

first printed in 1486, we find a chapter<sup>20</sup> on the decoration of buildings and interiors. There we read:

Both Painting and Poetry vary in kind. The type that portrays the great deeds of great men, worthy of memory, differs from that which describes the habits of private citizens, and again from that depicting the life of the peasants. The first, which is majestic in character, should be used for public buildings and the dwellings of the great, while the last mentioned will be suitable for gardens, for it is the most pleasing of all.

Our minds are cheered beyond measure by the sight of paintings depicting the delightful countryside, harbours, fishing, hunting, swimming, the games of shepherds—flowers and verdure. . . .<sup>21</sup>

There is still, in this astonishing passage, an emphasis on human activity which separates it from the idea of 'pure' landscape. Alberti, one would imagine, was probably as fond of Northern tapestries with their scenes of hunting and hawking as were the Medici at the time when these pages were written. But through his very reflections on these Northern themes the emphasis is subtly changed. He sees these paintings not merely as decorations but as Art to be treasured for its psychological effect. This is made even more explicit in another passage of the same chapter:

Those who suffer from fever are offered much relief by the sight of painted fountains, rivers and running brooks, a fact which anyone can put to the test; for if by chance he lies in bed one night unable to sleep, he need only turn his imagination on limpid waters and fountains which he had seen at one time or another, or perhaps some lake, and his dry feeling will disappear all at once and sleep will come upon him as the sweetest of slumbers. . . .

For Alberti, then, painting is no longer illustration or decoration. In its effects on the human mind it is linked with music, in its categories with poetry. It was out of these hints that Leonardo was to develop the first complete aesthetic theory of landscape painting—even before the first landscape had come into existence.

Leonardo's notes, of course, are crowded with references to landscape painting, but it is not these detailed observations of natural phenomena which seem to me decisive. These, after all, could also be used, and were probably intended to be used, in the treatment of landscape backgrounds. But there are passages in Leonardo which far transcend these technical hints and place the entire conception of painting firmly on that new foundation from which alone landscape painting can be envisaged as an independent activity.

Thus we read in a famous section of the *Paragone*:

If the painter wants to see fair women to kindle his love, he has the power to create them, and if he desires to see monstrosities to arouse his fear, his amusement and laughter or even his compassion, he is their Lord and Creator. And if he wishes to bring forth sites or deserts, cool and shady places in times of heat or warm spots when it is cold, he