



Fig. 25—Conversano, Castello: Paolo Finoglio,
Rinaldo Abandons Armida



Fig. 26—Pompeii, House of the Tragic
Poet: Theseus Abandons Ariadne



Fig. 27—Paris, Louvre: Poussin, Rinaldo
Abandons Armida (Drawing)

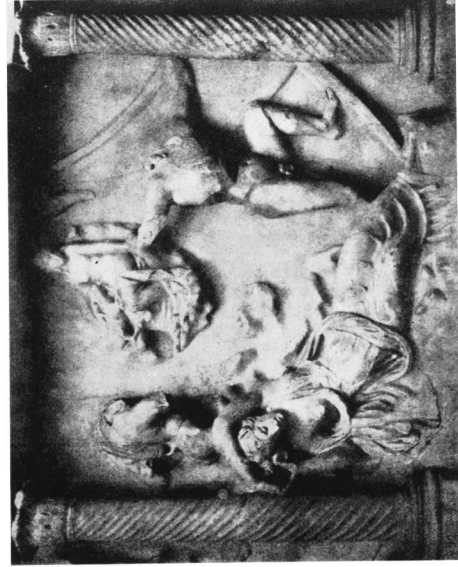


Fig. 28—Rome, Vatican: Hadrianic Relief,
Theseus Abandons Ariadne

For this last scene of Rinaldo's departure, there were also versions more faithful to the text; and in the case of Poussin's fine drawing in the Louvre (Fig. 27) this might seem at first to be sufficiently explained by the artist's respect for the dramatic and scenic essentials of the story and his unwillingness to introduce foreign material that might, like Finoglio's boatman, make for an effective composition per se, but not for one that could be said to emphasize the dramatic relationship between Rinaldo and Armida. But here, as in his illustration of the first episode of the story (Fig. 1) where Poussin, as we have seen, adopted motives from the Endymion sarcophagi for a scene similar in content, antiquity lent a strong, guiding hand. For in antique representations of Theseus abandoning the sleeping Ariadne on the island of Naxos—in the fine example, for instance, in the House of the Tragic Poet in Pompeii (Fig. 26)²⁴⁹—a subject that had in common with Tasso's the half-reluctant desertion of a former mistress who lies unconscious on the seashore (Armida in contrast to Ariadne is not sleeping, but has swooned), Poussin found a composition that was almost made to order for his illustration of Tasso.

If we compare his drawing with the ancient painting, we see in the left foreground of both the unconscious female figure in the classical attitude of sleep with a rocky eminence behind; and at the right the sea with the departing lover who turns to his mistress with a look of sorrowful farewell as he is helped or hurried, as the case may be, into the waiting boat. Tasso's text required the mountain in the background which, in a general way, parallels the rocky hill in the Pompeian painting; it also required the two warriors with whom we are already familiar who urge Rinaldo into the boat. The curve of the boat resembling the curve in the ancient fresco may be seen barely indicated at the extreme right, while the goddess Fortuna, whose body is half cut off by the frame, sits in the boat (as she actually does in a number of book illustrations that Poussin certainly knew) stretching out an arm to the three who are about to disembark. It will be noted that Poussin's alteration, such as it is, of the antique composition is characteristically in the interest of greater pictorial unity that makes for dramatic concentration. The mountain's powerful pyramid almost encloses both groups of figures within its contours, enforcing their dramatic relationship, and the boat at the right in contrast to its more complete depiction in the ancient painting (including the realistic detail of unfurling the "perjured sails") is barely suggested, as if Poussin, though willing in the interest of clear illustration to indicate the means of departure, had refused to permit any picturesque intrusion on the concentrated human drama of farewell.

It is probable that Tasso had the abandonment of Ariadne in mind when he wrote the conclusion to Rinaldo's infatuation for Armida; it is certain that he had in mind another famous desertion of antiquity—Aeneas' desertion of Dido in Carthage; for Armida, before she swoons, curses Rinaldo in the identical language of Dido's famous curse uttered during her final moments with Aeneas. In any event, for this episode the ancient world provided both painter and poet with absolutely parallel source material which they recreated to produce forms that were strikingly analogous to their prototypes, the antique language suffering less alteration here than in any scene hitherto considered.

Poussin, of course, never saw the painting in Pompeii, but it would seem virtually certain that he had seen in Rome a similar pictorial rendering of what was long a popular subject in Roman art. Or he could certainly have seen a relief like that reported to have been excavated at Hadrian's villa in the sixteenth century (Fig. 28),²⁵⁰ which itself contains most

249. For the Greek ancestry of this composition and of that in Fig. 28 see G. E. Rizzo, *La pittura ellenistico-romana*, Milan, 1929, p. 25.

250. See W. Helbig, *Führer durch die öffentlichen Sammlungen klassischer Altertümer in Rom*, 3rd ed., Leipzig, 1912, p. 138. Poussin's interest in the story of Bacchus and

of the chief elements in his composition, and could in the absence of a painting have served as its prototype. An interesting variant on Poussin's drawing is found in Vouet's painting in Paris (Fig. 29) with its obvious shift of background elements to place the sea behind Ariadne and the boat before the rocky cliff. The entire boat appears here, though dominated as an element in the composition by the figures, just as it is in the panoramic engraving of Antonio Tempesta (Fig. 30) executed before 1630, and probably during the period of Vouet's Italian sojourn,²⁵¹ which certainly provided the French painter with his immediate model. But probably for Tempesta, as certainly for Poussin, the immediate model was the antique.

It is hoped that enough evidence has been produced to show that the learned painter is, in the sense in which the Renaissance and Baroque critics frequently conceived him, something of a myth. This unreal conception, an inevitable accretion in the often pedantic criticism of the middle and late sixteenth century, of the theory of the sister arts—a theory which is significant only if unburdened of the supercargo of great erudition—must indeed share the responsibility for much unmemorable painting produced by the French and other academies in the course of their history. But fortunately it could have little or no serious influence on the significant practice and development of the art. What the critics in effect urged the painter to do was to read his text carefully, and then, in an accurate pictorial transcription, give a full account of his literary stewardship. What the painter actually did, has been the subject of this chapter.

VIII—VIRTU VISIVA

It will be remembered that Leonardo blamed the poet for possessing that manifold learning which the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* sought to thrust upon the painter, and for that reason considered him little more than a monger of the intellectual wares of other men.²⁵² This opinion of poetry, and others equally derogatory that appear in the celebrated *paragone*, no fair-minded critic will, of course, approve; and perhaps they represent some distortion of Leonardo's real opinion. For in the *paragone* he appears not only as the sincere and ardent champion of the art of painting, but also as one holding a kind of imaginary debate with a defender of poetry, as he might actually have done at the court of the Sforzas, and arguing perhaps with lively exaggeration to get the better of his opponent.²⁵³ The traditional elements, or some of them at least, that appear in his defense of painting Leonardo probably includes less from conviction than to serve the purpose of his argument: such he could have adopted from Pliny or Alberti or learned from his contemporaries, for they were the current jargon of the age. Thus he argues that if invention belongs to the poet's art,

Ariadne is further shown by two drawings in Windsor (nos. 11888^v and 11911) that Professors Panofsky and Friedlaender have called to my attention. Though the compositions are different, both drawings appear to represent Bacchus accompanied by his usual attendants standing before Ariadne, who is seated next to another woman who appears to console her or to persuade her to regard Bacchus with favor. The figure of the woman does not occur in classical art in Bacchus-Ariadne compositions. Problems concerning classical prototypes raised by these drawings cannot be discussed here. I mention the drawings only as further evidence of Poussin's interest in this story (cf. his *Bacchanal* in Madrid in which Ariadne appears with Bacchus), since an ancient illustration of one of its episodes

provided him with his composition for the *Abandonment of Armida*. No. 11911 is reproduced in *Old Master Drawings*, III, 1928-29, p. 16.

251. Tempesta lived and worked in Rome most of his life. He died in 1630.

252. *Trattato*, I, 23: "Che nessuna di queste cose, di che egli parla, è sua professione propria, ma che, s'ei vol' parlare et orare, è da persuadere, che in questo egli è vinto dall' oratore; e se parla di Astrologia, che lo ha rubato all' astrologo, e di filosofia, al filosofo, e che in effetto la poesia non ha propria sedia, nè la merita altramente, che di un merciajo ragunatore di mercanzie fatte da diversi artigiani."

253. See Richter, *The Literary Works of Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 41 ff.



Fig. 29—Paris, Guyot de Villeneuve Collection:
Vouet, Rinaldo Abandons Armida



Fig. 30—Antonio Tempesta: Rinaldo Abandons
Armida (Engraving)

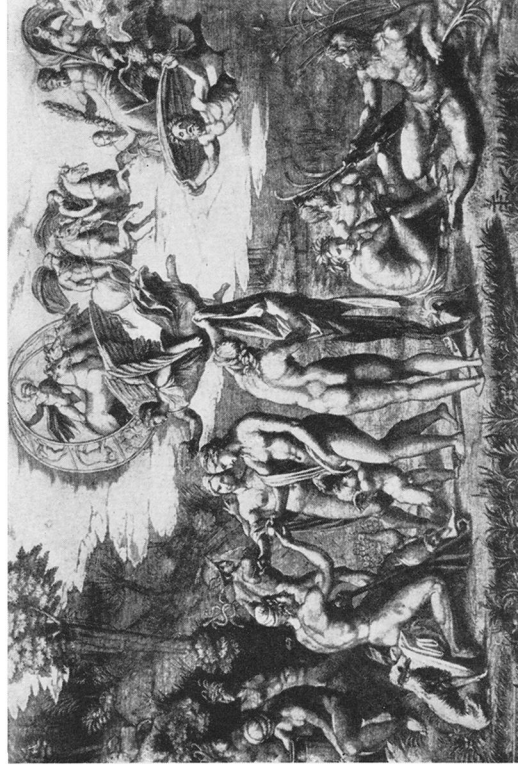


Fig. 31—Marcantonio Raimondi, Judgment of Paris:
Engraving after Drawing by Raphael

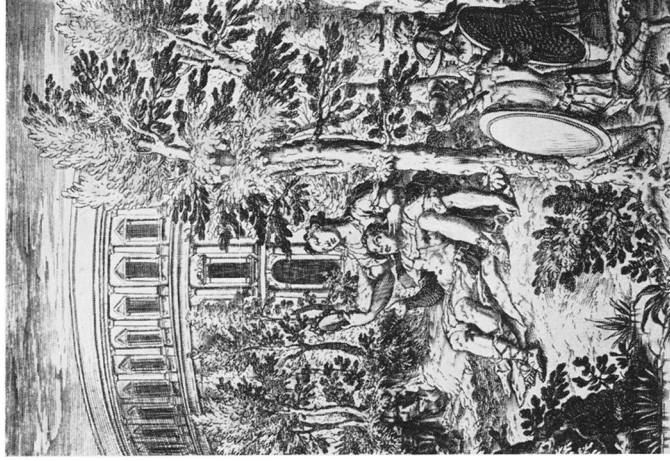


Fig. 32—Castello, Rinaldo and Armida:
Illustration for Tasso's Gerusalemme
Liberata, 1590

so does it also to the painter's;²⁵⁴ if poetry can teach, so too can painting;²⁵⁵ the vivid reality of the painter's images leads lovers to converse with portraits of their beloved, or incites men to worship as poetry cannot; and when it comes to deception the painter is supreme, and Leonardo avows to have seen a monkey indulging in endless pranks when he saw another monkey represented in a picture.²⁵⁶ Likewise one must discount as pardonable hyperbole or simply set down as bad aesthetic most of Leonardo's original comparisons of painting with poetry, to the latter's grievous disadvantage. He argues for instance that the sense of sight to which painting appeals is nobler than the sense of hearing to which poetry appeals,²⁵⁷ or that the darkness of the mind's eye in which poetry is born, in short the poetic imagination, is inferior to the bodily eye of the painter which directly apprehends the rich and wonderful variety of the external world as the inner eye of the poet cannot.²⁵⁸ In fact the sum of his argument is to deny nearly all reality to the poet's creations, simply because the medium of his art makes no direct impact on the organ of vision. But granting the presence of some matter that is merely conventional and of much that is aesthetically specious (however lively and original), the *paragone* still contains some very shrewd criticism. And if we survey the monotonous unanimity of the critics concerning the blessed sisterhood of poetry and painting, it is at least refreshing to find one who had the independent conviction to maintain that far from being identical twins, they were in important respects totally different. And of the differences noted by Leonardo one is fundamental and was to play an important part in the later history of criticism.

When Leonardo is explaining why the painter's depiction of a battle is superior to the poet's—a superiority that he measures in terms of directness, vividness, and truth—he declares that in contrast to the long and tedious description of a poem, the painter shows the vivid and manifold action of a battle in a single instant;²⁵⁹ and he says much the same thing when he comments on the poet's disadvantage as compared with the painter in the representation of bodily beauty. Thus the poet must render things piecemeal as “if a face were to be revealed bit by bit, with the part previously shown covered up, so that we are prevented by our own forgetfulness from comparing any harmony of proportions, because the eye cannot embrace the whole simultaneously in its field of vision,” whereas a painting would represent all the parts of the face at the same instant, like so many voices joined together in sweet harmony.²⁶⁰ This passage recalls Lessing's famous comment on the indistinctness of Ariosto's long and detailed description of Alcina which Dolce, as we have seen, praised as a model for painters to follow²⁶¹—a comment in which Lessing illustrates his view that since the successive addition of details in description cannot result in a clear

254. *Trattato*, I, 25.

255. *Ibid.*, 21: “Per l'una e per l'altra si può dimostrare molti morali costumi, come fece Apelle co' la sua calunnia.” Cf. 19 for a similar reference to Apelles.

256. For all these instances of the efficacy of painting see *ibid.*, 14.

257. *Ibid.*: “La pittura serve à più degno senso, che la poesia, e fa con più verità le figure delle opere di natura che il poeta.”

258. *Ibid.*, 15: “Si ritrova la poesia nella mente ovvero immaginativa del poeta, il quale finge le medesime cose del pittore, per le quali finzioni egli vole equipararsi a esso pittore, ma invero ei n'è molto rimoto . . . Adonque in tal caso di finzione diremo con verità esser tal proportione della scientia della pittura alla poesia, qual è dal corpo alla sua ombra derivativa, et ancora maggior proportione, conciosiacche l'ombra di tal corpo almeno entra per l'occhio al senso comune, ma la immaginazione di tal corpo non entra in esso senso, ma li nasce, nell' occhio tenebroso. O,

che differentia è à immaginare tal luce nel l'occhio tenebroso al vederla in atto fuori delle tenebre.”

259. *Ibid.*: “Se tu, poeta, figurerai la sanguinosa battaglia, si sta con la oscura e tenebrosa aria, mediante il fumo delle spaventevoli et mortali machine, mista co' la spessa polvere intorbidatrice dell' aria, e la paurosa fuga de li miseri spaventati dalla orribile morte? In questo caso il pittore ti supera, perchè la tua penna fia consumata, innanzi che tu descriva appieno quel, che immediate il pittore ti rappresenta co' la sua scientia. E la tua lingua sarà impedita dalla sete, e il corpo dal sonno e fame, prima chè tu co' parole dimostri quello, che in un istante il pittore ti dimostra . . . lunga e tediosissima cosa sarebbe alla poesia a ridire tutti li movimenti de li operatori di tal guerra, e le parti delle membra, e lor' ornamenti, delle quali cose la pittura finita con gran' brevità e verità ti pone innanzi.”

260. *Ibid.*, 21. The translation is from Richter, *op. cit.* p. 60.

261. See p. 198 and notes 10 and 11.

and definite image of coexistent forms, descriptive poetry is not the province of the poet, and cannot challenge painting in depicting the beauty of the external world. And in pointing out the painter's capacity, which the poet does not share, to represent figures or details that one apprehends in a single moment of time, Leonardo clearly anticipates Lessing's virtually identical definition of painting as an art of figures coexistent in space that has for its province the depiction of objective reality.²⁶² Furthermore when he observes that "the only true office of the poet is to invent the words of people, who are conversing together,"²⁶³ he seems to have in mind something that approximates Lessing's definition of poetry as an art of words succeeding one another in time in which, as the German critic was to add, the poet must deal not with description, but with progressive human actions and emotions.²⁶⁴ Leonardo thus anticipated by two and a half centuries Lessing's famous distinction between poetry and painting.

Now it is self-evident, despite the abstract logic of cubism or the vagaries of expressionism, that the painter's art must generally be based on the representation of the natural world as apprehended by the eye, and the fact that major provinces of the painter's art—landscape, interior scenes, and still-life—represent definite categories of visual experience that have no analogies among the historical genres of literature, is eloquent illustration of this truth.²⁶⁵ It does not follow, however, as Leonardo argued, that painting is the superior art, or even that its images of the world of nature are more vivid, for who can say that "that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude" of which the poet wrote presents less vivid images to the mind than the natural eye. In the early eighteenth century when we begin to see in literature the first stirrings of an interest in the beauty of external nature that was to culminate in the Romantic Movement, a critic of literature, Joseph Addison, again praised the sense of sight in words that would have won high praise from Leonardo himself: "Our sight," he says, "is the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses. It fills the mind with the largest variety of ideas, converses with its objects at the greatest distance, and continues the longest in action without being tired or satiated with its proper enjoyments."²⁶⁶ And when the English man of letters writes that "description runs yet further from the things it represents than painting; for a picture bears a real resemblance to its original which letters and syllables are wholly void of,"²⁶⁷ he seems merely to echo at a distance of two centuries Leonardo's famous remark that painting stands to poetry in the same relation as a body to its cast shadow, since "poetry puts down her subjects in imaginary written characters, while painting puts down the identical reflections that the eye receives as if they were real."²⁶⁸ Addison goes on to say that "colors speak all languages, but words are understood only by such a people or nation,"²⁶⁹ an observation that he probably owed to De Piles,²⁷⁰ but which again may trace its ancestry in the Renaissance to Leonardo's remark that lit-

262. *Laokoön* XVI–XX.

263. *Trattato*, I, 15: "Solo il vero uffitio del poeta è fingere parole di gente, che insieme parlino, e sol' queste rappresenta al senso dell' audito tanto, come naturali, perchè in se sono naturali create dall' humana voce. Et in tutte l'altre consequentie è superato dal pittore." But Leonardo later remarks that to imitate in words the actions and speeches of men is less noble than to imitate the God-created works of nature whereby painters become "nipoti à Dio" (*ibid.*, 14 and 19). And in another passage Leonardo says that it is the visual imagery of description of the beauties of nature—that part of his art in which he must be surpassed by the painter—that reflects honor on the poet (*ibid.*, 20).

264. *Loc. cit.*

265. "Descriptive poetry" is a term that suggests a kind

of poetry analogous in a general way to landscape, still-life' etc. in painting, but it was precisely the "Schilderungs-sucht" in modern poetry that Lessing attacked and with great good reason. The historical genres of literature—tragedy, comedy, epic, lyric, satire, etc.—are so named chiefly for the type of human content each has to express.

266. *Spectator*, No. 411 (June 21, 1712).

267. *Ibid.*, No. 416 (June 27).

268. *Op. cit.*, I, 2; the translation from Richter, p. 52.

269. *Spectator*, No. 416.

270. See Dryden's translation of his commentary on Du Fresnoy, p. 83: "The Advantage which Painting possesses above Poesie is this; that amongst so great a Diversity of Languages, she makes her self understood by all the Nations of the World."

erature requires commentators and explanations, whereas the work of a painter (since, Leonardo means, his language is the universal language of sight) will be understood by all who behold it.²⁷¹ And this was a notion that in later criticism was curiously inconsistent with the doctrine of the learned painter, for whereas the one praised the language of painting as superior to that of poetry in its universal appeal, the other sought to turn this language into a mere pictorial equivalent of literary texts, in short to make it a language that none but the initiate could understand. But when Addison comes to write of what he calls the secondary pleasures of the imagination—those that do not result directly from the sight of natural objects, but may accompany the experience of works of art or literature—he speaks of the power of words to evoke vivid images in the mind's eye in a way that is directly opposed to the doctrine of Leonardo, and contains a truth of which the Florentine was scarcely aware. For if painting reproduces nature with an objective reality that words can never attain (so far he would agree with Leonardo), still “words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more lively ideas than a sight of things themselves.”²⁷² The inward eye thus possesses for the literary critic at least as keen a sight as the outward eye possessed for the critic of painting, but with this point of view the Abbé du Bos, whose thinking along these lines was thoroughly Leonardesque, was a few years later to disagree. Du Bos makes a distinction that recalls Leonardo between the “signes naturels” of painting and the “signes artificiels” of poetry,²⁷³ and argues that the former act more powerfully on the human imagination than the latter because they act, as Leonardo would have said, “per la via della virtù visiva”—through the power of sight.²⁷⁴ And so it follows for Du Bos that the most moving poetry is tragedy, not only for its expressive power, but because it resembles painting to the extent that it is a spectacle presented on the stage and so appeals directly to the eye.²⁷⁵

It is unprofitable to argue, as Leonardo did, that the mind's eye sees more darkly than the outward eye or that the poet's imagery leaves less vivid marks on the mind than the painter's conveys to the sight, for on the basis of their own experience some will always agree with Leonardo, others with Addison. But it would certainly be the consensus of opinion that if descriptive poetry or prose produces a series of vivid images in the mind, these do not, in general experience, unite to form a clear simultaneous impression of various forms, details, and colors, such as one has in beholding a picture or a scene in nature. But the point which should be made here is that at the beginning of the eighteenth century a new impulse to seek the beginnings of knowledge not in any a priori endowment of the human soul, but in the data of sense experience, led to a new awareness of the senses as organs of knowledge. And between Leonardo, greatest exemplar of the empirical ardor of the Renaissance, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, and Du Bos near the beginning of the eighteenth, the clear insistence that painting is primarily an art whose function it is to represent to the eye the forms and beauty of the external world was in eclipse.²⁷⁶ It was in eclipse, that is, during the two centuries in which the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* was in process of

271. *Op. cit.*, 22: “Et anchorche le cose de' poeti sieno con lungo intervallo di tempo lette, spesse sono le volte, chelle non sono intese e bisogna farli sopra diversi comenti . . . Ma l'opera del pittore immediate è compresa dalli suoi riguardatori.” Elsewhere (19) Leonardo says that the poet's names are not universal like the painter's forms. Armenini (*De' veri precetti della pittura*, 1, 3, p. 33) remarks in like manner that poetry requires study, time, and doctrine (here speaks the Counter-Reform), but that painting is apprehended immediately by every rank and

type of person.

272. *Loc. cit.*

273. *Réflexions critiques*, 1, 40, pp. 415 ff.

274. *Ibid.*; cf. Leonardo, *op. cit.*, 1, 2.

275. *Ibid.*, p. 425; cf. 1, 13, pp. 105 ff., and Horace *Ars poetica* 180 ff.

276. The occasional compliments to painting as speaking a more universal language than poetry were stock in trade and do not alter the truth of this statement. See notes 270 and 271.

evolution, when the critics were all too eager to turn the poet into a painter of pictures and the painter into one who shared subject matter and expression and a set of rules for good invention with the poet. And it was in the writing of Du Bos, who was deeply influenced by the empiricism of the English philosopher John Locke and by Addison's essays (themselves owing much to Locke) on the effect of visual experience on the imagination,²⁷⁷ that we first find in the criticism of painting any well-formulated theory that is opposed to the abstract doctrine of the Academicians. For in applying the rules of poetry to painting, critics like Félibien and Le Brun had so intellectualized the pictorial art that its primary character as a visual art capable of affecting the human imagination only through its initial power over the sense of sight, was largely neglected.

But if painting to Leonardo could more vividly than poetry represent the beauty of a face, or of forests, valleys, fields, and streams,²⁷⁸ it could also—and here Leonardo argues against those who would claim for poetry the total realm of the mind's activity—represent the motions of the mind, by which he chiefly means the passions of the soul in so far as they are expressed by movements of the body.²⁷⁹ And when in the *Trattato*, he was not defending painting against poetry and there was no occasion for pressing the argument, Leonardo expressly states, as we have seen, that it is in the manifestation of the mind's activity through bodily movement (not in the depiction of the beauty of nature of which he sometimes writes with so much personal feeling and imagination)²⁸⁰ that the most important part of the painter's art lies.²⁸¹ Thus in arguing that the province of the mind is not denied to the painter, Leonardo at the same time restricts him to that inward activity that through the body makes itself palpable to the sight. And this again was an excellent distinction and one that later critics who tended to read into painting more expression of the thinking and feeling man than the painter could possibly depict in a single figure would have done well to consider. The implications of Leonardo's distinction are brought out in the mid-sixteenth century, when Dolce describes the painter as one intent on imitating through lines and colors all that is represented to the eye—and this, of course, includes the depiction of mental and of psychic life through expressive bodily movement—and the poet as imitating with words not only the external world (wherein most critics considered him a painter) but also “that which is represented to the intellect.”²⁸² By this phrase Dolce would appear to mean intellectual concepts and the temporal processes of thought, as distinguished from visual imagery. A few years earlier, Benedetto Varchi had also maintained this same general distinction, arguing that it is chiefly the poet's business to imitate *il di dentro*—the concepts, and passions of the soul, that are within—and the painter's, *il di fuori*—the bodies and features of the outer world.²⁸³ He added prudently

277. For Du Bos's debt to Locke and Addison see A. Lombard, *L'Abbé du Bos, un initiateur de la pensée moderne*, Paris, 1913, pp. 194 ff.; p. 206; p. 221.

278. *Trattato*, I, 18.

279. *Ibid.*, 19: “Se la poesia s'estende in filosofia morale, e questa in filosofia naturale; se quella describe le operazioni della mente, che considera quella, se la mente opera nei movimenti.”

280. *Ibid.*, II, 68; cf. 66.

281. *Ibid.*, 122: “La più importante cosa, che ne' discorsi della pittura trovare si possa, sono li movimenti appropriati alli accidenti mentali di ciascun animale, come desiderio, sprezzamento, ira, pietà e simili.” Cf. III, 297, 368.

282. See note 6.

283. *Due lezioni*, 1549, pp. 113–14: “I Poeti imitano il di dentro principalmente, cio è i concetti, e le passioni dell'animo, se bene molte volte descrivono ancora, e quasi

dipingono colle parole i corpi, e tutte le fattezze di tutte le cose così animate, come inanimate [in all of this “painting” of the external world Leonardo would have said that the poet cannot successfully rival the painter], et i Pittori imitano principalmente il di fuori, cio è i corpi, e le fattezze di tutte le cose . . . pare che sia tanta differenza fra la Poesia, e la pittura quanta è fra l'anima, e'l corpo [cf. the saying of Leonardo, who favors painting and the natural world, that painting is to poetry as a body to its cast shadow], bene è vero, che come i Poeti descrivono anchora il di fuori, così i Pittori mostrano quanto più possono il di dentro, cio è gl'affetti, et il primo, che cio anticamente facesse questo, secondo che racconta Plinio, fu Aristide Thebano, e modernamente Giotto. Bene è vero, che i Pittori non possono sprimere così felicemente il di dentro, come il di fuori.” A similar distinction appears again near the end of the century (1591) in Comanini's differentiation

that they may invade each other's territory to some extent, for the poet will also paint, as it were, the outer world, and the painter will represent the "affetti" as best he can, though he can never do this as happily as the poet—a point of view which is again a direct anticipation of the central doctrine of Lessing. But this vital distinction between the sister arts was obscured, if not altogether lost, in the late sixteenth century in the Mannerist doctrine that the painter's standard of artistic imitation was not to be found in selecting the best from external nature, but in contemplating an Idea of perfection—or what Zuccari was to call *disegno interno*—in the mind's eye.²⁸⁴ And it was not a distinction which, in the seventeenth century, the Cartesian habit of making painting purely a function of the human reason would tend to encourage. Again it was Du Bos in the early eighteenth century who in a discerning chapter on the subjects most suited to the poet and to the painter,²⁸⁵ distinguished carefully for the first time in nearly two centuries between the painter's field as *di fuori* and the poet's as *di dentro*. Du Bos remarks particularly on the ability of the former to represent, as the poet cannot without loss of unity, the different emotions of a large group of persons simultaneously interested in an action, as well as the age, sex, and dress of each, their individual characters so far as these may be rendered in visible signs, and the setting in which the group is placed, much of which the poet, because his is a temporal art, could only do—and here Leonardo would have again agreed—at the risk of lengthy and tiresome description. But the advantages of the temporal over the spatial art are that the poet can represent the sublime or subtle thought that accompanies the passions of the soul as the painter cannot, for all his greater vividness in portraying the emotions; just as he can render intricacies of moral character denied to the painter, and can impart to events a heightened meaning, because they are dramatically related to preceding events. This last Du Bos calls in the language of his day "le sublime de rapport"—a virtue obviously denied the painter, because he must confine himself to a single event in a single moment of time. In all such arguments one will recognize again, but this time at close range, a direct anticipation of Lessing. But it was Leonardo who, two centuries before, in claiming for the painter the depiction of those aspects of the mind's activity that are revealed in the body, had conceded to the poet other kinds of mental activity that the painter's art is unable to express.²⁸⁶

IX—THE UNITY OF ACTION

The preceding parts of this study will, it is hoped, make it clear that antiquity furnished the Renaissance with a body of doctrine intended in particular for dramatic and epic poetry, which the theorists of the sixteenth century cavalierly applied to painting, unaware, to invoke Lessing once more, that there might be difficulties in transferring the criticism of an art of words succeeding one another in time, to an art of figures coexistent in space. Now, in point of fact, sixteenth-century criticism of painting in Italy is singularly free of those anomalies that later arose from the unfortunate attempt to impose correspondences

between "imitatione fantastica" as being the chief delight of poetry, and "imitatione icastica" of the painter (see Panofsky, *Idea*, pp. 97–98 for comment on the meaning of these terms). Among literary critics it makes a rare appearance in the later Cinquecento in Castelvetro's virtual restriction of the painter's legitimate activity to the field of realistic portraiture, for in the imitation of ideal nature which is the poet's province the painter, he says, can produce nothing either delightful or of serious merit (*Poetica d'Aristotele vulgarizzata et sposta*, Basel, 1576, pp. 40, 72–73,

586; first ed. 1570). This is obviously to make the distinction in an extreme form and one which does violence to the art of painting.

284. See notes 48 and 108. For discussion of Zuccari's *disegno interno*, see Panofsky, *Idea*, pp. 47 ff.

285. *Op. cit.*, I, 13, pp. 84 ff. See also the excellent chapters on Du Bos's comparison of poetry with painting in Lombard, *op. cit.*, pp. 211–24.

286. See notes 263 and 279. Moral philosophy and human conversation are mentioned specifically as belonging to poetry.

of form rather than of content upon two arts whose primary media were totally different. The theological and dogmatic twist that Giulio da Fabriano in the late sixteenth century gave to the theory of decorum, belonged after all to a different category of criticism, and might be laid at the doors of the theologian and moralist rather than of the critic per se. It was merely an unfortunate extension of the humanistic habit of identifying the content and the high seriousness of poetry and painting, not the result of any consistent attempt of aesthetic criticism to discover relationships of form between the sister arts; and the same might be said of the theory of the learned painter, for only through learning could the painter's productions carry equal weight with poetry and history among scholars and theologians. And the Italian critics of the late sixteenth century, despite their grievous faults of prolixity, unincisiveness, and indiscriminate appropriation of the thought and language of their ancient or immediate predecessors, did not, like some of the more systematic than perceptive exponents of the humanistic theory of painting in seventeenth-century France and England, make the enthusiastic but mistaken attempt to discover, it would seem at any cost, analogies of form between the sister arts.²⁸⁷ To say, for instance, in the late seventeenth century that the painter like the dramatic poet had observed the unities of place, time, and action was perhaps to pay him as high a compliment as the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* could sponsor,²⁸⁸ and we have already seen that this particular development of the comparison of painting with poetry was a natural accompaniment of the Cartesian passion for clarity and order.²⁸⁹

But the Aristotelian unity of action is not a critical concept which has any real validity for the art of painting. And this will be apparent if we take a moment to consider some further aspects of the discussion reported by Félibien of Poussin's *Fall of the Manna in the Wilderness* (Fig. 4),²⁹⁰ a painting in which most of the persons represented are watching the falling manna in attitudes of wonder or thanksgiving, or are gathering it up from the ground. A critic of the picture had remarked that Poussin had violated the facts of history when he depicted the manna falling by day, for in reality the Hebrews had found it in the morning spread upon the ground like dew; and that he had also erred when to exemplify the hunger and wretchedness of these people he showed a young woman who suckled her aged mother instead of her child, for according to Scripture the Hebrews had the night before fed on quails which had been sufficient to satisfy their worst hunger (wherefore this episode, the critic means to say, could in reality have taken place only before the quails arrived).²⁹¹ To this Le Brun answered that a painter is not like an historian who by a succession of words represents a progressive action; but since he may depict an event as taking place only in a single moment of time, it is sometimes necessary for him to join together many incidents in order that people may understand the subject which he treats. For if he did not do this, they would be no better instructed than if an historian instead of conducting his narrative from beginning to end, contented himself with merely giving the conclusion.²⁹² Painting then is closely related to the art of story-telling, and Le Brun justifies what he takes to be Poussin's method on didactic grounds, as one might readily expect of a theorist who heartily endorsed the Horatian *monere et delectare*.

287. Cf. p. 202 and notes 26 and 27.

288. It will be recalled that it is only the unity of action that Aristotle insists upon in the *Poetics*. The other unities were first formulated by Castelvetro, who had the highly unimaginative notion that it would be a breach of verisimilitude if the place of the action were not a single spot which changed no more than the stage did, and if the time of the

action did not exactly coincide with the actual time of the performance. Castelvetro was equally unimaginative about the art of painting. See note 283.

289. See p. 224.

290. The date was November 5, 1667.

291. See Jouin, *Conférences*, p. 62.

292. *Ibid.*

We must forego a discussion of Le Brun's ingenious attempt to prove Poussin an accurate historian in the face of this telescoping of events, and proceed to the remarks of another speaker who according to Félibien brought the discussion to a close. For it is here that Aristotle's doctrine of the unity of action is pronounced to be as valid for painting as for dramatic poetry, and that painting is virtually declared to be, like poetry, an art of time. That did not, of course, prevent its being in the eyes of the Academy a spatial art as well, which since it represented a single event at a single moment of time, of necessity observed in pictorial fashion the other dramatic unities—those of time and place. But if this were true, as it obviously was, there was something inconsistent in interpreting Poussin's unity of action in temporal terms.²⁹³

The Aristotelian theorist begins by observing that if the rules of the theatre allow poets to join together several events that happened at different times in order to make a single action of them, provided there be no inconsistency and that probability ("vraisemblance") be strictly observed, it is yet more right that the painter should have the same freedom, for without it—and the present speaker, it will be noted, bases his argument on aesthetic, not on didactic grounds as had Le Brun—his compositions would be less admirable and his genius displayed to less advantage. Now in this regard, continues the theorist, one cannot accuse Poussin of having put in his painting anything that might impede the unity of action, or anything that is counter to probability or, for that matter, too far removed from historical truth. For if he did not entirely follow the text of Scripture, he could have found the main elements of his story in the *Antiquitates Judaearum* of Josephus, who relates that after the Jews had received the quails, Moses lifting up his hands prayed God to send them other nourishment, whereupon the manna fell from heaven like drops of dew which grew larger as they descended and which the people took for snow until they had tasted thereof.²⁹⁴

Here, at least, was a highly respectable text that, even if it did not have the infallibility of Scripture, might guard Poussin's reputation as an historian; and the speaker now proceeds to develop the idea of the unity of action, remarking that "as for having represented persons some of whom are in misery whereas others are receiving relief, it is here that this learned painter has shown that he is a true poet, for he has composed his work according to the rules which the art of poetry requires one to observe in composing plays for the theatre. For to represent his story perfectly he needed those parts that are necessary to a poem in order to pass from ill to good fortune. That is why we see that the groups of figures whose actions are different are like so many episodes that serve for what one calls *peripeteia*, and as a means to make known the changes that came upon the Israelites when they emerged from their extreme wretchedness, and entered into a happier state. Thus their misfortune is represented by people who are languishing and beaten down; the change in their fortune is depicted by the fall of the manna, and their happiness may be seen in their possession of a food that we see them gathering with unbounded joy."²⁹⁵

293. See *ibid.*, p. 154, for the interesting remarks of Henri Testelin on the fundamental difference, later emphasized by Lessing, between poetry and painting, and on the unities as they apply to painting (from his lecture on "L'expression générale et particulière"): "Il fut représenté que par l'écriture l'on peut bien faire une ample description de toutes les circonstances qui arrivent en une suite de temps, lesquelles on ne peut concevoir que successivement, mais qu'en la peinture l'on doit comprendre tout d'un coup l'idée du sujet; qu'ainsi un peintre se doit restreindre à ces trois unités, à savoir: ce qui arrive en un seul temps; ce que la vue peut découvrir d'une seule œillade; et ce qui se

peut représenter dans l'espace d'un tableau." The first of these unities corresponds to the dramatic unity of time, the second and third together to the dramatic unity of place. It will be noted that none of the three corresponds to Aristotle's unity of action, and quite rightly, because in a spatial art the latter is subsumed in the other two unities. For what can be seen happening in a single place in a single moment of time is bound to have unity of action in a pictorial sense, if the artist knows how to impart dramatic unity to his composition.

294. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

295. *Ibid.*

This is something new in the doctrine *ut pictura poesis*, for hitherto in our discussion we have seen that if the painter fulfilled the requirements of invention, expression, decorum, and the like, which the doctrine imposed upon him, his art would resemble poetry in content rather than in form, for the painter's disposition of his objects was never supposed to be governed by temporal considerations. But in the case of Aristotle's unity of action we have to do with a formal concept designed for dramatic poetry, which the critics of painting sometimes attempted to apply to an art for which, as we shall see, the unity of action was indeed a legitimate concept, but not in the Aristotelian sense.

Now it is obviously impossible to judge French painting of the seventeenth century fairly unless one understands and respects, however strong his disagreement, the view that the great painter is an edifying teacher, and unless one remembers that at no time in the history of painting did critics assume more completely that good painting gathered its subjects and its content from poetry and history. And one must recall as well that in an age when the painter was acknowledged to be moralist, poet, and historian, it was not unnatural that a learned man looking at a picture should read it like a text, as in fact Poussin, although he never admitted the didactic function of art, had virtually advised him to do.²⁹⁶ Nevertheless it is straining the possibilities of expression further than the medium of painting can bear when Félibien's theorist reads the beginning, middle, and end of a drama, considered as developing in time, into the actions and expressions in Poussin's picture. For granted that one knows its biblical source, as he must if he is to understand and judge it for its human as well as its formal content, what the *Fall of the Manna* tells us is what Poussin the painter, not the unknown theorist of the Academy, meant it to tell us: that here is a group of Israelites, male and female, young and old, who react with various emotions to the fall of the manna if they are aware of it; or if they are not, are so portrayed as to illustrate the state of hunger which the miracle of the manna was intended to relieve. This is in effect what Le Brun pointed out in his earlier discussion of the picture, when he remarked on the way in which the actions and expressions therein all bear on the principal subject,²⁹⁷ and when he might have legitimately added that in this respect the picture showed unity of action. For the unity of action so understood is based squarely (granted that one has the necessary minimum of biblical knowledge) on what the picture itself reveals, not on the temporal concept of the unity of action as Aristotle applied it to the drama. Yet it is the latter with which Félibien's theorist mistakenly, though with every complimentary intention, credits Poussin when, as an enthusiastic disciple of the doctrine *ut pictura poesis*, he seeks to apply a law indispensable to the writing of good drama to an art in which the unity of action must in the very nature of the medium be governed by spatial, not by temporal considerations. To the dramatist the unity of action is invaluable as a principle of criticism, for it points to a standard of abstemious concentration, and warns against the inclusion of the casual and unrelated in an art in which the succession of events in time must move consistently to an inevitable end. But for painting, once the continuous method had been generally abandoned,²⁹⁸ it could have, in the Aristotelian sense, no meaning, for the counterpart in painting of Aristotle's unity of action—the representation of an event in such a way that all pictorial elements would be simultaneously functional to the expression of a single dramatic action—

296. See p. 224 and note 123.

297. See pp. 223 ff.

298. Félibien in his *Préface* (p. 313) warns not precisely against this method but against including too many actions in a picture which took place in one time and one locality, remarking that a painter who commits these faults deserves

no less censure than did Euripides, whose *Trojan Women* has been blamed by everyone because it represents three separate actions. For the concept of the continuous method see F. Wickhoff, *Roman Art* (trans. E. Strong), London, 1900, pp. 11 ff.

could of necessity (such was the requirement of the medium) include only a single moment of time. Once this is understood, it becomes clear that any attempt to apply to painting the principle of the unity of action in the manner in which Aristotle applied it to the drama, is aesthetically fallacious. And this tendency to think of painting in the temporal terms of literary art leads not only in Félibien's time but sometimes to an appalling degree among later critics of art to the bad habit of finding in their favorite works, "what," as Reynolds observed, "they are resolved to find," as an example of which one might cite Le Brun's psychological analysis of the mingled feelings of the woman in the *Fall of the Manna* who in order to give her mother nourishment, has had to deprive her child of his rightful due.²⁹⁹ "They praise excellencies," Reynolds continues, "that can hardly exist together; and above all things, are fond of describing, with great exactness, the expression of a mixed passion, which more particularly appears to be out of the reach of our art."³⁰⁰ When Reynolds objects to the critics who read mixed passions into painting—and by a mixed passion he means what we have just remarked in Le Brun, the expression of several emotions in a given figure at the same time—or when he later suggests that the painter himself "may have attempted this expression of passions above the powers of his art,"³⁰¹ he strikes with the axe of sound common sense at the root of that mistaken tendency of the Aristotelian critics to obscure the legitimate humanistic relationship of the sister arts by declaring in effect that painting, like poetry, is an art of successive events in time. It is both shocking and amusing to contemplate the faults committed by the critics of painting in the name of Aristotle, wherein, it may be observed, the English critics especially outdid themselves. Even if one admits that the original creation and understanding of the figure arts have seldom been the particular forte of the English nation, and if one makes all due allowance for the dominance of *ut pictura poesis* in the late seventeenth century, it is still not easy to understand how a man of the acute critical sense of John Dryden could, in comparing literature with painting, fall into such absurdities as when he compares the subordinate groups gathered about the central group of figures in a painting to the episodes in an epic poem or to the chorus in a tragedy, or the sketch of a painting to stage scenery, or the warts and moles in a portrait to the flaw in the character of a tragic hero.³⁰² These analogies can scarcely be said to be illuminating, and they show again the confusion that arises when an enthusiastic but befuddled critic naively attempts a comparison of the sister arts that a little reflection on the possibilities and limitations of their media would have shown to be inconsistent with aesthetic truth.

There are occasional hints in Italian criticism of the sixteenth century of trouble to

299. Jouin, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

300. *Discourse v.* For an extreme example from the early eighteenth century of what Reynolds objects to, see Richardson's analysis of a painting by Poussin of an episode from Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* (*Essay on the Art of Criticism*, p. 196): "The expression of this picture is excellent throughout. The air of Vafrino is just, he hath a character evidently inferior, but nevertheless he appears brave, and full of care, tenderness, and affection. Argante seems to be a wretch that died in rage and despair, without the least spark of piety. Tancred is good, amiable, noble, and valiant, etc., etc" (for several pages). This painting, called *Tancred and Erminia*, and now in the University of Birmingham, is illustrated in Thomas Bodkin, "A Rediscovered Picture by Nicolas Poussin," *Burlington Magazine*, LXXIV, 1939, 253.

301. *Loc. cit.* He refers to Raphael who "has, therefore, by an indistinct and imperfect marking, left room for every

imagination, with equal probability to find a passion of his own."

302. See his *Parallel between Painting and Poetry*, pp. xvii ff. and xliv ff. But Dryden has also left a most beautifully succinct statement of the comparison of painting with dramatic poetry. In his epistle in verse to Sir Godfrey Kneller, after observing that the stupid people who want nothing but their portraits painted offer no encouragement to one whose métier is the noble art of historical painting, he continues:

"Else should we see your noble Pencil trace
Our Unities of Action, Time, and Place;
A Whole compos'd of Parts, and those the best,
With ev'ry various Character express;
Heroes at large, and at a nearer View;
Less, and at distance, an Ignobler Crew;
While all the Figures in one Action joyn,
As tending to Compleat the main Design."

come,³⁰³ but no such gratuitous and strained analogies between poetry and painting as the northern critics finally produced. Some of these have been cited here by way of defining a serious confusion of thought that developed in the later history of the *paragone*, and to show how this confusion was largely the result of the powerful influence of the *Poetics* which in determining the formal character of French classic drama, easily extended itself through the current habit of comparing the sister arts to the criticism of painting as well. It was, of course, the tendency to think of painting in temporal terms, along with the tendency which he was better equipped to oppose, to think of poetry in pictorial terms, that was to provoke the corrective criticism of Lessing in his brilliant attempt to define the limits of poetry and painting.

We are now in a position to see how Lessing's narrow and unsatisfactory conception of bodily beauty as the highest end of painting, which we discussed in an earlier chapter,³⁰⁴ not only reflects his Neo-Classic taste but also adapts itself readily to his theory of the limits of the arts. For a painting in which clearly-defined physical beauty provides the chief content—in which expression is given but a subordinate place—is unlikely to set the spectator or the critics to dreaming in a literary manner of the thoughts and feelings of the figures as if they were characters in a novel or drama. It is far less likely to do this than an historical painting with its variety of gesture and facial expression, to which Lessing objected precisely because it failed to subordinate expression to bodily beauty. "Beautiful shapes in graceful attitudes," then, since they provide immediate aesthetic satisfaction to the mind which apprehends them in spatial, not temporal terms, are not likely to tempt the imaginative onlooker to undue temporal speculation.

It should not be forgotten, however, that Lessing himself made an important concession to the temporal imagination in his doctrine of the most fruitful moment, according to which the painter who confines himself to a single moment of time must choose that moment in action or emotion—always a moment of relative restraint in which expression will not quarrel with beauty—that will be most suggestive of what is past and of what is still to come.³⁰⁵ Unfortunately Lessing does not seem to have realized the implications of this doctrine for anything but ancient art. Had he possessed the knowledge or the inclination to apply it fairly to modern art, he might have taken a more charitable view than he did of the element of expression in historical painting. Nevertheless one will note his willingness to consider art not merely as an objective realization of beautiful forms, but in its effect on the imagination, and no critic will seriously disagree with the doctrine of the most fruitful moment, provided it is understood that those images of the past or future which are evoked in the mind are always implicit in the work of art itself, and that they do not expand into actual speculation on the inner life of the figures, or on the temporal stages of the action, that soon leaves the work of art far behind. And Lessing would have been the first to challenge all those for whom the fruitful moment had been entirely too fruitful.

303. Dolce (*Dialogo della pittura*, p. 158), says that the painter must "vada di parte in parte rassembrando il successo della historia" so that the observer will believe that "quel fatto non debba essere avvenuto altrimenti di quello, che da lui è dipinto." Thus the painter will never place in front what ought to be behind, etc. It is then remarked that Aristotle in his *Poetics* gave the same advice to dramatists. Notions of time and space as they concern

the arts were evidently not altogether clear in Dolce's mind.

304. See pp. 214 ff.

305. *Laokoön* III, and XVI. For the interesting anticipation of Lessing's doctrine in Lord Shaftesbury's discussion of how the painter should represent *Hercules at the Crossroads*, see Blümner's introduction to his edition of the *Laokoön*, pp. 24 ff.; cf. Howard's edition, pp. LXXV ff.

X—CONCLUSION

In Italy of the sixteenth century the humanistic theory of painting rested on the classical doctrine that "the proper study of mankind is man." All critics assumed that painting, like poetry, was the imitation of human action, and it followed, as this essay has attempted to demonstrate, that it must resemble the sister art in subject matter, in human content, and in purpose. If the painter's inventions were to be comparable to those of the poet in power, depth, or beauty, he must choose themes from ancient and modern poetry, and from history sacred and profane; his genius was said to have its most intimate affinities with the poet's in his power to express human emotion; his aim like the poet's was assumed to be serious, for he must aspire not merely to give pleasure, but to impart wisdom to mankind.³⁰⁶ This profound relationship with poetry was enough to give to painting the prestige of a liberal art. But to make doubly sure that the painter should never again be considered only an artisan "sans littérature, sans mœurs, sans politesse," the critics, leaning heavily on the example of Pliny who had proclaimed the honorable estate of painters in antiquity, dwelt with wearisome though perhaps pardonable iteration on the free association of painters with princes and learned men during the Renaissance. Lastly, and most important, the high argument of inspired poetry could bestow on painting, as Varchi said in relating Michelangelo's debt to Dante,³⁰⁷ a profundity of content, a majesty and grandeur that Sir Joshua Reynolds writing of Michelangelo in a later age would have called the sublime.³⁰⁸ The critics who fashioned the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* thus ranked painting with poetry as a serious interpreter of human life, and the humanistic critic who is deeply concerned with art as a repository of enduring human values will always believe that human life is as supremely the painter's province as it is the poet's, and that some subjects are of more universal interest and importance than others, even though he may not care to admit with Roger de Piles that elevated subject matter can be an actual substitute for original genius.³⁰⁹

This was, in fact, De Piles at his most conservative, for although he was never a revolutionary and acquiesced in many of the dictates of the French Academy, his painter's instinct led him to extend a welcoming hand to landscape and still-life, which the Academy held in low repute, just as it led him to object to the unnaturalness of Le Brun's definitions of the passions, and to champion the sensuous element of color without which he said, "contour cannot represent any object as we see it in nature"³¹⁰—a sentiment that was distasteful to the Cartesian academicians who defended contour as the guardian of general, not particular truth. For the rational traditionalism of the Academy, founded on the ideal antique and sustained by a set of thoroughly formalistic concepts, tended to deny the painter his birthright of free converse with a living and unmethodized nature; and although one may discern behind the imposing but uninspired façade of its precepts the belief that the arts should minister to the dignity of human life, the extreme formalism of the academic point of view under Le Brun shows clearly that the once vital humanism of the Renaissance had hardened into inert convention which could not long resist the pressure of new and living forms of expression. And although the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* was to maintain some-

306. I must mention here the interesting appearance of the *paragone* in the first scene of Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*. See A. Blunt, "An Echo of the 'Paragone' in Shakespeare," *Journal of the Warburg Institute*, III, 1938-39, 260-62.

307. *Due lezioni*, p. 116.

308. *Discourse xv*.

309. *Cours de peinture*, p. 63.

310. *Dialogue sur le coloris*, Paris, 1699, p. 22. In this

connection one should point out that the kind of truth which De Piles urged the painter to follow was neither the "Vrai Ideal" of the antique, nor the "Vrai Simple" or natural truth of the Venetians, but what he calls the "Vrai Composé" or "Vrai Parfait"—a combination of the ideal and the natural that only Raphael, he thinks, possessed. This was, of course, to concede far more to nature than Félibien and Le Brun had done. See *Cours de peinture*, pp. 29 ff.

thing better than a hazardous existence during the eighteenth century, it was steadily undermined by forces that were in the long run to make for its destruction. Opposed to the humanistic point of view was the growing interest in external nature, with whose freshness and irresponsible freedom Rousseau, the apostle of emotion, was to contrast the life of human beings freighted with custom and constrained by the "false secondary power" of the reason. And although an interest like De Piles' in the concrete reality of nature as well as in the beauty of her transient effects—in those *formae Veneres fugaces* that had not been lost on Du Fresnoy—was necessary to save the painter's art (as in the Rococo painting of the early eighteenth century it was already doing) from the limitations of academic formalism, it was also a part of that general movement in thought and art away from concentration on the supreme significance of the human image.

Another source of danger to the humanistic point of view during the eighteenth century was the growing importance of the doctrine of original genius which was encouraged by the pervasive influence of the treatise of *Longinus on the Sublime*.³¹¹ And although the Longinian doctrine that the artist, if he is to attain sublimity or greatness, must at times jump the traces of the rules—in Pope's famous phrase "snatch a grace beyond the reach of art"—was accepted by conservative theorists as legitimatizing the occasional flights of genius for which no rules could provide a pattern, as the century progressed it came to be associated in the minds of critics with the subjective and emotional in artistic expression, and with a special class of sublime subjects that were obviously congenial to the romantic temperament and to that alone. And these were non-traditional subjects: scenes for instance of terror, or of vast, wild, and formless nature which had submitted to the laws of order no more than genius itself, it was at length acknowledged, was expected to do. Such a point of view was not one to encourage the ideal representation of human action that had been the theme of humanistic painting, and the doctrine of original genius is, moreover, the ancestor of modern expressionism which is necessarily hostile to the doctrine *ut pictura poesis*. For if the latter is to have any final significance, it must, without denying certain expressive privileges to genius, rest on the principle that since painting like poetry should be most concerned with the interpretation of universal human experience, the painter like the poet must in the act of creation retain a certain power of judgment and selective discrimination that is not compatible with unlicensed self-expression.

Amid the emancipating influences of the eighteenth century Lessing stands out as the last and one of the greatest of the Aristotelians, and the *Laokoön* as one of the last outposts of the humanism of the Renaissance. For in restricting painting and poetry to those subjects that were, as he thought, best suited to their means of imitation, he imposed severely humanistic limitations on both, denying to poetry whose proper sphere he considered to be human action, the description of scenes and objects in nature, and to painting (here, as we have seen, his point of view was narrow and, in a sense, anachronistic) virtually all but the depiction of corporeal beauty. Less brilliant as a dialectician, less uncompromising in his classicism, but, since he was a painter, aware as Lessing could never be of the wide and varied scope of pictorial art, Reynolds was also a late and important exponent of hu-

311. This treatise became an important document for European criticism after its translation by Boileau in 1674. Its influence appears already in De Piles' *Abrégé de la vie des peintres* of 1699. For the development of the concept of the sublime in the eighteenth century see S. H. Monk, *The Sublime, a Study of Critical Theories in XVIII-Century England*, New York, 1935. Chap. IX deals with

the theories of the sublime among the English critics of painting, and shows how these theories found illustration in the last decades of the century in the painting of the Royal Academy. English art was earlier affected by the sublime than was French art, which did not produce many sublime subjects until the early nineteenth century.

manistic doctrine. And again unlike Lessing he owed much to the doctrine of Longinus, not in its distorted and romantic form, but in its purity—in that form, in fact, in which it had first been known to the late seventeenth century through the translation and commentaries of Boileau. And it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the emphasis of Longinus on greatness of content in art as opposed to formal beauty, on the artist's power to move the mind through the emotions as against his appeal to the reason, on the imagination which in the greatest art outstrides correct judgment and purity of taste, all served to clear Reynolds' exposition of the academic tradition in his *Discourses* of much of the dead weight of formalism. Moreover it is "that nobleness of conception which goes beyond anything in the mere exhibition of perfect form" and which the painter acquires "by warming his imagination with the best productions of ancient and modern poetry" that is to Reynolds the crown of "that one great idea which gives to painting its true dignity, which entitles it to the name of a liberal art and ranks it as a sister of poetry."³¹² Thus one of the last and sanest exponents of the doctrine *ut pictura poesis*—of that doctrine which the Renaissance critics both of painting and poetry based upon the literary theory of antiquity—found that the chief likeness of painting to poetry lay not in adherence to a set of precepts borrowed from the sister art, or in any imagined correspondences of form, but in "nobleness of conception." To Reynolds, the most significant aspect of painting, as of poetry, was its capacity to reveal and interpret the element of dignity in human life. Painting, he believed, is never merely an art of the eye, but it is the mind whose servant the eye is that the painter of genius, like the poet, chiefly desires to address.

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APPENDIX I

ON THE LACK OF ANCIENT CRITICISM OF PAINTING (*See note 20*)

De Piles says in effect that in ancient times rules were given for painting and poetry, but that both arts after the fall of Rome fell into neglect until later times when Raphael and Titian, Corneille and Racine, tried to restore them to their original perfection. There is, however, this difference between them, that in the case of poetry the works of ancient poets and the rules of Aristotle and Horace are preserved, so that the true idea of poetry has remained as a guide for later poets; whereas in the case of painting, the great works of ancient painters and many critical writings of the Greeks are forever lost, so that, with nothing left to give a just idea of painting as practiced by the ancients in its period of greatest perfection, painting in modern times has not yet been recovered in its fullest extent. But these deficiencies are, he believes, in good part supplied by the works of the best painters who have revived the art, and "by what we gather from those who have laid down the rules of Poesy, as Aristotle and Horace," whereupon he quotes passages from the *Ars poetica* (see notes 14, 15) and the *Poetics* (iv) that indicate a favorable opinion of painting in antiquity. De Piles was thus glad to cite remarks of ancient critics that sustained him in his praise of painting (he remembers with disapprobation another opinion of Aristotle that the arts which require manual performance are

less noble on that account), but, as a progressive critic who admired color and the painting of Rubens, he was unwilling to pay any lip-service to the remains of ancient painting that had come to light in Rome; for in the course of his remarks on the disappearance of the ancient masterpieces of painting, he says bluntly that he holds the Roman remains of little account. No Poussinist would have said so much, no matter how inconsequential the painting.

At the end of the sixteenth century Armenini had held a like opinion of the remains of ancient painting. After declaring that his book with its compendium of directions for painters may save them the difficulty and discouragement of long research on their own account, and may even implant in the minds of men a sense of the value of old masterpieces and new that for want of an appreciation of their great worth are falling into decay (rich men in his degenerate age may, he opines, learn from his treatise to become better patrons of the arts), he remarks that painting has suffered for lack of a Vitruvius, and all the more because of its material fragility needs the prescribed word, "perciocchè col mezzo delle scritte, le quali si possono sporgere per tutto il mondo, non solo si rendono facili le arti, e men faticose, ma si conservano ancora più salde, e vive nelle memorie de' posterì, che non si fa quando elle rimangono sola-

312. *Discourse III.*

mente nelle opere e nelle lingue di color che le esercitano. *E se cosa alcuna in questo proposito fu lasciata dagli antichi, venne ad annichilarsi ed a risolversi in fumo, fuorchè alcune poche pitture ritrovate in luoghi orridi e inabitabili, da noi dette grottesche, e secondo il vocabolo degli antichi, chimere, delle quali, siccome da piccoli splendori, si tiene che i moderni pigliassero il modo e la via vera del dipingere.* Donde finqui è manifesto in quanta oscurità di prima si ritrovasse, e in quanti pericoli gli sia a' di nostri il sentier precedente" (*De' veri precetti della pittura*, I, I, p. 25). Armenini was thus no more inclined to worship the ancient remains of painting than De Piles, and for less satisfactory reasons.

In the early eighteenth century the scholarly Abbé du Bos was somewhat more charitably disposed toward the ancient remains, finding them, so far as he could tell, equal to the work of the moderns in design, light and shade, expression, and "composition poétique," by which he means composition that is functional to dramatic expression; it is impossible, he says, to judge their color, but it is evident that the ancients have not succeeded in "composition pittoresque" so well as Raphael, Rubens, Veronese,

and others. By "composition pittoresque" Du Bos means for the most part an harmonious pictorial effect—good composition for its own sake in the modern sense of the term. These distinctions are interesting as pointing to the dissolution of the humanistic point of view and the beginning of modern aesthetic ideas (cf. note 79). But Du Bos was a realist and was disinclined to make much of the comparison between ancient and modern painting, so fragmentary were the ancient remains. And he takes a fling at modern writers on ancient painting who, he says, make us more learned, but no more capable of judging the superiority of ancient to modern painting (the most famous of such writers would be Franciscus Junius, the author of *De pictura veterum*, Amsterdam, 1637). "Ces écrivains," he adds pointedly, "se sont contentés de ramasser les passages des auteurs anciens qui parlent de la peinture, et de les commenter en philologues, sans les expliquer par l'examen de ce que nos peintres font tous les jours, et mêmes sans appliquer ces passages aux morceaux de la peinture antique qui subsistent encore." See his *Réflexions critiques*, I, 38, pp. 370–409.

APPENDIX 2 (See note 70)

INVENTIO, DISPOSITIO, ELOCUTIO

Dolce (*Dialogo della pittura*, p. 174) remarks that "La inventione vien da due parti, dalla historia e dall'ingegno del Pittore [the latter becomes, of course, the all-important part as one approaches the Romantic Movement at the end of the eighteenth century; cf. also note 75]. Dalla historia egli ha semplicemente la materia. E dall'ingegno oltre all'ordine e la convenevolezza [orderly arrangement or disposition of figures, and decorum], procedono l'attitudini, la varietà, e la (per così dire) energia delle figure, ma questa è parte commune col disegno." Invention, then, for Dolce, means the choice of the history that he would represent, and the general plan of the picture, according to principles of good disposition and decorum, that he would work out in his mind. The actual sketch of the picture in black and white with "the attitudes, variety and energy" of the figures (all of which would have been performed included in a general way, at least, in the invention) is included under "disegno." Dolce had already (p. 150) divided the labor of the painter into three categories: *inventione*, *disegno*, and *colorito*. "L'inventione," he says, "è la favola, o historia, che'l Pittore si elegge da lui stesso, o gli è posta innanzi da altri per materia di quello che ha da operare [this narrow definition receives subsequently in the dialogue a broad interpretation of the kind suggested above]. Il disegno è la forma, con che egli la rappresenta [that is to say the projection into a sketch without color of the invention in the painter's mind]. Il colorito serve a quelle tinte, con le quali la natura dipinge (che così si può dire) diversamente le cose animate et inanimate" [coloring is, then, the final rendering of the picture].

It is interesting to observe that Dolce is the first

critic to use this threefold division which corresponds almost exactly to the first three divisions of the art of rhetoric—*inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*—among the Roman rhetoricians (Professor Samuel H. Monk of Southwestern College pointed out to me this and other interesting examples of the influence of the rhetoricians on Renaissance and Baroque criticism). For Cicero and Quintilian as for Dolce *inventio* means the choice of material, though it also includes for Dolce, as we have seen above, the general plan of the composition worked out in the painter's mind before its execution in a sketch; *dispositio* for the rhetoricians means a preliminary blocking out of the oratorical discourse, so as to give a clear indication of the structural outlines of its final form with the relation of parts to the whole, just as *disegno* for Dolce means a preliminary sketch of the painter's invention; and *elocutio* for the rhetoricians means the final rendering in language, just as *colorito* for Dolce means the final rendering in color (see Cicero *De inventione* I, 7, 9 and cf. *De oratore* I, 31, 142; Quintilian *Institutio oratoria* I, Proem., 22). A century before Dolce, Alberti, writing not only in a humanistic spirit, but even more as one interested in the practice of painting at a time when the Quattrocento painters were making their realistic advances, divides the art into *circonscriptione*, *compositione*, and *receptione di lumi* (*Della pittura*, pp. 99 ff.). This order indicates the painter's practical procedure: first the drawing of figures in outline; second the indication of planes within the outline (this is the first and purely technical aspect of *compositione*; other aspects will be mentioned shortly); third, the rendering in color wherein the painter must be aware of the relation of color to light. Dolce, on the other hand, writ-

ing not as one interested in the technical procedure of the practicing artist, but as an urbane and genial critic with a good education in classical literature and theory in an age that was critical rather than creative, follows the ancient rhetoricians in placing first *inventio*, which includes all of the preparatory labor of the painter before he actually begins to work at his canvas: his reading from which he would choose his subject, his conversations with learned men that might provide ideas, and his plan before its actual execution in a sketch for the disposition of his figures in his composition according to the principles of arrangement (*ordine*) and decorum (*convenevolezza*). Alberti's *compositio* corresponds in part to Dolce's *inventio*, for it includes besides the indication of planes in light and shade that distinguishes it in a purely technical sense from *circonscriptione*, the planning of the composition and matters of decorum and expression. Alberti added as a conclusion to his treatise, after *circonscriptione* and *compositio* had been discussed, a short third part that was intended to round out the painter's knowledge and render him "tale che possa seguire intera loda" (*op. cit.*, pp. 143 ff.). It includes a passage containing a few words of advice to the painters to acquire literary and historical knowledge that will improve their ability to compose histories "di cui ogni laude consiste in *la inventio*." This use of the word *inventio* corresponds to its use in Dolce's definition, and it is worth noting that whereas in the realistic Quattrocento literary knowledge is thought of as coming after and crowning the painter's scientific and practical knowledge, in the theoretical Cinquecento it is emphasized as the indispensable propa-

deutic to good painting, being considered equally with genius as the source of invention.

Professor Panofsky has called to my attention the fact that Alberti's threefold division of painting represents an indirect adaptation, long before Dolce's direct adaptation, of the rhetoricians' *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*: *inventio* being partly included by Alberti under *compositio* (where he speaks of arrangement, decorum, etc.) and mentioned once, in its own name, at the end of his book in connection with his advice concerning literary knowledge; *dispositio*, the preliminary outline of the orator's discourse, being represented also by *compositio* which includes the indication of how "le parti delle cose vedute si porgono insieme in pictura" (p. 109), but also by *circonscriptione*, the outline drawing through which the disposition of figures in a sketch would chiefly be made; and *elocutio*, the actual performance of the oration, by *receptione di lumi*, the rendering of the picture.

It should be noted that Dolce could have found the threefold division of *inventio*, *dispositio*, and *elocutio*, not only in the Roman rhetoricians, but also in Renaissance criticism of poetry which was profoundly influenced by them. See, for instance, Daniello, *La poetica*, Venice, 1536, p. 26: "Dico, tre esser le cose principali dalle quali esso [a poem] suo stato, et suo esser prende. L'Invention prima delle cose, o vogliam dire, ritrovamento. La Dispositione poi, over ordine di esse. Et finalmente la forma dello scrivere ornatamente le già ritrovate et disposte, che (latinamente parlando) Elocutione si chiama; et che noi volgare, leggiardo et ornato parlare chiameremo."

APPENDIX 3 (See note 90)

LOMAZZO ON EXPRESSION

See especially the important passage in *Trattato*, II, 2, pp. 108-109: "In questo loco ragione è che si tratti subsequentemente d'esso moto, cioè con qual arte il pittore habbia da dar il moto alla figura convenientemente; cioè secondo la natura della proportion della forma, e della materia; perche come ho detto, *in questo appunto consiste lo spirito, e la vita dell'arte*; onde i pittori lo sogliono dimandare hora furia, hora gratia, e hora eccellenza dell'arte; e non senza ragione; poiche *questa parte è la più difficile a conseguire che sia in tutta l'arte; et anco la più importante, e più necessaria da sapersi*. Percioche con questa i pittori fanno conoscere differenti i morti da i vivi; i fieri da gl'humili, i pazzi da i savii, i mesti da gli allegri, et in somma tutte le passioni, e gesti che puo mostrare, e fare un corpo humano trà se distinti, che si dimandano con questo nome di moto, non per altro che per una certa espressione, e dimostratione estrinseca nel corpo di quelle cose che patisce internamente l'animo. Che non meno per questa via si conoscono i moti interni delle genti che per le parole anzi più, per operarsi questo dal proprio corpo, ilquale ne più ne meno opera di quello che gli viene ordinato dall'anima rationale rivolta

ò da bene, ò da male secondo l'apprensioni. Et quindi è che i pittori che queste cose intendono benche rari, fanno che nelle sue pitture si veggono quelle maravigliose opere della natura secrete, mosse da quella Virtù motiva che di continuo stando nel cuore nascosta, si dimostra esteriormente nel corpo, e manda fuori i suoi ramoscelli per li membri esteriori, che perciò, secondo quelli si muovono. Quindi nascono quelle maraviglie grandissime de gl'effetti, e dimostrazioni delle figure che così frà di loro si veggono diversi, come sono differenti le passioni de oro animi; delle quali in questo libro alquanto ne sarà trattato. Ora la cognitione di questo moto, è quella come dissi poco sopra, che nell'arte è riputata tanto difficile, e stimata come un dono divino. *Imperochè per questa parte peculiarmente la pittura si paragona alla poesia*. Che si come al Poeta fà di mestiero ch'insieme con l'eccellenza dell'ingegno habbia certo desiderio et una inclinazione di volontà onde sia mosso à poetare, il che chiamavano gl'antichi furor d'Apollone, e delle muse; così ancora al Pittore conviene, che con le altre parti che si gli ricercano habbi cognitione, e forza d'esprimere i moti principali quasi come ingenerata seco, et accresciuta

con lui sino dalle fascie: altrimenti è difficile anzi impossibile cosa à possedere perfettamente quest' arte. Si come per esperienza si vede. Che sonosi trovati tanti eccellenti Pittori; si come se ne trovano ancora che nel depingere sono stati da tutti tenuti in grandissimo pregio, si come quelli che rappresentavano le figure vaghe di colori; e bene intese per le membra, e legature d'anatomia benissimo proportionate, e con diligenza allumate di buon chiaro, e scuro à. Mà perche con tutta la cura, e pazienza usata non hanno mai potuto acquistar felicemente questa facultà, hanno lasciato le opere loro sottoposte alla censura de' posteri solamente per le attitudini, et i gesti delle figure mal' espresse, per haverle cavate dalle inventioni altrui, cioè, di coloro che soli nacquero con questa gratia." Cf. Dolce (p. 226): "Finalmente ricerca al Pittore un'altra parte: della quale la Pittura, ch'è priva, riman, come si dice, fredda, et è a guisa di corpo morto, che non opera cosa veruna. Questo è, che bisogna, che le figure movano gli animi de' riguardanti, alcune turbandogli, altre rallegrandogli, altre sospingendogli a pietà, et altre a sdegno, secondo la qualità della historia. Altrimenti reputi il Pittore di non aver fatto nulla: perchè questo è il condimento di tutte le sue virtù: come avviene parimente al Poeta, all' Historico, ed all'Oratore: che se le cose scritte o recitate mancano di questa forza, mancano elle ancora di spirito e di vita." Cf. with this passage from Dolce the following from Daniello, *La poetica*, p. 40: "Nè basta solamente che il Poema sia grave, sia vago . . . s'egli non havera poi seco la Persuasione, nella quale tutta la virtù et grandezza del Poeta è riposta. Et pertanto devete affaticarvi figliuoli; di dir sempre

cose, che seco l'abbino: et che dolcemente gli animi di coloro che ascoltano, o leggono intenerischino et muovino. Il che a voler fare, bisogna prima che voi ottimamente intendiate che cosa gli Affetti siano, o vogliam dir piu tosto le Perturbationi dell'animo possentissimi mezzi a destar nell'altrui menti il pianto, il riso, l'ira, et lo sdegno: et simili." Thus Dolce could have found in Daniello's remarks to the poet concerning expression the precise doctrine that some twenty years later he was to give the painter. Daniello's term *persuasione* comes from the *persuadere* of the Roman rhetoricians which is the equivalent of *muovere*. Roger de Piles at a later day still believed in the supreme importance of expression: "Les Expressions font la pierre de touche de l'esprit de Peintre. Il montre par la justesse dont il les distribue, sa pénétration et son discernement" (*L'idée du peintre parfait*, pp. 43-44). Leonardo, nearly a century before Lomazzo, had defended painting against the implied charge of the proponents of poetry that painting does not express the operations of the mind, by insisting that it does precisely this, provided mental activity is of the kind that can be expressed in bodily movement: "Se la poesia s'estende in filosofia morale, e questa [painting] in filosofia naturale; se quella describe le operationi della mente, che considera quella, se la mente opera nei movimenti" (*Trattato*, I, 19). For the concept that bodily movement is expressive of psychic life, cf. in antiquity Cicero *De oratore* III. 57, 216: "Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam a natura habet voltum et sonum et gestum"; III. 59, 222: "Est enim actio quasi sermo corporis, quo magis menti congruens esse debet."

APPENDIX 4 (See note III)

THE CARTESIAN THEORY OF THE PASSIONS

In the *Traité des passions* (Art. 6) Descartes says that the body of a living man differs from that of a dead man as a watch or other automaton wound up and running according to the principle of its movement differs from a machine when it is broken and the principle of its movement ceases to operate. The struggle, he says (Art. 47), that people imagine between the higher and reasonable, and the lower and appetitive, parts of the soul, is in reality nothing but a disturbance in the pineal gland that occurs when the *esprits animaux* push the gland from one side while the soul through the agency of the will (which, in this case, resists the passion caused by the movement of the *esprits*) pushes it from the other side. In defining the passions of the soul (Art. 27) as "des perceptions, ou des sentiments, ou des émotions de l'âme, qu'on rapporte particulièrement à elle" (as opposed to other "sentiments" like odors, sounds, and colors, that one refers to exterior objects, or like hunger, thirst, and pain that one refers to the body), Descartes declares that they are caused, maintained, and strengthened by the movement of the *esprits*. These he defines as "un certain air ou vent très subtil" (Art. 7) produced in the brain by a

complex action of the circulation (Art. 10). Set in motion by perception or by the imagination the *esprits* move about the body via the nerves, those "petits tuyaux qui viennent tous du cerveau" (Art. 7), causing the passions of admiration, love, hate, desire, joy, and sadness and the bodily movements and facial expressions that accompany them. Throughout the *Traité des passions*, the passions and their external manifestations are treated as physical reflexes, the inevitable and immediate result of changes in the machine of the body; and it is this mechanistic theory of matter, or "extension" as Descartes calls it, applied to the microcosm of the human body that Le Brun took over when he composed his own treatise on the passions. But Descartes, although he believed that "extension" functioned according to its own mechanical laws, and that no action of the reason or will could prevent experience or recurrence of the passions, believed nevertheless that they could be controlled, and that the man of virtuous life whose conscience never reproached him with having failed to do those things that he judged to be the best would have complete protection against the most violent efforts of the

passions to disturb the tranquility of his soul (Art. 148). Furthermore Descartes did not, like the Stoics of antiquity, consider the passions as morbid states of the soul. As a Neo-Stoic of the Baroque age, sharing its fervent interest in the investigation of the physical universe, he considered them "toutes bonnes de leur nature" (Art. 211), believing that they needed only to be controlled; and if those men who were most moved by them experienced the greatest bitterness in life, so did they also taste the greatest sweetness. The soul could have its pleasures apart. But those which it shared with the body depended entirely on the passions (Art. 212).

Le Brun who does not, like the philosopher, view the mechanistic theory of the passions in any larger philosophical perspective, sums it up in the following passage wherein, after stating that ordinarily all that causes passion in the soul causes action in the body (by action he means any movement, bodily or

facial), he traces this action back to its source in the circulation of the blood which generates the *esprits*:

"L'action n'est autre chose que le mouvement de quelque partie, et le changement ne se fait que par le changement des muscles, les muscles n'ont de mouvement que par l'extrémité des nerfs qui passent au travers, les nerfs n'agissent que par les esprits qui sont contenus par les cavités du cerveau, et le cerveau ne reçoit les esprits que du sang qui passe continuellement par le cœur, qui l'échauffe et le rarefie de telle sorte qu'il produit un certain air subtil qui se porte au cerveau, et qui le remplit" (*Traité des passions* in Jouin, *Charles Le Brun*, p. 372).

For the debt of the Cartesian physiology to medieval science and to Harvey's theory of the circulation of the blood, see E. Gilson, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, Paris, 1930, pp. 51-100.

APPENDIX 5 (See note 112)

SYMPOSIUM ON THE PASSION OF WRATH

It may be interesting to compare some remarks on the expression of the passions by theorists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, noting significant changes as we advance in time and as we move from Italy to northern Europe. Leonardo, for instance, at the end of the Quattrocento gives the painters the following directions for representing the passion of wrath (*Trattato*, III, 381): "Alla Figura irata farai tenere uno per li capegli col capo storto à terra, et con uno de' gionocchi sul costato, et col braccio destro levare il pugno in alto; questo habbia li capegli elevati, le ciglia basse e strette, et i denti stretti, et i dui stremi dacanto della bocca archati; il collo grosso, et dinanzi, per lo chinarsi al nemico, sia pieno di grinzi." Leonardo thus thinks of a wrathful figure in actively dramatic terms: his knee is on his enemy's chest, his right fist is raised in the air before the blow is struck, his left hand has seized his enemy by the hair; the movements of the body that express the passion of *ira* have no abstract existence but are represented as Leonardo might have observed them in a Florentine brawl or elsewhere, and the same is true of his remarks on facial expression—the eyebrows low and contracted, the teeth clenched, the corners of the mouth drawn back to produce accentuated curved lines on either side. This passage, which may well be a description of one of Leonardo's own drawings, shows how directly he approached nature in his study of the passions. Lomazzo in defining *ira*, a century later (*Trattato*, II, 11, p. 136) shows none of this realistic approach to nature of the Renaissance but speaks either in generalizations that lack entirely the direct sense of observation that one finds in Leonardo, or in terms of examples drawn from books: "L'ira," he writes, "che non è altro che grandissima infiammatione d'animo, fà i moti stizzosi, colerici, e violenti; si come appare in quelli, à cui si gonfia la faccia, gl'occhi s'accendono, et avampano, come bragia; et

i moti di tutte le membra, per l'impeto, e violenza della colera, si fanno gagliardissimi, e molto più risentiti, come in Mosè, quando per l'adoratione del vitello, ruppe impetuosamente le tavole della legge . . . in Alessandro quando uccise Calistene, e molti suoi amici. Si che ciascuno in quel furore gli sgombrava dinanzi, poiche tanto poteva in lui, che si legge una volta essersi gli veduto in India uscire, e lampeggiar faville di foco dal corpo" (other examples follow). To say as Lomazzo does that the movements of an angry man are "passionate, choleric and violent such as appear in one whose face swells and whose eyes catch fire and burn like coals, whose limbs . . . move most vigorously and in a much more lively fashion (than usual)" is to describe the passion of wrath in very general terms indeed, and one easily detects here, and in Lomazzo's method of piling up examples from books, that same tendency to avoid direct experience of nature that appears in the Mannerist doctrine that the Idea of beauty which the artist should follow is not gathered from nature but exists a priori in his mind, a theory that has its counterpart in the well-known deviations from nature in Mannerist art (see notes 48 and 108). Le Brun, a century after Lomazzo, is not abstract like the latter through imprecision, but because his effort to "préciser les passions" has been carried to such a ridiculous extreme of categorical detail. It is characteristic of Le Brun as a theorist of the north of Europe, with a long artistic tradition behind him of emphasizing the face rather than the body as the chief vehicle of human expression, that he should declare (*Traité des passions* in Jouin, *Charles Le Brun*, p. 377) that "le visage est la partie du corps où elle fait voir plus particulièrement ce qu'elle ressent," and then devote the major part of his treatise to illustrating the changes that occur in the physiognomy under the influence of the passions. Leonardo, as a student of human psychology, was

deeply interested in facial expression, but as a southern European with an artistic tradition behind him in which the body is more expressive of human emotion than the face, naturally he was enormously concerned both as an artist and theorist with bodily movement, to which Le Brun in his treatise gives scant attention. Lomazzo is likewise a typical Italian theorist in being far more interested in bodily movement than in facial expression. In the following passage describing chiefly the facial manifestations of the passion of anger, Le Brun like Lomazzo notes the inflamed eyes and swollen face, and he undoubtedly owed to Leonardo, whose *Trattato* was first published in Paris in 1651 with illustrations by Poussin, the bristling hair, swollen neck (neither, be it noted, facial expressions), clenched teeth, and perhaps a hint for what he says about the movement of the eyebrows; for the rest he notes changes of his own prescribing in the pupil, forehead, nostrils, lips, complexion etc., and at the end makes brief reference to

one aspect of the internal, physiological cause of the external expression (*ibid.*, p. 387):

“Lorsque la colère s’empare de l’âme, celui qui ressent cette passion, a les yeux rouges et enflâmés, la prunelle égarée et étincelante, les sourcils tantôt abattus, tantôt élevés l’un comme l’autre, le front paroîtra ridé fortement, des plis entre les yeux, les narines paroîtront ouvertes et élargies, les lèvres se pressent l’une contre l’autre, et la lèvre de dessous surmontera celle de dessus, laissant les coins de la bouche un peu ouverts, formant un ris cruel et dédaigneux.

“Il semblera grincer les dents, il paroîtra de la salive à la bouche, son visage sera pâle en quelque endroit, et enflâmé en d’autres et tout enflé; les veines du front, des tempes, et du col seront enflées et tendues, les cheveux hérissés, et celui qui ressent cette passion, s’enfle au lieu de respirer, parce que le cœur est oppressé par l’abondance du sang qui vient à son secours.”

APPENDIX 6

DECORUM AND VERISIMILITUDE

In Dolce, learning is for the sake of “convenevolezza.” In Lomazzo (*Idea*, p. 36) the painter is urged to study continually in the history of all times and of all nations, because history tells us how things happened “in tutti i modi, e con tutte le circostanze, le quali quanto più minutamente dal pittore sono osservate, et intese, e nell’opere di lui espresse, tanto più fanno la pittura *simile ad vero*.” But this truth to fact is for the sake of a becoming majesty and grandeur “che doveva essere nel proprio fatto.” In Félibien, as we have seen, learning is chiefly for the sake of “bienséance” (see p. 235) or decorum, although “vraisemblance” or verisimilitude which Félibien interprets in the sense of the Aristotelian *rò eikós*—probability—would also result from the painter’s learning. This might have been the case, for instance, in Veronese’s *Supper at Emmaus* in which, however, the disposition of the place and all the people about our Lord “ne conviennent point à cette action” (Preface to the *Conférences*, pp. 314–15). But this last phrase and the example chosen show how closely Aristotle’s concept of the probable, which is central to his doctrine of typical imitation, tended in Félibien’s mind to merge with the concept of the appropriate and becoming.

Some fifty years later (1719) Du Bos, whose native realism that was often damaging to the doctrines of the Academy probably led him to resent the conventionalizing implications of the term decorum, talks only of “vraisemblance,” which he divides into two parts: “vraisemblance mécanique” and “vraisemblance poétique” (*Réflexions critiques*, I, 30, pp. 268 ff.). The former consists, he says, “à ne rien représenter qui ne soit possible, suivant les loix de la statique, les loix du mouvement, et les loix de l’optique.” This adherence to the truth of natural law, a reaffirmation of northern realism after two centuries of Mannerist and classical art in France,

not to mention the formalistic theory of the Academy, coincides, interestingly enough, with the realistic reaction against classicism in the contemporary style of the Rococo. But “vraisemblance poétique” on close examination turns out to be little more than the Horatian and Renaissance decorum, cleansed, however, of all implications of the instructive or edifying; for Du Bos admitted that art should give pleasure but denied that it should also instruct (see note 135). It is clearly more closely related to Horatian and Renaissance decorum than to Aristotelian probability, although Du Bos certainly had the latter in mind as well. And if Dolce’s “convenevolezza” were substituted in the following passage (*ibid.*, p. 269) for “vraisemblance poétique,” a phrase which Du Bos owed to his interest in the drama and in dramatic theory, there would be absolutely no difference in the sense: “La vraisemblance poétique consiste à donner à ses personnages les passions qui leur conviennent, suivant leur âge, leur dignité, suivant le tempérament qu’on leur prête, et l’intérêt qu’on leur fait prendre dans l’action. Elle consiste à observer dans son tableau ce que les Italiens appellent *il Costumé*, c’est-à-dire, à s’y conformer à ce que nous sçavons des mœurs, des habits, des bâtimens et des armes particulières des peuples qu’on veut représenter. La vraisemblance poétique consiste enfin à donner aux personnages d’un tableau leur tête et leur caractère connu, quand ils en ont un, soit que ce caractère ait été pris sur des portraits, soit qu’il ait été imaginé.”

Two years after Du Bos’ book appeared, Antoine Coypel published his *Épître à mon fils*, a short compendium in verse of what he considered it essential for the painter to know, that is a kind of pendant to Boileau’s *L’art poétique*; and it was, in fact, Boileau who urged him to publish his verse epistle and the *Dissertations* that are a commentary upon it (see

Jouin, *op. cit.*, pp. 367 ff.). In the latter, after listing a formidable array of subjects in which the painter must be learned, Coypel distinguishes (*ibid.*, p. 333) between characters taken from history which must be "semblables" and those from fable which must be "convenables." Here "semblable" which equals "vraisemblable" (Coypel uses both terms interchangeably) has not the sense of the probable which it had for the classicizing theorists of the seventeenth century, who were close to the Aristotelian theory of poetry as illustrated in the French classical drama, and which it had partially in the mind of Du Bos. It means rather "like the truth" in the sense of adherence to fact, a meaning which it had also, at times, in Italian literary criticism of the sixteenth century, in Castelvetro, for instance, where this meaning coexists with the Aristotelian meaning of the probable (See Charlton, *Castelvetro's Theory of Poetry*, pp. 41 ff.). If he is painting history, then, the painter is learned for the sake of "vraisemblance" in the sense that he will get his facts straight, but, Coypel does not add, as Félibien would have added, for decorum's sake, and it is interesting that he is far enough removed from the tradition of Félibien and Le Brun to hold of little account those rules for decorum that would maintain the dignity of religious subjects by imposing restraint on the rendering of "basses circonstances" like the ox and the ass in the Nativity. The latter, Coypel agrees, should not be played up, "but whatever rules one may establish in this regard are always unfruitful if they are not sustained by the painter's judgment and delicacy of spirit" (*ibid.*, p. 282). But decorum or the "convenable" is for Coypel merely the proper form for rendering the figures of fable according to their recognized characters, and to illustrate this rather narrow meaning of the term, which appears in Horace as a kind of corollary to the larger meaning of decorum as that which is appropriate to the typical rendering of human life, he quotes the famous lines of the Roman poet about preserving the traditional characters of Achilles, Medea, Ixion, etc. (*Ars poetica* 119-27). But the painter may, however, says Coypel, in the case of historical pictures, leave the "vraisemblable" to follow the "convenable" and, without losing sight of his characters, embellish their portraits. Here "convenable" seems to mean to idealize in a manner appropriate to the historical characters whom the painter will treat. But the

upshot of the whole matter in Coypel is that the notions of "vraisemblance" and decorum which had definite meaning in the minds of the Academicians of the time of Le Brun have here largely lost their original force, and are treated in a way that marks, even in a man who in many ways is still steeped in doctrines of the Academy, the beginnings of the dissolution of that point of view. For Coypel "vraisemblance" no longer means, as we have seen, the probable, but truth to historical fact; decorum has only the limited meaning of the traditionally appropriate rendering of characters from fable, or occasionally of personages from history, and its connotations of the decent and becoming in the moral or religious sphere that were strong in Félibien and Le Brun, have for Coypel no more than for Du Bos any significance in the domain of the rules, but are subject to the artist's personal taste. The notion of decorum is still inconsistently present in 1765 in Diderot for all his insistence that "nature never makes anything incorrect" ("Essai sur la peinture" in *Œuvres complètes*, ed. Assezat, Paris, 1876, p. 461 and p. 487). But in his fourth *Discourse*, delivered in 1771, Reynolds practically limits his remarks on decorum to the following: "Those expressions alone should be given to the figures which their respective situations generally produce. Nor is this enough; each person should also have that expression which men of his rank generally exhibit. The joy, or the grief, of a character of dignity is not to be expressed in the same manner as a similar passion in a vulgar face." In these remarks the elaborate rules of the French Academy have given way to a mere hint. As for verisimilitude, its meaning of factual truth does not exist in Reynolds who knew, furthermore, that "particularities" are inconsistent with the grand style; and its Aristotelian meaning of probability is not mentioned but is subsumed in Reynolds' discussion of typical representation. Thus in the course of the eighteenth century, those concepts that had been of great importance in the doctrine *ut pictura poesis* during its heyday under Le Brun come to be seen in proper perspective or to disappear. The antiformalistic tendencies that were to culminate in the Romantic Revival, and to which Reynolds was sensitive, were enough virtually to dispose of decorum to which the Aristotelian "vraisemblance" had in the seventeenth century, as we have seen, been closely related.