1828), the last of the great Spaniards unless one includes Picasso, forms a link between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much as Watteau does between the seventeenth and eighteenth or El Greco between the sixteenth and seventeenth. And like both of them he is a lonely figure, too personal to fit into the spirit of his day, and yet compelled to serve a royal patron. How he managed to retain his position as court painter when he so consistently refused to flatter his sitters is

a mystery. His big group of King Charles IV and the whole Spanish royal family is an exasperated commentary on small vices – meanness, bad temper, snobbishness, arrogance, self-indulgence. When his bitterness is not aroused Goya is a superb and sympathetic portrait painter (see Plate 29a), second only to Rembrandt in profundity, ahead of Hogarth in liveliness. His portraits are all of people thinking, talking, explaining – being themselves in fact, not merely sitting for their portraits. And the pearly, unforced quality of his paint makes Gainsborough look coarse by comparison. Goya was a robust hater of hateful things. He had none of Hogarth's laughter. In his series of etchings, 'The Disasters of the War', he omits nothing in the emotional sequence that runs from pathos to tragedy, from indifference to ultimate cruelty, and in the etchings he called 'Caprichos' and 'Proverbs' he gives free rein to an imagination that can be fantastic, macabre or satirical according to his mood.

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The names of Constable and Turner (1775–1851) are as closely linked in the history of landscape painting as are those of Reynolds and Gainsborough in portraiture. It is equally tempting to contrast them, and the contrast is in every way more striking, yet both were equally products of their age – an age in which landscape painting was rapidly altering its basic character and in which the artist was adopting a more intimate and therefore a more romantic attitude to natural phenomena. This highly emotionalized attitude, which could only have occured in the early nineteenth century, was so profoundly modified by the temperament of our two painters that their styles seem to be diametrically opposed.

What Constable achieved was inevitable. That close, affectionate attitude to Nature, the sheer love of trees and meadows, cottages and driving clouds (see Plate 25b) which he expressed so triumphantly was part of the spirit of the age. It appeared at the same time in poetry as well as in painting, and if Constable had not used

his observant eye and his sensitive brush in order to evolve a new kind of landscape, some other artist would have done so. That is not to belittle Constable or to deny his genius, but merely to point out that his originality and the remarkable innovations for which he was responsible were in the direct line of development of European art at that moment in the early nineteenth century. Looking back along the course of that development one could almost prophesy, after the event, that there had to be a pioneer to forge a link between the landscape art of Rubens and the Dutch masters of the seventeenth century and that of the French Impressionists of the late nineteenth century. It happened that the forger of that link was John Constable. To his contemporaries his vision and the style evolved by him to express it were unfamiliar, daring, and not a little puzzling. To us they seem so normal that if we were asked to name an artists almost completely free from eccentricity or mannersims, we should probably hesitate between Velasquez and Constable.

It has already been noted that Impressionism was essentially the art of capturing the fleeting moment. In Constable's work one sees the first step in that direction. The appearance of the shifting clouds, the sparkle of tossing foliage after a shower of rain – in a word, the *weather*, is the subject of most of his pictures. But not merely the weather, but the English weather: one might almost say the weather of his own corner of East Anglia.

If Constable was a parochial artist, convinced that everything a landscape painter needed could be found within a few miles of his home, Turner was a universal one. His incessant urge to wander drove him, sketchbook in hand, throughout the length and breadth of England, along the rivers of France, up the valley of the Rhine, into the peaks and glaciers of Switzerland, over the Alps to Venice, to Florence, to Rome. His creative genius was both more profound and more personal than that of Constable. I myself feel convinced that Turner is one of the greatest figures in the history of European art and certainly the greatest of all British artists. Perhaps the ultimate test of his stature is that despite his undoubted weaknesses – particularly a strain of theatrical vul-

garity to which he sometimes yielded when he was tempted to 'outpaint' men of his own time and to challenge such artists of the past as Claude, Watteau, and Rembrandt – he still remains a giant. Water colour was the medium in which the best of his work was done, though his oil paintings were many and some were masterpieces. But his innumerable water colours are miraculous in skill and inexhaustible in mood. And as his style matured he gradually enlarged the possibilities of the medium, especially in its capacity to suggest the mystery of dazzling, enfolding light (see Plate 25a), until, in his old age, light seems to dissolve form. Yet even in his later visionary sketches, the structure behind the light is still understood and implied.

Where Constable *observed* Nature, Turner identified himself almost pantheistically with her. The tangible world of plains, mountains, glaciers, clouds, and tempestuous or calm seas, provides him with a firm basis: yet all these seem to be caught up and transformed by the forces of nature. Where Constable recorded the particular weather of the particular day, Turner generalized his weather, as though it were a manifestation of a mythology of his own discovering.

The French Impressionists naturally admired Constable more than Turner, for their whole intention was to be accurate, not impressive. Yet in the end they came nearer to Turner than to Constable. Monet, at the end of *his* life, was producing work that had a strange resemblance to Turner's, though he arrived at his destination by a different route. The west front of Rouen Cathedral, seen through the red haze of sunset by the analytical eye of Monet, was very like the same scene viewed by the romantic eye of Turner. Truth, under certain conditions, can be as strange as poetry and as impressive.

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Out of the dull level plain of English mid-nineteenth century painting rise three minor but interesting elevations. On the subject of the pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood I find it difficult to write

without bias. So many contemporary critics whose opinions I usually respect are apt to dismiss the whole movement with an exclamation of impatient scorn that I am tempted alternately to overpraise it and to wonder whether I am a victim of one of those unreasoning loyalties that have their roots in a childhood's love. Granted that British art tends to have a literary flavour, and that the pre-Raphaelites can be as anecdotal as Hogarth and more literary than any other set of painters in history, I cannot see why they should for that reason be scorned as artists. All painters (with the exception of certain twentieth-century puritans who will be mentioned in the next chapter) have been *au fond*, illustrators. Giotto describing the meeting of the Virgin Mary and St Anne, or Chardin describing the texture of a loaf of bread are both equally engaged in a descriptive task. They are not better or worse painters for having done so. What made them good painters was their power to find equivalents in paint for their feelings about the Visitation or a cottage loaf. Both of them felt intensely, both of them visualized completely, and both of them were good craftsmen. To my mind pre-Raphaelites at their best pass all three tests with honour, and at the their worst they are still a little better than their not very distinguished contemporaries.

The movement was not a simple one. It started as a protest against the artificiality of the ' grand manner ', which, in the view of Millais and Holman-Hunt, had its origins in Raphael. It was a plea for honest, searching vision that avoided nothing, omitted nothing, and above all conventionalized nothing. Hence their passion for detail and their devotion to the particular as opposed to the general or the ideal. Their impatience with post-Raphaelite art led them to a study, necessarily superficial, of the Italian and Flemish primitives, but having none of the instinctive Italian largeness and nobility, it was from van Eyck and his kind that they had most to learn. They were, in fact, ' eye witnesses ' in exactly the same spirit as the Flemish primitives. But in addition to this (purely aesthetic) motive force they had a streak of romanticism of an escapist kind which attracted them into a past of their own imagining. They projected themselves into a

medieval worl of vivid colour and stressed pattern and even at first adopted a certain archiastic Gothic gaucherie, though their own acuteness of observation never allowed this to go too far. Millais entered this medieval world through the poems of Keats, Rossetti through those of Dante, Burne-Jones through his admiration of Rossetti. Holman Hunt, the pedestrian of the party, never shared this romanticism; Madox Brown, the psychologist of the group, used the pre-Raphaelite formula with a strongly personal twist that is sometimes reminiscent of Hogarth.

But in spite of their escapism and their mannerisms I am convinced that a handful of the best of their work is immortal, for they were escaping *to* something that they adored and their mannerisms were founded on an emotional intensity that is rare in art. Madox Brown's 'Work' and his frescoes in the Manchester Town Hall, Millais's 'Autumn Leaves' and his 'Lorenzo and Isabella', and Rossetti's early water-colours are original works of art of a very high order. I suspect that the present fashionable attitude to the pre-Raphaelites is partly due to the accident that none of their best paintings happen to be in London and partly to the fact that in the later stages of the Brotherhood all its members fell from grace. Millais lost his ardour, Holman Hunt descended from sentiment into sentimentality, Rossetti became the slave of his own mannerisms, Burne-Jones's world of dreams degenerated into a world of fancy dress.

G. F. Watts (1817–1904) is equally under a cloud to-day, but for a different reason. He was not an illustrator but a preacher, an allegorist, with a moral to be read in each of his allegories. Chesterton, in an essay on Watts which entirely overlooks his merits as a painter, has pointed out in some detail how thoughtful his allegorical essays were. Chesterton is right, but Watts could have been an atrociously bad artist for all that. Unlike the pre-Raphaelites he had no prejudice against the grand manner. In fact it is precisely because he was one of those rare spirits to whom the grand manner came quite naturally (certainly the only one in the history of British painting) that he is so considerable a figure. To compare him with Titian would be absurd, though he has some

of Titian's grandeur and breadth. What makes him memorable is his command of impressive gesture, not the empty rhetorical gesture of Michelangelo's followers, but the unexpected attitude that conveys a state of mind or of character. Good examples of this power are the outstretched threatening arm of Death in his 'Love and Death' and the bowed back of the rich man in 'For He Had Great Possessions'. But even though popular opinion may discount Watts's nobility because it regards it as ponderous, there can be no doubt about the quality of his portraits. The National Portrait Gallery contains at least a dozen masterly interpretations of Watts's great contemporaries, searching interpretations of character, with an unusually penetrating grasp, in each case, of the *kind* of greatness summed up in men as different from each other as Tennyson, Swinburne, William Morris, and Matthew Arnold.

Whistler (1834–1903) is not yet outmoded. The twentieth century likes Whistler. He was impish, a cynic, a poseur, a rebel, but, like Velasquez and Manet, a remarkably able painter. Had he been a contemporary of Velasquez he would probably never have been heard of, for he would have had nothing to rebel against, no target for his cynicism, no one to shock with his acid witticisms. But he came just at the right time to prick the bubble of Victorian priggishness and to preach the doctrine of 'art for art's sake'. Japanese prints and willow-pattern china made an innocent enough background for his aestheticism, which he somehow contrived to make positively naughty. He managed to turn himself into a legend that still lives by the simple expedients of being a dandy, possessing a caustic wit and calling his pictures 'symphonies'. His chief contribution to nineteenth-century English painting is to have brought back simplicity to it, at a time when it was frittering itself away on making painstaking records of trivial detail. The battle that Whistler fought, and won, in England had already been won by Manet in France. In fact, it is perhaps insufficiently realized that Whistler himself, during his early years in Paris, had a very considerable influence on the development of French painting. Someone had

to prick the Victorian bubble in England, and no one was more competent to do so than Whistler, but the bubble would eventually have deflated itself in any case. Whistler was an ambassador rather than a leader.

17

The Twentieth Century

Any account of the art of the century to which the author and his readers belong must suffer from a lack of that detachment with which both find it easy enough to look back into the past. Particularly is it difficult to be detached when author and reader belong, as they do to-day, to a period of transition in which old traditions are being jettisoned and new ones built up. Art historians, by their very nature, are bound to accumulate a set of loyalties to the past which assert themselves as soon as the present throws down its challenge. Their attitude to what is 'modern' becomes emotional and slightly hostile whenever that challenge is uttered. Art critics, on the other hand, whose everyday life brings them into closer contact with the present, tend to be equally emotional and unnecessarily defiant when confronted by this hostility: their attitude becomes both aggressive and defensive.

This is an inevitable situation. One cannot regret it, for both art history and art criticism (which are indistinguishable as long as the critic-historian is dealing with the past) would be valueless unless they were based on enthusiasm. It is only when enthusiasms find themselves in conflict that the historian becomes dangerously biased and the critic loses his sense of proportion.

The reader must, therefore, accept this chapter with a certain amount of wholesome suspicion. Try as I may to achieve the same measure of detachment that characterizes earlier chapters, I am aware that the attempt cannot quite succeed. History cannot be decently written at the very moment when it is being made: values cannot be weighed while they are still fluid.

What is certain, however, is that during the last decades of the nineteenth century a revolution was brewing and that towards the end of the first decade of the twentieth it manifested itself in an extreme form – or rather in a number of extreme

forms, for though it is natural for revolutionaries to agree as to what, in the old régime, they wish to destroy, it is inevitable that when they come to replace the old régime with a new one, they should disagree as to the form it is to take.

By the middle of the seventies, Impressionism had established itself in Paris. The battle fought by the Impressionists had been won against all but the most conservative of the critics. Their brilliant attempt to capture the fleeting moment, startling though it had been at first, was accepted as a respectable programme. The 'snapshot' effect that Degas had introduced into figure painting and Monet into landscape, we can now recognize, after a lapse of three-quarters of a century, as the last assault, in the long cycle that had begun with Giotto, on the world of appearances.

Georges Seurat (1859–91), Paul Cézanne (1839–1906) and Vincent van Gogh (1835–90) may seem, at first sight, to have little in common, yet as soon as one begins to put into words their answer to the basic question, 'What is the painter's main objective?' it becomes evident that all three were convinced that Impressionism had no part in that objective. To capture the fleeting moment seemed to all three of them trivial and unworthy. Something far more fundamental was needed if art was to retain its serious purpose. Impressionist painting, they could all have agreed, had become too dependent on the physical eye. Merely to observe the ephemeral and then to record those observations in paint was not enough.

In the theory and the painting of Seurat French logic found its fullest expression since Poussin. The theory that a painting, even though it contains recognizable subject matter, is primarily an arrangement of colour and form within the rectangle of the canvas is familiar enough to-day. It has been repeated in different words by many twentieth-century artists. 'Remember', said Maurice Denis, as early as 1890, 'that a picture – before being a battle-horse, a nude woman or an anecdote – is essential a plane surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order.' To Seurat the establishment of that 'certain order' was of the utmost importance. The picture was, in fact, a manufactured object

deliberately designed to produce a calculated effect on the beholder. Its formal rhythmus and its colour harmonies might be reinforced by the subject, but what mattered was that the picture should offer to the eye a purely architectural harmony (see Plate 27a). It did not occur to Seurat to carry the theory to its logical conclusion and, by dispensing with subject matter altogether, to invent abstract art: but in an age of specialists, the step from Seurat's pure pictorial architecture to abstract art was an inevitable one. It was taken by Kandinsky in about 1910.

That same pictorial architecture which Seurat imposed on his picture Cézanne endeavoured to discover in nature. 'Study nature' was his battle cry, and, in his mind, a searching analysis of the structure of nature was not at all the same thing as the close observation of nature initiated by Constable and practised by the Impressionists. The extraordinary density of the forms in Cézanne's pictures, the closely knit organization of his landscapes (see Plate 26b), the effect of his having discovered a way of building up structure by means of modulated colour – all this makes him a far more formidable and influential revolutionary than Seurat. Set beside a portrait, a still-life or a landscape by Cézanne, any Impressionist picture becomes invertebrate, any picture by Seurat calculated and artificial. In his work the moment has been forgotten, and with it the sense of a time of day or a condition of the atmosphere, even a season of the year. Who remembers the weather, the movement of the clouds or the sparkle of foliage in a landscape by Cézanne? He set himself the formidable task of extracting from nature the solid geometry that was implicit behind the mask without losing sight of the mask. Raphael, in his day, had done the same, but Raphael was backed by the tradition of a whole century while Cézanne was endeavouring to establish, single handed, a new tradition – or, as we see it now, to re-establish a lost tradition.

Van Gogh's programme, equally revolutionary, was simple by comparison but more spectacular in its results. It consisted in expressing himself with furious intensity and in discovering on his canvas the visual equivalents of that intensity. The restless,

muscular rhythms of his brushstroke (see Plate 29b) and his purely emotional use of colour were inventions which almost every twentieth-century eye can now understand and accept. Van Gogh is a popular artist. Once the controlled violence of his method had been understood his genius was almost universally acclaimed.

On the foundations provided by these three the main structure of ' modern ' art has been and still is being erected. Art as pictorial architecture, art as the analysis of structure and art as the expression of a state of mind – these are by no means new ideas, but the combination of the three in different proportions and at the expense of all other aspects of art had not occurred before. Nearly all truly contemporary painting and sculpture can be traced to one or another or to an eclectic amalgam of the three, and what is noteworthy in the art of to-day is the fact that the artist has no hesitation in carrying them to the furthest possible extreme.

Extremism – the logical pursuit of a theory – was first observable in Paris, the natural home of theory and logic. It is in the paintings of Picasso, Braque, and Kandinsky in the second half of the first decade on this century that one first realizes how far painting was prepared to go along the route marked out by Seurat and Cézanne. If Seurat pointed the way to abstract art, Cézanne's example inevitably led in the direction of Cubism. The expressionism originated by van Gogh found the cultural soil of Paris less sympathetic to its full development. Expressionism, as a self-conscious programme, found more enthusiastic exponents in Norway, where Edvard Munch developed it with reckless impetuosity, and in Central Europe where there had always been a tendency to hysterical over-emphasis. The sublime and often sadistic exaggerations of Grünewald provided a precedent for the wholehearted expressionism of Oskar Kokoschka and a considerable school of German painters. But the example of van Gogh was felt, in a modified form, in Paris, where the short-lived experiment of ' fauvisme ' produced a series of pictures recognizable by their heightened key of colour and complete freedom in the handling of paint.

One other specifically ' modern ' extremist movement – Sur-

realism – should be mentioned at this point. It was (one speaks of it in the past tense since in its most extreme form it was short-lived though its influence has been profound) an attempt to isolate the illogical dream-world of the unconscious mind and present its symbolism in the most realistic manner. Here again, there was nothing new except a logical attempt to push the illogical to its extreme limits. The symbolism of the unconscious levels of the mind has often provided art with its most potent effects. Indeed it could be said that poetry and music could not exist at all unless they drew freely on these levels.

Surrealism in painting, however, as a self-contained programme, is absurd. Consciously and philosophically to paint the territory of the unconscious mind is a contradiction in terms. What Surrealism succeeded in doing, during its brief heyday, was to make us all aware of vast tracts of experience and of subject matter that had never been fully exploited before. Such movements, incapable, in their purest and therefore most completely sterilized forms, of giving complete satisfaction, are immensely useful for the enrichment they can supply to the central tradition. Surrealism has done as much to increase the potentialities of subject matter as has abstract art to enlarge our sensitivity to pure form.

Abstract art, Cubism, and *Fauvisme* can therefore be regarded as the three main sources of 'modern' art, though doubtless their legitimate ancestors, Seurat, Cézanne, and van Gogh would all have been somewhat surprised to realize how complete was the revolution they had inaugurated. During the experimental period between the two world wars it became evident that the conception of painting, inaugurated by the Renaissance, as an interpretation of the world of visible phenomena, had completely broken down and that the validity of a work of art could no longer be tested by asking the simple question, 'What aspect of visual experience does it illuminate?' The relevant question is now, 'To what extent and to what purpose have the three revolutionary movements been assimilated and combined to produce a work of art that is recognizably "modern"?'

The word 'modern' used, as it is to-day, as a semi-technical

term to describe a period style is a little confusing and unfortunate. An adjective that should mean no more than up-to-date, and which has always been used in that sense, has now gathered to itself a new set of connotations which future lexicographers will have to take into account. We are accustomed to think of the world we live in as developing more quickly, shedding its old fashions and evolving new ones more rapidly than it did in the past. Yet to-day the word ' modern ' appears to have acquired a ' frozen ' meaning. If, for example, the early style of Titian were to have been labelled ' modern ' by Venetians of the year 1520, the same word could certainly not be applied to pictures by the same artist executed fifty years later. The kind of ' development ' that occurred during those fifty remarkable years has certainly not taken place during the last half century. What was ' modern ' in 1906 is still ' modern ' in 1961. The situation, noted in an earlier chapter, in which the sudden innovations of Giotto were followed by a period of relative stylistic paralysis, seems to be repeating itself to-day.

Perhaps it is one of the inevitable laws of evolution that revolutionary periods are followed by periods of stylistic stagnation, or perhaps the more accurate word would be digestion. The language of art – the vocabulary of form at the artist's disposal – has enlarged itself emmensely since Picasso painted ' Les Demoiselles d'Avignon ' (surely the first major landmark in ' modernism ') in 1906. The stylistic possibilities open to the painter and sculptor of to-day seem so limitless, now that he has shaken off his once strict obligations to the world of ' appearance ', that he is bewildered and even stultified by his own freedom. He can move in any direction, provided it is in a direction *away from* any of the kinds of realism practised between Giotto and Renoir. And though his new found freedom does not embarrass him it certainly weakens the impact of his art. Not to be harnessed – or rather to be harnessed to an aesthetic theory instead of to a human or a religious cause – is to be deprived of an immediate purpose, for the movements of a man out of harness are unpredictable and apparently capricious, however sincere or purposeful they may

seem to the man who makes them. They are, in fact, movement for movement's sake, which is hardly distinguishable from art for art's sake.

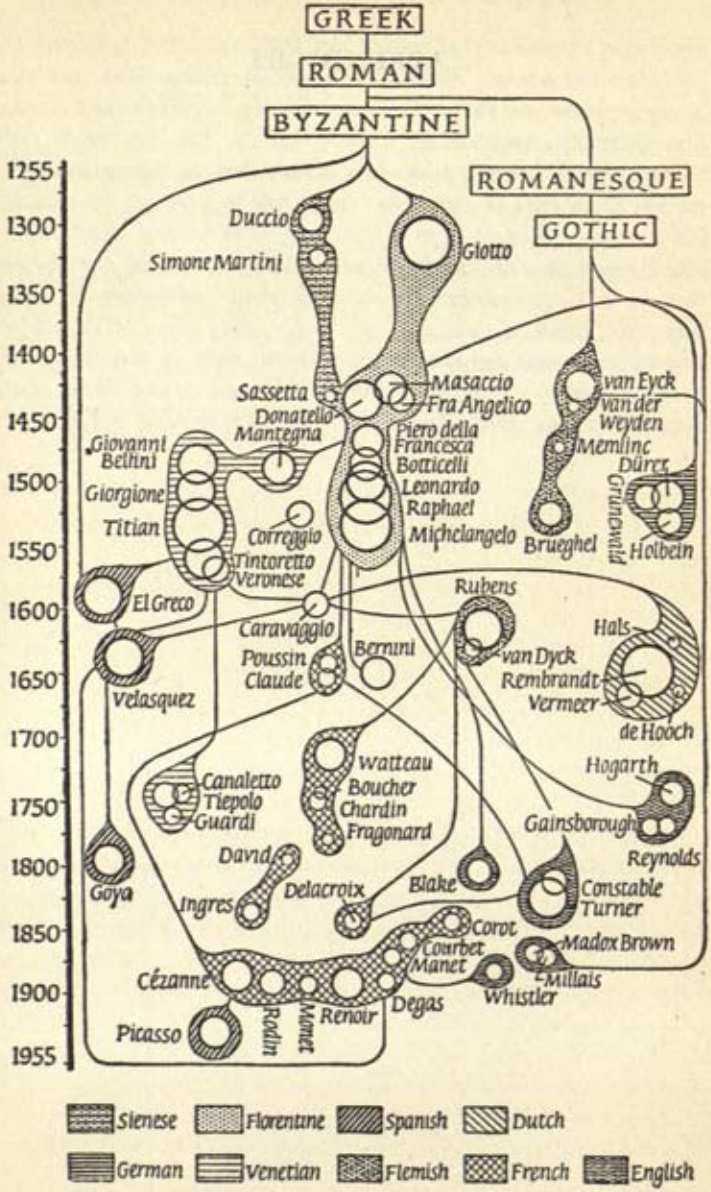
I am far from pessimistic about the present situation. Periods in which the potentialities of the artist's means of expression were enlarged at the expense of the thing-to-be-expressed, have happened before and they have invariably been followed, in the long run, by an increase of the total potentialities of art. As I see it, the present, the 'modern' phase of painting and sculpture is no more than another instance of *reculer pour mieux sauter* that invariably follows a period of revolution. It is irritating, of course, to know that one will not live to see the new potentialities realized: that the moment of which one writes is a moment of primitivism in which foundations are being laid for a structure that one cannot foresee. It was easier for a contemporary of Michelangelo to look into the past and complacently point backwards at a period of progress than for a contemporary of Giotto to peer into the future and guess at a Michelangelo as yet unborn.

Not only is history an easier mode than prophecy. It is also more satisfying. The reader of this chapter will doubtless have observed that it has been entirely concerned with new attitudes to art rather than with new achievements. But he must forgive me if I refuse to embark on an assessment of the individual achievements of twentieth-century painters and sculptors.

There has been no lack of such achievements and many of them are, by any standards, of a very high order indeed. No one has exploited the potentialities of the artist's language more eloquently or more ingeniously than Picasso (see Plate 31), no one has used it with more refinement than Braque or with more joyful elegance than Matisse. No one has linked more imaginatively than Paul Klee the full result of the artist's grammar and syntax with the unconscious levels of human experience. No one has explored with such monumental simplicity the possibilities of sculptural form as Henry Moore (see Plate 32b). In England, always more romatic in its approach to painting than the Latin countries, Graham Sutherland specializes in inventing 'presences'

of a remarkable intensity and uses colour harmonies of a peculiarly arresting, acid quality personal to himself. Such a list could be extended idenfinitely but to do so would serve no useful purpose. This short account of the history of European painting and sculpture would be incomplete without a general description of the current meaning of the word ' modern ' as applied to the art of our time, but to attempt to fill it with specific detail would destroy the pattern of the book as a whole. At a moment when *modes* of expression have become so engrossing it is almost impossible to think in terms of the difference between talent and genius. Yet it is with the distinction between the two that this book, in all but its last chapter, has been mainly concerned. It is a distinction that only posterity can make with any confidence.

APPENDICES


GREEK
ROMAN
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1800
1850
1900
1955
Duccio
Simone Martini
Giotto
Sassetta
Masaccio
Fra Angelico
Donatello
Mantegna
Giovanni Bellini
Giorgione
Titian
Piero della Francesca
Botticelli
Leonardo
Raphael
Michelangelo
Correggio
Tintoretto
Veronese
El Greco
Caravaggio
Poussin
Claude
Velasquez
Bernini
Rubens
van Dyck
Rembrandt
Vermeer
Hals
de Hooch
van Eyck
van der Weyden
Memlinc
Brueghel
Dürer
Grunewald
Holbein
Watteau
Boucher
Chardin
Fragonard
Canaletto
Tiepolo
Guardi
Hogarth
Gainsborough
Reynolds
Goya
David
Ingres
Delacroix
Blake
Constable
Turner
Corot
Courbet
Manet
Madox Brown
Millais
Whistler
Cézanne
Degas
Renoir
Monet
Rodin
Picasso
Sienese
Florentine
Spanish
Dutch
German
Venetian
Flemish
French
English

Note on the Diagram

Some apology is due for the unshapeliness of the facing diagram, but I would rather it were unshapely than uninformative. The information it is intended to convey is complex, though I have reduced its complexity to a minimum. If I had attempted to work it out in greater detail it would have become impossibly intricate.

The diagram is concerned with the chief schools of European painting from Giotto to the present day. It attempts to indicate:

(*a*) Their relative importance (by the area of the shaded masses).
(*b*) Their approximate dates (see the time-scale in the left-hand column).
(*c*) The principal artists (each represented by a circle).
(*d*) Their relative importance (by the size of the circle).
(*e*) Their dates (the centre of each circle is placed on the central point of the artist's productive life).
(*f*) The threads of influence between schools and between artists.

I had intended to work out the diagram on the basis of my simile of a river, but the development of artistic traditions is not quite as simple as the course of a river. A river springs from its own tributaries, but it cannot split into tributaries. Artists not only assimilate the influence of previous artists: they also radiate their own influence. Moreover, a map of a river system gives no indication of the force of the current.

As the diagram is largely based on my personal opinions, each reader will doubtless wish to modify it to suit his own. Is Goya really so detached from the main current? Is Hogarth as big as the diagram suggests? And is Cézanne as small? Had Holbein no artistic progeny? Are the pre-Raphaelites worth including?

One aspect of the diagram is bound to be particularly controversial. I have been rash enough here (by the size of the circles)

to indicate my own estimate of their ' importance '. If I am asked what principle has guided me in making this estimate, I can only reply that ' importance ' in any given case depends on so many factors that there can be no question of following a principle. Michelangelo, for example, is a limited artist, but so powerful within his limitations that he must be given the highest rank. Whistler would probably not have been included at all had he been born at any other time: his importance depends on his contrast with his contemporaries. Poussin depends on his ingenuity and intergrity (and not at all on his originality); Cézanne, on the impetus he gave to his followers. Rubens's fame rests on the cumulative effect of a mass of work. Masaccio's on the intensity of a tiny handful of frescoes, Vermeer's on his perfection, Constable's on his honesty, Turner's on his imaginative vision. Holbein is great because he faced up so squarely to the world he lived in, El Greco because he created a new one.

I am aware that the diagram gives the impression that all the giants of European art belong to the fairly remote past and that the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been only productive of talent or mediocrity. That is inevitable, since the stature of genius depends as much on the existence of opportunity as on the power to seize it. In the sixteenth century Renoir would probably have been as big a man as Titian because Venice would have used him to better purpose than Paris did. In an age in which the artist is no longer a major ingredient in the social fabric it is difficult for him to attain to full stature. He is driven either to aesthetic experiment on the one hand or to the purely personal expression of his own temperament on the other, and in neither case can he develop his full potentialities. Isolated instances do still occur of artists who have been provided with big opportunities, even in the twentieth century, but they are the exception, not the rule.

Classified List of Artists

This classified list of 265 painters (including a few outstanding sculptors) could, of course, have been extended almost indefinitely. It includes, at least, the names of those artists who, from the beginning of the thirteenth to the end of the nineteenth centuries, have made the most important contributions to the European tradition.

Any classification must hesitate between a chronological and a geographical method. Both have disadvantages. Divisions between centuries are arbitrary and influences overflow from one century into the next. The same overflowing – especially in later ages – confuses any attempt at national or geographical arrangement. The method I have adopted is purely opportunist – a common-sense mixture of the two.

The reader will realize that the descriptive notes to each artist or group of artists are necessarily over-simplified in the interests of brevity. He is recommended to enlarge on them by consulting the mass of specialist literature, and by studying their works, whenever possible, at first hand.

Dates of births and deaths before the middle of the sixteenth century are often conjectural. Dates about which art-historians disagree are marked '?'. Dates about which trustworthy evidence is lacking are marked 'c'. 'Op.' is followed by the earliest and latest dates at which the artist was known to be working.

No attempt has been made to give the full names of artists. The names given are those by which the artist is generally known or which would be naturally used in conversation, whether they are 'nicknames', like Botticelli or Tintoretto, christian names like Raphael, surnames like Signorelli or Dürer or full names like Piero di Cosimo or Rogier van der Weyden.

Where an artist is described more fully in the text than would be appropriate in this appendix, the brief notes have been omitted. Page references are given in the case of artists mentioned in the text.

THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURIES

The thirteenth century marks the first emergence from the medieval attitude of mind, but only in Italy, and mainly in Northern Italy. Elsewhere, throughout Europe, art, though plentiful and vigorous, is largely anonymous and therefore outside the scope of this appendix.

ITALY

Nicola Pisano *c.* 1220–*c.* 1278. p. 124.

Cimabue (Giovanni Cimabue) ?1240–1301. No authentic paintings known. According to Vasari, Giotto's master. Evidently transitional, in style, between Byzantine formalism and Giottesque realism. p. 98.

Giovanni Pisano. *c.* 1250–1320. p. 125.

Giotto (Giotto di Bondone) ?1266–1336. p. 94.

Daddi, Bernardo. Op. 1317–48. Follower of Giotto. Weaker, but with an added Sienese elegance.
Orcagna (Andrea Orcagna). Op. 1348–68. Sculptor and painter. The most powerful of Giotto's immediate followers.
Duccio di Buoninsegna. Op. *c.* 1278–1319. p. 102.
Pietro Lorenzetti. Op. 1306–48, and his brother Ambrogio. Op. 1319–48 were the liveliest of the early Sienese painters, though not the most exquisite. p. 104.
Simone Martini. 1284–1344. p. 104.
Jacopo della Quercia. 1367–1438. p. 126.

NETHERLANDS

Claus Sluter. 1350–1406. Sculptor. Born at Haarlem. Introduced a new liveliness and an element of portraiture into the carvings done for the Duke of Burgundy between 1380 and 1400, thus leading the way to a subsidiary Renaissance in Northern Europe. p. 166.

FIFTEENTH AND SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

The period of the Italian Renaissance. Italy is the artistically creative centre of Europe, but the Netherlands, and to a less extent, France, are beginning to assert themselves. Many cities of Italy have sufficiently distinguishable styles to justify a subdivision into regional schools of painting, but in the fifteenth century Florence is the dominant force. In the sixteenth century the Florentine spirit produces a rather dreary progeny of manneristst and eclectics. But Venice, during the same century, retains her full vigour, and the Venetian School shows no signs of decadence until its last quarter.

ITALY

FLORENCE

Lorenzo Monaco. *c.* 1370–*c.* 1425. Master of Fra Angelico. Sienese by birth, but Florentine by temperament. A gentle, charming, small-scale painter. p. 107.
Ghiberti (Lorenzo Ghiberti). 1378–1445. p. 126.
Donatello (Donato di Niccolo de' Bardi). 1386–1466. p. 127.
Fra Angelico (Guido di Pietro). 1387–1455. p. 107.
Paolo Uccello (Paolo di Dono). 1397–1475. p. 113.
Luca della Robbia. 1400–82. p. 127.
Masaccio (Tommaso di Giovanni). 1401–28. p. 108.
Lippo Lippi (Fra Filippo Lippi). 1406–69. Influenced by Masaccio, but gayer and more agitated in style, and more romantic in treatment. p. 116.
Andrea del Castagno. *c.* 1420–57. Virile and insistent upon characterization, sometimes to the point of harshness. p. 114.
Agostino di Duccio. 1418–90. p. 128.

APPENDIX 2

Benozzo Gozzoli (Benozzo di Lese). 1420–97. Pupil of Fra Angelico, but entirely without his deep religious sense. A delightful decorator. p. 107.

Baldovinetti (Alesso Baldovinetti) *c.* 1426–99. A more important painter than his surviving work suggests. Historically significant as the master of Pollaiuolo, Verrocchio, and Ghirlandajo.

Pollaiuolo (Antonio del Pallaiuolo). 1432–98. p. 116.

Verrocchio (Andrea del Verrocchio). 1435–88. p. 117 129.

Botticelli (Alessandro Filipepi). 1444–1510. p. 118.

Ghirlandajo (Domenico Bigordi). 1449–94. Accomplished, unimaginative, and pedestrian, he made effective use of the Florentine tradition of his generation. p. 119.

Leonardo da Vinci. 1452–1519. p. 131.

Filippino Lippi. 1457–1504. Lippo's son, Botticelli's pupil. Characterized by a refined and rather mannered melancholy. p. 119.

Piero di Cosimo. 1462–1521. A painter of strange lyrical fantasy with a truly pantheistic outlook. He stands a little apart from the intellectual spirit of Florence. p. 120.

Michelangelo (Michelangelo Buonarroti). 1475–1564. p. 134.

Fra Bartolommeo (Baccio della Porta). 1475–1517. Influenced and was influenced by Raphael, but had little of his genius. Recognizable by a monumental serenity and sweetness.

Sodoma (Antonio Bazzi). 1477–1549. A curiously uneven painter, memorable at his best for the invention of noble gesture but incapable of true High Renaissance grandeur. p. 134.

Raphael (Raffaello Santi). 1483–1520. p. 137.

Andrea del Sarto. 1486–1530. Pupil of Piero di Cosimo. Led the way into the eclecticism that produced Florentine decadence. Sentimentalized the virility of Michelangelo and softened the austerity of Raphael, but still retained the grandeur of the Florentine High Renaissance. p. 140.

SIENA

Sassetta (Stefano di Giovanni). 1392–1450. One of the last in line of true Sienese painters. The Medieval outlook lingers on in his charming and graceful works. p. 101.

UMBRIA

Gentile da Fabriano. *c.* 1370–1427, and

Pisanello (Vittore [or possibly Antonio] Pisano). Before 1395–1455. Delicately and richly patterned in style: Gothic in their love of detail and incident. In addition, Pisanello had a stylishness that one thinks of as more French than Italian. p. 106.

Domenico Veneziano. Op. 1438–61. An influential painter though few authentic works survive. More atmospheric and radiant than his contemporaries in Florence. p. 114.

Piero della Francesca. ?1416–92. p. 120.

Melozzo da Forli. 1438–94. Pupil of Piero, from whom he derived his intellectual and scientific integrity, but little of his serene poetry. p. 122.
Signorelli (Luca Signorelli). ?1441–1523. Also a pupil of Piero, but shows no trace of his influence. Temperamentally a Florentine, with a fanatical obsession with the human figure in action derived from Pallaiuolo and passed on to Michelangelo. Virile but somewhat harsh and unsympathetic. p. 122.
Pintoricchio (Bernardino di Betto). *c.* 1454–1513. A splendid large-scale decorator and narrative painter. Never pedantic and never profound. p. 122.
Perugino (Pietro Vannucci). *c.* 1445–1523. Raphael's master. Exquisite refinement and serenity in his figures and spacious landscapes, but limited in range of expression by a too-consistent sweetness of mood. p. 122.

MILAN

Foppa (Vincenzo Foppa). Op. 1456–1515. Founder of the Milanese School. Fortunate in that he was born early enough to escape Leonardo's influence.
Boltraffio (Giovanni Antonio Boltraffio). 1467–1516. p. 133.
Luini (Bernardino Luini). *c.* 1475–1532. p. 133 and
Ambrogio de Predis (Giovanni Ambrogio Preda). *c.* 1455–after 1508. p. 133. The most important of a group of artists bewitched rather than influenced by Leonardo. Luini made consistent and charming use of the Leonardesque smile, but had none of Leonardo's intellectual power.

FERRARA

Cosimo Tura. *c.* 1428–98, p. 145.
Cossa (Francesco del Cossa). *c.* 1435–*c.* 1477. p. 145 and
Ercole Roberti (Ercole d'Antonio de' Roberti). ?1450–96. p. 145. This group centred round the court of Ferrara. The two latter were influenced by the former whose vivid, metallic style has the air of a protest against the suave elegance of contemporary Florentine painting. His forms are tortured in a way that today's phraseology would call 'expressionist'.

PADUA

Squarcione (Francesco Squarcione). 1394–1474. His importance depends less on his own paintings, which are scholarly and pedantic, than on his influence as a teacher, especially on Mantegna. p. 144.
Mantegna (Andrea Mantegna). 1431–1506. One of the most impressive and uncompromising of Renaissance painters. Inspired by a reverence for Classical sculpture as he knew it. A steady and impeccable draftsman. Heroic in mood and conception. p. 144.

VENICE

Jacopo Bellini. 1400–70. Father of Gentile and Giovanni. Settled with his

family in Padua and thus subjected his sons to the direct influence of Mantegna. Unimportant as a painter, but his sketch books, bequeathed to his sons, were a constant source of inspiration to them.

Gentile Bellini. *c.* 1429–1507. Learned from his father the Venetian doctrine of 'figures in space' and painted the earliest of the Venetian 'pageant' pictures.

Giovanni Bellini. *c.* 1430–1516. p. 146.

Crivelli (Carlo Crivelli). *c.* 1430–1495. Developed the elaborately decorative side of early Venetian painting. p. 149.

Antonello da Messina. *c.* 1430–79. Born in Sicily, visited Northern Europe and thence brought the Flemish method of oil painting to Venice where Giovanni Bellini adopted and developed it.

Bartolommeo Vivarini. *c.* 1430–*c.* 1499. The most popular and workmanlike of the contemporaries of Giovanni Bellini. Grafted the new Renaissance spirit on to the older Venetian Gothic elaboration.

Alvise Vivarini. *c.* 1446–1504. Bartolommeo's nephew. Continued the family tradition and added to it a powerful gift for portraiture.

Carpaccio (Vittore Carpaccio). *c.* 1450–1523. A delightful narrative painter of crowds and ceremonial occasions in elaborate settings. Intensely human and colourful but rarely capable of solemnity. p. 149.

Cima (Giovanni Battista Cima da Conegliano). 1460–1517. A follower of Giovanni Bellini. Specialized in intimate Madonna and Child groups with supporting saints and sunny landscape backgrounds. p. 149.

Giorgione (Giorgio da Castelfranco). 1477–1510. p. 149.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio). ?1477–1576. p. 151.

Palma Vecchio (Jacopo d'Antonio Negreti). *c.* 1480–1528. Influenced by Giorgione. Best known for his 'Sacred Conversation Pieces'. p. 152.

Lorenzo Lotto. 1480–1556. Slightly aloof from the Venetian tradition of his time. Original, romantic, refined, and often hinting at a troubled ecstasy. Lotto, like Correggio, anticipates the restlessness of the Baroque style. p. 153.

Savoldo (Girolamo Savoldo). *c.* 1480–after 1548. p. 153.

Paris Bordone. ? 1510–92. Known chiefly as a painter of typically monumental Venetian portraits.

Jacopo Bassano. 1510–92. Shared with his great contemporaries their nobility of outlook and gesture, but introduced a more rustic note and an element of genre into his religious paintings.

Tintoretto (Jacopo Robusti). 1518–94. p. 155.

Veronese (Paolo Caliari). 1528–88. p. 154

ITALIAN MANNERISTS AND ECLECTICS

After the first quarter of the sixteenth century the creative power of the Renaissance relaxes, everywhere but in Venice, into Mannerism and Eclecticism. Regional styles cease to be significant.

Dosso Dossi. 1479–1541. The last of the painters of Ferrara. His eclecticism

is saved from banality by a touch of fancifulness and Giorgionesque romanticism. p. 145.

Correggio (Antonio Allegri da Correggio). 1494–1534. Worked mostly at Parma. An early forerunner of the Baroque style. Notable for sensuous charm and delicate manipulation of light. p. 140.

Giulio Romano. ?1492–1546. Raphael's pupil. A talented disciple while his master's influence lasted but coarsened and vulgarized his style in later life. p. 140.

Pontormo (Jacopo da Pontormo). 1494–1556. Exaggerated the mannerisms of Michelangelo and added hectic, rather discordant colour, but was, notwithstanding, often impressive. p. 160.

Bronzino (Angelo Allori). 1503–72. Influenced, sometimes with deplorable results, by Michelangelo but a stern and accomplished portraitist. p. 160.

Parmigianino [sometimes called Parmigiano] (Francesco Masola). 1504–1540. Influenced by Correggio and Raphael. The most elegant of the mannerists. p. 161.

Vasari (Giorgio Vasari). 1511–74. Biographer of the artists of the Italian Renaissance. Obsessed by Michelangelo. What he intended as homage often strikes us as parody. p. 160.

Barocci [sometimes called Baroccio] (Federigo Barocci). 1526–1612. Roman mannerist. Interested in light and atmosphere.

Annibale Carracci. 1560–1609. Founder of the eclectic school at Bologna. Attempted to combine the excellences of Correggio, Raphael, and Titian but with an added interest in landscape. p. 159.

Domenichino (Domenico Zampieri). 1581–1641. Similar to Carracci but more heroic in mood p. 160.

THE NETHERLANDS

Robert Campin, or Le Maître de Flémalle. *c.* 1379–1444. Only recently established as a separate personality. A forceful portrait painter.

Hubert van Eyck. *c.* 1380–1426.

Jan van Eyck. ?1385–1441. p. 170. Hubert was the elder painter. His share in the Ghent altarpiece cannot be distinguished from that of his brother. Recent scholarship has doubted the existence of Hubert.

Rogier van der Weyden (in French, Rogier de la Pasture). *c.* 1399–1464. p. 167.

Dirk Bouts. Op. 1448–75. More placid and less vigorous than his predecessors.

Hugo van der Goes. Op. 1467–82. A dramatic narrative painter and a sensitive portraitist. p. 167.

Memlinc [or Memling] (Hans Memlinc). *c.* 1435–94, p. 167.

Hieronymus [or Jerome] Bosch. Op. 1480–1516. Painted fantastic and elaborate pictures crowded with macabre and fascinating symbolism. Has largely influenced modern surrealists. p. 168.

Gerard David. Op. 1484–1523. The last of the group of Bruges painters. More expressive in his landscapes than in his figures. p. 167.

Geertgen (Geertgen tot Sint Jans). *c.* 1465– *c.* 1495. Figures quaint and impassive, but showed originality in attempting night effects.

Quentin Massys. 1466–1530. Influenced by Italian Renaissance painting, especially the caricatural elements in Leonardo. p. 167.
Mabuse (Jan Gossaert). Op. 1503–*c.* 1533. Visited Italy and attempted to copy without being able to absorb the Italian style. In consequence became an efficient but uncomfortable eclectic. p. 167.
Patinir [alternative spellings Patenier, Patinier] (Joachim Patinir). ?1485–1524. Pupil of David. A delightful painter of fantastic rocky landscape with suggestions of vast distances. p. 168.
van Orley (Bernaert van Orley). *c.* 1493–1541. Borrowed unintelligently, like Mabuse, from Italy, but was less brutally realistic. p. 167.
Lucas van Leyden. *c.* 1494–1533. A more scholarly and convincing borrower from Italy. p. 167.
Jan van Scorel. 1495–1562. Similar in style to Lucas van Leyden but a better designer. p. 167.
Mor [Antonio Moro] (Anthonio Mor van Dashorst). ?1517–76. Portrait painter. Visited Italy, Spain, and England. The alternative spelling of his name proves his international reputation.
Pieter Brueghel the Elder. *c.* 1525–69. p. 168.
Elsheimer (Adam Elsheimer). 1578–1610. Worked in Rome and was influenced by Caravaggio and the 'tenebrists'; in his turn influenced Rembrandt.

GERMANY

Conrad Witz. *c.* 1400–*c.* 1445.
Schöngauer (Martin Schöngauer). 1445–91. p. 169, and
Lochner (Stefan Lochner). *c.* 1400–51.
The last of the medieval German artists. Lochner is similar to the early Flemish painters. Schöngauer has more vigour, invention, and humour.
Dürer (Albrecht Dürer). 1471–1528. p. 169.
Cranach (Lucas Cranach the Elder). 1472–1553. More lyrically poetical than his contemporaries. Gothic quaintness and Renaissance grace are charmingly mixed in his imaginative pictures, especially his nudes with landscape backgrounds.
Hans Burgkmair. 1473–1531. His portraits are typical specimens of German realism.
Grünewald (Matthias Gothart or Nithart). *c.* 1475–1530. p. 170.
Baldung (Hans Baldung Grien). 1480–1545. Influenced by Schöngauer and Dürer. A master of woodcut.
Altdorfer (Albrecht Altdorfer). *c.* 1480–1538. Picturesque landscape becomes the dominant theme in his pictures. His landscape is thoroughly North European and owes nothing to Italy.
Holbein (Hans Holbein the Younger). 1497–1543. p. 171.

FRANCE

Fouquet (Jean Fouquet). *c.* 1420–*c.* 1480. A stern realist in portraiture,

Flemish in spirit, but Italian influence is just discernible in the massiveness and stylishness of his painting. p. 183.

School of Avignon. A group of anonymous painters working in or near Avignon in the second half of the 15th century with a style of their own, more naive and vivid than their Flemish contemporaries. Worthy of inclusion in this short list because it produced the 'Pietà', the greatest anonymous masterpiece of European art. p. 183.

Enguerrand de Charonton. Op. 1440–1464. An Avignon painter, famous for a single masterpiece, 'The Coronation of the Virgin'. p. 183.

Maître de Moulins. Op. *c.* 1480–1520. Name unknown. Painted the Virgin and Child in Moulins Cathedral. Influenced in detail by van der Goes, but more monumental in design.

School of Fontainebleau. Three Italian artists, Rosso (Giambattista dei Rossi), 1494–1541, Primaticcio (Francesco Primaticcio), 1504–70 and Nicolo dell' Abbate, 1512–71, directed the decoration of the Palace of Fontainebleau, and evolved a style that had no immediate influence–a gallicized version of Italian paganism; they were fond of introducing nude figures that combined the poise of Italy with the mannered stylishness of France. p. 184.

Jean Clouet, op. 1516–40, and his son François Clouet, ?1510–72, were court portrait painters to Francis I and his successors. They worked, like Holbein, from preliminary drawings, which are less forceful but more delicate than Holbein's.

SPAIN

Bermejo (Bartolomé Bermejo). Op. 1474–95. The best of the Spanish primitives. Influenced by the van Eycks, but with stronger religious feeling and sense of drama.

Coello (Alonso Sanchez Coello). 1532–88. Uninspired but efficient portrait painter. Pupil of Antonio Mor.

El Greco (Domenikos Theotokopoulos). 1545–1614. p. 174.

Ribalta (Francisco Ribalta), *c.* 1551–1628. A mannerist who added Italian ingredients to his native Spanish gloom. The earliest of the Spanish 'tenebrists'.

ENGLAND

Nicholas Hilliard. 1537–1619. Miniaturist. Decorative, jewel-like style; penetrating portraiture. p. 201.

Isaac Oliver. *c.* 1562–1617. Miniaturist. Less incisive and less poetical than Hilliard. p. 201.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

Italy has now almost ceased to be a creative force, though she still exercises her influence in varying degrees throughout Europe. France inherits an enfeebled form of the Classic

style to which the Italian Renaissance gave birth. But the real vigour of the century is to be found, first, in the Flemish school and, later, in Holland. Meanwhile Spain is developing a characteristic style, and England is emerging, at last, from medievalism.

ITALY

Caravaggio (Michelangelo Amerighi da Caravaggio). 1569–1609. p. 162.

Guido Reni. 1575–1642. Derived from the Bolognese eclectics and also from Caravaggio. A skilful designer but spoiled, for twentieth-century taste, by excessive sentimentalism.

Strozzi (Bernardo Strozzi), 1581–1644. Resisted the mannerist and eclectic tendencies of his time. Influenced by the style of Caravaggio but infused into it a gentle humanity that foreshadows Rembrandt.

Guercino (Giovanni Francesco Barbieri). 1591–1666. A popular, talented eclectic deriving chiefly from Caravaggio.

Pietro da Cortona, 1596–1669, and Gaulli (Giovanni-Battista Gaulli), 1639–1709. p. 182.
Typical members of the group of grandiose Baroque painters who worked for Bernini in Rome. Gaulli was one of the most elaborately theatrical of the Italian Baroque painters. Specialized in large scale visionary effects, crowded with figures, on the ceilings of churches, the most famous of which is the Church of Il Gesù in Rome.

Bernini (Lorenzo Bernini). 1599–1680. p. 182.

Salvator Rosa. 1615–73. Specialized in the ' sublime ', especially in dramatic, awe-inspiring landscape.

FRANCE

Antoine le Nain, 1588–1648. Louis le Nain, 1593–1648, and Mathieu le Nain, 1607–77, p. 184. The paintings of these three brothers, so human in feeling, so modest in theme, yet so serious in content, separate them from all their French contemporaries, most of whom were dominated by Italian Classicism and the pursuit of an ' elevated ' style.

Georges de la Tour. 1590–1652. One of the more convincing French followers of Caravaggio. His design is more formal than that of Caravaggio. p. 184.

Simon Vouet. 1590–1649. Founded the official school of painting in France and painted pedantically correct classic pictures. p. 186.

Nicolas Poussin. 1594–1665. p. 185.

Claude [or Claude Lorrain] (Claude Gelée). 1600–82. p. 187.

Philippe de Champaigne. 1602–74. An austere but powerful portraitist and author of religious pictures.

Gaspard Poussin (Gaspard Dughet). 1613–75. Poussin's brother-in-law. Introduced a note of romanticism into his landscapes.

Le Sueur (Eustache le Sueur). 1616–55. A prodigious decorative worker in a completely unoriginal style based on Poussin, Vouet, and Raphael. p. 186.

Charles Lebrun. 1619–90. Favourite painter of Louis XIV. Another conscientious, uninspired classicist.

NETHERLANDS

Rubens (Sir Peter Paul Rubens). 1577–1640. p. 172.
Jordaens (Jacob Jordaens). 1593–1678. A lesser and a coarser Rubens. Had all his exuberance but little of his grandeur.
Van Dyck (Sir Anthony van Dyck). 1599–1641. Assistant to and influenced by Rubens, but more self-conscious and effeminate. Portrait painter to Charles I. Had a remarkable talent for subtle flattery which he bequeathed to British portraiture in the next century.

SPAIN

Pacheco (Francisco Pacheco). 1564–1654. A scholarly, pedestrian painter, chiefly known as Velasquez's master and father-in-law.
Ribera (Jusepe Ribera). 1589–1652. Studied under Ribalta and carried his dark Caravaggesque drama even further.
Zurbarán (Francesco Zurbarán). 1598–1662. A sturdy realist, influenced by Velasquez, but gayer, more colourful and with an endearing undercurrent of naive charm.
Velasquez (Diego Rodriques de Silva y Velásquez). 1599–1660. p. 175.
Murillo (Bartolomé Estaban Murillo). 1618–82. Recognizably and typically Spanish in his genre pictures of peasant boys, but sentimentally eclectic in his religious and parable pictures.

ENGLAND

Cornelius Johnson. *c.* 1593–*c.* 1664. Portrait painter. Still under the influence of the earlier English miniaturists but the mood of van Dyck begins to be seen. His later portraits, painted in Holland, show Dutch influence.
William Dobson. 1610–46. Assistant to van Dyck and very close to him in style but without his swagger.
Lely (Sir Peter Lely). 1618–80. Dutch by birth. Court portrait painter to Charles II. Reduced van Dyck's style to a decorative formula. Tasteful and inventive colourist. p. 196.
Riley (John Riley). *c.* 1646–91. Portrait painter. Diffident, lacking in bravura, but serious and penetrating.
Kneller (Sir Godfrey Kneller). 1646–1723. An efficient but rather careless portrait painter. Painted innumerable not very interesting portraits of his distinguished contemporaries.
Thornhill (Sir James Thornhill). 1676–1734. A sound exponent – almost the only one produced by England – of the full-blooded Baroque decorative style. Hogarth's father-in-law.

HOLLAND

Frans Hals. 1580–1666. p. 176.
Seghers (Hercules Pietersz. Seghers). *c.* 1590–1640. Painted Dutch and Swiss

landscape: often with a sombre sentiment that influenced Rembrandt.
Van Goyen (Jan Josefsz. van Gojen). 1596–1656. Landscape. Vaporous skies and level fields. p. 179.
Saenredam (Pieter Jansz. Saenredam). 1597–1665. p. 178.
Van der Neer (Eglon Hendrik van der Neer). *c.* 1635–1703. Landscape. Specialized in evening and moonlight effects.
Adriaen Brouwer. 1605–38. Small-scale genre, mainly of lower middle-class life. Powerful characterization.
Rembrandt (Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn). 1606–69. p. 179.
Ostade (Adriaen Jansz. van Ostade). 1610–1685. Gentre. Not unlike Brouwer, but with more sense of spatial relationship. p. 178.
Teniers (David Teniers the Younger). 1610–90. Landscape with small figures. Paler and more delicate than most of his contemporaries.
Gerard Dou. 1613–75. Pupil of Rembrandt; ended where Rembrandt began; a close but superficial observer.
Carel Fabritius. 1614–54. Pupil of Rembrandt: master of Vermeer. Small-scale, acutely sensitive painter.
Ter Borch [or Terburg] (Gerard Ter Borch). 1617–81. p. 177.
Wouverman (Philips Wouverman). 1619–68. Landscape with small figures and animals.
Cuyp (Aelbert Cuyp). 1620–91. Landscape and cattle. Tranquillity and golden sunshine. Magnificent grasp of the impact of light on wide stretches of country. p. 178.
Wynants (Jan Wynants). *c.* 1625–82. Landscape in low tones. Influenced Gainsborough's early paintings.
Ruisdael (Jacob van Ruisdael). 1628–82. Landscape. Admirable breadth and understanding of the fall of light on the spacious Dutch countryside. Extracted a surprising drama from more or less featureless landscapes. p. 179.
Paul Potter. 1625–54. Cattle in landscape. Popular in his own day.
Jan Steen. 1626–79. The most prolific of the genre painters. Lively scenes of merrymaking painted with gusto and often with forced humour.
Pieter de Hooch. 1629–*c.* 1683. p. 177.
Metsu (Gabriel Metsu). 1630–67. Quiet, unforced genre, with a delicate sense of human relationships and a fine gift for the selection of essentials.
Nicholas Maes, 1632–93. Pupil of Rembrandt. A genre painter, worthy but uninspired.
Vermeer (Jan Vermeer of Delft). 1632–75. p. 177.
Willem van de Velde. 1633–1707, and Adriaen van de Velde, 1635–72. Marine painters. Thorough understanding of shipping and delicate effects of light.
Berck-Heyde (Gerrit Adriaensz. Berck-Heyde). 1638–98. Architectural and topographical painter.
Hobbema (Meindert Hobbema). 1638–1709. Landscape. A prosaic Ruisdael. p. 179.
Jan van Huysum. 1682–1749. The best of the many excellent Dutch painters of formal flower pieces. p. 178.

EUROPEAN PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

There is an interesting late flowering in Italy, but France takes the artistic lead in Europe. England confines herself mainly to portraiture and conversation pieces, but produces one or two great men in this narrow field. None the less, English landscape painting has its roots in the eighteenth century. In Spain, Goya is an isolated figure leading from the eighteenth into the nineteenth century.

ITALY

Sebestiano Ricci. 1659–1734. A Venetian. Painter of religious and classical subjects in an emasculated version of the grand style of the seventeenth century.

Piazzetta (Giovanni Battista Piazzetta). 1682–1754. The brilliant leader of the Venetian revival of figure painting in the eighteenth century. Often theatrical; audacious in his use of light and shade: an impressive ceiling decorator, inferior only to Tiepolo in his own generation. p. 158.

Tiepolo (Giovanni Battista Tiepolo). 1696–1769. p. 158.

Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal). 1697–1768. Venetian. The greatest practitioner of descriptive topographical townscape. Extraordinary breadth of design despite meticulous detail. Also painted in London. p. 158.

Pietro Longhi. 1702–85. Lively small-scale painter of Venetian life and incident in the mid-eighteenth century. A slight but charming talent for animated genre. p. 159.

Guardi (Francesco Guardi). 1712–93. Trained under Canaletto and painted similar subjects, but in a more romantic spirit, a freer brushstroke and an eye for the fitful play of light. A forerunner of Impressionism. p. 158.

FRANCE

Largillièrre (Nicolas de Largillièrre). 1656–1746. Portrait painter in the 'grand style' but with an infusion of eighteenth-century sprightliness.

Watteau (Antoine Watteau). 1684–1721. p. 188.

Nattier (Jean Marc Nattier). 1685–1766. Member of the French Academy. Specialized in the portraiture of women at the court of Louis XV, and set the tone of elegant flattery that characterized eighteenth-century portraiture in France. p. 189.

Lancret (Nicolas Lancret). 1690–1743, and Pater (Jean-Baptiste Joseph Pater), 1695–1736. Followers of Watteau, but with less of his poetry and little of his underlying pathos.

Chardin (Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin). 1699–1779. p. 190.

Boucher (François Boucher). 1703–70. p. 190.

La Tour (Maurice Quentin de la Tour). 1704–88. Brilliant but superficial portraitist in oil and pastel.

Greuze (Jean-Baptiste Greuze). 1725–1805. The first appearance of the lush romantic sentiment of the nineteenth century. Single figures of girls and genre paintings with a moral.

Fragonard (Jean Honoré Fragonard). 1732–1806. p. 189.

APPENDIX 2

ENGLAND

Hogarth (William Hogarth). 1697–1764. p. 196.
Alexander Cozens. *c.* 1710–86. The earliest important English landscape water-colourist. Usually worked in monochrome with no topographical intention. Often reminiscent of Chinese landscape painting.
Alan Ramsay. 1713–84. Court portrait painter to George III. Drier and more formal in style than his contemporaries. Had a delicate perception of character.
Richard Wilson. 1714–82. Landscape painter, influenced in Italy by the classical approach of Claude and Poussin, but later drew more inspiration from nature and less from art. Notable for his luminous skies.
Reynolds (Sir Joshua Reynolds). 1723–92. p. 198.
Stubbs (George Stubbs). 1724–1806. Mainly a painter of horses and wrote a treatise on the anatomy of the horse, but an artist of very considerable power and nobility.
Gainsborough (Thomas Gainsborough). 1727–88. p. 198.
Romney (George Romney). 1734–1802. Portrait painter. A rather wooden neoclassicism robs his portraits of vitality.
Zoffany (Johann Zoffany). 1733–1810. The best of the 'Conversation Piece' painters and groups held together by a slender psychological theme; competent but uninspired.
Raeburn (Sir Henry Raeburn). 1756–1823. Portrait painter. Direct and breezy in style and lively in colour but usually superficial in characterization.
Blake (William Blake). 1757–1827. p. 197.
John Crome. 1768–1821. East Anglian landscape painter. Simple, strong, and affectionate in his approach to his theme. Parochial in the best sense.

SPAIN

Goya (Francisco José de Goya y Lucientes). 1746–1828. p. 206.

NINETEENTH CENTURY

France increases her lead, and becomes, by the end of the century, internationally dominant. The École de Paris absorbs artists from all over Europe, but not until the two great English landscape painters at the beginning of the century have paved the way.

SWITZERLAND

Hodler (Ferdinand Hodler). 1853–1918. A painter of power and originality. The earliest to use in a serious way the German 'Jugendstil'.

FRANCE

David (Jacques-Louis David). 1748–1825. p. 191.
Ingres (Jean-Auguste-Dominique). 1780–1867. p. 191.

Géricault (Jean Louis André Théodore Géricault) 1791–1824. A fellow student with Delacroix and a fellow rebel against the Classicism of David. Had he not died early, might have eclipsed Delacroix as leader of the Romantic movement. p. 192.

Delacroix (Ferdinand Victor Eugène Delacroix). 1798–1863. p. 192.

Corot (Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot). 1796–1875. p. 193.

Honoré Daumier. 1808–79. p. 193.

Théodore Rousseau (Pierre Étienne Théodore Rousseau). 1812–67. Leader of the Barbizon School. p. 194.

Jean François Millet. 1814–75. p. 194.

Daubigny (Charles François Daubigny). 1817–78, and Harpignies (Henri Harpignies), 1819–1916. Members of the Barbizon School. Pleinairistes without the heightened and vibrant colour of the Impressionists.

Courbet (Gustave Courbet). 1819–77. Self-appointed apostle of 'Réalisme', a reaction against both academic and romantic painting. Forceful and sometimes over-emphatic in his attempt to avoid idealization. p. 194.

Chassériau (Théodore Chassériau). 1819–56. Eclectic. Pupil of Ingres and admirer of Delacroix whose romanticism he sentimentalized.

Puvis de Chavannes (Pierre Cécile Puvis de Chavannes). 1824–98. A studious and earnest designer, mainly of large-scale mural paintings. Mistrusted painterly facility and achieved something of the breadth and unity of Italian Renaissance wall-painting.

Boudin (Eugène Boudin). 1824–98. Quiet and subtle painter of coasts and harbours. A student of skies, in which he influenced Monet.

Camille Pissarro. 1830–1903. p. 201.

Manet (Édouard Manet). 1832–83. p. 203.

Degas (Edgar Hilaire Germain Degas). 1834–1917. p. 203.

Cézanne (Paul Cézanne). 1839–1906. p. 215.

Monet (Claude Oscar Monet). 1840–1926. p. 201.

Rodin (Auguste Rodin). 1840–1917. Sculptor. Temperamentally a whole-hearted romantic: technically an impressionist. Momentary gesture was usually his theme, the play of light on agitated surfaces his method. Careless of formal design. p. 204.

Sisley (Alfred Sisley). 1840–99. p. 203.

Renoir. 1841–1919. p. 205.

The Douanier Rousseau (Henri Rousseau). 1844–1910. Significant as the first of the naive, self-taught artists. Remarkable for his poetical imagination.

Gauguin (Eugene Henri-Paul Gauguin). 1848–1903. Bold, heraldic design and consciously decorative colour. Spent his last years in Tahiti searching for a primitivism of subject-matter to match his style.

Van Gogh (Vincent van Gogh). 1853–90. p. 216.

Seurat (Georges Seurat). 1859–90. p. 214.

Toulouse-Lautrec (Henri Marie-Raymond de Toulouse-Lautrec-Monfa). 1864–1902. Painted cynical (rather than satirical) but closely observed pictures of the Parisian underworld and Parisian night life. Vigorous but inclined to indulge in large-scale caricature.

Vuillard (Jean Édouard Vuillard). 1864–1940, and Bonnard (Pierre Bonnard), 1867–1947.

APPENDIX 2

ENGLAND

Lawrence (Sir Thomas Lawrence). 1769–1830. Portrait painter with some of van Dyck's genius for subtle flattery but had neither his breadth nor his taste.

Girtin (Thomas Girtin). 1775–1802. Included among nineteenth-century artists because, during his short life, he was so closely connected with Turner. Within his limited range, a landscape water-colourist of genius. Notable for breadth of design and dignity of composition.

Turner (Joseph Mallord William Turner). 1775–1851. p. 208.

Constable (John Constable). 1776–1837. p. 207.

Cotman (John Sell Cotman). 1782–1842. Skilful water-colourist. Less solid and more superficially decorative than Girtin.

Geddes (Andrew Geddes). 1783–1844. Penetrating and sympathetic portrait painter, usually on a small scale.

Wilkie (Sir David Wilkie). 1785–1841. Painter of anecdotal genre. Trivial themes but lively treatment.

Samuel Palmer. 1805–81. Romantic, small-scale painter of radiant pastoral landscape. Influenced by Blake.

Alfred Stevens. 1817–75. Sculptor, architect, and painter. Temperamentally a craftsman, superficially influenced by Michelangelo.

Watts (George Frederick Watts). 1817–1904. p. 211.

Ford Madox Brown. 1821–93. p. 211.

Holman-Hunt (William Holman Hunt). 1827–1910. p. 210.

Rossetti (Gabriel Charles Dante Rossetti). 1828–82. p. 211.

Millais (Sir John Everett Millais). 1829–96. p. 210.

Burne-Jones (Sir Edward Coley Burne-Jones). 1833–98. The pre-Raphaelites and their immediate derivatives. p. 211.

Whistler (James Abbot McNeill Whistler). 1834–1903. p. 212.

Wilson Steer (Philip Wilson Steer). 1860–1942. Landscape and figure artist. Brought the vision of Constable up to date by an admixture of French Impressionism.

Sickert (Walter Richard Sickert). 1860–1942. p. 204.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

Munch (Edvard Munch). 1863–1944. Norwegian. The pioneer of Expressionism in Europe. A prolific and turbulent painter, passionate and often heroic in style but over-emphatic.

Kandinsky (Wassily Kandinsky). 1866–1944. Born in Moscow. Worked in Germany and Paris. Was the first artist to abolish ' the object ' from painting and develop pure abstraction.

Matisse (Henri Matisse). 1869–1955. The only member of the ' fauve ' group who fully explored the possibilities of their programme. Absorbed many Oriental elements into his style. A great colourist and a daring designer. His paintings are vigorously optimistic.

Paul Klee. 1879–1940. Worked mainly in Germany. Inexhaustible in his range

of delicate, small-scale fantasy and unusually inventive in discovering the appropriate means of communication for each of his many moods.

Picasso (Pablo Ruiz Picasso). b. 1881. Born in Barcelona. Has worked in Paris since 1901. One of the most versatile and experimental of all painters. More responsible than any other artist of his century for the enlargement of the vocabulary of modern art.

Braque (Georges Braque). b. 1882. The most elegant and the most exquisite of contemporary Parisian painters.

Henry Moore. b. 1898. Has contributed as much to the modern sculptor's repertory of form as Picasso has to that of the modern painter. Fuses the noble, muscular strength of the human figure with shapes suggested by mountain or bone formations.

Graham Sutherland. b. 1903. British. Began as an etcher of romantic landscape and has developed an acute realization of the expressive possibilities of pure form, seen, mainly, in linear terms, derived from nature but isolated and intensified, often with an undercurrent of tragic feeling.

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