

traversing rivers, the flourishing work of the countryside, the gay and hard toil of the peasants, and also the far distant prospects of land and sea, fleets, fowling, hunting, and all that *genre* so pleasing to the eyes in a lavish and festive style.<sup>33</sup>

Giovio's text is noteworthy for several reasons. First, because it may well be the earliest detailed description of landscape painting in modern times which refers not to a postulate like Alberti and Leonardo, but to actual contemporary work. Second, because in describing this work it uses—again, it seems, for the first time—the word *genus* in this context, *cuncta id genus spectatu oculis iucunda*, showing that to Giovio and his like-minded friends Dosso's landscapes (Fig. 149) did in fact fit into an acknowledged 'kind' or '*genre*' of art. Thirdly, because it shows that even in this early document the place of this new '*genre*' in the hierarchy of values has been settled.<sup>34</sup> Dosso shows his skill not only in his 'proper work', *justis operibus*, but even more in the *hors-d'œuvre* of art, in *parerga* which appeal to the eye. The term *parerga* or *parergia* is also derived from Pliny, who says that Protogenes, in his famous wall paintings in Athens, had included a number of small warships in 'what the painters call *parergia*' (i.e. accessories), to allude to his past as a ship's painter.<sup>35</sup> In this sense, as denoting landscape background, the term is already used in the North Italian *ambiente* of the Quattrocento—it occurs in one of the descriptions of fictitious paintings in Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia*,<sup>36</sup> thus confirming once more the wide influence of Pliny's descriptions.

Read in the context of Renaissance aesthetics, even the remark that this kind of *parerga* is pleasing to the eyes is somewhat double-edged in character. Great art, of course, must speak to the intellect and not to the senses, it must show invention, symmetry and proportion and lead the mind to the contemplation of higher things. Yet even these pleasing trifles had their function. As Alberti had observed, they could serve as legitimate recreation. Like the 'lighter veins' of poetry and music, they help to restore the tired spirits of the man of affairs.

From the point of view of the artistic theories of the Renaissance, it might thus be said that if such a kind of painting did not yet exist, it had to be invented. But in some form, of course, it did exist in the Northern traditions of realistic painting. Here, then, was a frame into which the admired products of Northern skill and patience could be fitted—and if the frame was a bit too small to admit the whole of these paintings, the 'Gothic' foreground subjects could, after all, be cut away to show the pleasing *parerga* to greater advantage.

It is hard to say when this attitude first reflected back on the art of the North. We can see its impact on an artist reared in the Gothic tradition in Francisco da Hollanda's *Dialogues*. The famous remarks about the 'Flemings' which the Portuguese convert to the academic creed put into the mouth of his 'Michelangelo' may be taken as typical. It is precisely the fault of the Northern masters, so we hear, that they paint to charm the outward eye by an assembly of pleasing objects—