

PART ONE

MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS



TENIERS: THE GALLERY OF THE ARCHDUKE LEOPOLD AT BRUSSELS (DETAIL)



THE NATIONAL GALLERY AT WASHINGTON

MUSEUM WITHOUT WALLS

I A Romanesque crucifix was not regarded by its contemporaries as a work of sculpture; nor Cimabue's *Madonna* as a picture. Even Pheidias' *Pallas Athene* was not, primarily, a statue.

So vital is the part played by the art museum in our approach to works of art to-day that we find it difficult to realize that no museums exist, none has ever existed, in lands where the civilization of modern Europe is, or was, unknown; and that, even amongst us, they have existed for barely two hundred years. They bulked so large in the nineteenth century and are so much part of our lives to-day that we forget they

have imposed on the spectator a wholly new attitude towards the work of art. For they have tended to estrange the works they bring together from their original functions and to transform even portraits into "pictures". Though Caesar's bust and the equestrian Charles V remain for us Caesar and the Emperor Charles, *Count-Duke Olivares* has become pure Velazquez. What do we care who the *Man with the Helmet* or the *Man with the Glove* may have been in real life? For us their names are Rembrandt and Titian. The men who sat for these portraits have lapsed into nonentity. Until the nineteenth century a work of art was essentially a representation of something real or imaginary, which conditioned its existence *qua* work of art. Only in the artist's eyes was painting specifically painting, and often, even for him, it also meant a "poetic" rendering of his subject. The effect of the museum was to suppress the model in almost every portrait (even that of a dream-figure) and to divest works of art of their functions. It did away with the significance of Palladium, of Saint and Saviour; ruled out associations of sanctity, qualities of adornment and possession, of likeness or imagination. Each exhibit is a representation of something, differing from the thing itself, this specific difference being its *raison d'être*.

In the past a Gothic statue was a component part of the Cathedral; similarly a classical picture was tied up with the setting of its period, and not expected to consort with works of different mood and outlook. Rather, it was kept apart from them, so as to be the more appreciated by the spectator. True, there were picture collections and *cabinets d'antiques* in the seventeenth century, but they did not modify that attitude towards art of which Versailles is the symbol. Whereas the modern art-gallery not only isolates the work of art from its context but makes it forgather with rival or even hostile works. It is a confrontation of metamorphoses.

The reason why the art museum made its appearance in Asia so belatedly (and, even then, only under European influence and patronage) is that for an Asiatic, and especially the man of the Far East, artistic contemplation and the picture gallery are incompatible. In China the full enjoyment of works of art necessarily involved ownership, except where religious art was concerned; above all it demanded their isolation. A painting was not exhibited, but unfurled before an art-lover in a fitting state of grace; its function was to deepen and enhance his communion with the universe. The practice of pitting works of art against each other, an intellectual activity, is at the opposite pole from the mood of relaxation which alone makes contemplation possible. To the Asiatic's thinking an art collection (except for educational purposes) is as preposterous as would be a concert in which one listened to a programme of ill-assorted pieces following in unbroken succession.

For over a century our approach to art has been growing more and more intellectualized. The art museum invites criticism of each of the

expressions of the world it brings together; and a query as to what they have in common. To the "delight of the eye" there has been added—owing to the sequence of conflicting styles and seemingly antagonistic schools—an awareness of art's impassioned quest, its age-old struggle to remould the scheme of things. Indeed an art gallery is one of the places which show man at his noblest. But our knowledge covers a wider field than our museums. The visitor to the Louvre knows that he will not find the great English artists significantly represented there; nor Goya, nor Michelangelo (as painter), nor Piero della Francesca, nor Grünewald—and that he will see but little of Vermeer. Inevitably in a place where the work of art has no longer any function other than that of being a work of art, and at a time when the artistic exploration of the world is in active progress, the assemblage of so many masterpieces—from which, nevertheless, so many are missing—conjures up in the mind's eye *all* the world's masterpieces. How indeed could this mutilated possible fail to evoke the whole gamut of the possible?

Of what is it necessarily deprived? Of all that forms an integral part of a whole (stained glass, frescoes); of all that cannot be moved; of all that is difficult to display (sets of tapestries); of all that the collection is unable to acquire. Even when the greatest zeal has gone to its making, a museum owes much to opportunities that chance has thrown in its way. All Napoleon's victories did not enable him to bring the Sistine to the Louvre, and no art patron, however wealthy, will take to the Metropolitan Museum the Royal Portal of Chartres or the Arezzo frescoes. From the eighteenth to the twentieth century what migrated was the portable; far more pictures by Rembrandt than Giotto frescoes have found their way to sales. Thus the Art Museum, born when the easel-picture was the one living form of art, came to be a pageant not of color but of pictures; not of sculpture but of statues.

The Grand Tour rounded it off in the nineteenth century. Yet in those days a man who had seen the totality of European masterpieces was a very rare exception. Gautier saw Italy (but not Rome) only when he was thirty-nine; Edmond de Goncourt when he was thirty-three; Hugo as a child; Baudelaire and Verlaine, never. The same holds good for Spain; for Holland rather less, as Flanders was relatively well known. The eager crowds that thronged the Salons—composed largely of real connoisseurs—owed their art education to the Louvre. Baudelaire never set eyes on the masterpieces of El Greco, Michelangelo, Masaccio, Piero della Francesca or Grünewald; or of Titian, or of Hals or Goya—the Galerie d'Orléans notwithstanding.

What had he seen? What (until 1900) had been seen by all those writers whose views on art still impress us as revealing and important; whom we take to be speaking of the same works as those we know, and referring to the same *data* as those available to us? They had visited two or three galleries, and seen reproductions (photographs, prints or

copies) of a handful of the masterpieces of European art; most of their readers had seen even less. In the art knowledge of those days there was a pale of ambiguity, a sort of no man's land—due to the fact that the comparison of a picture in the Louvre with another in Madrid was that of a present picture with a memory. Visual memory is far from being infallible, and often weeks had intervened between the inspections of the two canvases. From the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, pictures, interpreted by engraving, had *become* engravings; they had kept their drawing but lost their colors, which were replaced by "interpretation," their expression in black-and-white; also, while losing their dimensions, they acquired margins. The nineteenth-century photograph was merely a more faithful print, and the art-lover of the time 'knew' pictures in the same manner as we now 'know' stained-glass windows.

Nowadays an art student can examine color reproductions of most of the world's great paintings, can make acquaintance with a host of second-rank pictures, archaic arts, Indian, Chinese and Pre-Columbian sculpture of the best periods, Romanesque frescoes, Negro and "folk" art, a fair quantity of Byzantine art. How many statues could be seen in reproduction in 1850? Whereas the modern art-book has been pre-eminently successful with sculpture (which lends itself better than pictures to reproduction in black-and-white). Hitherto the connoisseur duly visited the Louvre and some subsidiary galleries, and memorized what he saw, as best he could. We, however, have far more great works available to refresh our memories than those which even the greatest of museums could bring together. For a "Museum without Walls" is coming into being, and (now that the plastic arts have invented their own printing-press) it will carry infinitely farther that revelation of the world of art, limited perforce, which the "real" museums offer us within their walls.

I Photography, which started in a humble way as a means of making known acknowledged masterpieces to those who could not buy engravings, seemed destined merely to perpetuate established values. But actually an ever greater range of works is being reproduced, in ever greater numbers, while the technical conditions of reproduction are influencing the choice of the works selected. Also, their diffusion is furthered by an ever subtler and more comprehensive outlook, whose effect is often to substitute for the obvious masterpiece the significant work, and for the mere pleasure of the eye the surer one of knowledge. An earlier generation thrived on Michelangelo; now we are given photographs of lesser masters, likewise of folk paintings and arts hitherto ignored: in fact everything that comes into line with what we call a style is now being photographed.

For while photography is bringing a profusion of masterpieces to the artists, these latter have been revising their notion of what it is that makes the masterpiece.

From the sixteenth to the nineteenth century the masterpiece was a work that existed "in itself," an absolute. There was an accepted canon preconizing a mythical yet fairly well-defined beauty, based on what was thought to be the legacy of Greece. The work of art constantly aspired towards an ideal portrayal; thus, for Raphael, a masterpiece was a work on which the imagination could not possibly improve. There was little question of comparing such a work with others by the same artist. Nor was it given a place in Time; its place was determined by its success in approximating to the ideal work it adumbrated.

True, this aesthetic was steadily losing ground between the Roman sixteenth and the European nineteenth centuries. Nevertheless, until the Romantic movement, it was assumed that the great work of art was something unique, the product of unconditioned genius. History and antecedents counted for nothing; the test was its *success*. This notion, narrow if profound, this Arcadian setting in which man, sole arbiter of history and his sensibility, repudiated (all the more effectively for his unawareness of it) the struggle of each successive age to work out its own perfection—this notion lost its cogency once men's sensibility became attuned to different types of art, whose affinities they glimpsed, though without being able to reconcile them with each other.

No doubt the picture-dealers' shops, which figure in so many canvases up to *L'Enseigne de Gersaint*, had (until, in 1750, the "secondary" paintings of the royal collection were exhibited) enabled artists to see different kinds of art aligned against each other; but usually minor works, subservient to an aesthetic as yet unchallenged. In 1710 Louis XIV owned 1299 French and Italian pictures and 171 of other schools. With the exception of Rembrandt—who impressed Diderot for such curious reasons ("If I saw in the street a man who had stepped out of a

Rembrandt canvas, I'd want to follow him, admiringly; if I saw one out of a Raphael, I suspect I'd need to have my elbow jogged before I even noticed him!")—and especially of Rubens, at his most Italianate, the eighteenth century regarded all but the Italians as minor painters. Who indeed in 1750 would have dared to set up Jan van Eyck against Guido Reni? Italian painting and the sculpture of classical antiquity were more than mere painting or statuary; they were the peakpoints of a culture which still reigned supreme in the imagination. Neither Watteau nor Fragonard wanted to paint like Raphael, nor did Chardin; but they did not think themselves his equals. There had been a Golden Age, now defunct, of art.

Even when, at last, in Napoleon's Louvre the schools joined vigorous issue, the old tradition held its ground. What was not Italian was evaluated, as a matter of course, in terms of the Italian hierarchy. To speak Italian was a prime condition of admittance to the Academy of the Immortals (even if the artist spoke it with Rubens' accent). In the eyes of critics of the period a masterpiece was a canvas that held its head up in the august company of masterpieces. But this august company was much like the Salon Carré; Velazquez and Rubens were tolerated in it thanks to their compromise with Italianism—Rembrandt, a magnificent, disturbing figure, being relegated to the outskirts,—a compromise that was to reveal itself before the death of Delacroix as nothing but academicism. Thus a rivalry of the canvases between themselves replaced their former rivalry with a mythical perfection. But in this Debate with the Illustrious Dead, in which every new masterpiece was called on to state its claim to rank beside a privileged élite, the test of merit (even when Italian supremacy was on the wane) was still the common measure of the qualities those time-honored works possessed. Its scope was narrower than at first sight it seemed to be: that of the three-dimensional oil paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A debate in which Delacroix had his say with difficulty; Manet not at all.

Photographic reproduction was to aid in changing the tenor of this debate; by suggesting, then imposing, a new hierarchy.

The question whether Rubens was admired because he proved himself Titian's equal in some of his less Flemish canvases loses much of its point when we examine an album containing Rubens' entire output—a complete world in itself. In it *The Arrival of Marie de Medici* invites comparison only with Rubens' other works.* And in this context the portrait of his daughter (in the Liechtenstein Gallery), and certain sketches such as the *Atalanta*, *The Sunken Road* and the *Philopoemen*

* Exhibitions of an artist's work ("one-man shows") produce the same effect. But they are of limited duration. Also, they are due to the same evolution of our artistic sensibility. The great romantic artists used to exhibit at the Salon—to which our great contemporaries send their canvases only as a friendly gesture.



RUBENS: THE RETURN OF PHILOPOEMEN

acquire a new significance. A true anthology is coming into being. For we now know that an artist's supreme work is not the one in best accord with any tradition—nor even his most complete and “finished” work—but his most personal work, the one from which he has stripped all that is not his very own, and in which his style reaches its climax. In short, the most significant work by the inventor of a style.

Just as, formerly, the masterpiece that made good in the conflict with the myth it conjured up of its own perfection, and, thereafter, the masterpiece acclaimed as such in the company of the Immortals, was joined and sometimes replaced by the most *telling* work of the artist in question, so now another class of work is coming to the fore: the most significant or accomplished work of every *style*. By presenting some two hundred works of sculpture, an album of Polynesian Art brings out the quality of some; the mere act of grouping together many works of the same style creates its masterpieces and forces us to grasp its purport.

The revision of values that began in the nineteenth century and the end of all *a priori* theories of aesthetics did away with the prejudice against so-called clumsiness. That disdain for Gothic art which prevailed in the seventeenth century was due, not to any authentic conflict of values, but to the fact that the Gothic statue was regarded at that time,

not as what it really is, but as a botched attempt to be something quite different. Starting from the false premise that the Gothic sculptor aimed at making a classical statue, critics of those days concluded that, if he failed to do so, it was because he could not. This theory that the imitation of classical models was beyond the capacities of the artists of that age, or else that the models themselves were lost—though actually copies of the antique were being made in the eleventh century in Southern France, and though it was enough for Frederick II of Hohenstaufen to give the word, for Roman art to reappear, and though Italian artists walked past Trajan's Column daily—this fantastic theory was generally accepted only because idealized naturalism had in fact necessitated a series of discoveries in the craft of exact portrayal, and because nobody could believe that Gothic artists would not have tried to make the same discoveries. That exclamation of Louis XIV, "Away with those monstrosities!" applied equally to Notre-Dame. It was the same attitude which at the beginning of the nineteenth century caused the canvas of *L'Enseigne de Gersaint* to be cut in two, and enabled the Goncourts to pick up their Fragonards for a song, in junk-shops. A "dead" style is one that is defined solely by what it is *not*; a style that has come to be only negatively felt.

Isolated works of any imperfectly known style—unless this style comes into sudden prominence as a precursor, as Negro art was of Picasso—almost always provoke these negative reactions. Thus Negro art, for instance, had been regarded for many centuries as the work of sculptors who hardly knew the first thing of their craft. And—like the fetishes—the Greek archaics, the sculpture of the Nile and the Euphrates Valley began by entering our culture timidly and piecemeal. Single works and groups of work alike, even cathedral statuary, had to insinuate themselves almost furtively into the artistic awareness of those who now "discovered" them, and win a place in a company of masterpieces, more homogeneous and exclusive, though vaster, than the *corpus* of literary masterpieces. Théophile Gautier disdained Racine on the strength of Victor Hugo, and perhaps Poussin on the strength of Delacroix; but not Michelangelo, or even Raphael. A great Egyptian work of art was admired in proportion to its congruity, subtle as this might be, with the Mediterranean tradition; we, on the contrary, admire it the more, the further it diverges from that tradition. Traditional works were compared, classified and reproduced, while the others were relegated to an obscurity from which but a few emerged, as fortunate exceptions, or as examples of an alleged decadence. That is why the connoisseur of the period was so ready with this charge of "decadence" and to define it primarily in terms of what it lacked. Thus a portfolio of Baroque art is a rehabilitation, since it rescues the Baroque artists from comparison with the classical; and we realize that theirs was an independent art, not a debased, voluptuous classicism.

Moreover, much as Gothic seems to have been led towards classical art by a series of gradations, a similar process, in reverse, led to the rediscovery of Gothic art. This rediscovery, associated with the rise of Romanticism at the close of the eighteenth century, began neither with Chartres nor with the high austerity of Romanesque, but with Notre-Dame of Paris. Every "resurrection" in art has a way of beginning, so to speak, with the feet. But the Museum without Walls, thanks to the mass of works it sets before us, frees us from the necessity of this tentative approach to the past; by revealing a style in its entirety—just as it displays an artist's work in its entirety—it forces both to become *positive*, actively significant. To the question "What is a masterpiece?" neither museums nor reproductions give any definitive answer, but they raise the question clearly; and, provisionally, they define the masterpiece not so much by comparison with its rivals as with reference to the "family" to which it belongs. Also, since reproduction, though not the cause of our intellectualization of art, is its chief instrument, the devices of modern photography (and some chance factors) tend to press this intellectualization still farther.

Thus the angle from which a work of sculpture is photographed, the focussing and, above all, skilfully adjusted lighting may strongly accentuate something the sculptor merely hinted at. Then, again, photography imparts a family likeness to objects that have actually but slight affinity. With the result that such different objects as a miniature, a piece of tapestry, a statue and a medieval stained-glass window, when reproduced on the same page, may seem members of the same family. They have lost their colors, texture and relative dimensions (the statue has also lost something of its volume); each, in short, has practically lost what was specific to it—but their common style is by so much the gainer.

There is another, more insidious, effect of reproduction. In an album or art book the illustrations tend to be of much the same size. Thus works of art lose their relative proportions; a miniature bulks as large as a full-size picture, a tapestry or a stained-glass window. The art of the Steppes was a highly specialized art; yet, if a bronze or

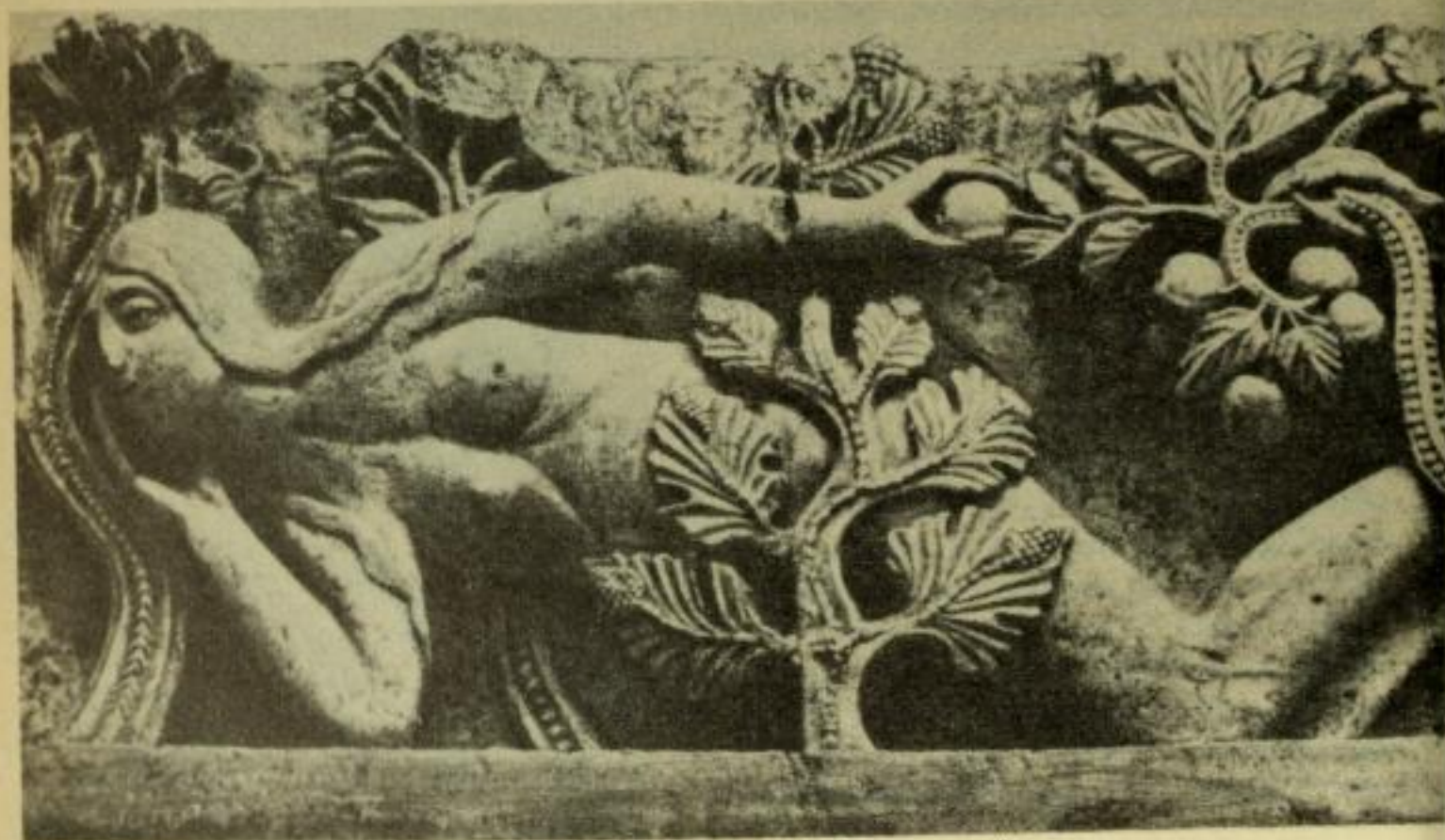


FIRST PHOTO OF THE LADY OF ELCHÉ



ART OF THE STEPPES (FIRST CENTURY): ANIMALS FIGHTING

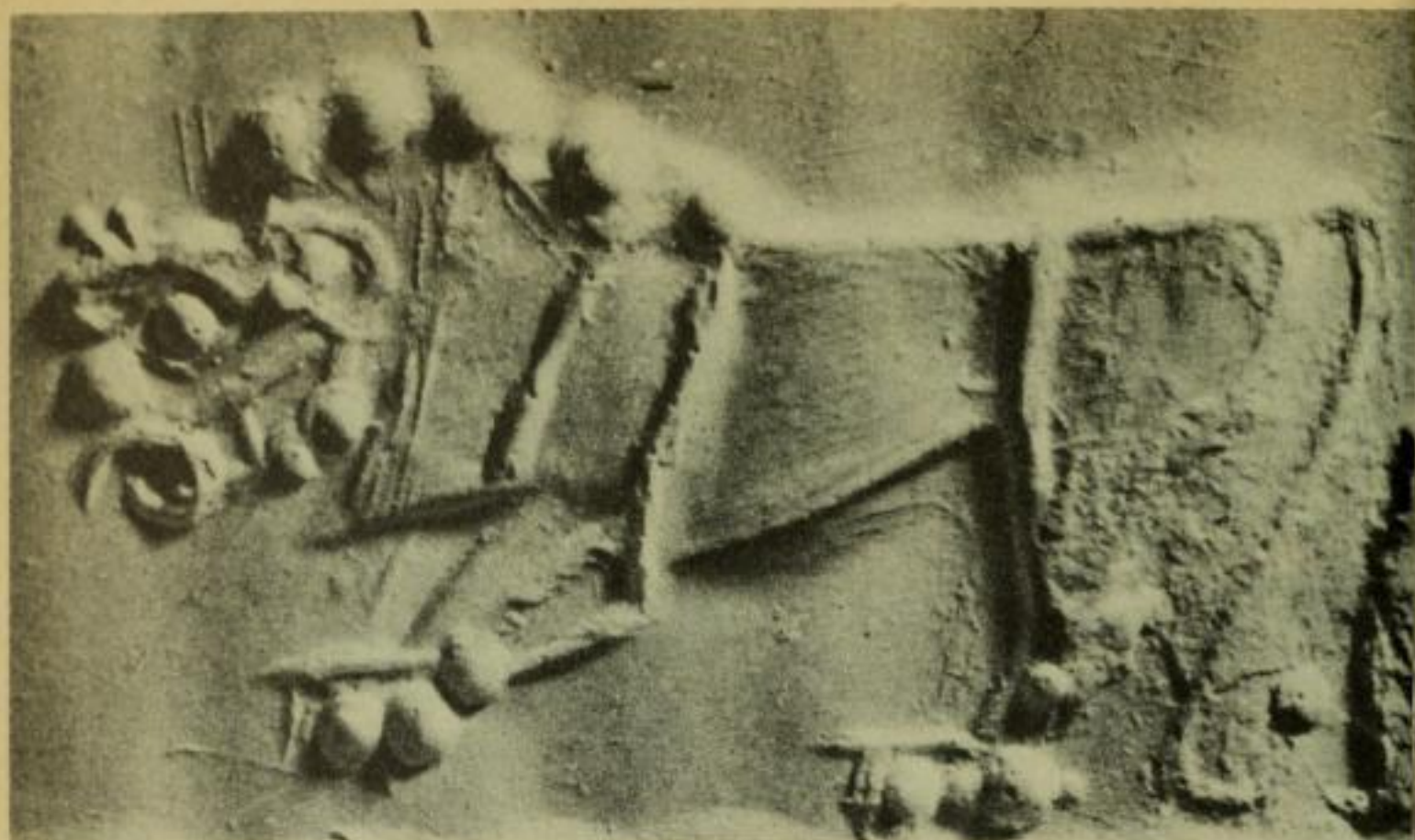
gold plaque from the Steppes be shown above a Romanesque bas-relief, in the same format, it becomes a bas-relief. In this way reproduction frees a style from the limitations which made it appear to be a minor art.



ROMANESQUE ART (EARLY 12th CENTURY): EVE



IBERO-PHOENICIAN ART (3rd CENTURY B.C.): LAST PHOTO OF THE LADY OF ELCHÉ



ART OF SUSA (BEFORE 3000 B.C.): CYLINDER SEAL (ENLARGED)

Indeed reproduction (like the art of fiction, which subdues reality to the imagination) has created what might be called "fictitious" arts, by systematically falsifying the scale of objects; by presenting oriental seals the same size as the decorative reliefs on pillars, and amulets like statues. As a result, the imperfect finish of the smaller work, due to its limited dimensions, produces in enlargement the effect of a bold style in the modern idiom. Romanesque goldsmiths' work links up with the sculpture of the period, and reveals its true significance in sequences of photographs in which reliquaries and statues are given equal dimensions. True, these photographs figure solely in specialist reviews. But these reviews are made by artists, for fellow artists—and do not fail to take effect. Sometimes the reproductions of minor works suggest to us great styles which have passed away—or which "might have been." The number of great works previous to the Christian era which we have retrieved is trifling compared with the number of those which are lost for ever. Sometimes, too, drawings (those of the Utrecht Psalter) or pottery (that of Byzantium) show us styles—or "idioms"—of which few other traces have survived; and we can detect in their succession, by way of modulations hitherto unobserved, the persisting life of certain forms, emerging ever and again like spectres from the past.

In the realm of what I have called fictitious arts, the fragment is king. Does not the *Niké of Samothrace* suggest a Greek style divergent from the true Greek style? In Khmer statuary there were many admirable

heads on conventional bodies; those heads, removed from the bodies, are now the pride of the Guimet Museum. Similarly the body of the *St. John the Baptist* in the Rheims porch is far from bearing out the genius we find in the head, when isolated. Thus by the angle at which it is displayed, and with appropriate lighting, a fragment or detail can tell out significantly, and become, in reproduction, a not unworthy denizen of our Museum without Walls. To this fact we owe some excellent art-albums of primitive landscapes culled from miniatures and pictures; Greek vase paintings displayed like frescoes; and

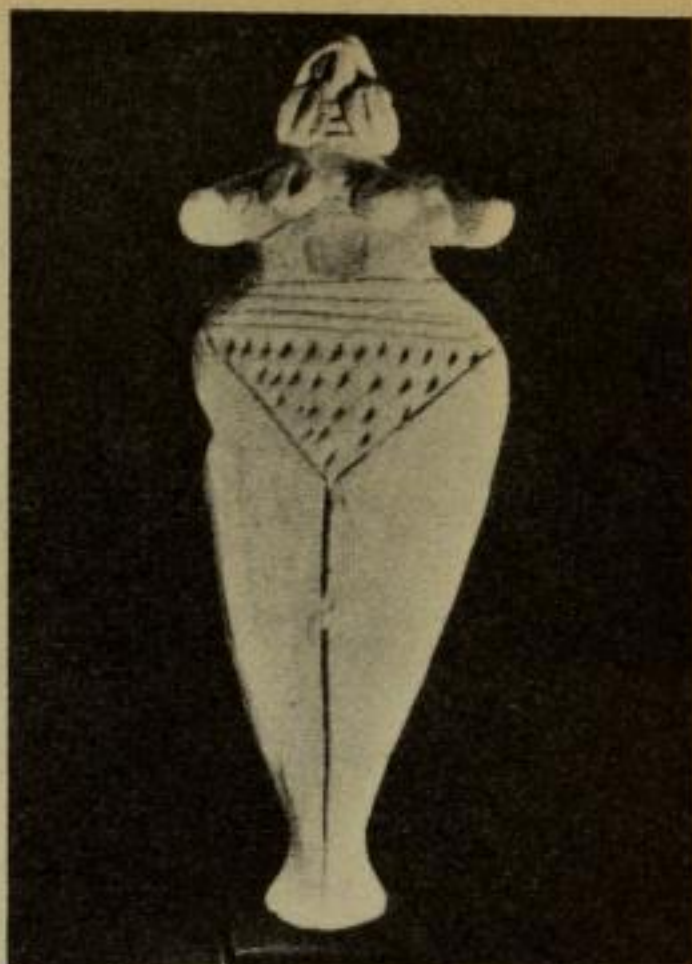


BYZANTINE FOLK ART: CERAMIC



FUNERARY LECYTHUS (5th CENTURY B.C.)

the lavish use in modern monographs of the expressive detail. Thus, too, we now can see Gothic figures in isolation from the teeming profusion of the cathedrals, and Indian art released from the luxuriance of its temples and frescoes; for the Elephanta caves, as a whole, are very different from their Mahesamurti, and those of Ajanta from the "Fair Bodhisattva." In isolating the fragment the art book sometimes brings about a metamorphosis (by enlargement); sometimes it reveals new beauties (as when the landscape in a Limbourg miniature is isolated, so as to be compared with others or to present it as a new, independent work of art); or, again, it may throw light on some moot point. Thus, by



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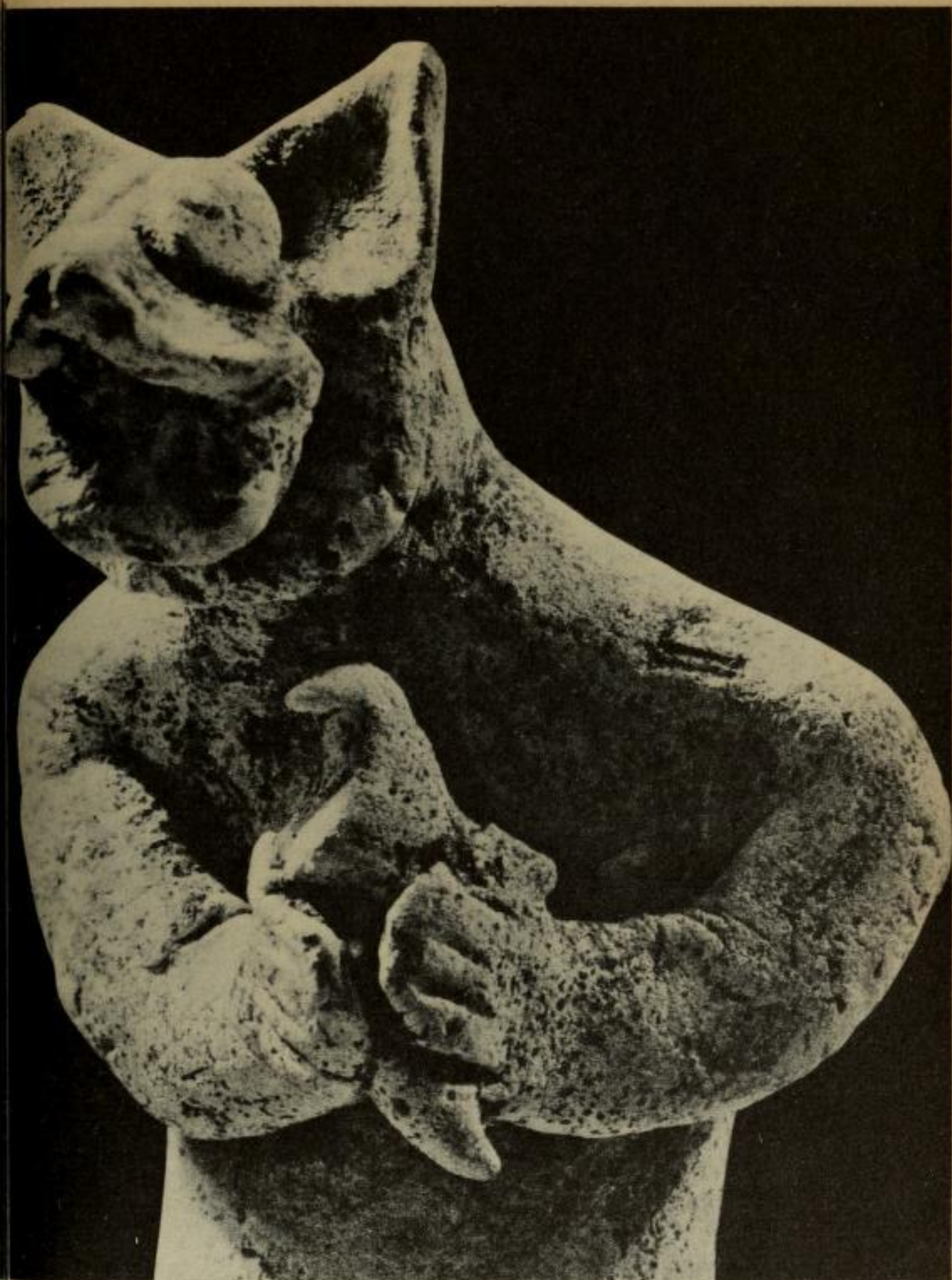
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means of the fragment, the photographer instinctively restores to certain works their due place in the company of the Elect—much as in the past certain pictures won theirs, thanks to their "Italianism."

Then, again, certain coins, certain objects, even certain recognized works of art have undergone a curious change and become subjects for admirable photographs. In much the same way as many ancient works owe the strong effect they make on us to an element of mutilation in what was patently intended to be a perfect whole, so, when photographed with a special lighting, lay-out and stress on certain details, ancient works of sculpture often acquire a quite startling, if spurious, modernism.



SUMERIAN ART (3rd MILLENNIUM B. C.): FERTILITY?



SUMERIAN ART (EARLY 3rd MILLENNIUM B.C.): DEMON

Classical aesthetic proceeded from the part to the whole; ours, often proceeding from the whole to the fragment, finds a precious ally in photographic reproduction.

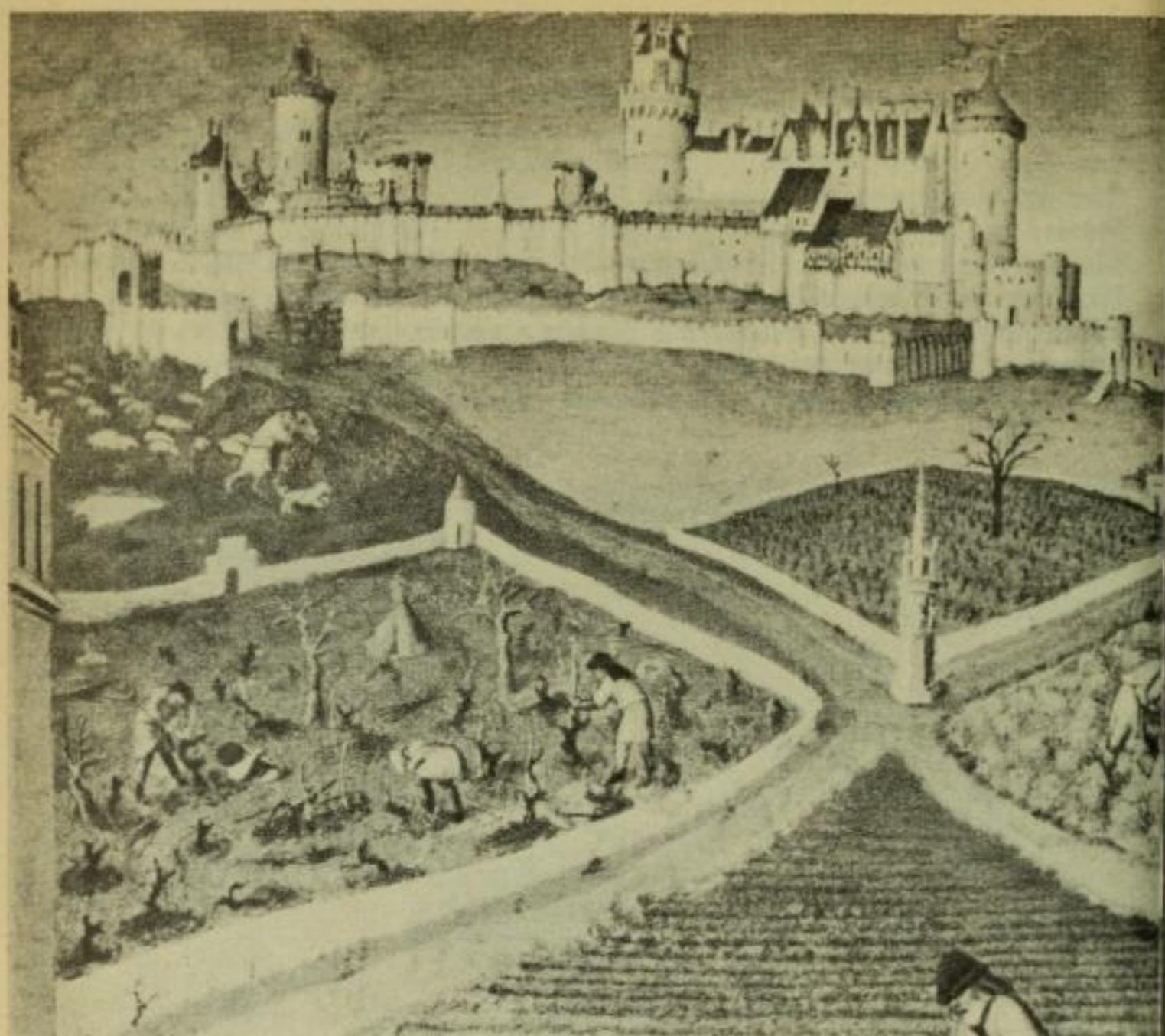
Moreover, color reproduction is coming into its own. It is still far from being perfect, and can never do justice to an original of large dimensions. Still, there has been amazing progress in the last twenty years. As yet, the color reproduction does not compete with the masterpiece, it merely evokes it, and rather enlarges our knowledge than satisfies our contemplation—performing, in fact, much the same function as engravings did in the past. For the last hundred years (if we except the activities of specialists) art history has been the history of that which can be photographed. No man of culture can have failed to be impressed by the unbroken continuity, the inevitability, of the course of Western sculpture, from Romanesque to Gothic, and from Gothic to Baroque. But how few cultured persons are aware of the parallel evolution of the stained-glass window, or of the drastic transformations that took place in Byzantine painting! The reason why the impression that Byzantine art was repetitive and static prevailed so long is, simply, that its drawing was bound up with a convention—whereas its life-force, genius and discoveries were recorded in its color. Formerly, years of research, ranging from Greek to Syrian monasteries, from museums to private collections, from picture sales to antique shops (and therewith a prodigious memory for color) were needed for a knowledge of Byzantine painting. Thus, until recently, its history was the history of its drawing—and its drawing, we were told, “had no history”! But drawing is going to lose, for the art-historian, the supremacy, threatened at Venice, which was regained with the advent of black-and-white photography. How could photography have enabled us to glimpse all modern painting behind Hals’s *Governors of the Almshouse* and Goya’s *Burial of the Sardine*? Indeed a reproduction used to be thought the more effective because the color was subordinated to the drawing. The problems peculiar to color are at last being frankly faced, however, and Chardin will no longer combat Michelangelo, disarmed. Thus the whole world’s painting is about to permeate our culture, as sculpture has been doing for a century. And the imposing array of Romanesque statues is now confronted by that of frescoes unknown to all but art-historians before the 1914 war, and likewise by the miniature, tapestry and, above all, the stained-glass window.

As a result of photographic juggling with the dimensions of works of art, the miniature (like small-scale carving) is by way of acquiring a new significance. Reproduced “natural size” on the page, it occupies about the same space as a “reduced” picture; its minutely detailed style jars on us no more than does the faint grimace imposed on the latter by its diminution. However the miniature must still be regarded as a minor *genre*, owing to its being an applied art, to its dependence on

conventions and its addiction to the so-called "celestial palette"; we need only compare a first-rank Italian miniature with Fra Angelico's predellas to perceive the gulf between a convention and an authentic harmony. (Still, we must not undervalue that convention; the miniature has no mean kingdom of its own, comprising as it does the West, Persia, India, Tibet and—in a less degree—Byzantium and the Far East.) And what of the Irish and Aquitanian illuminators, and the Carolingian miniaturists from the Rhine to the Ebro? And those miniatures in which a master has *invented* a personal style, and not merely transposed pictures or imitated previous miniatures? Surely the master of *The Love-stricken Heart* can claim a place in our Museum without



THE LOVE-STRICKEN HEART (LATE 15th CENTURY): THE KING'S HEART



TRÈS RICHES HEURES DU DUC DE BERRY (CA. 1410): CHATEAU DE LUSIGNAN (DETAIL)

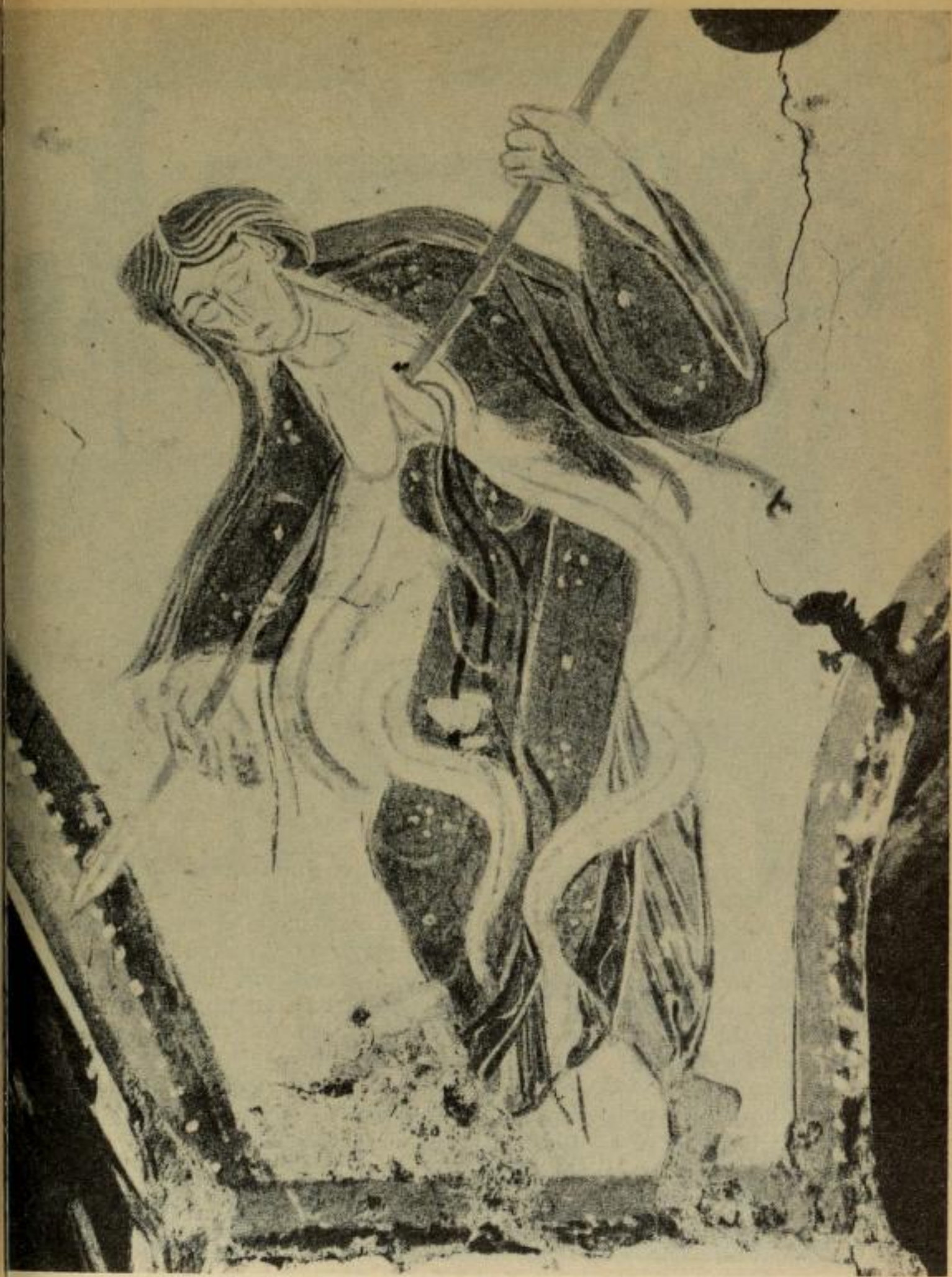
Walls. The *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* do not become frescoes but fall in line with Flemish paintings, the Broederlam triptych, yet without resembling them. Moreover, the subjects used by the Limbourgs and even Fouquet for the miniature were such as they never would have dreamt of using for a picture. (But their style is none the less significant for that.) If we want to know what landscape meant to a Northern artist in 1420, we must turn to Pol de Limbourg. Like enlarged coins, certain works of this kind, when isolated by reproduction, suggest sometimes a great art, sometimes a school that died untimely (a thought which gives food for the imagination). In certain works by the Master of the *Heures de Rohan* we glimpse a precursor of Grünewald; the *Ebo Gospel Book*, given back its colors, shows less genius perhaps but no less originality than the Tavant frescoes.



HEURES DE ROHAN (EARLY 15th CENTURY): DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS (DETAIL)



EBO GOSPEL-BOOK (9th CENTURY): ST. MARK



TAVANT (11th OR 12th CENTURY): LUST

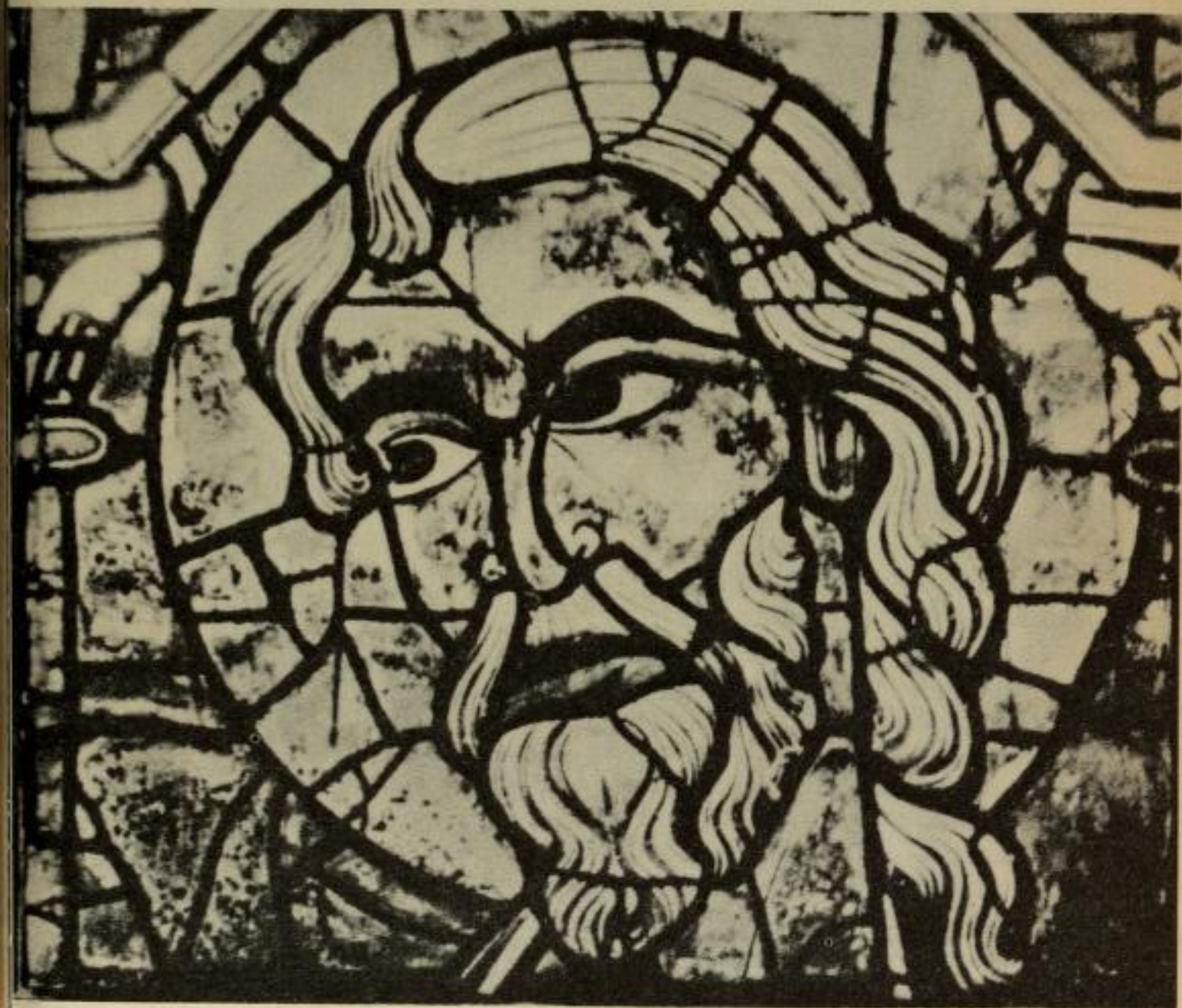


APOCALYPSE OF ANGERS (LATE 14th CENTURY): THE SEVEN SOULS AND THE ALTAR

Tapestry which, owing to its decorative functions, was so long excluded from objective contemplation and whose color shared with stained glass the right of diverging from the natural colors of its subjects, is becoming, now that reproduction obliterates its texture, a sort of modern art. Thus we respond to its "script" (more obvious than that of pictures), to the scrollwork of the Angers *Apocalypse*, to the quasi-xylographic flutings of fifteenth-century figures, to the *Lady with the Unicorn* and its faint damascenings. For any refusal to indulge in illusionist realism appeals to the modern eye. The oldest tapestries, with their contrasts of night-blues and dull reds, with their irrational yet convincing colors, link up with the great Gothic plain-song. Minor art though it be, tapestry can claim a place in our Museum without Walls, where the Angers *Apocalypse* figures between Irish illumination and the Saint-Savin frescoes.

But the stained-glass window is to play a far more important part in our resuscitations.

Stained-glass has been considered an ornamental art, but here we must walk warily; the frontiers of the decorative are highly imprecise when we are dealing with an early form of art. Obviously an eighteenth-century casket is decorative; but how should we regard a reliquary? Or, for that matter, a Luristan bronze, a Scythian plaque, a Coptic fabric, or certain Chinese animal-figures, not to mention tapestry? A figure on a reliquary is subordinated to the object it adorns; but obviously less than a pier-statue is subordinated to the edifice incorporating it (and the influence of goldsmiths' work on Romanesque stone-carving is now generally recognized). The limits of the decorative can be precisely defined only in an age of humanistic art. And it was by humanistic standards that the stained-glass window came to be defined in terms of what it was *not*—in much the same way as the



STAINED GLASS WINDOW AT BOURGES (13th CENTURY): ST. MATTHEW

seventeenth century judged Gothic sculpture. True, the window is conditioned by a structural lay-out, sometimes of a decorative nature (though even in this respect we must avoid any hasty decision), but its color is far more than ornamental or mere filling-in, however brilliant; it has a message of its own and speaks a color language not without analogies with the lyricism of the art of Grünewald and Van Gogh. In fact the reason why the birth of religious painting in Northern Europe came so late is that, for the colorist, stained glass was its most powerful medium of expression. And our color-obsessed geniuses of the close of the last century seem often to invoke the medium of stained glass, to which such canvases as *Le Père Tanguy* and *The Sunflowers* come much nearer than to Titian and Velazquez. We are misled by the fact that the term "painting" is linked up with pictures; the supreme paintings of the West, before Giotto, were neither frescoes nor miniatures—they are in the Great Window of Chartres Cathedral.

No doubt stained glass is decorative *as well*; as indeed is all Romanesque art, even the statuary. Indeed the statue would often be quite submerged by the huge ornamental masses crowding in on it, were it not that the human face sponsors its individuality. For, though the drapery of the pillar-statue is integrated with the portal, not so the head which crowns it. And the twelfth, even the thirteenth-century window stands out as emphatically as does the face of the Romanesque pillar-statue. Aided by photography, each of us isolates instinctively in his mind's eye the statues of the Royal Portal of Chartres, but stained glass has not yet been rescued from the medley of strap-work in which Our Lady of the Great Window is engulfed. The service done the statue by the face (which liberates it from its surroundings) is rendered to the stained-glass window by its direct appeal to our emotions—quite as specific as that of music: a form of expression whose specificity no artist can fail to recognize if he contrasts it with other plastic expressions of Romanesque, such as the fresco or mosaic. We need but compare the great Romanesque windows with the frescoes of Le Puy, and with the mosaics that preceded them, to realize that these windows are not a decoration but exist—supremely—in their own right.

True, the stained-glass window is eminently "monumental"; no fresco harmonizes so well with the edifice containing it as does the window with the Gothic edifice and, when we have it at its best, no other art achieves such splendor. When the great windows were stored away during the recent war and white glass took their place, we realized how much more than mere ornamentation they had been. Though indifferent to the spatial dimensions of what it portrays, stained glass is not indifferent to the changes of the light which, when our churches were thronged with worshipers at successive hours, endowed it with a vitality unknown to any other form of art. It replaced the mosaic set in a gold ground, as the free light of day replaced the furtive glimmer



MOSAIC (7th CENTURY): ST. SEBASTIAN



FRESCO AT MONTOIRE (11th-12th CENTURY)

of the crypts—throughout the centuries of Christendom triumphant that silent orchestra of the Chartres windows has been conducted by the baton which the Angel holds above the sundial.

The inspiration of the stained-glass window ceases when the smile begins. Once humanism comes in, drawing becomes paramount, and literal imitation of objects and living beings a criterion of value. But the Romanesque world, untouched by humanism, had other modes of expression. There is much of the pier-statue in the *Tree of Jesse* at Chartres, and we find the jagged intensity of the great stained-glass windows in the Autun tympanum. Those obscure forces which took their rise in the eternal sameness of the desert and had refined the plurality of Rome into the abstractions of Byzantium were calling for their lyrical expression in the West. Stained glass is a mosaic given its place in the sun; the stiff Byzantine trunk, nourished by barbarian migrations, breaks into blossom in the *Tree of Jesse* window as brilliantly as one of Bellini's voices finds its orchestration in the splendor of the Tintoretto of San Rocco. Linked to sunlight as the fresco to the wall, early stained glass is not a mere fortuitous adornment of a world where man has not yet come into his own and impinges on the microcosm of primitive Christendom only in the guise of the Prophets or the cowering hordes of Judgment Day; it is, rather, the supreme expression of that world. As are the tympanums in which Christ is still submerged in God the Father, and the Creation and Last Judgment take precedence of the Gospels; as at Moissac, where the human element was allowed a place under the Christ in Majesty only in the guise of the Elders of the Apocalypse. But soon Christ was to become the Son of Man, and the blood of his pierced hands, quenching the fiery abstractions of the Old Dispensation, was to quicken a harvest of scenes of human toil and rustic craftsmanship, in which the cobblers and vinedressers of the Chartres windows replaced the lost souls of Autun and the Elders of Moissac, while at Amiens blacksmiths beat swords into ploughshares. But soon the first fine glow of lyrical emotion began to dwindle; from Senlis to Amiens, from Amiens to Rheims, and from Rheims to Umbria, Man waxed in stature until he broke through these stained-glass windows which were not yet to his measure and had ceased to be to God's.

Stained glass has an immediate appeal to us, by reason of its emotivity, so much akin to ours, and its impassioned crystallization. But the blaze of color, kindled by the Prophets, which consumed all human things till only that queerly fascinating Byzantine skeleton remained, took another course in the world of Islam. The art of Byzantium, which owed its being to the insistent pressure of an oriental God wearing down indefatigably the multitude of his creatures, after becoming petrified in the mosaic, branched out in two directions: towards Chartres and towards Samarkand. In the West, the window; in the East, the carpet.

Islam's two poles are the abstract and the fantastic: the mosque and

The Arabian Nights. The design of the carpet is wholly abstract; not so its color. Perhaps we shall soon discover that the sole reason why we call this art "decorative" is that for us it has no history, no hierarchy, and no meaning. Color reproduction may well lead us to review our ideas on this subject and rescue the masterwork from the North African bazaar as Negro sculpture has been rescued from the curio-shop; in other words, liberate Islam from the odium of "backwardness" and assign its due place (a minor one, not because the carpet never portrays Man, but because it does not *express* him) to this last manifestation of the undying East.



JAPAN, NARA (7th OR 8th CENTURY): BODHISATTVA

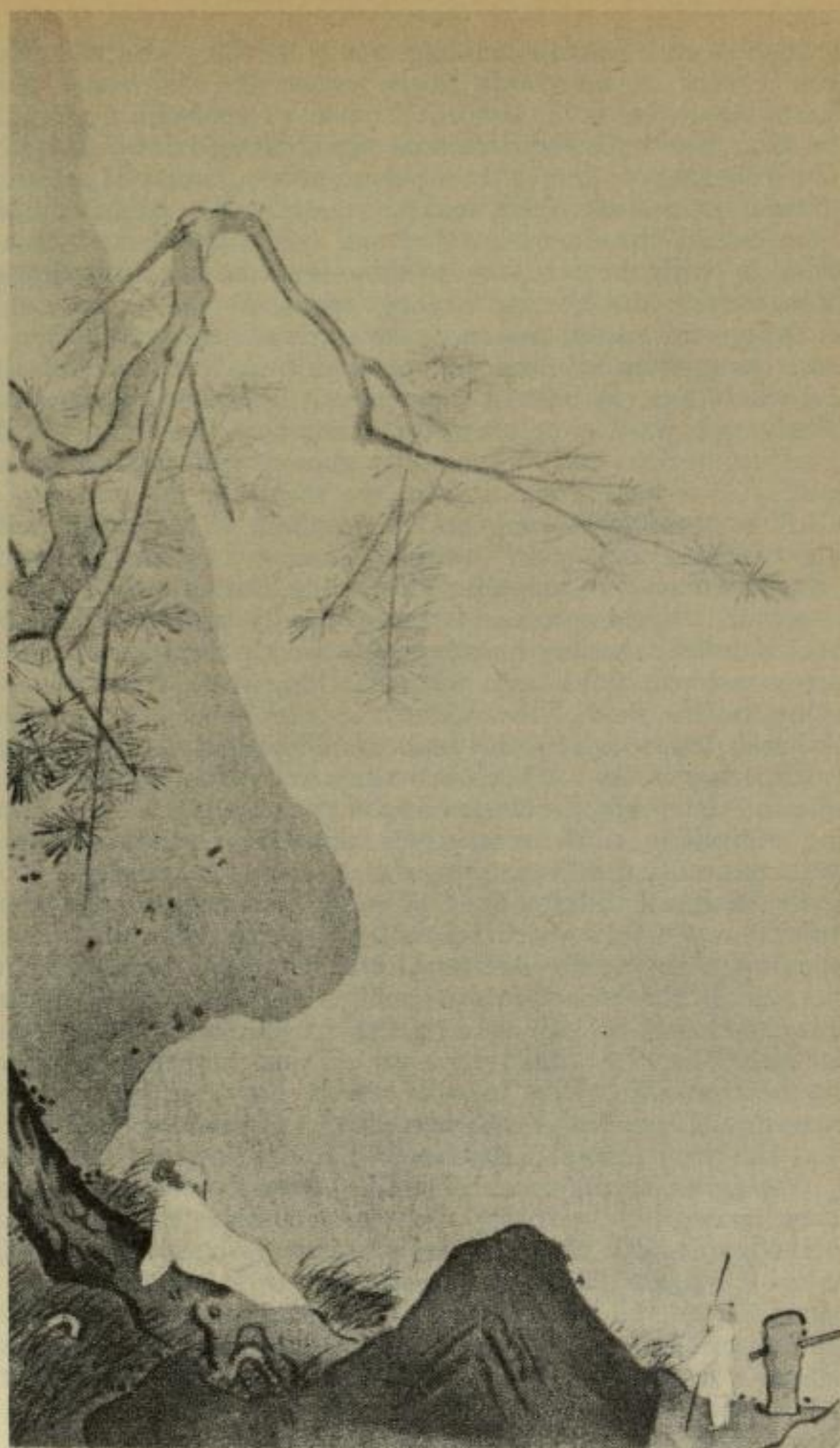


WEI DYNASTY, CHINA (CA. 5th CENTURY). YUN KANG: BUDDHIST FIGURE

And then, after the sculpture, banners and frescoes of ancient Asia, the great schools of Far-Eastern painting will, no doubt, come to the fore. The relatively faithful reproductions now available of Chinese wash-drawings have, quite unjustly, created a bias against those of Chinese painting. These works are scattered; no real art museum exists in China and many collectors and custodians of temples will not allow the scrolls in their keeping to be photographed. Also, the apparatus of color reproduction in China is rather primitive and the masterpieces of Chinese painting could be reproduced in color, with relative fidelity, only by direct photography or by the technique perfected by the Japanese. Thus most of the works known to us are in Japanese collections or in art galleries of the West. We need only picture what our knowledge of European art would be were it restricted to the canvases in America—and our painting is far better represented in America than is Chinese painting in the entire West.

Little known though it is, Sung painting is beginning to whet the curiosity of our painters. Its seeming humanism answers none of our contemporary problems but, once freed from the *fin-de-siècle* "Japanism" which still travesties it for us, it would reveal an attitude of the painter to his craft that the West has never known, and a new function assigned to painting—which was regarded by these artists as a means of communion between man and the universe. Above all it would bring to us a conception of Space utterly unlike ours; in this respect, while its calligraphy could teach us nothing, its spirit might be a revelation. We shall see, presently, how far removed this spirit is from any Christian humanism. But when, thanks to modern methods of reproduction and a growing demand, it becomes possible to familiarize the public with this painting, it will also point the way to a better understanding of Far-Eastern art, from Buddhist figures to Japanese twelfth-century portraits. Amongst the paintings having no affinities with our culture only frescoes and miniatures have, so far, been reproduced. Shown a faithful reproduction of the *Portrait of Yoritomo*, what artist could fail to recognise in it one of the world's supreme works of art?

Reproduction has disclosed the whole world's sculpture. It has multiplied accepted masterpieces, promoted other works to their due rank and launched some minor styles—in some cases, one might say, invented them. It is introducing the language of color into art history; in our Museum without Walls picture, fresco, miniature and stained-glass window seem of one and the same family. For all alike—miniatures, frescoes, stained glass, tapestries, Scythian plaques, pictures, Greek vase paintings, "details" and even statuary—have become "colorplates." In the process they have lost their properties as *objects*; but, by the same token, they have gained something: the utmost significance as to *style* that they can possibly acquire. It is hard for us clearly to realize the gulf between the performance of an Aeschylean tragedy, with the instant



CHINA (EARLY 13th CENTURY). MA YUAN: A POET LOOKING AT THE MOON

Persian threat and Salamis looming across the Bay, and the effect we get from reading it; yet, dimly albeit, we feel the difference. All that remains of Aeschylus is his genius. It is the same with figures that in reproduction lose both their original significance as objects and their function (religious or other); we see them only as works of art and they bring home to us only their makers' talent. We might almost call them not "works" but "moments" of art. Yet diverse as they are, all these objects (with the exception of those few whose outstanding genius sets them outside the historic stream) speak for the same endeavor; it is as though an unseen presence, the spirit of art, were urging all on the same quest, from miniature to picture, from fresco to stained-glass window, and then, at certain moments, it abruptly indicated a new line of advance, parallel or abruptly divergent. Thus it is that, thanks to the rather specious unity imposed by photographic reproduction on a multiplicity of objects, ranging from the statue to the bas-relief, from bas-reliefs to seal-impressions, and from these to the plaques of the nomads, a "Babylonian style" seems to emerge as a real entity, not a mere classification—as something resembling, rather, the life-story of a great creator. Nothing conveys more vividly and compellingly the notion of a destiny shaping human ends than do the great styles, whose evolutions and transformations seem like long scars that Fate has left, in passing, on the face of the earth.

Galleries, too, which exhibit replicas and plaster casts bring together widely dispersed works. They have more freedom of choice than other art galleries, since they need not acquire the originals, and in them the seeming antagonism of the originals is reconciled in their manifestation of a vital continuity, emphasized by the chronological sequence in which such galleries usually display the replicas. They are immune from that virus of the art book which inevitably features style at the expense of originality, owing to the absence of volume and, in many cases, to the reduced size of the reproductions; and, above all, to their proximity and unbroken sequence—which bring a style to life, much as an accelerated film makes a plant live before our eyes. Thus it is that these imaginary super-artists we call styles, each of which has an obscure birth, an adventurous life, including both triumphs and surrenders to the lure of the gaudy or the meretricious, a death-agony and a resurrection, come into being. Alongside the museum a new field of art experience, vaster than any so far known (and standing in the same relation to the art museum as does the reading of a play to its performance, or hearing a phonograph record to a concert audition), is now, thanks to reproduction, being opened up. And this new domain—which is growing more and more intellectualized as our stock-taking and its diffusion proceeds and methods of reproduction come nearer to fidelity—is for the first time the common heritage of all mankind.

III But the works of art that comprise this heritage have undergone a strange and subtle transformation.

Though our museums conjure up for us a Greece that never existed, the Greek works in them patently exist; Athens was never white, but her statues, bereft of color, have conditioned the artistic sensibility of Europe. Nor have the painstaking reconstitutions made at Munich succeeded in replacing by what the Greek sculptors probably envisaged what the statues certainly convey to us today. The Germans tried to bring the real Greece back to life, alleging that her works of art reached our museums in the state of corpses. Singularly fertile "corpses" in that case; nor did the gallery of waxworks intended to replace them have any such fertility. The theory was, of course, that "we should see these works as those for whom they were created saw them."

But what work of the past can be seen in that manner?

If the impression made on us today by a painted and waxed Greek head is not that of a work of art recalled to life, but that of a grotesque, the reason is not simply that our vision has been warped; it is also that this one resuscitated style emerges among so many others that are not resuscitated in this manner. In the East almost all statues were painted; notably those of Central Asia, India, China and Japan. Roman statuary was often in all the colors different marbles could provide. Romanesque statues were painted, so were most Gothic statues (to begin with, those in wood). So, it seems, were Pre-Columbian idols; so were the Mayan bas-reliefs. Yet the whole past has reached us . . . colorless.

The slight traces of color surviving on Greek statuary embarrass us chiefly because they hint at a world so very different from that of the Greek drawing and sculpture with which we are familiar. Even such elements of Alexandrian art as we have allowed to enter into our conception of "ancient Greece" are difficult to reconcile with figures in three colors. Actually a period is expressed no less by its color than by its drawing; but though we can see that Greek draftsmanship, Gothic fluting and Baroque extravagance link up with their respective periods, the connection assumed to exist between a culture and its color amounts to little more than a tentative belief that the painting of harmonious civilizations favors light tones, and that of dualistic civilizations, dark. A mistaken belief, obviously, since the painting contemporaneous with the Chartres *Kings* is usually light-hued; and so is Gauguin's. It is on a par with believing that the music of heroic ages consists of military marches. In a period indifferent to realism the color of a statue is rarely realistic. Greek statues were polychrome, but Plato tells us that in his time the pupils of their eyes were painted *red*. Bleached to whiteness by the passage of time, these statues are not diminished, but transmuted; a new, coherent system, no less acceptable than the original



GREECE (5th CENTURY B.C.). MASTER OF THE REEDS: LECYTHUS

system, has replaced it. With the partial exception of Egypt, the role of color in the great cultures of the past (no less distinctive and legitimate than the part played by forms) is conveyed to us by a few fragments only; the multitude of living figures which our world-wide resuscitations have conjured up is voiceless.

Retrieved without its color, the past—until the Christian era—has been retrieved without its painting. What conception would a future archeologist who knew its sculpture only have of nineteenth-century art? It would seem that Greek painting in the days of Pericles was two-dimensional, and perhaps we can get an inkling of its style from the elements in common between the white lecythi and the Naples *Women playing at Knuckle-bones*. As for hoping to guess what it was by studying Pompeian art (five centuries posterior to Pericles), we might as well believe that in the year 4000 it will be possible to understand the art of Raphael by studying our contemporary posters. Those Greek artists whose grapes, we are told, were so realistic that even the birds were taken in, were contemporaries of Alexander, not of Themistocles; of Praxiteles, not of Pheidias. The sculpture of the latter hints at the



(FIRST CENTURY B.C.). ALEXANDER OF ATHENS: WOMEN PLAYING AT KNUCKLEBONES (DETAIL)

existence of a "flat" unrealistic painting with incisive drawing, and devoid of archaism. The discovery of a humanistic painting in two dimensions—in the sense in which this term applies to the *Horsemen of the Acropolis*—would set our art-historians, and others too, perhaps, some major problems.

No doubt we are quite aware that the Greek world and the Mesopotamian have come down to us transformed. But what of the Romanesque world? Its pillars were ribboned with vivid color; some of its tympana and effigies of Christ were as strongly colored as Polynesian fetishes, while some others were painted in the colors favored by Braque. No more realistic than those of the miniature and the stained-glass window (which would surprise us less had the Vézelay tympanum come down to us intact), their colors illuminated a world that the Romanesque frescoes are beginning to reveal to us—a world utterly different from that of the monochrome churches. Gothic ends up with the motley of Sluter's *Well of Moses*, the base of a "Calvary"; Moses' garment was red, his mantle lined with blue; the pedestal was spangled with gold suns and initials, and painted, like the entire "Calvary," by Malouel; while Job wore real gold spectacles! Where Gothic works have retained their primitive color it is lustreless, though often as intense as that of Fouquet's red and blue angels. Where they have kept the color of a later phase, it aims at a realism sometimes akin to that of the illuminators, sometimes to that ambivalent naturalism which reappeared in Spanish polychrome wood-carvings. Indeed during the Middle Ages there existed a sort of cinema in colors of which no trace has survived; just as in the sudden dawning of a larger hope amongst men who had not forgotten the dark age whence they had emerged but yesterday—a dawning symbolized by the great cathedrals soaring heavenwards—there was a splendid confidence in the future, not unlike that of America

Wherever the painting on the statues has survived, it has come down to us transformed by a patina and, inevitably, by decay as well; and the transformation due to these two factors affects its very nature. Our taste, not to mention our aesthetic, is no less responsive to this subtle attenuation of colors, once bright to the point of garishness, than that of the last century was to the layers of varnish on the pictures in museums. If we regard a well-preserved Romanesque Virgin (Italy has several such) and a time-scarred Virgin of Auvergne as belonging to the same art, this is not because the Auvergne Virgin is a mutilated replica of the other, but because the intact Virgin shares, *in a less degree*, the characteristics we perceive in the time-worn Virgin. Romanesque art as we know it is an art of stone carving: of bas-reliefs and pier-statues. Our museums house figures akin to the bas-reliefs, removed from their setting and usually damaged. Indeed when it chances to be intact, a Romanesque



ROMANESQUE VIRGIN OF AUVERGNE



ITALIAN ROMANESQUE: DEPOSITION FROM THE CROSS

Deposition from the Cross seems often to reduce the majesty of "true" Romanesque to the art of Breton wayside crosses or the Christchild's crib. Thus we are no more anxious to restore its pedestal to the great Romanesque crucifix in the Louvre than her arms to the Venus of Melos; of the two versions of Romanesque we have chosen ours.

Our feeling for a work of art is rarely independent of the place it occupies in art history. This historic sense, a by-product of our place in time and conditioned by the here-and-now, has transformed our artistic heritage (which would be no less transformed were we to relinquish it). Thus mediaeval art acquires different significances according as we see in it an art of "darkness" or that of a massive building-up of Man. We have seen how greatly a history of color would modify the art history we know—which is in fact a history of drawing, given its form by Florence and, above all, by the Rome of Julius II. That of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was dominated by Venice; Velazquez revered Titian and disdained Raphael. (Whereas that of France, shaped by engravings and black-and-white photography, sponsored Rome far more than Venice.) We are now beginning to glimpse in the Gossaert of Berlin a kinsman of El Greco, and in the Naples Schiavone a progenitor of the Fauves. Always there comes a time when the long beams of the searchlight that plays across the course of art history—and, indeed, all human history—linger on a great work hitherto neglected, relegating others to partial obscurity. Thus it is only

recently that Piero della Francesca has emerged as one of the world's greatest artists; and since then Raphael has greatly changed for us.

A period that does not set out to "filter" an art of the past makes no effort to resuscitate it in its original form, but merely ignores it. That in the Middle Ages the statues of antiquity, though they were there to see, were never looked at, is partly due to the fact that theirs was a dead style; partly to the fact that certain cultural periods banned metamorphosis as passionately as ours has welcomed it. It was not because of any feeling for the past that Christian art admitted echoes of Pompeii in some of its miniatures of the High Middle Ages. The notion of art as such must first come into being, if the past is to acquire an artistic value; thus for a Christian to see a classical statue as a statue, and not as a heathen idol or a mere puppet, he would have had to begin by seeing in a "Virgin" a statue, before seeing it as the Virgin.

That (to quote a famous definition) a religious picture "before being a Virgin, is a flat surface covered with colors arranged in a certain order," holds good for us, but anyone who had spoken thus to the men who made the statuary of St. Denis would have been laughed out of court. For them as for Suger and, later, for St. Bernard, what was being made was a Virgin; and only in a very secondary sense an arrangement of colors. The colors were arranged in a certain order not so as to be a statue but so as to be *the* Virgin. Not to represent a lady having Our Lady's attributes, but to *be*; to win a place in that other-world of holiness which alone sponsored its quality.

Since these "colors in a certain order" do not merely serve purposes of representation, what purpose do they serve? That of their own order, the modernist replies. An order variable, to say the least: since it is a style. No more than Suger would Michelangelo have admitted that word "before" in "before being a Virgin" He would have said: "Lines and colors must be arranged in a certain order so that a painted Virgin may be worthy of Our Lady." For him, as for Van Eyck, plastic art was, amongst other things, a means of access to a world of the divine. But that world was not separable from their painting, as is the model from the portrait; it took form through the expression they achieved of it.

The Middle Ages were as unaware of what we mean by the word "art" as were Greece and Egypt, who had no word for it. For this concept to come into being, works of art needed to be isolated from their functions. What common link existed between a "Venus" which *was* Venus, a crucifix which *was* Christ crucified, and a bust? But three "statues" can be linked together. When, with the Renaissance, Christendom selected, from amongst the various forms created for the service of other gods, its most congenial method of expression, there began to emerge that specific "value" to which we give the name of art, and which was, in due time, to equal those supreme values in whose

service it had arisen. Thus, for Manet, Giotto's *Christ* was to become a work of art; whereas Manet's *Christ aux Anges* would have meant nothing to Giotto. By "a good painter" had been meant a competent painter, capable of convincing the spectator by the quality of his "Virgin" that she was more the Virgin than was an average artist's Virgin—and this called for superior craftsmanship. Thus, when art became an end in itself, our whole aesthetic outlook underwent a transformation.

But it was not a belief in painting as an absolute value that supervened on the age of faith; that belief came later. What came next was "poetry." Not only was the poetic sense, throughout the world and for many centuries, one of the elements of art, but over a long period painting was poetry's most favored mode of expression. Between the death of Dante and the birth of Shakespeare how trivial seem the poets of Christendom as compared with Piero della Francesca, Fra Angelico, Botticelli, Piero di Cosimo, Leonardo, Titian and Michelangelo! What poems contemporary with Watteau rank beside his art?

The distinction we make today between the specific procedures of painting and its poetic elements is as indefinite as the distinction between form and content. They once comprised an indivisible domain. Thus it was at the bidding of his poetic sense that Leonardo's colors were "arranged in a certain order." *Painting*, he wrote, *is a form of poetry made to be seen*. Until Delacroix, the ideas of great painting and poetry were regarded as inseparable. Can we suppose it was due to some aberration that Duccio, Giotto, Fouquet, Grünewald, the Masters of the Italian Renaissance, Velazquez, Rembrandt, Vermeer, Poussin—and all Asiatic artists—took this for granted?

After having been a means to the creation of a sacrosanct world, plastic art was chiefly, during several centuries, a means to the creation of an imaginary or transfigured world. And these successive worlds were far from being what we call "subjects" for the artists; it is obvious that the Crucifixion was not a "subject" for Fra Angelico, nor (though



PIERO DI COSIMO: THE DEATH OF PROCRIS



BOTTICELLI: LA DERELITTA

here the distinction is subtler) was *The School of Athens* for Raphael, or even *The Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* for Delacroix merely a "subject"; each was a means of conquering, by way of painting, a world that was not exclusively the domain of art. In those days people spoke of "big" subjects—and the adjective conveys a whole attitude. When modern art arose, "official" painting had replaced that

conquest by the artist's subordination to a romantic or sentimental theme, often linked up with history—a sort of theatrical performance freed from its narrow stage, if not from its gestures. Reacting from this realistic treatment of the imaginary, painting rediscovered the poetic emotion, once it ceased illustrating the “poetry” of history and sponsoring that of the *pleinairistes*, and took to *making its own poetry*. Cézanne's *Montagne Noire*, Renoir's *Moulin de la Galette*, Gauguin's *Riders on the Beach*, Chagall's *Fables*, Dufy's scenes of gay life and Klee's knife-edged phantoms owe nothing of their lyricism to their subjects; these artists use them as vehicles for their own poetic emotion, each in his own manner. Goya's drawings hold us as the countless scenes of martyrdom in academical Baroque can never do. And then we have Piero, and Rembrandt We respond effortlessly to the enchanting harmony of pinks and grays in *L'Enseigne de Gersaint*, but the appeal of Boucher or an Alexandrine to our sensuality (like that of Greuze or a Bolognese to our sentimentality) evokes little or no response. We are moved by Rouault's *Old King*, but the glimpse of Napoleon on a muddy road in Meissonier's *1814* leaves us cold. If the subjects of the “official” Salon artists are meretricious, this is because, far from being conjured up by the art of those who painted them, they are models to which this art submits itself. Titian did not “reproduce” imagined scenes; it was from the nightbound forests of Cadore he got his “Venus.”



MEISSONIER: 1814



ROUAULT: THE OLD KING

Far from excluding poetry from painting, we should do better to realize that all great works of plastic art are steeped in poetry. How can we fail to see it in the art of Vermeer, Chardin, Brueghel and Courbet (in his major works)? We profess to admire only their color in Bosch and Titian, but if we propose to treat their color—the means of expression of their poetry—as separable from it, we shall have to begin by assuming that their art was a technique of *representation*. Realistic as this color may seem, it is a link between the *Juggler* and the *Temptations*; the trees in Titian's finest works belong *also* to that magic realm of poesy. And this poetic "glamour" is not something superadded to his painting; it is still less separable from it than is the fantastic from the art of Bosch. Nor is it due to the taste prevailing then in Venice (as is the calligraphy of his decorative compositions); it is due solely to his art. This is becoming clearer with the advance in color reproduction and the comprehensiveness of modern exhibitions thanks to loans of masterpieces; far more than the drawing, the color expresses the poetry in his art. Titian, one of the world's greatest poets, seems often no more than a master of tapestry design, when he is reproduced in black and white. True, some of our painters say they would prefer Titian with his "Venus" left out—meaning that they prefer those still lifes in which Venus, though no less present than in the Prado, is not visibly present. As though *Laura de Dianti*, *Venus and Adonis*, the Vienna *Callisto*, the *Nymph and Shepherd*, belonged to the world of Cézanne, or even that of Renoir! Is that which differentiates Rembrandt's from almost all Hals's portraits only the unlikeness of two palettes? And even, we might add, that which differentiates the *Governors of the Almshouse* from the *Archers*?

With poetry in this sense painting has always, to say the least of it, collaborated, and the art of the age of religion collaborated no less than does our modern art. But from the Renaissance up to Delacroix there was more than mere collaboration; poetry was wedded to painting as it had been to faith. Leonardo, Rembrandt and Goya seek and achieve both poetic and plastic expression, often simultaneously. Pisanello's hanged men, Leonardo's daylight vistas and Bosch's nightbound recessions, Rembrandt's light and Goya's phantoms belong to both categories. The Queen of Sheba is conjured up by Piero's art, the Prodigal Son by Rembrandt's, Cythera by Watteau's, a limbo of spectres by Goya's. Poetry comes as naturally to this art as the flower to a plant.

Italian Mannerism affected Europe rather as a school of poetry than through its forms; Jean Cousin and Jan Matzys were votaries of a dream and a dream alone. Like their Italian masters, the painters of the various Schools of Fontainebleau were illustrators in their minor works; nevertheless their ornamental art, in quest—beyond mere ornament—of poetry and often the mysterious, was put to the service not of the poets but of poetry and, rather than aiming at the depiction

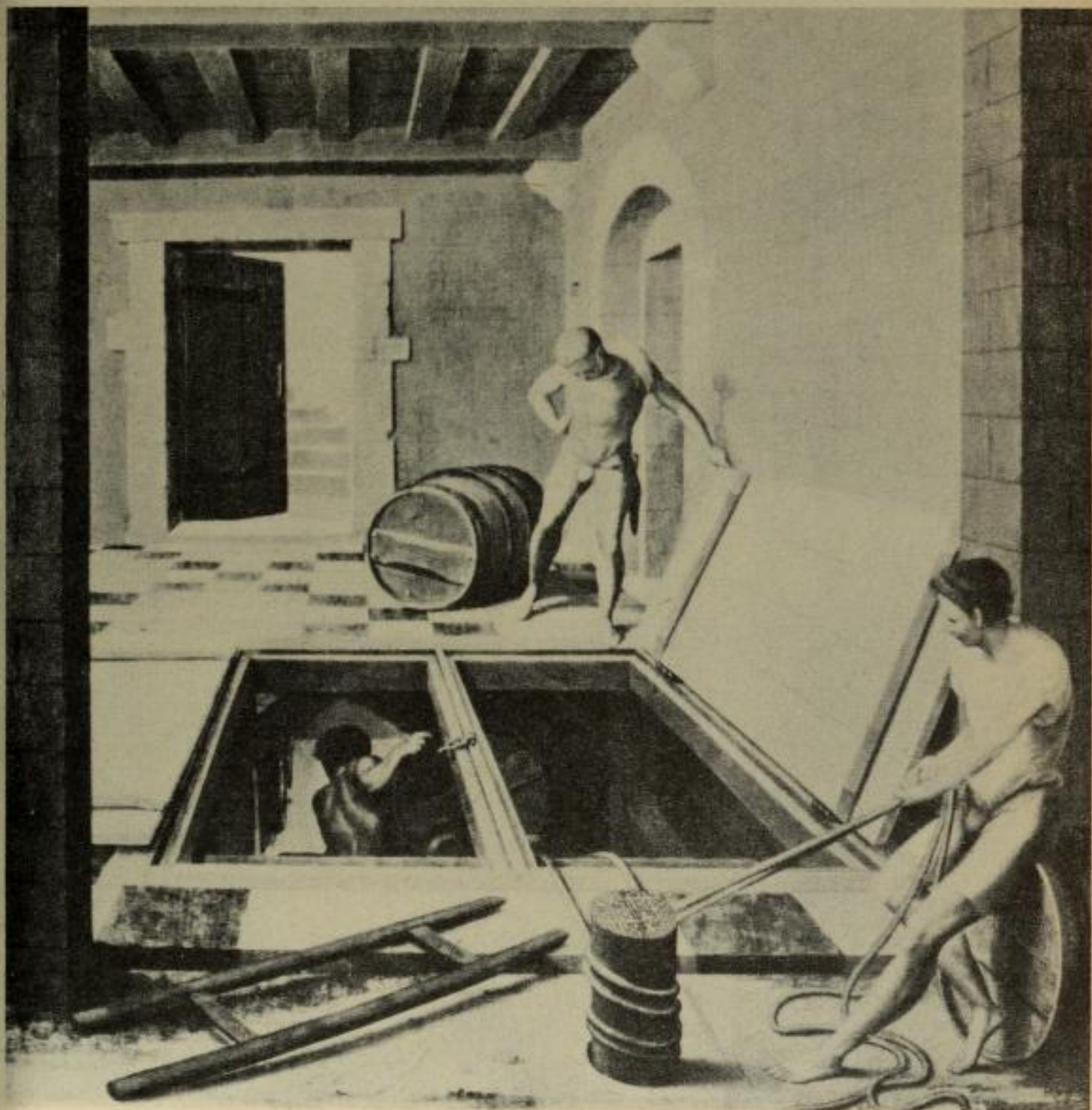


LEONARDO DA VINCI: THE VIRGIN, CHILD AND ST. ANNE (DETAIL: ST. ANNE)



REMBRANDT : THE PRODIGAL SON

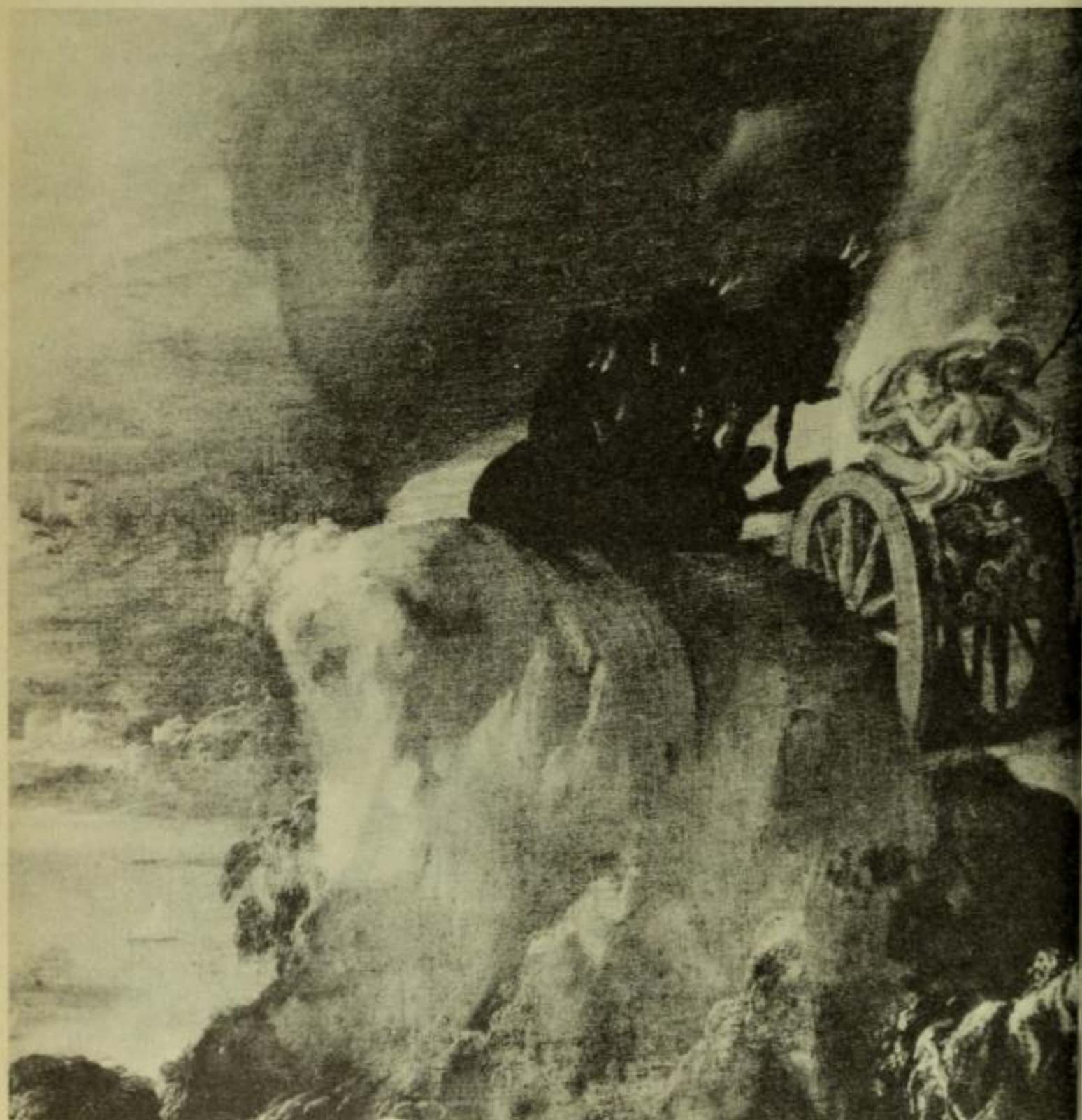
of a poetic world, was seeking for a poetic expression of the world they saw around them. Is there less poetry in *The Harvesters* at the Louvre or *Descent into the Cellar* than in *Eva Prima Pandora*, in Caron's pictures and countless "Dianas"? That elongation, those forms half glimpsed through veils and arabesques so often directed towards a focal point and nearer those of glyptics than those of Alexandria, are essentially pictorial, not anecdotal procedures. It was not Venice but Rosso who discovered



JEAN GOURMONT (1537): DESCENT INTO THE CELLAR

those curious color harmonies which Spanish Baroque was, later, to use to such effect. And in that chariot with its dark horses carrying away Niccolo dell'Abbate's Proserpine to the Shades, how separate the illustrative and the poetic elements?

That certain old-time pictures are imbued with a truly modern poetic emotion—that Piero di Cosimo is near akin to Chirico—is plain



NICCOLO DELL' ABBATE: THE RAPE OF PROSERPINE (DETAIL)

to see. Some unfinished etchings by Rembrandt in which he comes very near our modern sense of the mysterious have been discovered; but let us make no mistake regarding this. Our modern taste has been shaped by a, so to speak, sectarian poetry which adjusts its world to perspectives of the dream and the irrational. No doubt all true poetry is irrational in the sense that it substitutes a new system of relations between things for the established order. But, long before peopling



REMBRANDT : THE PAINTER AND HIS MODEL

the solitude of an artist, that new system had come to men as an ecstatic revelation—a panic conquest of the joys and wonders of the earth; or that, not of a world of dreams, but of the star-strewn darkness which broods upon the august presence of the Mothers or the slumber of the gods. Mallarmé is not a greater poet than Homer, or Piero di Cosimo than Titian; and what do the vividest realizations of our painters amount



MICHELANGELO : NIGHT (DETAIL)

to if we compare their impact with what that first great vision of a nude woman—her of the Panathenaea, on whom the first butterfly alighted—must have meant to those who saw her then, or that of the first sculptured face in which Christ ceased to be symbol and “came alive”? The poetry of the dream has not always vanquished that of ecstasy; Baudelaire’s vision of “night” ensues on that of Michelangelo, but has not effaced it.

Midway between Man’s fleeting world and the transcendent world of God, a third world found its place in several phases of culture, and art was subordinated to it as once it was to faith. We have a tendency to treat this intermediate world as a mere *décor*; its function is not actually denied, but, rather, disregarded. The association in our culture of very different types of art is rendered feasible only by the metamorphosis that the works of the past have undergone, not merely through the ravages of time but also because they are detached from certain elements of what they once expressed: their poetry no less than the faith of their makers and the hope of enabling man to commune with the cosmos or the dark demonic powers of nature. Indeed every work surviving from the past has been deprived of something—to begin with, the setting of its age. The work of sculpture used to lord it in a temple, a street or a reception-room. All these are lost to it. Even if the reception-room is “reconstructed” in a museum, even if the statue has kept its place in the portal of its cathedral, the town which surrounded the reception-room or cathedral has changed. There is no getting round the banal truth that for thirteenth-century man Gothic was “modern,” and the Gothic world a present reality, not a phase of history; once we replace faith by love of art, little does it matter if a cathedral chapel is reconstituted in a museum, stone by stone, for we have begun by converting our cathedrals into museums. Could we bring ourselves to feel what the first spectators of an Egyptian statue, or a Romanesque crucifixion, felt, we would make haste to remove them from the Louvre. True, we are trying more and more to gauge the feelings of those first spectators, but without forgetting our own, and we can be contented all the more easily with the mere knowledge of the former, without experiencing them, because all we wish to do is to put this knowledge to the service of the work of art.

But though a Gothic crucifix becomes a statue, as being a work of art, those special relations between its lines and masses which make it a work of art are the creative expression of an emotion far exceeding a mere will to art. It is not of the same family as a crucifixion painted today by a talented atheist—out to express his talent only. It is an object, a picture or a work of sculpture, but it is also a Crucifixion. A Gothic head that we admire does not affect us merely through the ordering of its planes; we discern in it, across the centuries, a gleam

of the face of the Gothic Christ. Because that gleam *is there*. We have only a vague idea as to what the aura emanating from a Sumerian statue consists of; but we are well aware that it does not emanate from a Cubist sculpture. In a world in which the very name of Christ had left men's memories, a Chartres statue would still be a statue. And if the idea of art had survived in that civilization, the statue still would speak a language. What language? it may be asked. But what language is spoken by those Pre-Columbians of whom we still know next to nothing, or by the coins of ancient Gaul, or by those bronzes of the Steppes as to which we do not even know who were the peoples that cast them? And what language by the bisons of the caves?

It is no vain quest seeking to ascertain to what deep craving of man's nature a work of art responds, and we do well to realize that this craving is not always the same. Throughout the ancient East the craftsmen manufactured gods, but not haphazard; the styles imposed on these images were devised by the artists, who also devised the successive transformations of these styles. The sculptor's craft served the making of the gods, and art served to express, and doubtless to promote, a special form of intercourse between Man and the Divine. In Greece the sculptors continued making gods; the artists wrested these gods from the realm of the non-human, of death and "the terror that walks by night." The theocratic spirit of the East had imparted even to objects of daily use the style invented for the effigies of the gods; indeed the Egyptian perfume-spoons look as if they had been carved for use in the netherworld. Whereas, with Hermes and Amphitrite, Greece succeeded in imposing idealized human forms on the gods. Thus while in both cases art depicted gods, it is obvious that, in doing this, it directed its appeal to different elements of the human soul.

We know how very different are the basic emotions to which art makes its appeal in, for example, a Sung painting, the Villeneuve *Pietà*, Michelangelo's *Adam*, a picture by Fragonard, by Cézanne or Braque; and, at the very heart of Christendom, in the guise of the paintings in the Catacombs and those in the Vatican, in the art of Giotto and Titian. We, however, discuss these works *as paintings*—as though they all belonged to the same domain. In most of them art ranked second for their makers, whereas we subordinate them all to art; indeed, if it became the general opinion that the artist's function is to serve (for instance) politics, or to act on the spectator in the manner of the advertisement, the art museum, and our artistic heritage, would be utterly transformed in under a century.

For since our museums were constituted at a time when it was taken for granted that every painter wished to make what *we* call a picture, they were filled with the pictures that our art invited to figure in them. It is always at the call of living forms that dead forms return to life. The Gothics were regarded as uncouth by the man of the seventeenth

century because the contemporary popular sculptors to whom he likened them were obviously less competent than Girardon; above all, because had his craftsmanship resembled that of the Gothics, a contemporary sculptor would certainly have been "uncouth". This habit of projecting the present on the past persists, but nowadays we would not regard a sculptor whose work resembled pre-Romanesque as clumsy; we should call him "expressionist." In our resuscitations of pre-Romanesque art Uccello comes to the fore, while Guercino fades out. (How could anyone care for Guercino? we ask. After all, why not, considering that Velazquez did, and bought his pictures for the King of Spain?) The most permanent European values have been served in successive periods by arts that were not merely different but hostile; as against the Gothics the seventeenth century (notably La Bruyère) vaunted the architecture and sculpture of antiquity, not for their stylization but for their "truth to nature," and it was on precisely the same grounds that the Romantics extolled Gothic, as against seventeenth-century art. Like these periodic metamorphoses of the notion of "truth to nature," every resuscitation, in reviving and revealing a forgotten art, casts great tracts of shadow over other aspects of the past. For us today Uccello is neither what he was for his own age nor what he was for the eighteenth century; and the same applies to Guercino.

True, we are less inclined than it would seem to take Titian for another Renoir, Masaccio for a Cézanne, or El Greco for a Cubist; nevertheless, in the case of Masaccio, as in that of El Greco, we select certain elements for our admiration, and shut our eyes to the others. Every "resurrection" sorts out what it recalls, as is evident in the earliest collections of antiques, restorations notwithstanding. Today our museums welcome torsos but not limbs. That fortunate mutilation which contributes to the glory of the Venus de Melos might be the work of some inspired antiquary; for mutilations, too, have a style. And the choice of the fragments we preserve is far from being haphazard; thus we prefer Lagash statues without their heads, Khmer Buddhas without their bodies, and Assyrian wild animals isolated from their contexts. Accidents impair and Time transforms, but it is we who choose.

Indeed Time often works in favor of the artist. Doubtless many masterpieces are lost for ever. Yet the very rarity of those which have come down to us confers on them a solitary grandeur (which may perhaps mislead our judgment). Thus, were the huge output of Jan van Eyck available, might it not impair the lonely eminence of *The Mystic Lamb*? And surely the name of Rogier van der Weyden would have a deeper resonance had he painted one picture only, the *Deposition of the Escorial*. After seeing the ten canvases which rank Corot with Vermeer, we can hardly believe that those charming, trivial landscapes which adorn our provincial museums bear his authentic signature. Who can tell if the scrap-heap of Rubens' studio would not be more akin

to Renoir's than to those massive harmonies, voices of the earth, that echo through the *Kermesse*, and in certain immortal landscapes and portraits? The judgment of Time is more selective than that of any given phase of culture.

It is common knowledge that during the nineteenth century the successive layers of varnish put on pictures were by way of creating a "museum style," sponsoring a preposterous kinship between Titian and Tintoretto—pending the day when cleaning was to put a stop to this absurd fraternity. Neither Titian nor Tintoretto had asked posterity to overlay his canvases with a yellow gloss; and if the ancient statues have gone white, Pheidias is not to blame, nor is Canova. Yet it was only after painting had become light-hued that these coats of varnish came to seem intolerable to the curators of our museums.

By the mere fact of its birth every great art modifies those that arose before it; after Van Gogh Rembrandt has never been quite the same as he was after Delacroix. Often discoveries in fields quite foreign to each other have the same effect; thus the cinema is undermining every art of illusionist realism, perspective, movement—and tomorrow will usurp relief as well. If Louis David did not see the works of classical antiquity as Raphael did, that is because his approach to them was different; also because, having access to a wider range of them, he did not see the same ones.

We interpret the past in the light of what we understand. Thus from the time when history set up as a mental discipline (not to say, an obsession) until 1919, inflation was a relatively rare phenomenon. Then it became frequent, and modern historians see in it a cause of the decline of the Roman Empire. Similarly since 1789 history has had a new perspective, revolution being a successful revolt, and revolt a revolution that has failed. Thus a new or rediscovered fact may give its bias to history. It is not research-work that has led to the understanding of El Greco; it is modern art. Each genius that breaks with the past deflects, as it were, the whole range of earlier forms. Who was it reopened the eyes of the statues of classical antiquity—the excavators or the great masters of the Renaissance? Who, if not Raphael, forced an eclipse on Gothic art? The destiny of Pheidias lay in the hands of Michelangelo (who had never seen his statues); Cézanne's austere genius has magnified for us the Venetians (who were his despair); it is in the light of those pathetic candles which Van Gogh, already mad, fixed round his straw hat so as to paint the Café d'Arles by night, that Grünewald has come into his own. In 1910 it was assumed that the Winged Victory, when restored, would regain her ancient gold, her arms, her trumpet. Instead, she has regained her prow and, like a herald of the dawn, crowns the high stairway of the Louvre; it is not towards Alexandria that we have set her flight, but towards the Acropolis. Metamorphosis is not a matter of chance; it is a law governing the life

of every work of art. We have learned that, if death cannot still the voice of genius, the reason is that genius triumphs over death not by reiterating its original language, but by constraining us to listen to a language constantly modified, sometimes forgotten—as it were an echo answering each passing century with its own voice—and what the masterpiece keeps up is not a monologue, however authoritative, but a *dialogue* indefeasible by Time.



"HERALD OF THE DAWN"

IV The art which is taking over, sorting out and imposing its metamorphosis on this vast legacy of the past is by no means easy to define. It is our art of today—and obviously a fish is badly placed for judging what the aquarium looks like from outside. The antagonism between it and the museum art of its day becomes still clearer in its relations with the past; those whom it has slain have all a family likeness, and so have those it has revived. Our resuscitations cover a far wider field than our contemporary art; but the latter gives us our bearings in our rediscovery of art's "sacred river" by setting up painting as something that exists in its own right against the criteria of the museum.

For five centuries (from the eleventh to the sixteenth) European painters, in Italy as in Flanders, in Germany as in France, concentrated their efforts on liberating art, stage by stage, from its two-dimensional limitations, and from what they took for the clumsiness or ignorance of their predecessors. (Far-Eastern art, linked up as it was with an ideographic script written with a hard brush, had made much quicker progress in mastering its medium.) Gradually they discovered the secrets of rendering volume and depth, and they attempted to replace those symbolic intimations of space which we find in Romanesque and Byzantine art, and later in Tuscan art, by the illusion of actual space. In the sixteenth century complete illusion was achieved.

To Leonardo, doubtless, goes the credit for the decisive technical advance. In all the painting known to Leonardo's world—that of Greek vases and Roman frescoes, the art of Byzantium and the East, of Christian Primitives of various lands, of the Flemings, Florentines, Rhine-

landers and Venetians (as in almost all the painting we have discovered since his day: Egyptian, Mesopotamian, Persian, Buddhist Indian, Mexican)—whether they were painting in fresco, in miniature or in oils, painters had always composed *in terms of outlines*. It was by blurring outlines, prolonging the boundaries of objects into distances quite other than the abstract perspective of his predecessors (Uccello's and Piero's perspective tends to emphasize rather than attenuate the isolation of each object)—it was by merging all things seen into a



FILIPPO LIPPI: DETAIL OF ROCKS

background suffused in various tones of blue that Leonardo, a few years before Hieronymus Bosch, invented (or organized) a way of rendering space such as Europe had never known before. No longer a mere neutral environment for bodies, his Space (like Time) enveloped figures and observers alike in its vast recession and opened vistas on infinity. Not that this Space was a mere hole in the picture surface; its very translucence owes everything to painting. Not until this discovery had been made could Titian break up his contour lines, or Rembrandt fulfill his genius in his etchings. But in Italy, during that period, all a painter needed to do was to adopt Leonardo's technique—whilst being careful to omit the qualities of transfiguration and insight that Leonardo's genius imparted to all his work—for the painting to be a faithful reproduction of what the eye perceives, and the figures to "come to life." While



LEONARDO DA VINCI: DETAIL OF ROCKS

to the contemporary spectator with his taste for illusionist realism, a picture by Leonardo or Raphael seemed more satisfying as being more lifelike than one by Giotto or Botticelli, no figure in the centuries that followed was more alive than Leonardo's; it was merely different. The technique of strongly "illusionist" painting which he introduced at a time when Christianity, already losing grip and soon to be divided against itself, was ceasing to impose on visual experience that hieratic stylization which proclaimed God's presence in all His works—this technique of the lifelike was destined to change the whole course of painting. Perhaps it was not a mere coincidence that, of all the great masters, the one who had the most far-reaching influence was the only painter for whom art was not his sole interest in life, his *raison d'être*.

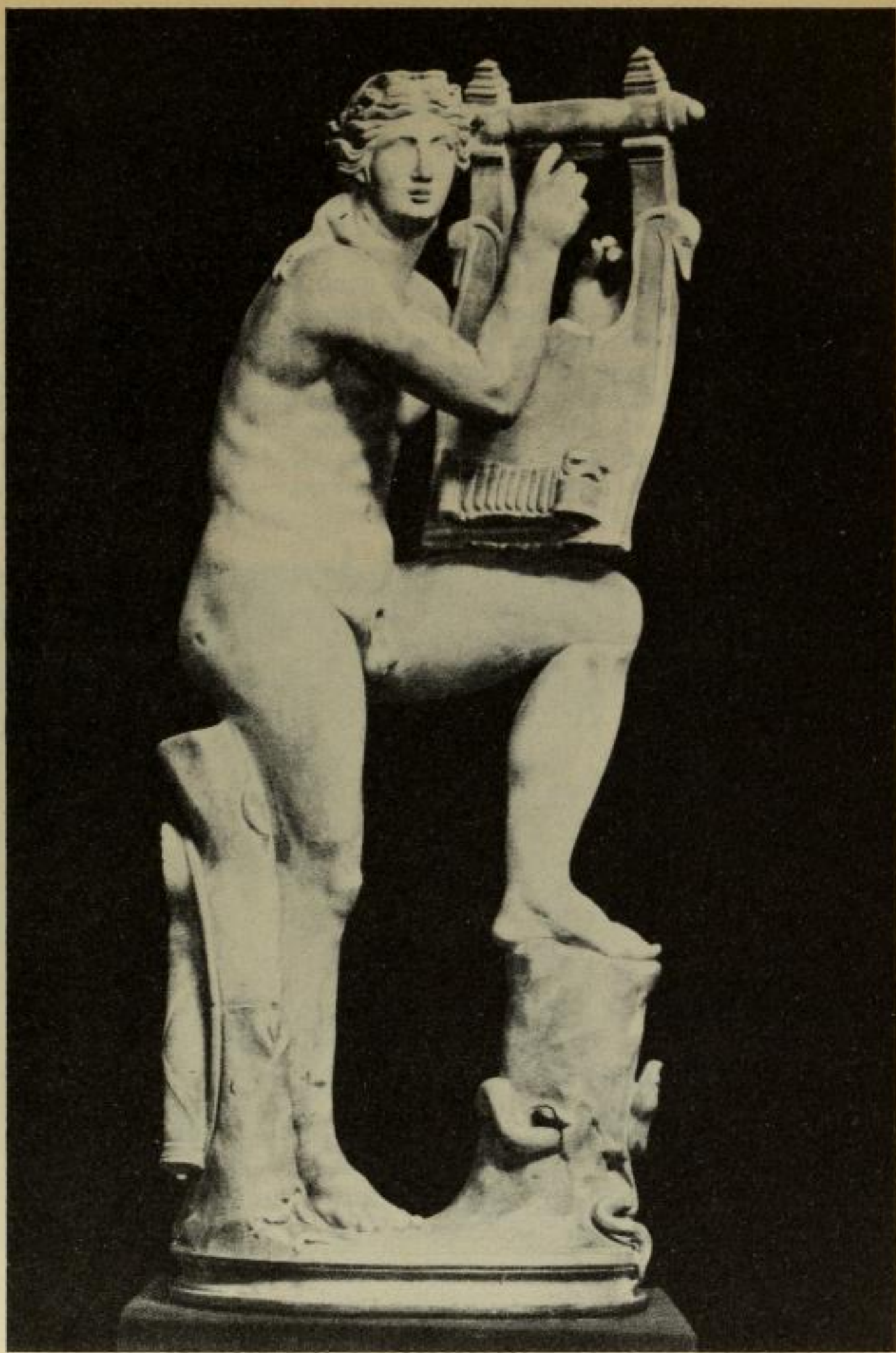
Thus Europe came to take it for granted that one of painting's chief functions was the creation of a semblance of reality. Yet, though hitherto art had aspired to master a certain range of visual experience, it had always been recognized as different in kind from the world of appearances; the striving for perfection implicit in all works of art

incites it far more to stylize forms than to imitate them. Thus what was asked of art in the period following Leonardo's was not a transcript of reality but the depiction of an idealized world. And, though resorting to every known device for rendering texture and spatial recession, and attaching so much importance to the modeling of its figures, this art was in no sense realistic; rather, it aspired to be the most convincing expression possible of an imagined world of harmonious beauty.

The prelude to a work of fiction is always a "Let's make believe. . . ." But there had been no make-believe about the Monreale *Christ*; it was an affirmation. Nor was the Chartres *David* make-believe; nor Giotto's *Meeting at the Golden Gate*. Still there begin to be traces of it in a *Virgin* by Lippi or Botticelli; and Leonardo's *Virgin of the Rocks* is frankly so. A Crucifixion by Giotto is a declaration of faith; Leonardo's *Last Supper*, sublime romance. Behind this lay undoubtedly a change in the religious climate. Religion was ceasing to mean Faith, and its images were entering that speculative limbo whose color is the very color of the Renaissance, and where, while not quite estranged from truth, they are not yet wholly fiction, but in process of becoming it.

In the thirteenth century the artist was chary of introducing this element of fiction into his work; but by the seventeenth century all religious art was frankly a product of the imagination, and in this new world of fantasy the artist felt himself supreme. More factual than the musician, and on a par at least with the poet, he began to draw in Alexandrines. None better than he could conjure into being a woman of ideal beauty; because it was less a matter of conjuring her up than of building her up, of amending, idealizing, keying up his drawing—harmonious and idealized already; and because his art, even his technique, seconded his imagination no less than his imagination served his art.

Pascal's "What folly to admire in art anything whose original we should not admire!" is not the fallacy it seems but an aesthetic judgment—meaning not so much that only beautiful things should be painted, but only such things as would be beautiful, did they exist. A view that found its justification in the style of antiquity, this was the theory behind Alexandrine art and the ornate Roman copies of certain Athenian masterpieces (to which, however, it did not in the least apply). The reason why Michelangelo, in his innocence, was so much impressed by the *Laocoön* was that he had never seen, never did see, a single figure of the Parthenon. And this style forced a preposterous but none the less impressive unity on the originals of five centuries of classical art. Alexandria "expressed" Themistocles. Hence came the idea of a beauty independent of any given age; a beauty whose prototypes were immutable and which it was the artist's duty to visualize and to body forth. Hence, too, came the notion of an absolute style, of which other styles were but the infancy or the decline. How different from this myth is our view of Greek art today!



"ANTIQUÉ"

This myth arose in close conjunction with Christian art at the time when Julius II, Michelangelo and, still more, Raphael regarded the Greeks as allies—it was only much later that they were considered enemies. But we are now familiar with the arts of the ancient East, and if Pheidias to our thinking sharply contrasts with both the Christian and our modern artists, he is no less in conflict with the Egyptian sculptors and with those of Iran and the Euphrates. For many of us the supreme discovery of the Greeks was their new approach to the universe: the spirit of enquiry. With their philosophers who taught men the art of living, their gods who changed their nature with every change made in their statues and were becoming rather helpers than ruthless lords of destiny—what the Greeks changed was the very meaning of art. Despite that evolution of forms in the course of which, century by century, the sense of an ineluctable order written in the stars had submerged more and more the life of Egypt—as in Assyria a tyranny of blood—art had never yet been other than an answer given by these civilizations once and for all to destiny. But then, within a space of



EGYPTIAN ART. IVth DYNASTY (3rd MILLENNIUM B.C.): CHEPHREN

fifty years, that stubborn *questioning* which was the very voice of Hellas silenced those Tibetan litanies. Ended was the rule of oneness over the multiplicity of things; ended, too, the high prestige of contemplation and of those psychic states in which a man dreams he attains the Absolute by surrendering to the vast cosmic rhythms and losing himself in them. Greek art is the first art that strikes us as being "secular." In it man's basic emotions are given their full human savor; ecstasy assumes the simpler name of joy. In it even the depths of being become humanized; that ritual dance in which the forms of Hellas make their first appearance is the dance of mankind joyously shaking off the yoke of destiny.

In this respect Greek tragedy may mislead us. Actually, the doom of the House of Atreus was the epitaph of the great Oriental sagas of fatality. In Greek tragedy the gods show as much concern for man as men for the gods. For all their netherworldly air the protagonists have no roots in the timeless sands of Babylon; rather, like men marching in step with men, they have won free from these. And when man faces destiny, destiny ends and man comes into his own.



EGYPTIAN ART. IVth DYNASTY (3rd MILLENNIUM B.C.): KING DEDEFRÊ



NEO-SUMERIAN ART (3rd MIL. B.C.): GODDESS

Even today, for a Musulman of Central Asia, the tragedy of Oedipus is much ado about nothing; how regard Oedipus as an illstarred exception, when every man is Oedipus? And what the Athenians admired in the art that made stage tragedies of them was not man's defeat but the poet's victory over destiny.

Within every artichoke is an acanthus leaf, and the acanthus is what man would have made of the artichoke, had God asked him his advice. Thus, step by step, Greece scaled down the forms of life to man's measure, and similarly adjusted to him the forms of foreign arts. We may be sure that a landscape by Apelles suggested a landscape made by man, not by cosmic forces. The cosmos is less an enemy than vehicle of a com-

munion; by contrast with the cowering immobility of Asiatic statuary, the movement of the Greek statue—the first movement known to art—was the very symbol of man's emancipation. The Greek nude came into its own without heredity and without blemish, even as the Greek world is a world rescued from its servitudes: such a world as might have been created by a god who had not ceased being a man.

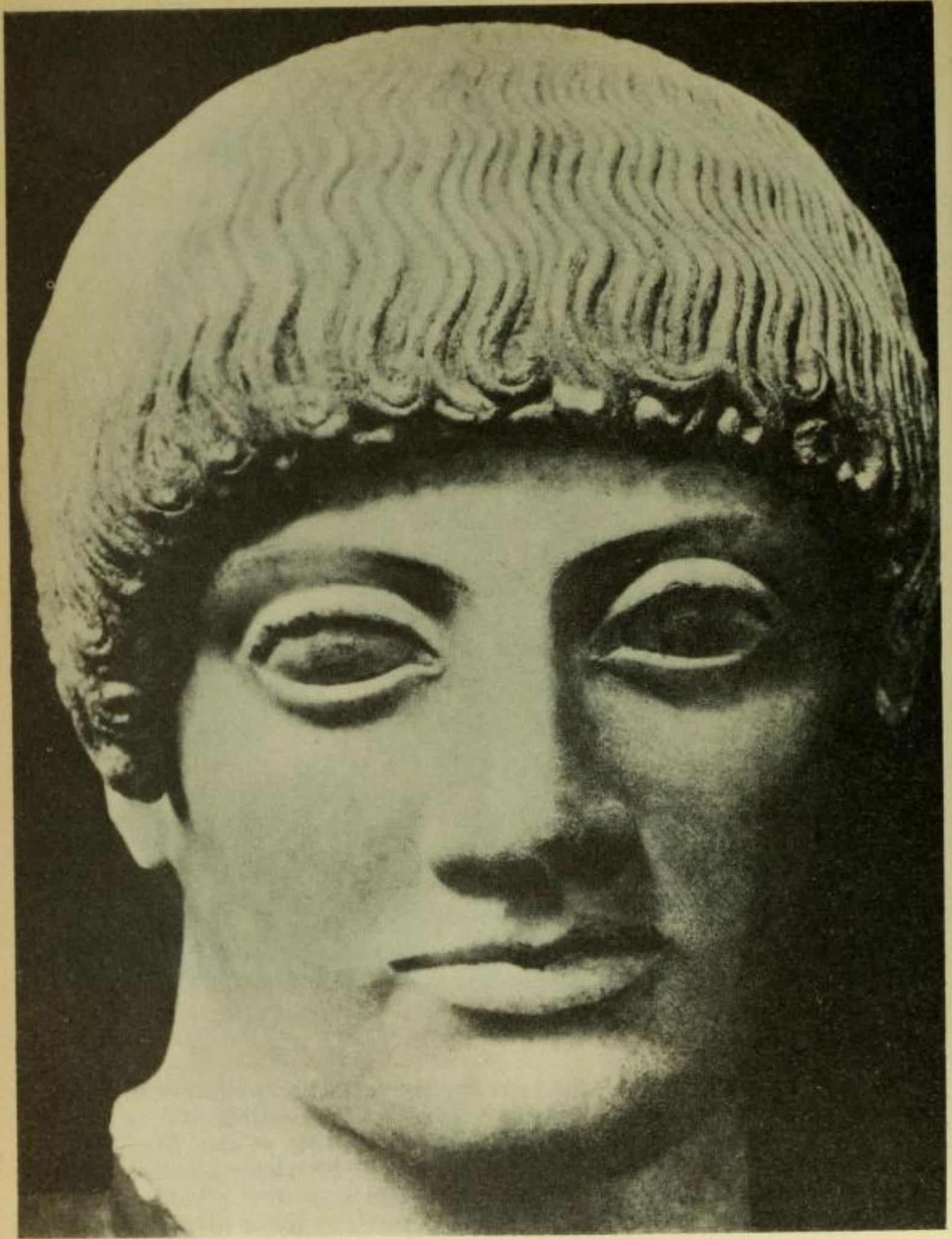
Thus, too, the language of Greek forms, into whatever decadence, whatever concessions to the meretricious it sometimes lapsed, regained something of the lustre of its golden age each time it put forth a challenge, timid or outspoken, to the lingering influence of the great stylizations of the East: in the Gothic art of Amiens and Rheims to defunctive Romanesque; in Giotto to Gothic art and, notably, Byzantium; in the sixteenth century to the medieval artists. And on each occasion it resuscitated human forms, not what came to be called Nature. (The Bolognese, rightly enough, dubbed Giotto's figures "statues.") Forms chosen by man and made to man's measure: forms whereby man enlarged his values till they matched his conception of the universe.

Since the days of the Catacombs we have seen enough of what



ASSYRIAN ART (8th CENTURY B.C.): WINGED BULL WITH HUMAN HEAD (DETAIL).

a world in which man's values are at odds with his environment may mean, to realize the vast significance of this reconciliation. In the Acropolis it is this that makes up linger in front of the *Head of a Youth* and the *Koré of Euthydikos*, the first faces to be wholly human. On those statues of uncertain origin, which still kept their archaic frontalism, something was taking form that neither Egypt nor Mesopotamia,



GREECE (6th CENTURY B.C.): HEAD OF A YOUTH



GREECE (6th CENTURY B.C.): THE KORÉ OF EUTHYDIKOS



GREECE (6th CENTURY B.C.): BOY OF KALIVIA

neither Iran nor any ancient art had ever known—something that was to disappear from the solemn faces of the Acropolis, and that something was *the smile*.

Far more than in the ripples of its drapery, all Hellas is in the curves of those faintly pouting lips and this is neither the Buddhist smile, nor the smile that hovers on some Egyptian faces; for, primitive or sophisticated, always it is directed towards the person looking at it. Whenever it recurs, something of Greece is in the point of breaking into flower—whether in the smiling grace of Rheims or that of Florence; and whenever man feels himself in harmony with the world, he regains his precarious sway of that limited yet never to be forgotten kingdom which he conquered for the first time on the Acropolis of Delphi.

The smile, girls dancing at the call of instinct not of ritual, the glorification of woman's body in the nude—these are some tokens, amongst many others, of a culture in which man bases his values on his predilections. In the Eastern cultures neither happiness nor man had ranked high in the scale of values, and thus all that might express them had little place in art. The art of the Euphrates valley was as aloof as modern art from forms bespeaking pleasure. True, the East knew sexuality; but sexuality is an instrument of destiny, the antithesis of pleasure.

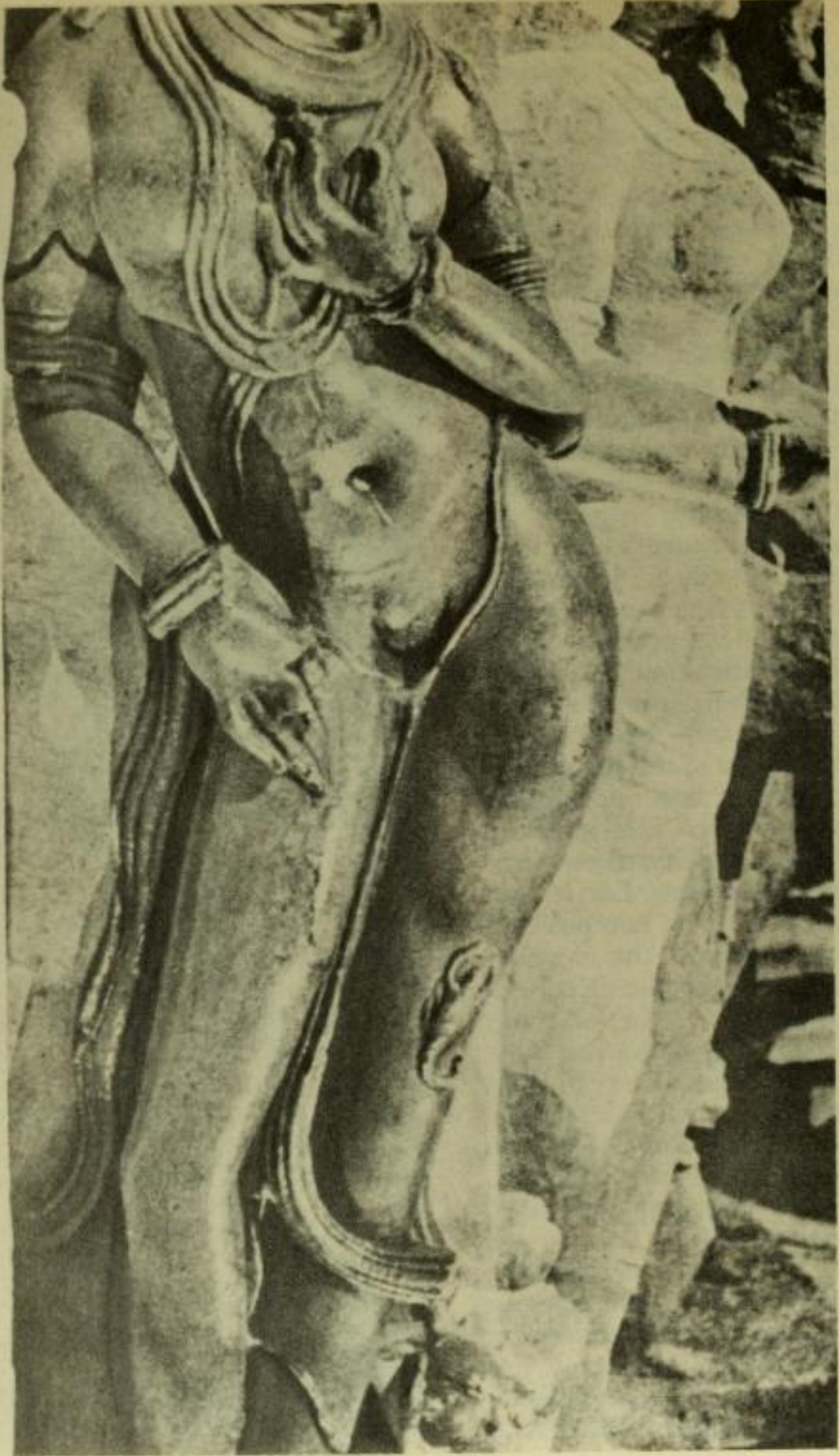
That word "Greece" still calls up in our minds a host of strong, if ill-assorted, associations—in which intermingle (singularly enough) not only Hesiod and the poets of the Anthology but the *Head of a Youth* of the Acropolis and the last Alexandrian sculptors. Actually it was by way of Alexandria and Rome that Europe discovered Greece; but let us try to picture how things would have been had Greek art come to an end when Pheidias made his first works of sculpture. (A whole cycle of Greek culture ended with Pericles, and it is no more absurd to picture a Hellenism in which that culture whose art was set in such high honor

first by the sixteenth, then by the seventeenth century, had no place, than to see in Praxiteles an aftermath and an expression of Aeschylus.) Though beauty would hardly come into the picture, would the spirit of Hellas be less present? Who could assimilate the *Delphi Charioteer*, the figures in the Acropolis, or the "Boy of Kalivia" to an Egyptian or Mesopotamian statue?

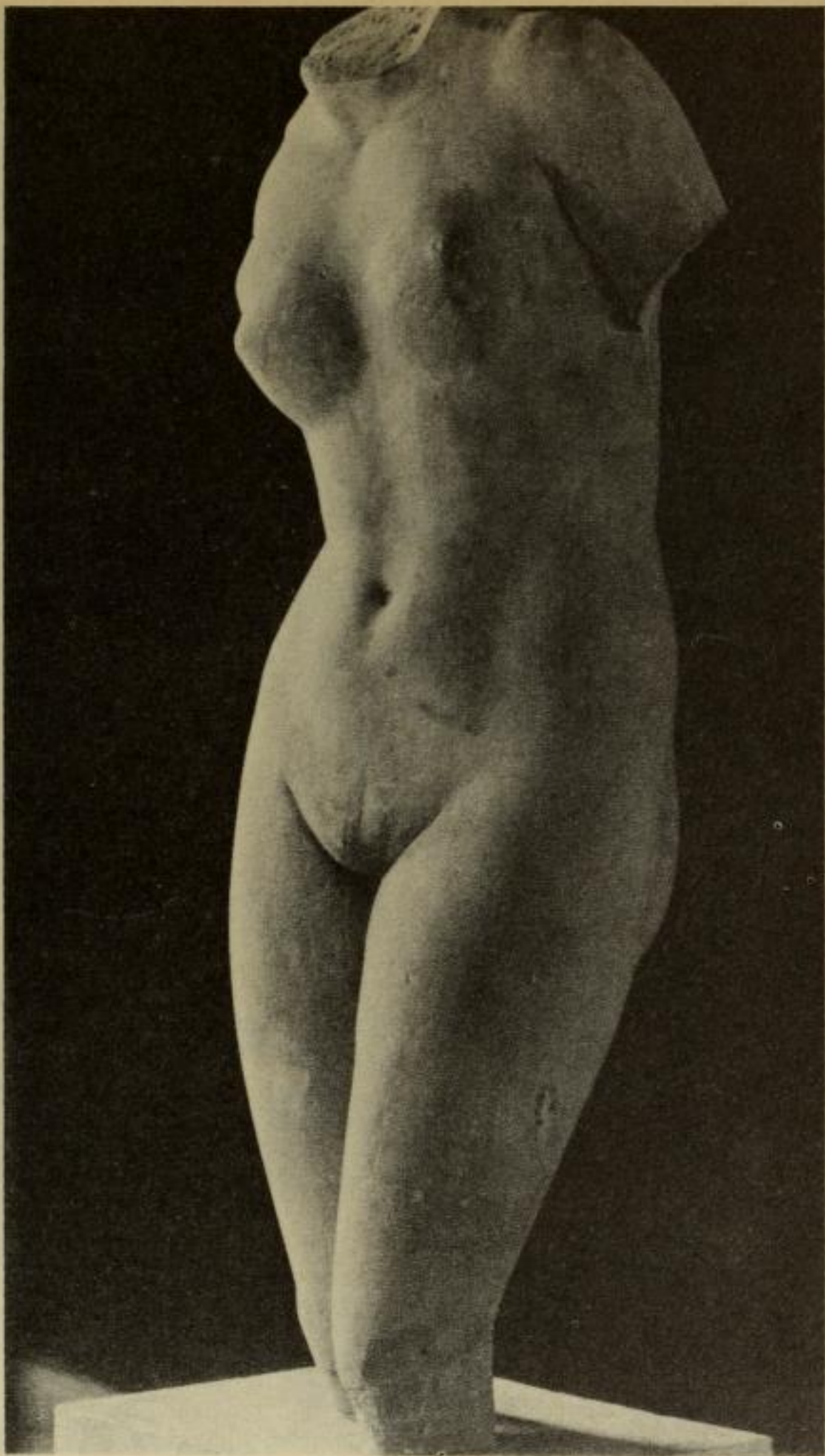
The nude woman's figure, which came later still than the quest of beauty, suggests to us sensual pleasure, and indeed expresses it. Firstly, because it is set free from any ritual "paralysis," its gestures being merely in abeyance like those of a living woman in her sleep. But above all because the hieratic order of the firmament with which it was once linked has ceased to be fatalistic and has changed to harmony; and because Mother Earth has included in her conquest of what was once the awe-inspiring realm of the Mothers, the cosmos too. We need only cease observing the Greek nude through Christian eyes, and compare it not with the Gothic but with the Indian nude—and its nature promptly changes; the erotic elements fade into the background, we see it radiant with new-won freedom and in its amply molded forms find hidden traces of the drapery of the figures from which it has gradually broken free, and which the Greeks called "Victories."



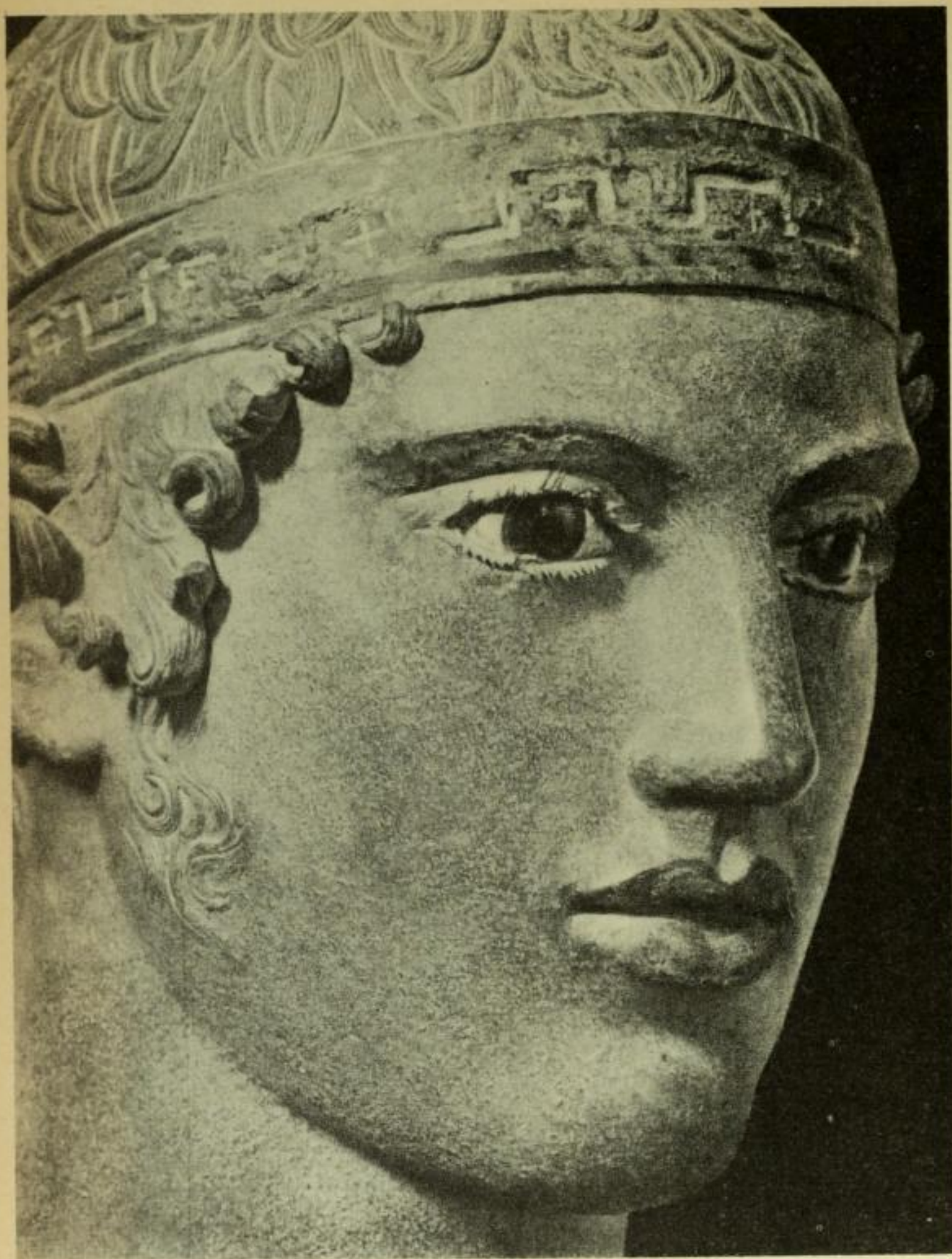
GREECE (5th CENTURY B.C.). PAEONIOS: VICTORY



INDIA, KHADJURAHO (10th CENTURY): APSARA WITH SCORPION



THE VENUS OF CNIDOS (ANCIENT REPLICA OF PRAXITELES)



GREECE, DELPHI (CA. 475 B.C.): AURIGA

The artist of the East had *translated* forms into a style (the same procedure was followed, later, by the Byzantines) which re-fashioned the visible world in terms of other-worldly values, the most constant of which was timelessness. Whereas an art which owes allegiance to the world of men stems from a close alliance with the human, an art bound up with fatalism and focused on the eternal draws its strength from its disharmony with the human; it is unconcerned with art or beauty, nor has it "a style"; it *is* style. This is why the art of Greece in its struggle



PRAXITELES (LATE 4th CENTURY B.C.): HERMES

against that of the ancient East, and the artists first of Rheims and then of Italy when they took arms against the oriental elements of Christendom, solved the problem of portraying movement in the same manner. That smoothing-out of planes which in the age of Pericles replaced the clean-cut ridges (especially in lips and eyelids) of the earlier figures foreshadowed Leonardo's softened outlines. It was their search for methods of countering the hieratic immobility of Eastern art that led the Greeks as it subsequently led the Italians (once the technique of illusive realism was mastered) to regard art as solely a means to creating a make-believe world on the grand scale.

Thanks to its zest for enquiry Greek art changed its forms more thoroughly within two centuries (from the vith to the ivth) than Egypt and the East had changed theirs in twenty. And the moving spirit of Greek art—the myth behind the quest—was its tireless cult of man. But all those discoveries and inventions which, from the Euthydikos *Koré* to the Parthenon, constitute the glory of Hellas, crystallized in the age of the great European monarchies into a single discovery: art's ability to create an imaginary world. This imaginary world was made

to gratify not that human instinct which, from the Mesopotamian period up to the medieval, had sought to transcend art and see in it merely the raw material of religious pageantry, but that no less innate craving to remake the scheme of things after our hearts' desire.

Hence it was that a Gothic artist came to be regarded as a man who would have liked to paint like Raphael, but could not. And the theory of a steady progress in art, from the primitive to the antique and from the "barbarians" to Raphael, was more and more widely accepted. Thus art had its age of enlightenment and the artist's aim came to be the expression not of himself but of a certain form of culture. And now its only goal was beauty.

What exactly beauty means is one of the problems of aesthetics—but only of aesthetics. (Actually aesthetic theory, a late development, was chiefly a rationalization of attitudes already existing.) When art was enlisted as beauty's handmaid, what was meant was clear enough. Beauty was that which everyone prefers to see in real life. No doubt tastes vary greatly, but men find it easier to agree about woman's beauty than about the beauty of a picture; since almost every man has fallen in love, but connoisseurs of painting are relatively few. This is why Greece so easily reconciled her taste for a monumental art with her taste for elegance (statues of Pallas Athene and Tanagra statuettes); and also why she moved on so naturally from Pheidias to Praxiteles. This, too, explains why the eighteenth century could combine so well its admiration of Raphael with its enjoyment of Boucher. From this, and not from allegations of the superior "truth" of the antique nude as against Gothic nudes, academicism derived its efficacy. The women in the Bourges "Resurrection" are more like women than is the Aphrodite of Syracuse; but the latter is the type of woman men prefer.

When, on its renascence in the sixteenth century, the academicism of the ancient world seemingly endorsed the artistic value of sensual appeal, Christendom had gradually, and not without setbacks, been shaking off the fear of hell. The forms of a world haunted by visions of hell-fire had been replaced by those of Purgatory, and soon all that Rome retained of the hopes and fears of Christendom was a promise of Paradise. Byzantine art had never got beyond portraying angels announcing the Last Judgment, figures deriving from Greek *Victories* and resembling Prophets. Fra Angelico had obviously forgotten how a devil should be painted. That day when Nicolas of Cusa wrote "Christ is Perfect Man" closed a cycle of Christendom and, with it, the gates of hell; now Raphael's forms could come into happy being.

Man had climbed up from hell to paradise through Christ, in Christ, and the inhuman aloofness which had hitherto characterized the hieratic arts vanished together with his fears. From Chartres to Rheims and from Rheims to Assisi, in every land where under the Mediator's outspread hands a world of seedtime and harvest, figured

in bas-reliefs of the Seasons, was permeating human lives (where until now there had been room for God alone)—in every land artists were discovering the forms of a world released from fear. And now that the devil owned little more than a dim hinterland of Purgatory, how could the lesson of the Greeks have been other than that of the acanthus? Thus now it was that this message from the past was codified; the “divine proportion” exemplified in the human body became a law of art and its ideal measurements were invoked to govern the whole composition.

A dream both grandiose and rich in intimations. But when it ceased being the justification for a cult of harmony—when the artist used it as the starting-point of his works instead of causing it to emanate from them—not discovery but adornment became his aim. He set out to transform the world into acanthus-leaves; gods and saints and landscapes into patterns of beauty. Hence the quest of ideal beauty, *le beau idéal*.

“Rational beauty” would be the better term. It aspired to manifest itself in literature, in architecture and also, though more cautiously, in music. Above all it sought to be transposable into life—sometimes in a subtle manner. Since a Greek nude is more voluptuous than a Gothic, would the Venus of Melos, if she came to life, be a beautiful woman? The criterion of this rational beauty was that it should be one regarding which men of culture, though with no special interest in painting, could agree with each other, and each with his own sense of what was fitting. The type of beauty in which both picture and model can be admired, and which Pascal preconized (though it is very different from the beauty we find in his own sharply etched, Rembrandt-esque style). A beauty that the artist did not create, but *attained*; in terms of which a picture gallery should not be an *ensemble* of paintings but a permanent display of carefully selected, imaginary scenes.

For despite its claim to rationality this art was the expression of a world created for the joy of the imagination. The very notion of beauty, especially in a culture for which the human body is the supreme object of art, is wrapped up with the imaginary and sexual desire; it is founded on a fiction. This is why the art deriving from it lavished on the fiction as much fervor as medieval art had lavished on faith (and as much fervor as that with which our modern art bans realistic make-believe). It aimed at making good its fictions by their *quality*, and it was this idea of quality—not so much that of the picture itself as that of the scene depicted—which enabled it to regard itself as art. For, though aspiring to conform to the evidence of our senses and setting out to charm, it did not limit its charm to mere sensual appeal; what it sought, above all, to captivate in the spectator was his culture.

Culture, indeed, took charge of art, the cultivated man became art's arbiter. Not as a lover of painting but as a lover of culture, and because he regarded *his* culture as an absolute standard of value.

Until the sixteenth century every important discovery of the means of rendering movement had linked up with the discovery of a style. If the archaic sculptors in the Acropolis Museum seemed to carry more conviction than those of Aegina (and less than Pheidias), Masaccio more than Giotto, and Titian more than Masaccio, the spectator had always confused their power of carrying conviction with their genius; in fact, in his eyes it was this power that made their genius. He was all the less capable of distinguishing between these inasmuch as the tidal movement of Italian art—which had borne man on towards a reconciliation with God and swept away, together with the tragic dualism that was the legacy of Gothic, the last traces of the powers of evil in the forms of art—was all in favor of the human; and because every discovery in the way of expression enlarged the artist's freedom from the thrall of Romanesque dramatization and Byzantine symbolism; withdrew him further from hieratic immobility. Masaccio did not make his works more lifelike than Giotto's because he was more anxious to create an illusion of reality, but because the place of man in the world he wished to body forth was not the same as the place of man in Giotto's world. The motives urging him to liberate his figures were the same as those which had led Giotto to emancipate his figures both from the Gothic tradition and the Byzantine; but the same motives were to lead El Greco to distort and stylize his figures—to wrest them violently from their emancipation. The parallelism between expression and representation, owing to which the personal genius of each great artist had acted so strongly on the contemporary spectator, came to an end once the technique of representation had finally been mastered.

The Italians' approach to their art history reminds us of our modern outlook on the progress of applied science. No painter or sculptor of the past was ever preferred to a contemporary one until the time of the rivalry between Leonardo, Michelangelo and Raphael (that is to say, before the technique of portrayal was fully mastered). True, Duccio and even Giotto were revered as precursors but, until the nineteenth century, no one would have dreamed of preferring their work to Raphael's; it would have been like preferring a sedan chair to an aeroplane. The history of Italian art was that of a series of "inventors," each with his attendant school.

For Florence to repudiate her art the *spirit* behind it had first to be challenged; Botticelli's works were burnt for the same reason as that for which modern Europe may some day destroy her machinery. And, be it noted, Botticelli himself was the first to burn them. Savonarola, had he won the day, might perhaps have conjured up an El Greco—but it was he who was burnt.

Fiction had always played a part in art; the new development was that it came to permeate even religion so deeply that Raphael hellenized or latinized the Bible without a qualm and Poussin could harmonize

his Crucifixion with his Arcadia. When painting is put to the service of a fiction regarded as a cultural value, art is inevitably called on to promote an established idea of civilization; its values qua art take second place and its task is to present realities or fancies in an attractive guise. Humanistic though it was, the language of the forms of Pheidias and the pediment of Olympia had been as distinctive as that of the Masters of Chartres and Babylon, or the abstract sculptors, because it voiced the *discovery* of a culture and did not merely illustrate one. In Italy the course of painting and sculpture had been an advance into the unknown; Masaccio after Giotto and, after Masaccio, Piero knew only whence they were setting forth. But from now on painters were expected to know where they were going and to comply with a preconceived idea of painting's function. The artist's impulse to destroy the forms which gave him birth—to which the Greek archaics and the makers of the Parthenon, like those of Chartres and Yun Kang owed their creative genius—was ceasing to be comprehensible.

Discussions between painters regarding their special problems gave place to discussions between intellectuals, whose interest centered on the *subject* of the picture. And now that painting was being absorbed into culture, art criticism was coming on the scene.

Obviously it was easier for the intellectual to regard a painting as a portrayal of some imagined scene, than to recognize it as speaking a language of its own. (Even today we hardly understand the language of the stained-glass window.) That language becomes apparent only when we bring together paintings differing in spirit—by the recognition of some sort of pluralism. But at that time the arts existing outside Europe and the best Greek sculpture were unknown; connoisseurs had seen only a limited range of pictures and the Gothics were styled "barbarians." Moreover, the classical mentality was anything but pluralist in outlook. But when the forms of antiquity were found unsuitable for expressing the new relationship between man and God (whether because man was beginning to stand up to God, or because the Jesuit type of piety, which was replacing religion as religion had replaced faith, called for a more emotional and dramatic handling of figures), art which aspired to be classical became what it was bound to be: not a new classicism, but—a quite different thing—a neo-classicism. Poussin may sometimes have "re-invented" the line of Pheidias (of whom he had seen only interpretations), but David frankly copied the drawing of the bas-reliefs he admired. The painters' exploitation of the art of antiquity gave the impression of being a style because it imitated, not the painting of the Greco-Romans (none of which survived), but the statues. Actually the resuscitation of ancient sculpture spelt the *end* of the great statuary of the West, which did not re-emerge until academicism was in its death throes. Michelangelo, who from the Bruges *Madonna* to the Rondanini

Pietà strained his genius to the breaking-point in his struggle to break away from, not to approximate to, antiquity, is the last great sculptor comparable with the Masters of the Acropolis, of Chartres, and of Yun Kang. And with Michelangelo ended the supremacy of sculpture.

In the countries with classical traditions painting (which now took precedence of sculpture) called for a mental attitude opposed to that which Gothic art demanded and modern art demands. A statue in Chartres Cathedral takes effect by the insertion into a self-contained world, that of sculpture, of a form which, outside art, would be a king; a landscape by Cézanne takes effect by its insertion into a self-contained world—that of Cézanne's painting—of a scene that, outside art, would be a landscape. But in the age of classical culture a picture made good by the projection of a delineated form into an imaginary world, and it was all the more effective, the more emphatic and exact was the suggestion the figure conveyed. The methods employed came to be such as would have entitled the subject, could it have come to life, to occupy a privileged position in the scheme of things. But the nature of this privilege was changing; the rectified world that art was invited to create, and which hitherto had been rectified to satisfy man's spiritual needs, was now beginning to be adjusted to his aesthetic enjoyment. The view that the philosophers of the Enlightenment took of religion made them blind to all great religious art, and even more allergic to the Gothics and the work of the Byzantine school than they were to contemporary pictures on sacred subjects. Though Diderot appreciated Rembrandt, he called his etchings "mere scrawls." Of course there had always been semi-barbarians in the Netherlands with a feeling for color! . . . Neither Voltaire nor the Jesuits were particularly qualified for realizing that hieratic anti-realism is the most potent method of expression in an age of fervent faith. Thus art problems were rationalized more and more—just as religious problems were being rationalized by the Encyclopedists.

Moreover in the course of their campaign against the Protestants, which was followed up by one against the new Enlightenment, the Jesuits discovered that painting could be a useful ally, especially if of such a nature as to appeal to the masses. Obviously the style best fitted for this was one that created a complete illusion of reality. Giotto's message had been addressed to men of his own kind, not to the lukewarm, and he painted for his fellow-Christians as he would have painted for St. Francis. But the new painting was not intended for saints; it aimed less at bearing witness than at giving pleasure; hence its readiness to adopt all the methods of seduction, beginning with those which had proved most successful in the past. Hence, too, the popularity of the academic notion of "combining the strength of Michelangelo with the suavity of Raphael." This was the first frankly propagandist painting

that Europe had known, and like all good propaganda it implied a relative clear-sightedness on the part of its purveyors as to the means employed. It was no longer necessary that they should, personally, be true believers; their task was to encourage piety in others. Indeed there was remarkably little cohesion between the precepts of Suger and the practice of the Jesuits.

Now that painting had become less the means of expression of a humbly, or tragically, sacred world than a means of conjuring up an imaginary world, it came in contact with another and a highly effective stimulus to the imagination: the theater. This was taking an ever larger place in contemporary life; in literature, the chief place—and in Jesuit churches it was imposing its style on religion. The Mass was being overlaid with stage effects, as the mosaics and frescoes of the past were being overlaid by the new painting. No longer suggesting Arcadian scenes, pictures evoked, first, tragic events; then, frankly, dramas. Thus during three centuries the will to theatrical effect took the place of what during the age of faith had been the will to truth and, from the Romanesque visions of the Creation to the first flowering of the Renaissance, had been the will to a vast, universal Incarnation.

The part taken by Baroque in the great pictorial pageant-play of Europe is difficult to define; apparently, no doubt, it played the lead—but it often played the lead for our benefit and *against* its own masterpieces. To the illusion of movement in depth (achieved at the beginning of the sixteenth century) it added gesture. Like their master Michelangelo in his *Last Judgment*, the later frescoists had often worked as decorators commissioned to paint huge surfaces, which they did not divide up into parts. The decorative style they thus created was popularized by Jesuit architecture and the sculpture appended to it. Subsequently, during two centuries, this style, detached from its original function and deprived of its vital principle, was taken over by easel painting.

But the creators of Baroque were painters, too. At Venice they restored to painting the power of lyrical expression. Tintoretto's *St. Augustine healing the Plague-stricken* and his *San Rocco Crucifixion*, Titian's *Venice Pietà*, Rubens' landscapes and the Louvre *Kermesse* belong as distinctively to painting as the tombs of the Medici, the Barberini and Rondanini *Pietàs* belong to sculpture.

Day takes its place beside the *Crucifixion*, the *Pietà* and *The Burial of Count Orgaz* on a gaunt, tragic mountain-top as far removed from the theater as from the mundane; in that haunted solitude where, later, Rembrandt joins them. The spectator has ceased to count for them. Upon an art of extravagance, of billowing draperies, was based the austere stylization known in ten centuries to the Western world, that of El Greco. In Michelangelo's frescoes and the *Pietà*, even in the *San Rocco Crucifixion*, the colors blend into a turbid stormlight as remote

from reality or "glamour" as are the *St. Maurice* of the Escorial, the most sumptuous Titians, and that dazzling *St. Augustine healing the Plague-stricken*. Painting for his own satisfaction, Rubens is less histrionic; he discards the "operatic" in favor of bold flights into a realm of fantasy. While he was conquering Europe, Baroque was stifling the tempestuous melodies of its early inspiration under the trumpery refrains of Naples, and it was Roman Baroque alone that sought to recapture the spirit of the *Last Judgment*. But Rubens' truer dramatic sense and his purely painterly execution were destroying the world of the theatrical, because they were destroying illusionist realism.

The Jesuits, however, tolerated the flights of Baroque fancy only in that lavish decoration which turned the church into a stage set, and soon they forced the Baroque gesture into the service of realistic effects and a type of painting that lifted to spectacular heights those *tableaux vivants* on which the Jesuit fraternities set so much store. Hence the almost aggressively secular nature of this art which purported to be so religious. Those Baroque holy women were neither altogether women nor altogether saints; they had become actresses. Hence, again, came the interest shown in emotions and faces; the painter's means of expression was no longer primarily line and color, it was the human personality.

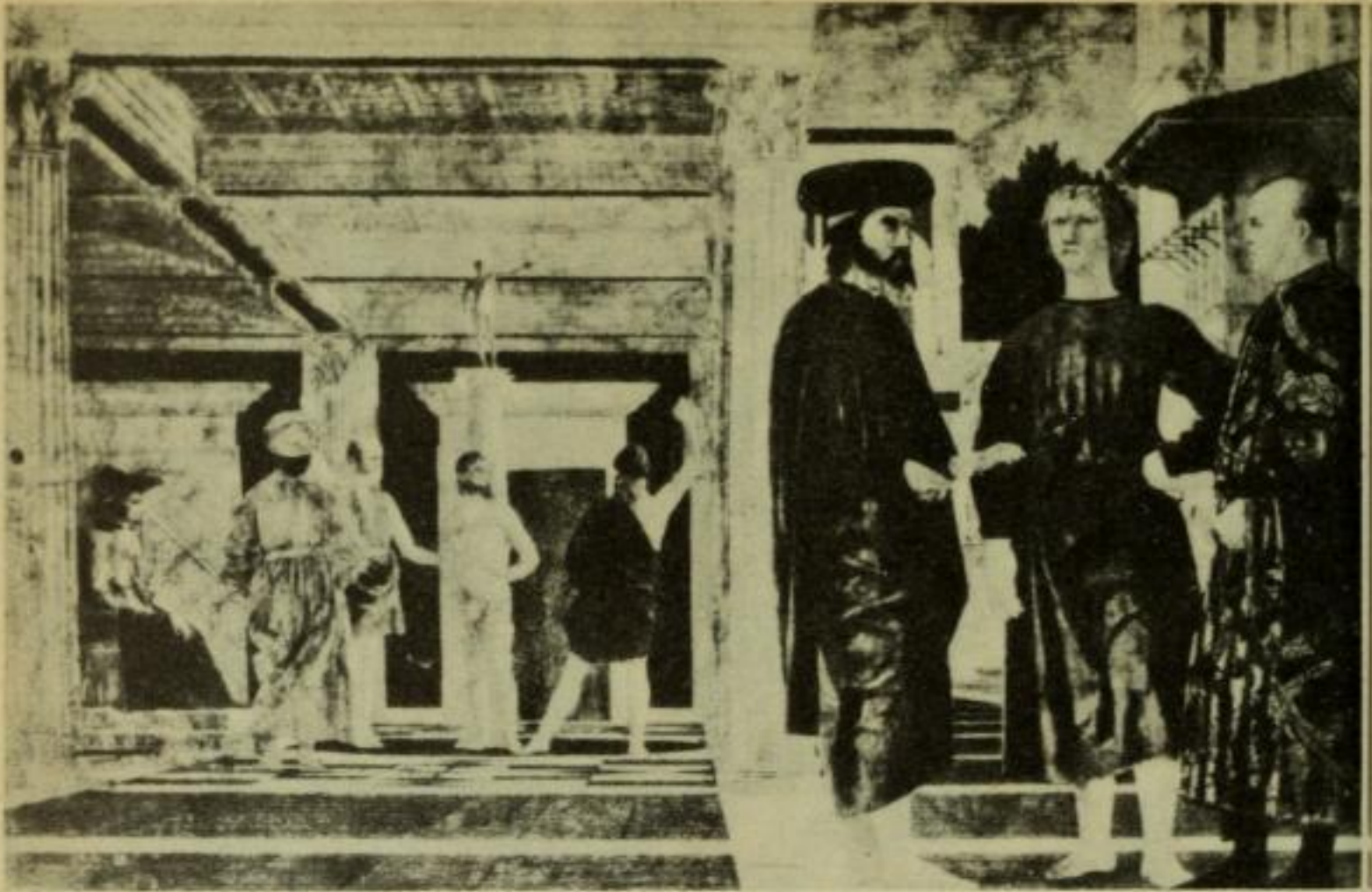
The *genre* scenes of Greuze are in the direct line from Jesuit painting; Greuze took the same view of art's function as did the Jesuit artists. And Jesuits and philosophers, whether admirers of the former or the latter, found common ground in their scorn of all painting previous to Raphael.

Neo-classicism, while reacting against Baroque gesticulation, likewise paid homage to the gods of the theater; only it found its gods in classical, not in Jesuit tragedy. We can see at once how much David's *Oath of the Horatii* has in common with a tragedy by Voltaire. Though he often paints theatrical characters, Delacroix, when depicting movement, rarely illustrates gestures; in Ingres' classical scenes we can admire without a feeling of discomfort only those from which theatrical gesture is excluded.

Two of the artists whom our century has restored to the front rank are Italians: Uccello and Piero della Francesca. Uccello's were perhaps the first battle-scenes regarding which the painter seems to feel no personal emotion; they are no less stylized than Egyptian bas-reliefs, and their arrested movement, that of a ritual ballet, bodies forth an hieratic symbolism rendered in terms of color. Creator of one of the most highly developed styles that Europe has known, Piero was also one of the first artists to use aloofness as the ruling expression of his figures and, like Uccello's, his statuesque forms come to life in the measures of a sacred dance. In *The Flagellation* uninterested soldiers are scourging a Victim whose thoughts seem far away; the three standing



PAOLO UCCELLO: BATTLE OF SAN ROMANO (DETAIL)



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA: THE FLAGELLATION

figures in the foreground have their backs turned to the tragic scene. And in *The Resurrection* Christ pays as little heed to the sleeping soldiers as to the spectator. Even Le Nain when we compare him with Le Sueur seems like the frontage of a massive prison contrasted with a mere stage setting. What does Vermeer's *Young Girl* express? From Georges de Latour to Greco, even up to Chardin's day, all the painters we have resuscitated show the same indifference to making faces "expressive." Piero, indeed, might be the symbol of our modern sensibility, our desire to see the expression of the painter, not that of the model, in his art.

But in the eighteenth century the expression specific to painting had become subordinated to the "rational" expression of the person portrayed. In the countries of classical culture none but the painters themselves and a handful of connoisseurs realized that the plastic arts might have—or, rather, be—a language of their own, like music. Then, at the close of the century, an aesthetic of sentiment joined forces with that of Reason; it was only a matter of appealing to the heart instead of appealing to the head. Stendhal did not blame the selection committee of the Salon for their general outlook, but for judging by rule of thumb (i.e., insincerely), and he suggested replacing them by the Chamber of Deputies. (As who should have, a century earlier, proposed replacing them by the Court.) He was, in fact, simply endorsing the Jesuits' and

Encyclopedists' notion that a work of art is good if it pleases the average cultured and right-minded man; and a painting pleases such a man, not *qua* painting, but according to the quality of the scene or incident it illustrates. What Stendhal appreciated in Correggio was the delicacy and subtlety of his rendering of women's feelings; most of his eulogies would apply, word for word, to a great actress—and some, indeed, to Racine. For everyone who has no specific response to painting instinctively projects a picture into real life, and judges it in terms of the scene it represents. In 1817 Stendhal wrote:

Had we to list the components of the beau idéal, we would name the following forms of excellence: first, a look of very keen intelligence; secondly, gracefully molded features; thirdly, glowing eyes—glowing not with the dark fires of passion but with cheerful animation. The eyes give liveliest expression to the play of the emotions, and this is where sculpture fails. Thus modern eyes would be extremely candid. Fourthly, much gaiety; fifthly, great underlying sensibility; sixthly, a slender form and, above all, the sprightly grace of youth.

He thought he was attacking David and Poussin; actually he was setting up one theatrical procedure against another. This explains why English painting (Van Dyck's aftermath), for all its brilliancy and brio, shares in the indifference we feel towards Italian eclecticism, Alexandrinism and French academicism.

Eighty years later Barrès (though he, anyhow, does not invoke *le beau idéal*) echoes Stendhal and endorses those notions of art which identify painting with culture and pictorialized fiction.

I have not the least hesitation in ranking Guido, Domenichino, Guercino, the Carracci and their compeers, who give such powerful and copious analyses of passion, above the Primitives and even the painters of the first half of the Cinquecento. I can understand that archeologists find pleasure in harking back to the sources—to such painters as Giotto, Pisano and Duccio. And I can also see why aesthetes, enamored of the archaic, who have deliberately emasculated their virile emotions in quest of a more fragile grace, relish the poverty and pettiness of these minor artists. But anyone who judges for himself and refuses to be influenced by the pedantic prejudice in favor of sobriety, or by the fashions of the day—any man, in short, who is fascinated by the infinite diversity of the human soul—will find, when contemplating good examples of seventeenth-century art in the museums, that these were the work of men whose driving force came, not from outside, but from within them; men who did not look to ancient statuary or any models for guidance, but externalized deeply felt and fully realized emotions.

Though the modern world disdains them, these artists often touch sublimity in dealing with the tender emotions, and especially in the expression of sensual pleasure keyed to its highest pitch. Here the emotive effect is heightened by its pathological veracity. We need only look at Bernini's famous statue of St. Teresa at Santa Maria della Vittoria in Rome. A great lady—would we not say?—swooning with love. Let us bear in mind what the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries aimed at; and Stendhal and Balzac, too. Like them, these painters

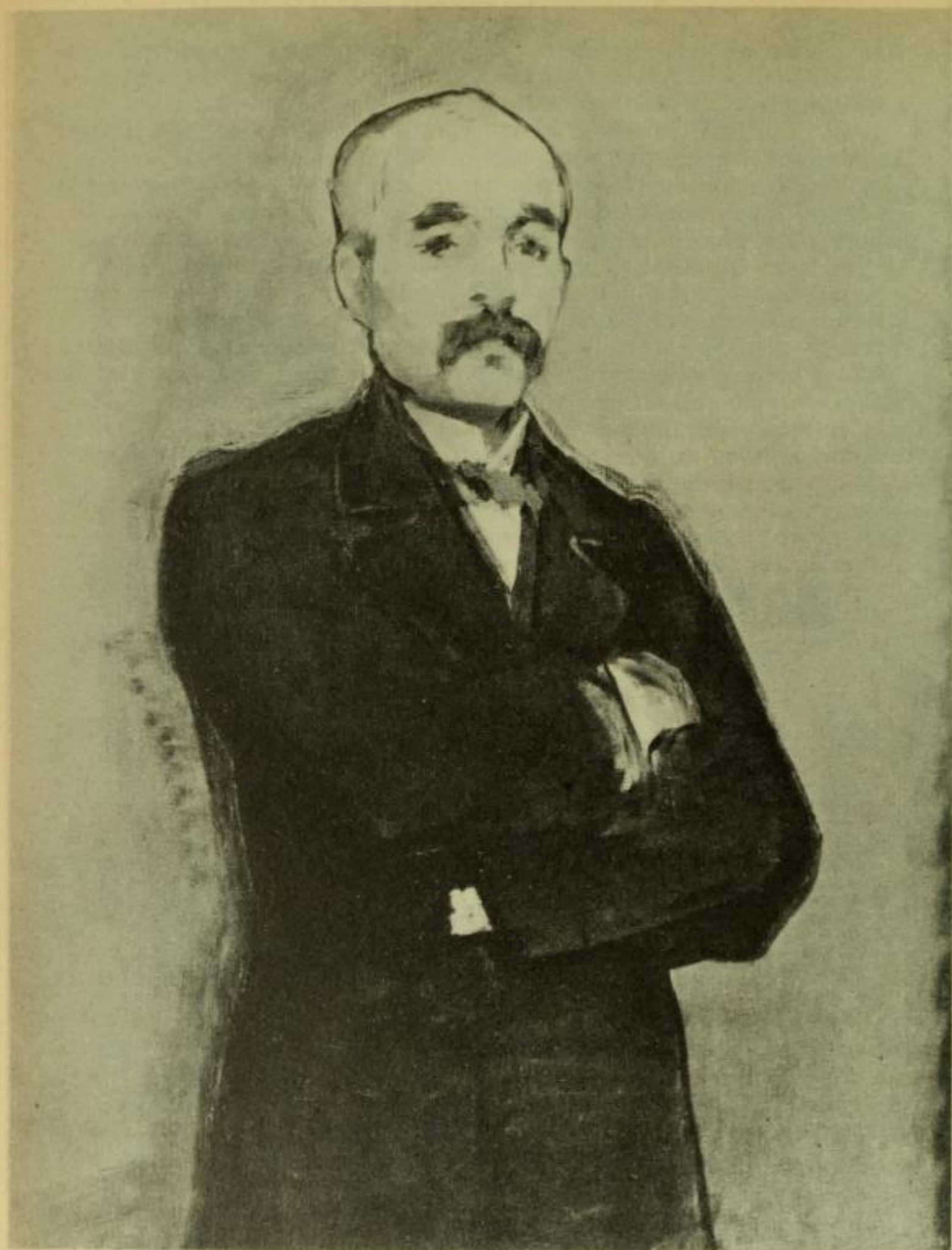


PROCACCINI: MAGDALEN

placed their characters in predicaments which brought out precisely those sentiments—of embarrassment, perhaps, or helplessness—which were most apt to make us understand them, and to stir our feelings.

But whereas Stendhal thought he was speaking for the future, anyhow the immediate future, Barrès hardly hoped as much.

While an aesthetic of descriptive art was spreading over two thirds of Europe, painting, under the aegis of Velazquez and Rembrandt, followed its predestined path. Gone were the days when all great artists, from Cimabue to Raphael and Titian, reaped their reward of comprehension and public esteem. Until the sixteenth century great painters had indulged happily in the narrative, deepening its significance by their discoveries; minor painters likewise indulged in it, though without making discoveries. But now the time had come when great artists were to make discoveries without recourse to narrative. The conception of the function of painting which had led first to Italian eclecticism, then to the concept of an ideal (and sentimental) beauty, came to its end, during the period between Stendhal and Barrès, in the vast mausoleum of nineteenth-century academicism. Here, too, the time-proved recipes, rendered more appetizing on occasion by a dash of inventiveness, were put to the service of an art which catered primarily to a public with no special interest in painting. The only difference was that the historical subject replaced the religious anecdote. The Jesuit venture, which had begun with fiction and an exploitation of the Italian masters' genius, ended with the passing of the anecdote, with Manet's triumph.



MANET: PORTRAIT OF CLEMENCEAU

V For the break that took place between the romantics and the classicists in literature had no equivalent in painting—except in the case of Goya, whose influence made itself felt later. The romantics took arms against that classical literary aesthetic which had held almost absolute sway in Europe during the seventeenth century, and against all works deriving from it. Though the artists too joined issue with this aesthetic code, they did not attack the major works of art produced during its ascendancy; rather, they carried these works a stage further. While Racine “corresponds,” we might say, to Poussin, what writer could be said to correspond to Velazquez, Rembrandt or Hals, all of whom died in the same decade as Poussin (between 1660 and 1670). France, though paramount in literature, held no such lead in painting. The art contemporary with the French literary classics was the great oil painting of Europe, which was a development, in depth, of the Roman, and especially the Venetian, art of the sixteenth century. And Géricault, Constable and Delacroix found a place in the art museum as naturally as their great forerunners. In the field of painting the romantic movement was far less in conflict with the broad trend of classicism than with the narrowness of neo-classicism; it was not a style, it was a school. Not until Manet was there any question of breaking with traditional painting, as the great poets of the early nineteenth century broke with literary tradition.

Once he had got into his stride, Manet moved on to *Olympia*, then from *Olympia* to the *Portrait of Clemenceau*, and from this to the small *Bar des Folies-Bergère*—just as painting progressed from academicism to modern art. Thus he points us towards whatever in the traditional past seems called on to figure in the new art museum, in which his *accoucheurs*—Goya, obviously, to begin with—rank as the great masters.

Goya foreshadows all modern art; nevertheless painting is not in his eyes the *supreme* value; its task is to cry aloud the anguish of man forsaken by God. The seemingly picturesque elements in his work have always a purpose and are linked up—as the great Christian art was linked up with faith—with certain deep-rooted collective emotions, which modern art has chosen to ignore. His *Shootings of May Third* voices the outcry of suffering Spain; his *Saturn*, mankind’s oldest cry. The fantastic in his work does not stem from albums of Italian *capricci*, but from the underworld of man’s lurking fears; like Young, like most pre-romantic poets, but with consummate genius, he hymns the powers of the Night. What is modern in him is the freedom of his art. For his colors, though not derived from Italy, are not invariably different from those of the museum; the *May Third*, the *Burial of the Sardine*, are pure Goya, but a comparison of his various *Majas on the Balcony* with, say, Murillo’s *Courtesans* can be revealing. True, it would be easy to glean from his output (as from Victor Hugo’s) a truly modern anthology—but its general trend is in another direction. His painting and his



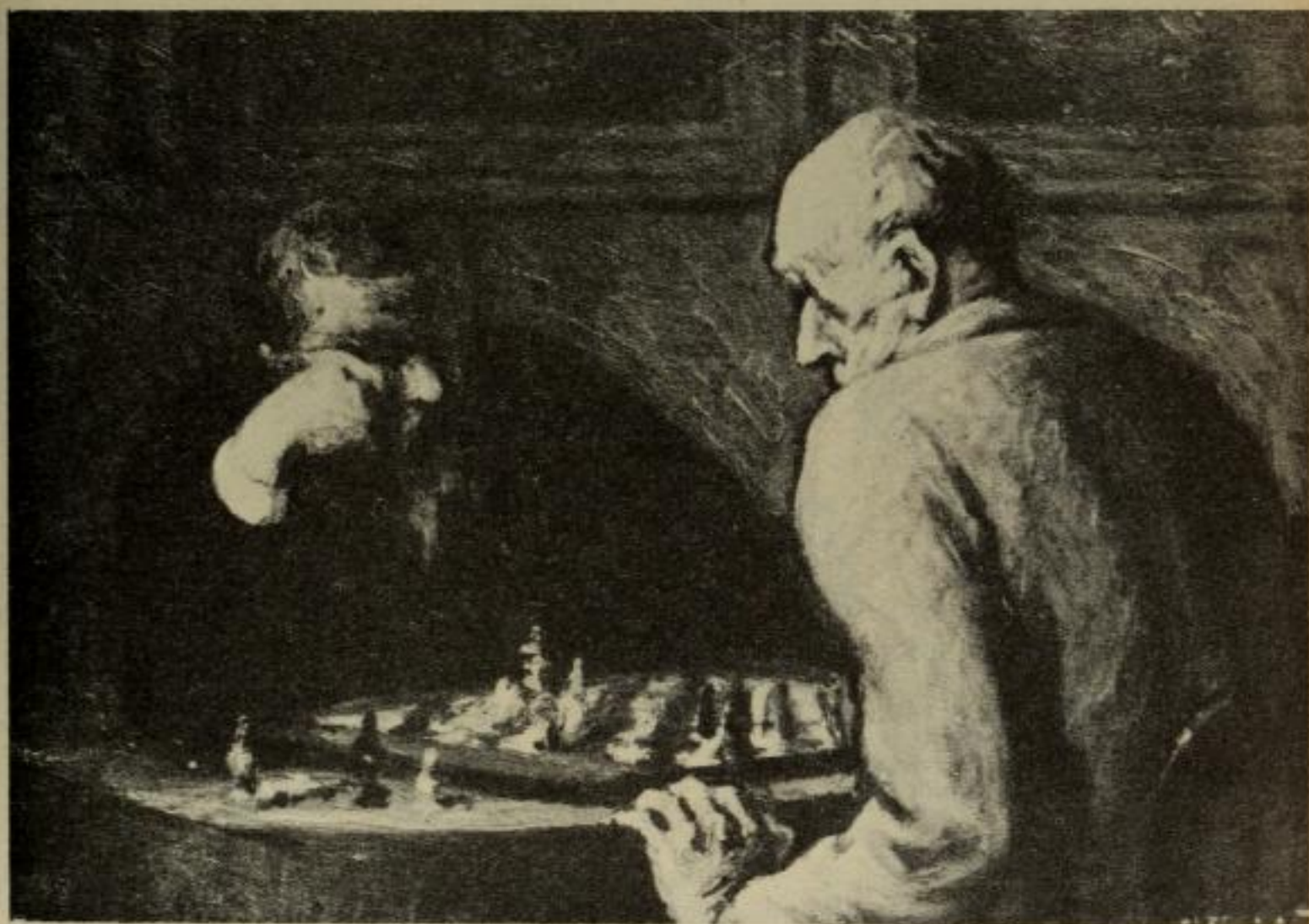
FRANS HALS: THE WOMEN GOVERNORS OF THE ALMSHOUSE (DETAIL)

passion for Velazquez point us back towards the last period of Frans Hals (the hands in *The Women Governors* strike perhaps the first aggressively modern note in painting); his drawing, towards those sketches in which Titian in his old age breaks peremptorily the continuous outline of Florentine and Roman drawing; and, ultimately, towards Rembrandt. On the margin of this lineage, less obviously akin, come certain works by the Venetians, the Spaniards, some English portrait-painters; and, at a later date, by Géricault, Delacroix, Constable, Turner and Courbet—even Decamps and Millet.

But what appeals to the modern eye is not so much their output as a whole as certain "accents" in the work of these artists; for often they "tell a story." And the distinguishing feature of modern art is that it *never* tells a story.

Before modern art could come into its own, the art of historical fiction had to pass away—and it died hard. In the eighteenth century historical painting, though it retained its place "on the line" beside the

portrait, was moribund. By way of Watteau's fantasies and ballets painting slipped away, with nothing to check its lapse, towards the *genre* scene and still life, towards Chardin's and Fragonard's semi-nudes (even the *Enseigne de Gersaint* is a *genre* picture). Then came the end. Delacroix in *The Barricades*, Manet in *Maximilian* tried to bring historical painting up to date; but for Manet the *Maximilian* proved a dead end. Though Courbet set out to break new ground and did not wish to tell a story but to depict something different from what his predecessors had depicted, nevertheless he, too, aimed at representation—and this is why in our eyes he belongs to the traditional art museum. When Courbet replaced Delacroix's subjects by *The Funeral at Ornans* and *The Atelier*, he was combating the art museum in as superficial a manner as Burne-Jones when he painted Botticellian subjects, and his genius played no part in this replacement. The truth was that the "subject" was bound to disappear, because a new subject was coming to the fore, to the exclusion of all others, and this new subject was the presence of the artist himself upon his canvas. To realize his *Portrait of Clemenceau* Manet, greatly daring, had to be everything in the portrait, and Clemenceau next to nothing.



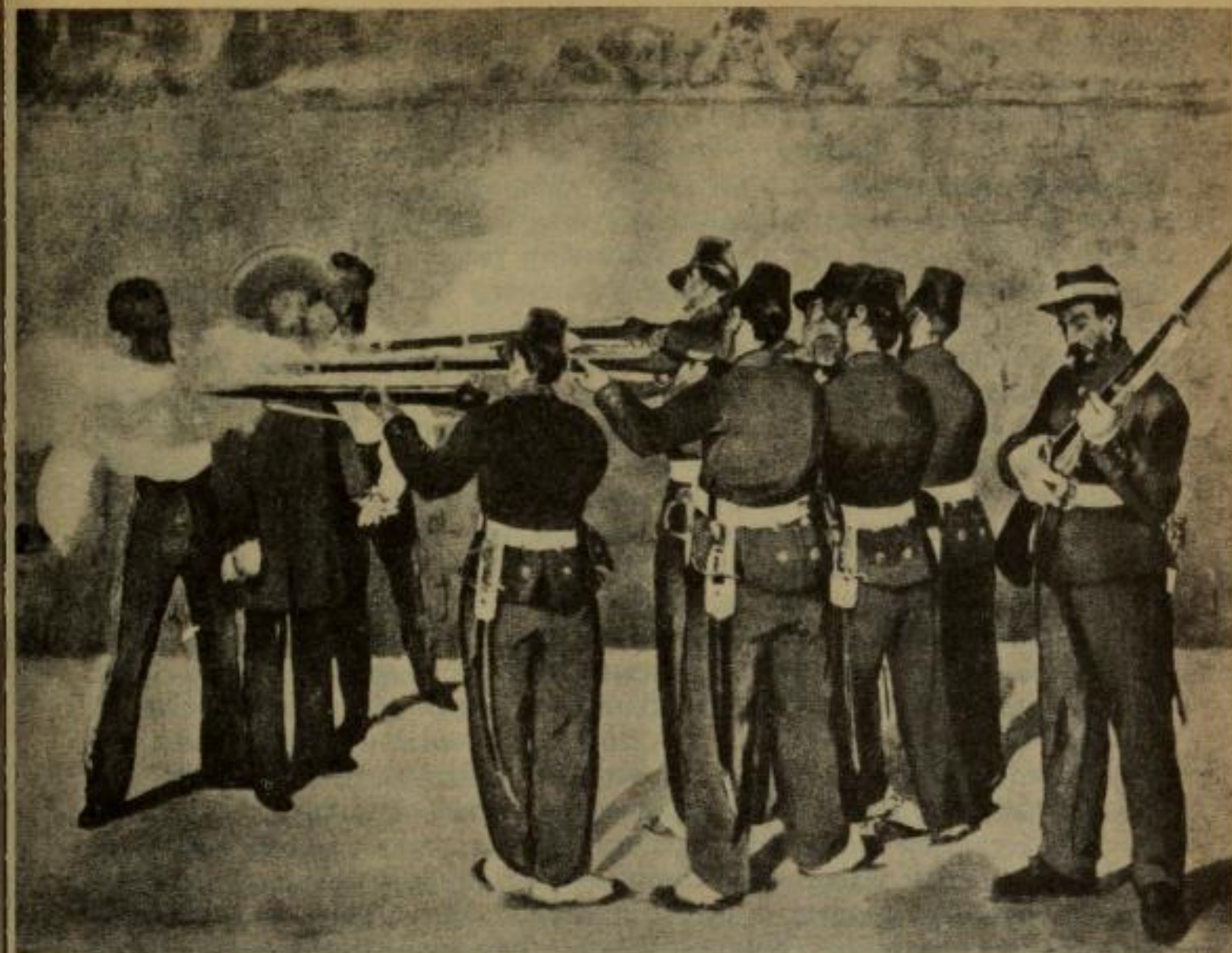
DAUMIER: THE CHESS PLAYERS

Though we cannot fail to see in parts of Manet's work his indebtedness to his juniors (despite the high prestige of Daumier, his senior), his name has come to symbolize a new art era. For it was his exhibitions that ushered in conspicuously the conflict between the old and the new in painting; the new values were not merely latent in his work but boldly proclaimed. Whereas Daumier, it would seem, hardly realized the import of his art. Daumier the man was abashed by the genius of Daumier the painter, and he painted even more for his own satisfaction than for posterity. Like Goya, he belongs at once to the museum and to modern art. His pictures of everyday subjects (*The Washerwoman*, *The Soup*) are in no sense anecdotal; in them the sufferings of poverty are sublimated on to a higher plane. His illustrations (*Don Quixote*, *The Two Thieves*) rise above mere illustration, just as his Dutch subjects (print-collectors, picture-hunters, players of games) rise above the anecdotal thanks to the boldness of their style, their disdain of illusive realism and a lay-out that is unmistakably modern. Nevertheless the true modern differs from Daumier in his rejection of *all* values that are not purely those of painting, and in the nature of his harmonies.

Manet's *Execution of Maximilian* is Goya's *May Third*, without what the latter signifies; similarly *Olympia* is the *Maja Desnuda*, and *The Balcony*



GOYA: THE SHOOTINGS OF MAY 3, 1808



MANET: THE EXECUTION OF MAXIMILIAN

the *Majas on the Balcony*, minus Goya's "message"; with Manet, the devil's emissaries have become two innocent portraits. A *Washerwoman* by Manet would have been the same as Daumier's, minus what the latter signifies. For the trend that Manet tried to give his painting ruled out such significances. And in his art this exclusion of the "message" was bound up with the creation of that "harmony of discords" which we find in all modern painting. Daumier's *Chess Players* has little more significance than most of Manet's canvases; nevertheless the faces in it are still expressive—and it is not due to mere chance that Manet was, above all, a great painter of still lifes. Striking as it is, the harmony of *The Chess Players* follows the conventions of museum art. Manet's contribution, not superior but radically different, is the green of *The Balcony*, the pink patch of the wrap in *Olympia*, the touch of red behind the black bodice in the small *Bar des Folies-Bergère*. His temperament, no less than his deference to authority, led him to begin by indulging in a wealth of Spanish-Dutch browns, that were not shade, contrasted with

bright passages, that were not light—thus reconciling tradition with the pleasure of painting for painting's sake. Next, the juxtaposition of colors, dispensing more and more with browns and glazes, added a new vigor to the canvas. (Though *Lola de Valence* is not quite the "black-and-pink jewel" of the poet's description, *Olympia* is tending in that direction—and in Cézanne's *Still Life with Clock* the marble clock is actually black and the big shell actually pink.) This new harmony of colors *between themselves*, instead of a harmony between colors and dark passages, led on to the use of pure, unbroken colors. The dark passages of museum art were not the garnet-reds of the Middle Ages, but those of the *Virgin of the Rocks*: tones born of depth and shade. This use of shade had served to temper the discords of Spanish Baroque painting. Now, with the disappearance of shade, these tones, too, disappeared, and the use of the discord, though hesitant to start with, paved the way for the resuscitation of two-dimensional painting. From Manet to Gauguin and Van Gogh, from Van Gogh to the Fauves, this cult of dissonance gained strength in modern art, so much so indeed that it embraced the stridences of the figures of the New Hebrides. Thus in an age when, along with naïve sculpture and the popular picture-sheet, pure color looked like dying out, it not only took a new lease of life in a highly sophisticated form of painting but opened up communication with a neglected past. Indeed it was this triumph of pure color that brought the most far-reaching change to the contents of the museum.

What exactly were these contents at the period of which we are speaking? Ancient art, with Roman works preponderating over Greek; Italian painting beginning with Raphael; the Dutch and Flemish masters; the Spaniards beginning with Ribera; French artists from the seventeenth, and English from the eighteenth century onwards; Dürer and Holbein rather in the background, along with a few Primitives.

Essentially it was a collection of painting in oils; a kind of painting in which the conquest of the third dimension had been all-important and for which a synthesis between illusive realism and plastic expression was a *sine qua non*. A synthesis which involved the rendering not only of the shapes of things but of their volume and texture (disregarded in all arts other than those of the West); in other words, a simultaneous impact on both sight and touch. A synthesis, moreover, which did not aspire to suggesting Space as an infinitude—as do Sung paintings—but at confining it in a frame. (Hence the attention given to the play of light and angles of illumination; in the whole world, since the dawn of painting, Europe alone casts shadows.) This synthesis involved not only the presence of what we see and touch, but also that of what we know is there. Our Primitives painted a tree leaf by leaf not because they thought they saw it thus, but because they knew it was like that. Which gave rise to the detail linked up with depth, not to be found in any art but ours.

In its efforts to attain this synthesis (which, whenever it was transcended, seemed destroyed), Western painting made a series of discoveries. We have already observed that a Giotto fresco looked more "true to life" than one by Cavallini; a Botticelli than a Giotto; a Raphael than a Botticelli. In the Low Countries as in Italy, in France as in Spain, seventeenth-century artists applied their genius to research in this direction, and the now generalized use of oils was at once a symptom of, and an effective adjunct to their quest of complete realism. The rendering of movement, light and texture had been mastered; the technique of foreshortening (like that of chiaroscuro and painting velvet) had been discovered, and each successive discovery had promptly been incorporated in the common stock of knowledge—as in our time the devices of *montage* and the traveling shot have become the stock-in-trade of film directors. Whenever it told a story, painting, like the theater to which it was steadily drawing nearer, was becoming a "show," a performance. Hence came the notion that a strict conformity between the work of art and natural appearances was both the supreme form of expression and the criterion of value, as it had been in what was then called the art of antiquity. Hence, too, the practice of subordinating the execution of the picture to what it represented.

But along with Gothic art (whose dramatic and picturesque elements alone had caught the fancy of Romanticism) the nineteenth century began to discover the arts of Egypt and the Euphrates, and the pre-Raphael frescoes. Tuscan art, too, was discovered, and the discovery was made, as usual, piecemeal; by traveling upstream in time: from the sixteenth to the fifteenth century, from the fifteenth to the fourteenth. In 1850 Botticelli was still a "Primitive." Nineteenth-century observers thought they were discovering merely a special range of themes and a special kind of drawing (this gave rise to the Pre-Raphaelite movement); actually they were discovering two-dimensional painting.

True, the medieval Flemish painters were well known. But while their color was esteemed, their drawing was held to be sadly unworthy of it. Moreover, being a late development, it had no equivalent in the sculpture which was then gradually becoming known, as far back as Romanesque. In fact, Flemish color belonged more to the museum than to the forms of art opposed to the museum. The hieratic composition of the Chartres Portal approximated it to two-dimensional painting, and from this the art of the Van Eycks and Van der Weyden, with its close attention to detail, its color-patterns and its (relative) depth, was very different.

At first it appeared that the august rivalry between the Dutchman Rembrandt and Velazquez the Spaniard was becoming less a matter of geography than one of history; actually the differences between them were quite other than those discriminating both from, say, an Egyptian

or Romanesque statue; from Giotto, too, perhaps; from Byzantium assuredly. A fundamental concept, that of *style*, was involved.

If we wish to understand what is meant by this new conception of style, it is Byzantine art (Gothic and especially Romanesque began by being regarded as dramatic versions of Byzantinism) that will serve us best. The Byzantine painter did not "see" in the Byzantine style, but he interpreted what he saw in the Byzantine style. For him what made the artist was this ability to *interpret*; thus he lifted figures and objects on to a supramundane plane and his procedure joined up with ritual and ceremonial symbolism.

This habit of "painting Byzantine" (as a man might "speak Latin") had only one point of contact with traditional museum art; both aspired to a kingdom not of this world. Raphael and Rembrandt, Piero and Velazquez shared, each in his manner, in this quest, and sought after what they might have described as "intimations of divinity." Similarly Poussin stylizes his figures, Rembrandt showers his with light so as to raise them above man's estate; just as the mosaicist of Monreale stylized his figures so that they might participate in his vision of transcendence.

But Romanesque, even in the Quattrocento, did not answer to the religious and emotional cravings that Gothic art had satisfied at the beginning of the century; they appealed primarily to the aesthetic sense. While in its heyday Romanesque art had aspired to glorify God in all His creatures, in its renaissance God had no place. The nineteenth century forced it to become an *ensemble* of works of art, as the museum converted the crucifix into statuary. And now at last the Romantic attitude showed itself in its true colors. It had been generally agreed that a picture could lay claim to beauty when what it depicted, had it become real, would have been a thing of beauty; this theory which directly applied to Raphael and Poussin could also be applied, if deviously, to Rembrandt. But how could one conceive of a pier-statue, or even a Romanesque head, "coming to life?"

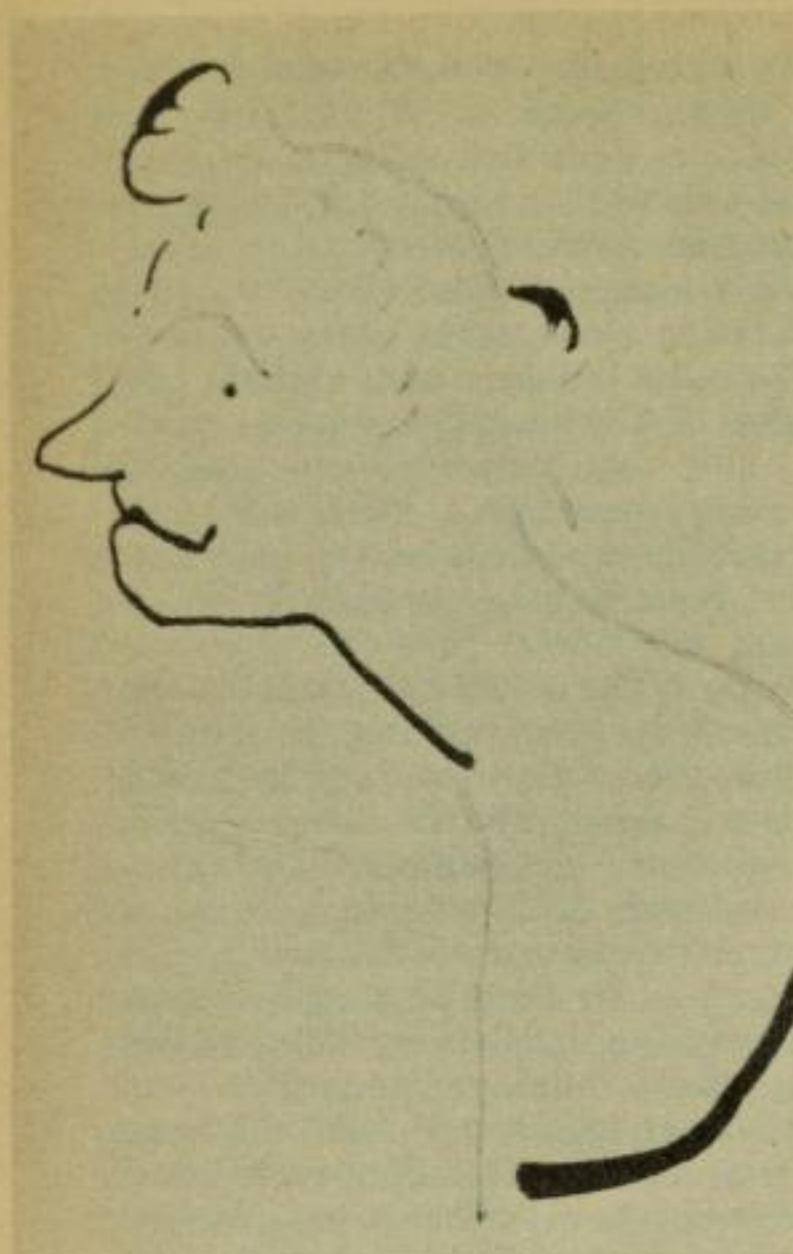
This newly found sculpture seemed utterly remote from any known kind of painting, and equally from all the sculpture figuring in museums. It conjured up notions of some imaginary painting. Far more than that of the Flemish Primitives, a painting truly akin to Gothic sculpture could have been found in the Villeneuve *Pietà*, which, however, did not enter the Louvre until 1906—and as for Romanesque painting, it was then quite unknown. Nor was it easy to extricate the true lesson of the Middle Ages from the glamour of the Quattrocento "picturesque." If those great Romantics, Géricault, Constable and Delacroix had never seen a cathedral, would it have changed a single line of their pictures?

As against the compact, massive unity of the Autun figures traditional sculpture was coming to look theatrical and thin. And now the revelation of the style of Romanesque and styles of the Ancient East had dramatic consequences. For these styles were not in conflict with this

artist or that, or with any particular school, but with the museum as a whole. Idealized faces, realistic faces, Raphael, Rembrandt and Velazquez were grouped together in one collective style, and against this the "accents" of the newly found arts were calling for a totally new conception of art, ill-defined, perhaps, but far-reaching.

A conception that had not even a name assigned to it. Arts had been classified as imitative or decorative (how many styles began as decorative before being recognized as arts in their own right!). But now it was discovered that great forms of human self-expression existed which owed nothing to imitation, and that between them and the ornament or hieroglyph there was some connection. With the revelation of the Elgin *Parcae* and of all those Greek statues whose emergence killed the myth of Hellas, as it killed their Roman copyists, it became apparent that Pheidias owed nothing to Canova (Canova discovered this for himself, at the British Museum, with rueful stupefaction)—and meanwhile the Pre-Columbian forms of art were coming to the fore. "I have in mind," wrote Baudelaire in 1860, "that streak of inevitable, synthetic, childlike savagery which is still perceptible in many a perfect type of art (Mexican, Ninevite, Egyptian, for instance), and comes from a desire to see things on the grand scale and, notably, with an eye to their *ensemble*." Those elongations and distortions of the human form which the Romanesque style employed in its hieratic transfigurations made it plain that a system of organized forms dispensing with imitation can defy the scheme of things and, indeed, recreate the world.

True, Baroque also distorted the human figure, but—with the exception of El Greco, regarded at the time by those familiar with his art as more of a belated Gothic than a Baroque artist—flamboyant Baroque belonged to a world in which everything was subordinated to emotion, and emotion, for artists of the time, meant certainly something quite other than a means of escape from the tyranny of the senses. Romanesque had nothing in common with the theater: whether the stage-effects of the fifteenth-century *Pietàs*, so dear to the Romantics, or those of Italian Baroque. On the contrary, it proved that the most poignant way of expressing an emotion is not necessarily the representation of a victim of that emotion; that for rendering grief there is no need to show us a weeping woman, and that a style in itself can be a means of expression. Obviously this art owed much of its impressiveness to its close association with architecture; but this association was less felt when photography began to isolate groups or fragments from their architectural context—and in any case the artist does not trouble overmuch about the context of works that fire his imagination. Moreover, since Romanesque did not express the psychological, rather sentimental Christianity of the nineteenth century and, for the artists and connoisseurs of the later period, the twelfth-century Christ was a remote, legendary figure, Romanesque art, now that it was freed from its setting



TOULOUSE-LAUTREC: SKETCH

and parted from its God, proved that such works of art can affirm the genius implicit in them, not only by a harmony and rhythm between the parts, but also by the harmony immanent in their style, uniting the saints and the lost souls of the tympana in a single, grandiose composition. And likewise it proved that art can subdue life's teeming forms to the artist's genius, instead of subjecting the artist to the forms of Nature. None of the arts discovered in our times, however exotic, has challenged the heritage of tradition so effectively as did this joint incursion of Romanesque, Mesopotamian and Egyptian sculpture.

In the traditional museum, which excluded the archaics of Olympia no less than fetishes, and in which Michelangelo's largest works passed for "unfinished," Greek art began with Pheidias. The quality that all the works of sculpture con-

secrated by tradition shared was "finish;" whereas the quality common to all the arts whose rediscovery was beginning was their lack, their wilful lack, of "finish." Hence the discovery which Baudelaire, speaking of Corot, summed up in the remark that a work of art need not be finished to be complete, and a work, though perfectly finished, was not necessarily perfect. In Primitive Egyptian art, as in the work of Corot, there was the same absence of finish; but (most noticeably in Egyptian art) this was not due to incompetence or remissness. That an Egyptian statue was a work of art none could deny; and it followed that its style was the artist's chosen means of expression. Just as in an art whose merits lie in its conformity with what we see, the finish is no more than a means of expression.

Sculptural problems, these—which the artists' quest of new fields to conquer transposed into problems of draftsmanship. Egyptian art being still more detached from its gods than Romanesque was from its

God, the problem, it seemed, could only be one of forms. The understanding of architecture is not a bad preliminary to the understanding of Giotto, but these new styles, with their vast, compelling simplifications, had no equivalent in painting. Or, rather, only one kind of painting gave an impression of power somewhat akin to these sculptors'—but gave it as it were *sub rosa*—and that was the sketch.

What was usually described as a sketch was the early state of a work of art, before its completion. But another kind of sketch existed, in which the painter, oblivious of the spectator and indifferent to the "realism" of his picture, reduced a perceived or imagined scene to its purely pictorial content: an aggregate of patches, colors, movements.

There is often failure to distinguish between the two kinds of sketch: the working sketch (or study) and the sketch which records the artist's direct, "raw" impression—just as there is some confusion between the Japanese sketch and the great synthetic wash-drawings of the Far East; between the preparatory sketches of Degas or Toulouse-Lautrec and the draftsmanship of some of their lithographs, which often seem to have been dashed off on the impulse of the moment. The rough sketch is a memorandum; the expressive sketch an end in itself. And being an end in itself, it differs essentially from the completed picture. An artist like Delacroix or Constable, when completing certain sketches, did not set out to improve on them but to interpret them—by adding details linked up with depth, so that (in Delacroix's case) the horses became more like real horses, and (in Constable's case) the hay wain more literally a hay wain, while the picture came to be as much an actual scene or a "story" carrying conviction as a work of art. Thus it achieved complete realism by means of that "finish" put in to gratify the spectator,



TOULOUSE-LAUTREC: DRAWING

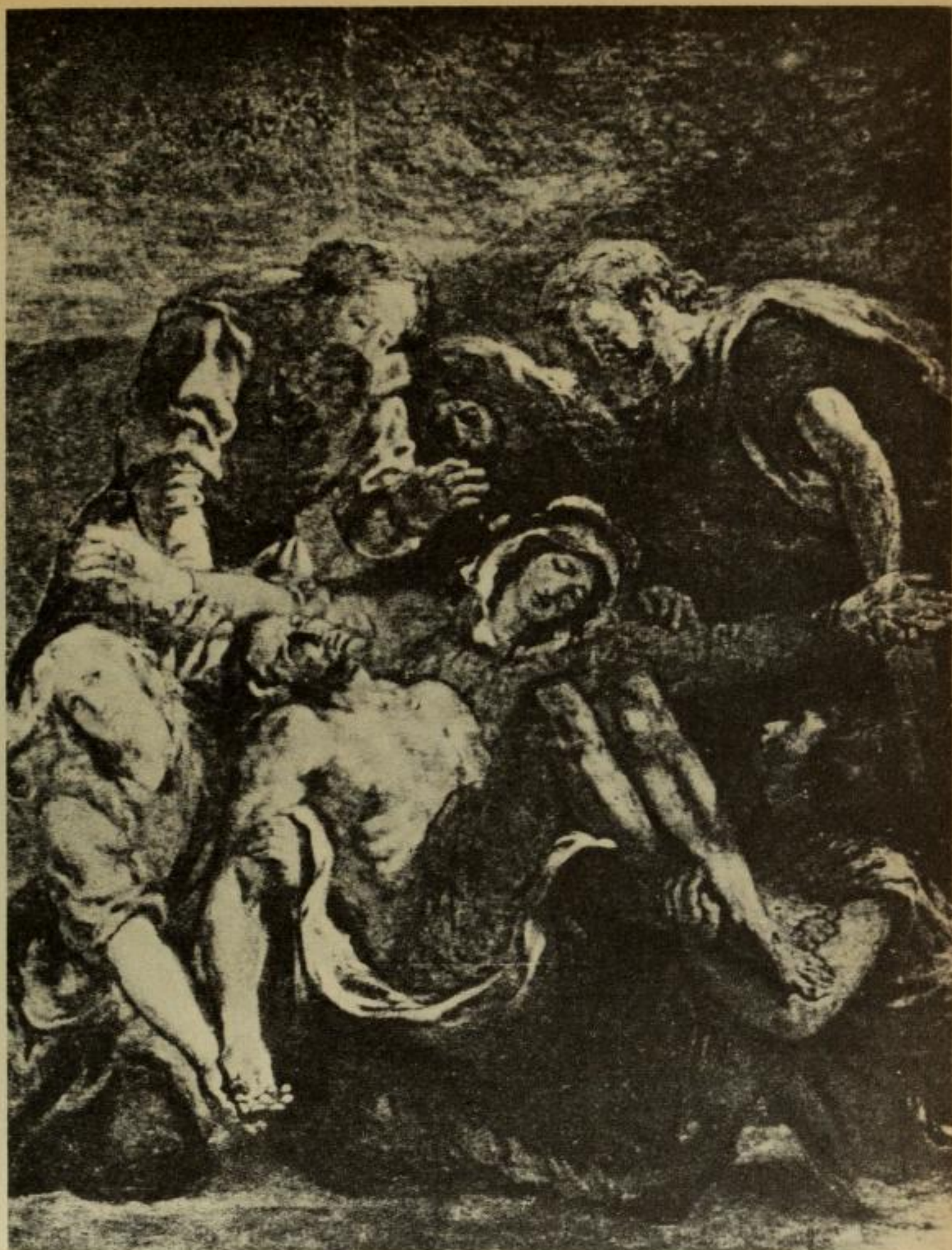
a mere survival in such cases, which the sketch had dispensed with, as the rediscovered sculpture had dispensed with it.

Artists had guessed as much already, and now were getting more and more alive to it. The sketches which the greatest painters had marked out for preservation—Rubens, for instance, and Velazquez (in the case of his *Gardens*)—do not strike us as unfinished pictures, but as self-sufficient expressions which would lose much of their vigor, perhaps all, were they constrained to be representational. Though Delacroix declared the finished picture superior to the sketch, it was no mere accident that he preserved so many of his sketches; indeed their quality as works of art is equal to that of his best pictures. He remembered Donatello's sketches, Michelangelo's, and the unfinished *Day*. Nor is it due to mere chance that Constable, first of modern landscape painters, treated some of his most important subjects sketchwise, before painting the so-called completed versions. The latter he exhibited; whereas he practically hid away those wonderful sketches, regarding which he wrote that *they* were the real pictures.

Not that the sketch was held to be, inevitably, superior to the completed work. Sketches thus regarded were of a special kind, like Leonardo's *Adoration of the Magi*, some "unfinished" Rembrandts and almost all of Daumier. Raphael's sketches for portraits were presumably of this kind; Ingres' sketch for his *Stratonice* is inferior to the picture at Chantilly. Sketches such as these, which are really "states" of a picture or rehearsals for it, conform to the same principles as the picture itself. Whereas the sketch of the *Narni Bridge* conforms to Corot's personality, and the completed picture to the standards of his day. Like Constable again, Corot kept in his studio, unexhibited, those works of his youth with which across the years his last works, in his most individual style, were to link back. Rubens' sketches are not merely "states." And all these artists combated "finish" just as the religious art of Byzantium had combated realism.

In any case the dividing line between the sketch and the picture was becoming less clearly defined. In many acknowledged masterpieces, in some Venetian works, in the last pictures by Hals and in some English pictures whole passages were treated sketchwise. For Corot as for Constable, Géricault, Delacroix and Daumier the sketch style was a way of escape to a freedom more and more sought after, though always somewhat conscience-stricken at its escapades.

So now that illusionist realism was losing its ascendancy, two-dimensional painting became better understood and, though no one realized it yet, modern Europe was making its first contacts with the arts of the rest of the world. For two-dimensional painting was, and is, world-wide; it prevailed in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Mexico, Persia, India, China and Japan—even, except for a few centuries, in Western Europe.



DELACROIX: PIETA

Though for yet awhile the art museum tradition, in its loftiest form, was given pride of place in art history, it had at least ceased to *be* art history to the exclusion of all else. That great tradition formed a compact *bloc*, isolated from the new territories which were in process of being discovered and opening vistas on an as yet uncharted world. The proper sphere of oil painting was becoming that which, beyond all theories and even the noblest dreams, had brought together the pictures in the museums; it was not, as had been thought until now, a question of technique and a series of discoveries, but a language independent of the thing portrayed—as specific, *sui generis*, as music. True, none of the great painters had been unaware that this language existed, but all had given it a subordinate place. Thus to think of painting as an end in itself involved a new conception of the whole function of painting. What art was groping for, and what was discovered by Daumier's cautious and by Manet's intrepid genius, was not some modification of the great tradition, like the changes made successively by earlier Masters, but a complete break, like that which follows the resurgence of a long-forgotten style. A different style and not a different "school"—this would have been unthinkable in periods when the mere notion of a new style never crossed the artists' minds.

Thus at last the painter's talent was no longer pressed into the service of description. His talent, but not his painting as a whole. For, long after the turn of the century, our artists went on piling up "subjects" and "stories" and the walls of our official Salons were cluttered up with these; only henceforth these were the works of artists who no longer counted. Poetry shared in the great adventure and was similarly transformed; with Baudelaire it utterly discarded the "story," though traditionalist poetry continued wallowing for years in narrative and dramatic lyrics. That Zola and Mallarmé could unite in an admiration for Manet is less puzzling than it might seem; different, sometimes contradictory as were their points of view, naturalism, symbolism and modern painting combined to deal its deathblow to the Colossus of the narrative, whose last avatar was the historico-romantic.

Painting and poetry now were called on to give first place to the manner of expression peculiar to each, and this was tantamount to asking for a poetry more purely poetry and painting more intrinsically painting. Some would have added, "and less poetic," but, more accurately, this was poetry of a special, non-descriptive kind. By rejecting illustration, painting was led to reject both that fictional art which had become no more than a caricature of authentic painting, and a world distinct from that of the pleasure of the eye—in the same sense that certain passages in Vittoria, Bach and Beethoven lie beyond the pleasure of the ear. And thus it ceased to feel concerned with the so-called sublime and the transcendental; a man could fully enjoy this art, it seemed, without his soul's being implicated. A rift was developing between art and beauty,

and it went deeper than that which had developed with the decay of "Italianism."

What then was painting by way of becoming now that it no longer either imitated or transfigured? Painting! And this it was coming to mean even in the museum, now that the museum, crowded to overflowing, was no longer more than a challenge to research. For artists had decided that henceforth painting was to dominate its subject-matter instead of being dominated by it.

Rubens with the thick broken-up arabesques of his sketches, Hals (precursor of modern art in this respect) with his figures' strongly stylized hands, Goya with his accents of pure black, Delacroix and Daumier with their rageful slashes—all these men seemed to wish to stamp their personalities on the canvas, like the Primitives who inserted their own faces beside the donors'. The provocative script of each was like a signature, and the painters who thus "signed" their work appeared to have been far more interested in their medium itself than in what was represented.



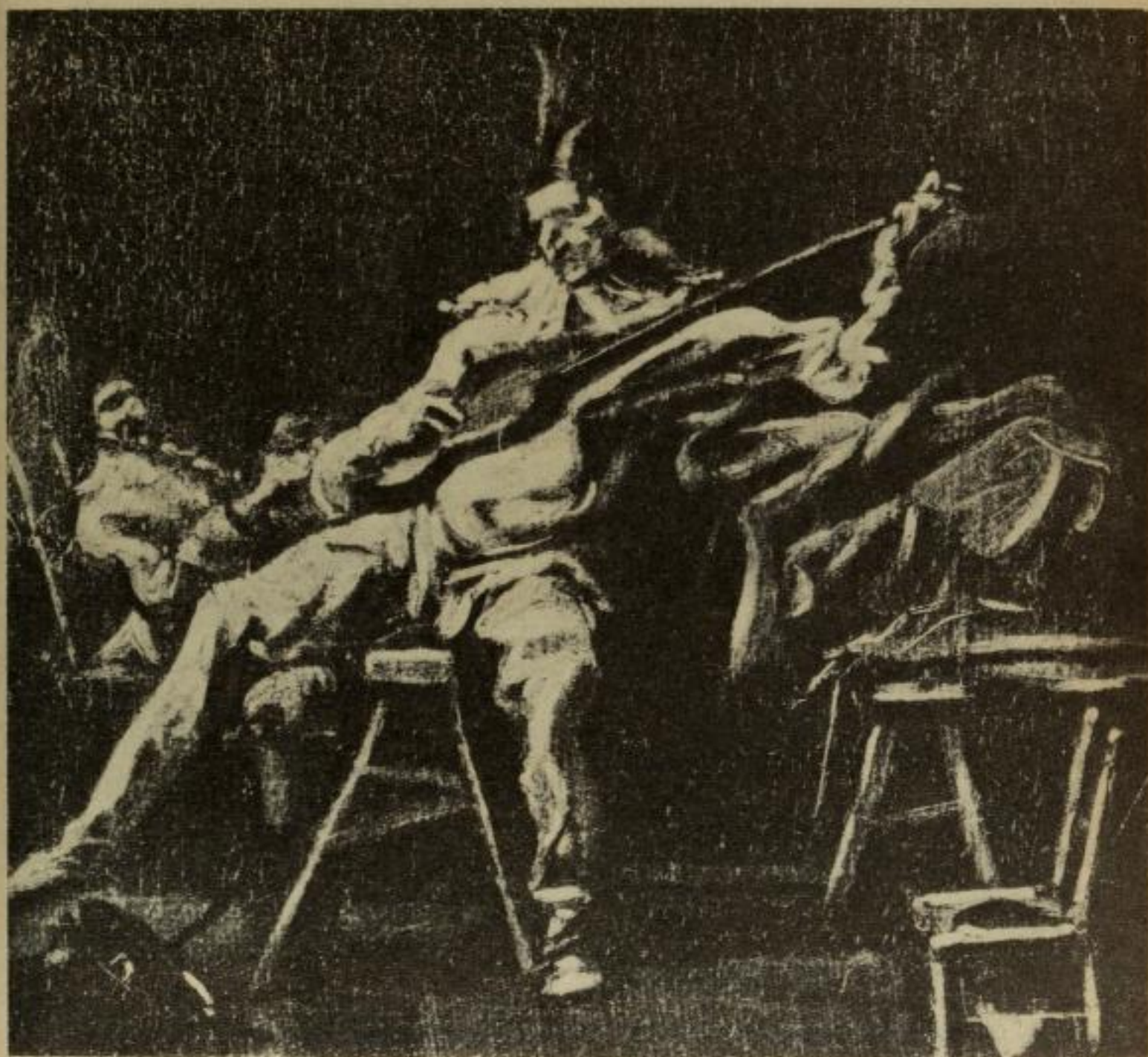
DAUMIER: THE SCULPTOR'S STUDIO



DELACROIX: ROGER ET ANGÉLIQUE

Yet both medium and drawing remained at the service of representation. In Titian's last phase and in the art of Tintoretto the strongly marked brushstrokes implement dramatic lyricism; and the same is true of Rembrandt, though his lyricism lies beneath the surface. Not without qualms did Delacroix indulge in his fierce slashes, like Rubens at his stormiest. Goya goes farthest of them all, now and again; but then Goya (if we exclude his "voices" and the heavy shadows he inherited from the museum) is modern art.

Also, there was one of Guardi's manners, and one of Magnasco's. Where we have Magnasco at his best, the frenzied line, all in notes of exclamation, seems to follow the play of a light fringing the contours



MAGNASCO: PULCHINELLO

of objects and figures—that “frill of light” which Ingres thought beneath the dignity of art. Always this light serves his turn; even when he does not represent it, the brushstrokes follow its unseen ripples. But, amazing as was the achievement of that dazzling Italian tragicomedy, it had quite definite limits, limits which he clearly respects in his Inquisition scenes.

All that modern art took over from him was the artist's right freely to express himself. Problems of light mean little to our painters. (Incidentally, in *Olympia* and *Le Fifre* does the light really come from in front?) Modern art began when what the painters called “execution” took the place of “rendering.” It used to be said that Manet was incapable of painting a square inch of skin; that the drawing of *Olympia* was done in wire. Those who spoke thus forgot one thing: that for Manet the drawing, the rendering of skin, came second; his sole object was to make a picture. The pink wrap in *Olympia*, the reddish balcony in the little *Bar* and the blue material in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* are obviously color-patches signifying nothing except color.

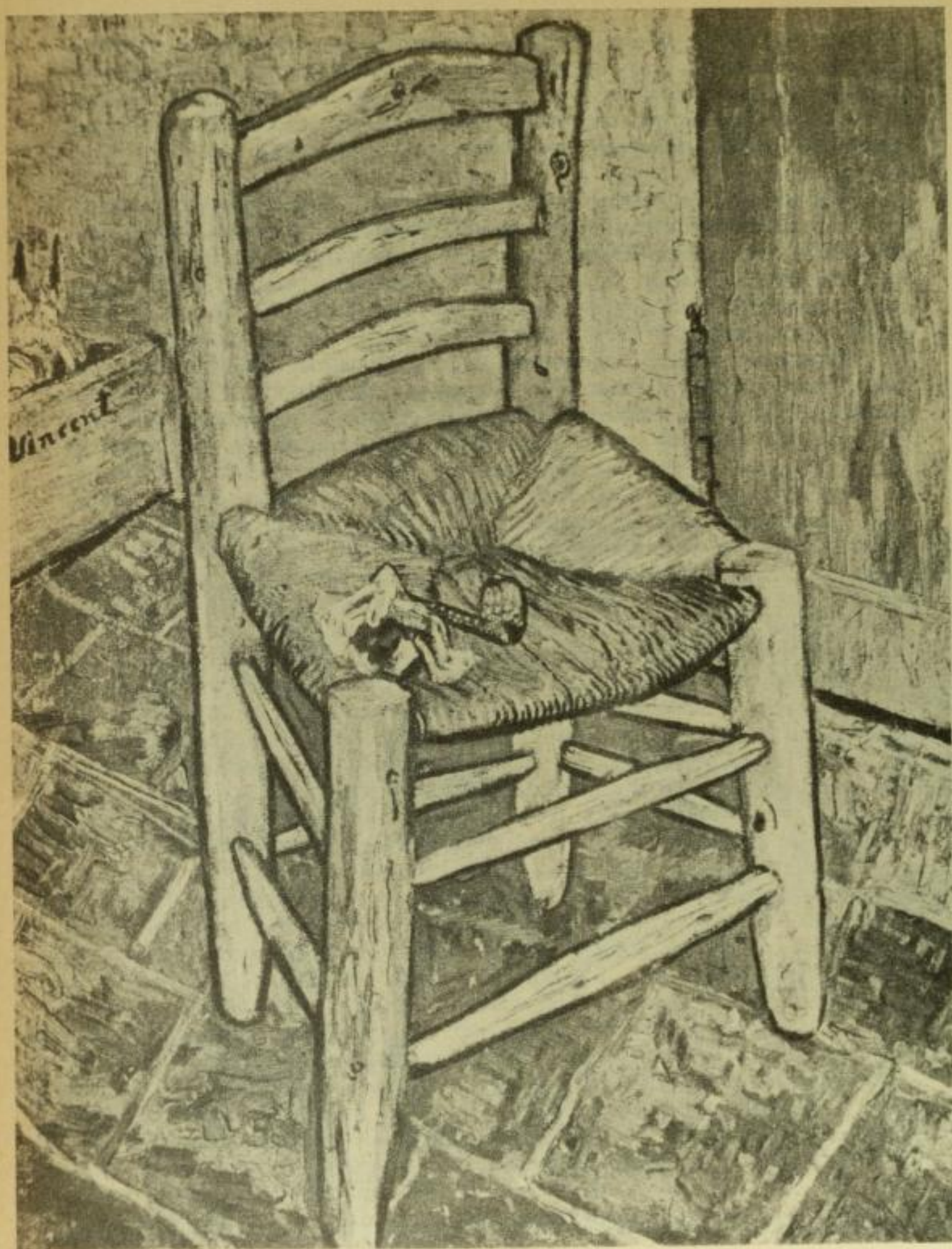


MANET: THE SMALL "BAR DES FOLIES-BERGÈRE"

Here the picture, whose background had been hitherto a recession, becomes a surface, and this surface becomes not merely an end in itself but the picture's *raison d'être*. Delacroix's sketches, even the boldest, never went beyond dramatizations; Manet (in some of his canvases) treats the world as—uniquely—the stuff of pictures.

For though the touch of color had already been allowed, on occasion, the independence it was to claim henceforth, this had always been done for some effect of emotion, to the communication of which the painting was regarded as a means. "This world of ours," Mallarmé once remarked, "has all the makings of a great book." It would have been as true, indeed truer, to say: "the makings of these pictures."

Hence the affinity between all the major works that followed, and hence, too, the curious anomalies of impressionist theory. The relations between theory and practice in every kind of art often give scope to irony. Artists build theories round what they would like to do, but they do what they can. The work that answers best to the preface of *Cromwell* is certainly not *Ruy Blas* and undoubtedly *L'Annonce faite à Marie*. And, compared with his painting, Courbet's theories seem ludicrous. After Manet had forced his way into recognition, and at the time when Impressionism was vaunting its discoveries and proclaiming its conquest of the true colors of nature—much as if it set out to be an open-air school directed by opticians—at this very time Cézanne (soon to be followed by Gauguin, Seurat and Van Gogh) was creating the most uncompromisingly stylized art that, since El Greco, the Western world had known. The theoreticians of Impressionism asserted that the function of painting was a direct appeal to the eye; but the new painting appealed far more to the eye *qua* picture than *qua* landscape. While the relations between the artist and what he called Nature were being changed, the theorists appraised in terms of, and by reference to, Nature what the painters themselves with admirable self-consistence, if not always deliberately, were achieving in terms of painting. That the banks of the Seine looked more like nature in Sisley's than in Theodore Rousseau's work was beside the point. What the new art aimed at was a reversal of the old subject-picture relationship; the picture now, as picture, took the lead. The landscape had to shift for itself—just as Clemenceau in his portrait was made to look as the painter wanted him to look. This method of judging value only by the eye meant a break with traditional art, in which a painted landscape was subordinated to what is known and thought about it; in Impressionist landscapes distance is not representative but allusive, and very different from Leonardo's distance. Actually when these artists sought for a keener perception of the outside world this was not with a view to reproducing it more faithfully but with a view to intensifying the painting itself. Manet was born in 1832, Pissarro in 1830, Degas in 1834; within a



VAN GOGH: THE CHAIR

space of two years (1839-1841) Cézanne, Sisley, Monet, Rodin, Redon and Renoir were born, and for each of these artists the visible world was a heaven-sent pretext for speaking his own language. Keeness of vision was but a means to an end, that end being the transposition of things seen into a coherent, personal universe. And soon Van Gogh was to come upon the scene. Representation of the world was to be followed by its annexation.

The description of modern art as "the world seen through a temperament" is wrong, for modern art is not just a "way of seeing things." Gauguin did not see in frescoes, Cézanne did not see in volumes, nor Van Gogh in wrought iron. Modern art is, rather, the annexation of forms by means of an inner pattern or schema, which may or may not take the shape of objects, but of which, in any case, figures and objects are no more than the expression. The modern artist's supreme aim is to subdue all things to his style, beginning with the simplest, least promising objects. And his emblem is Van Gogh's famous *Chair*.

For this is not the chair of a Dutch still life which, given its context and lighting, helps to create that atmosphere of slippered ease to which the Netherlands in their decline made everything contribute. This isolated, so little easy chair might stand for an ideogram of the painter's name. The conflict between the artist and the outside world, after smoldering so long, had flared up at last.

The modern landscape is becoming more and more unlike what was called a landscape hitherto, for the earth is disappearing from it, and modern still lifes are ever less like those of the past. We look in vain for the velvety bloom of Chardin's peaches; in a Braque still life the peach no longer has a bloom, the picture has it. Gone are the copper pots and pans and all the other "light-traps"; in still lifes of today the glitter of Dutch glassware has given way to Picasso's packets of tobacco. A still life by Cézanne stands in the same relation to a Dutch still life as does a Cézanne figure to a Titian nude. If landscapes and still lifes—along with some nudes and depersonalized portraits (themselves still lifes)—have come to rank as major *genres*, this is not because Cézanne liked apples, but because he could put himself more effectively into a picture of apples than Raphael could into his portrait of Leo X.

I remember hearing one of our great modern painters remark ironically to Modigliani: "You can paint a still life just as the fancy takes you, and your customer will be delighted; a landscape, and he'll be all over you; a nude—maybe he'll look a bit worried; his wife, you know . . . it's a toss-up how she'll take it. But when you paint his portrait, if you dare to tamper with his sacred phiz—well, he'll be jumping mad!" Even amongst those who genuinely appreciate painting there are many who fail, until confronted with their own faces, to understand this curious alchemy of the painter, which makes their loss

his gain. Every artist of the past who acted thus was modern in some sense; Rembrandt was the first great master whose sitters sometimes dreaded seeing their portraits. The only face to which a painter sometimes truckles is his own—and how queerly suggestive these self-portraits often are! Painting's break with the descriptive and the imaginary was bound to lead to one of two results: either the cult of a total realism (which in practice never was attained, all realism being directed by some value in pursuance of which it employs its technique of imitation); or else the emergence of a new, paramount value—in this case the painter's total domination of all that he portrays, a transmutation of things seen into the stuff of pictures.

When painting was a means of transfiguration, this process, while operating freely on a portrait or a landscape (as in Rembrandt's art), had given rein to the imagination and been persistently endowed with anecdotal glamour. In this connection let us imagine what would have happened had Tintoretto been commissioned to paint three apples on a plate, just that, without any sort of setting. We feel at once that his personality would have stamped itself emphatically on this still life, more so indeed than in any Baroque extravaganza or even the spectacular *Battle of Zara*. For he would have had to transmute the apples by dint of painting and painting alone.

Thus the painter, when he abandoned transfiguration, did not become subservient to the outside world; on the contrary he annexed it. And he forced the fruit to enter into his private universe, just as in the past he would have included it in a transfigured universe. The artist's centuries-old struggle to wrest things from their nature and subdue them to that divine faculty of man whose name was beauty was now diverted to wresting them once again from their nature and subjecting them to that no less divine faculty known as art. No longer made to tell a story, the world seen by the artist was transmuted into painting; the apples of a still life were not glorified apples but glorified color. And the crucial discovery was made that, in order to become painting, the universe seen by the artist had to become a private one, created by himself.

Had Raphael's guardian *daemon* explained (not shown) to him what, in the fullness of time, Van Gogh was going to attempt, Raphael, I imagine, would have perfectly understood the interest this venture might have for Van Gogh himself. But he would certainly have wondered what interest it could have for others. Yet, just as it had been discovered that such things as dramatic line and tragic color actually exist, so it was now discovered that the reduction of all things visible to a private plastic universe seemed to engender a force akin to that of styles, and that (for all those in whose eyes art had a value) it had a value of the same order. Thus the artist's will to annex the world replaced the will to transfigure it, and the infinite variety of forms, hitherto made to converge on religious faith or beauty, now converged on the individual.

So now it was the artist as an individual who took part in the now unending quest, and it was recognized—unequivocally at last—that art is a series of creations couched in a language peculiar to itself; that Cézanne's translucent watercolors sound the same grave bell-notes as Masaccio's frescoes. And now, after an easy if inglorious demise that lingered over fifty years, descriptive art was to have a spectacular resurrection, and find its proper medium: the cinema.

Once the era of discoveries in the technique of representation came to an end, painting began to cast about, with almost feverish eagerness, for a means of rendering movement. Movement alone, it seemed, could now impart to art that power of carrying conviction which had hitherto been implemented by each successive discovery. But movement called for more than a change in methods of portrayal; what with its gestures like those of drowning men Baroque was straining after was not a new treatment of the picture but a picture *sequence*. It is not surprising that an art so much obsessed with theatrical effect, all gestures and emotion, should end up in the motion picture.



RUBENS: ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE



EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY: LA CASTIGLIONE (?)

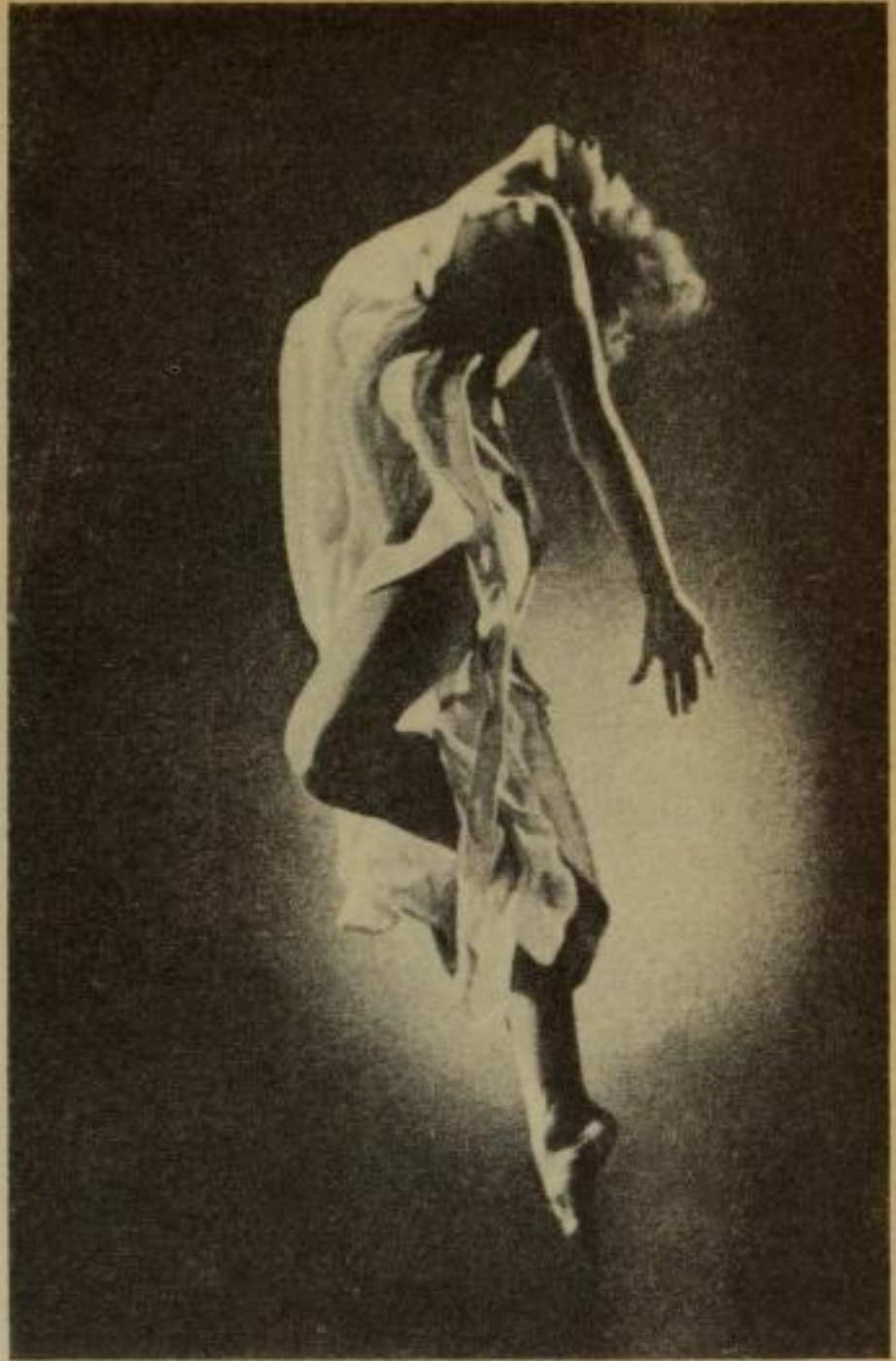
The photograph had proved its usefulness for passports and the like. But in its attempt to represent life, photography (which within thirty years evolved from Byzantine immobility to a frenzied Baroque) inevitably came up against all the old problems of the painter, one by one. And where the latter halted, it, too, had to halt. With the added handicap that it had no scope for fiction; it could record a dancer's leap, but it could not show the Crusaders entering Jerusalem. But the desire for descriptive pictures, from those of the saints' faces to great historical scenes, has always been focused as much on what people have never seen as on that with which they are familiar.

The attempt to capture movement, which had lasted for four centuries, was held up at

the same point in photography as in painting, and the cinema, though it could record movement, merely substituted mobile for unmoving gesticulation. If the great drive towards representation which came to a standstill in Baroque was to continue, the camera had to become independent as regards the scene portrayed.

The problem did not concern the movement of a character within a picture, but the possibility of varying the planes. (The planes change when the camera is moved; it is their sequence that constitutes "cutting." At present the average duration of each is ten seconds.) The problem was not solved mechanically—by tinkering with the camera—but artistically, by the invention of "cutting."

When the motion picture was merely a device for showing figures in movement it was no more (and no less) an art than gramophone recording or ordinary photography. Within a defined space, that of a real or imagined stage, actors performed a vaudeville or drama, and the camera merely recorded their performance. The birth of the cinema as a means of expression dated from the abolition of that narrowly defined space; from the time when the producer had the notion of recording a succession of brief shots (instead of photographing a play continuously), of sometimes having the camera brought near the objective so as to enlarge the figures on the screen, or else moved back; and, above all, of replacing the limitations of the theater by a wide field of vision, the area shown on the screen, into which and from which the players made their entries and exits, and which the producer *chose*, instead of having it imposed on him. The means of reproduction in the cinema is the moving photograph, but its means of expression is the sequence of planes.

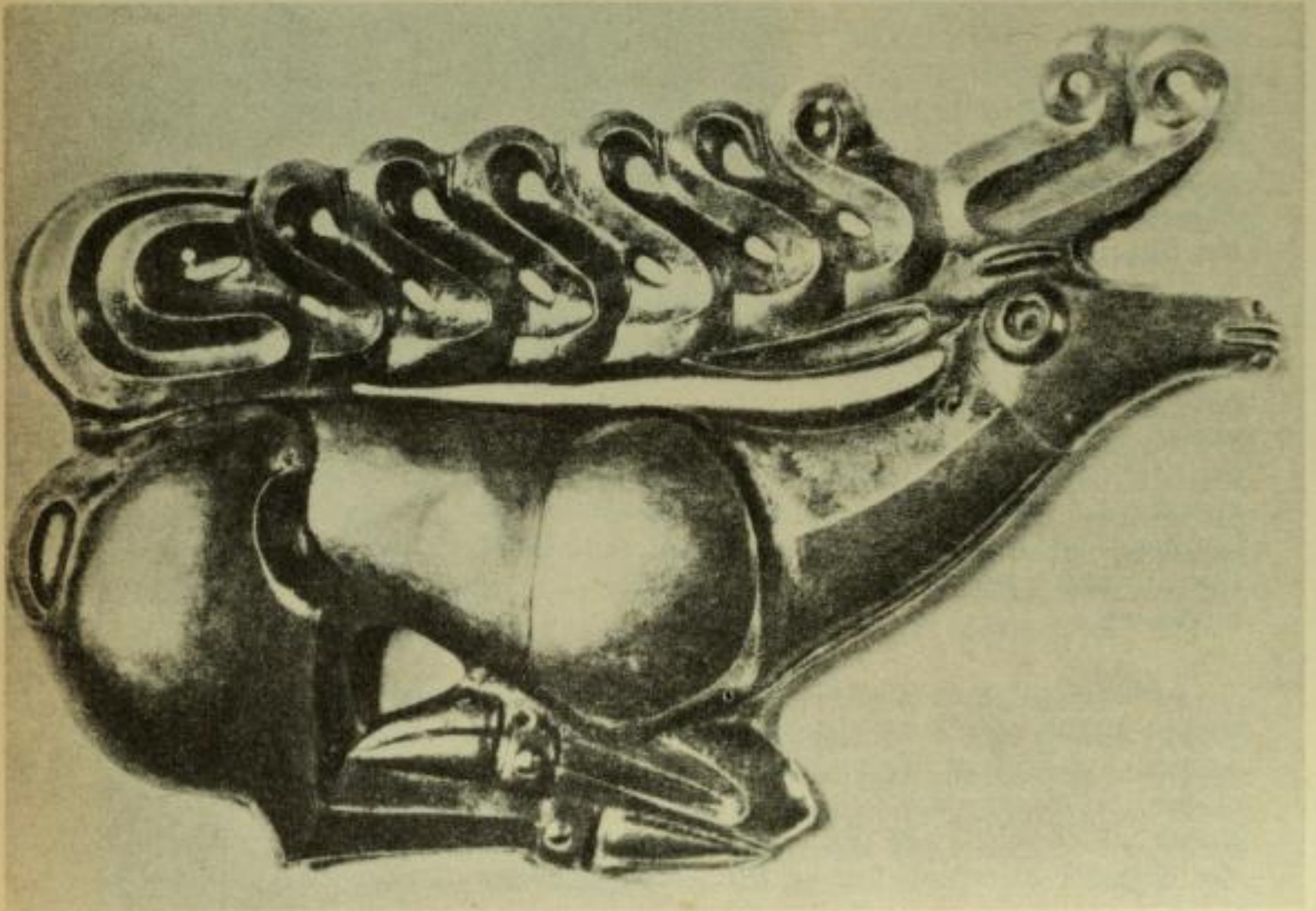


1950 PHOTOGRAPHY: THE DANCER

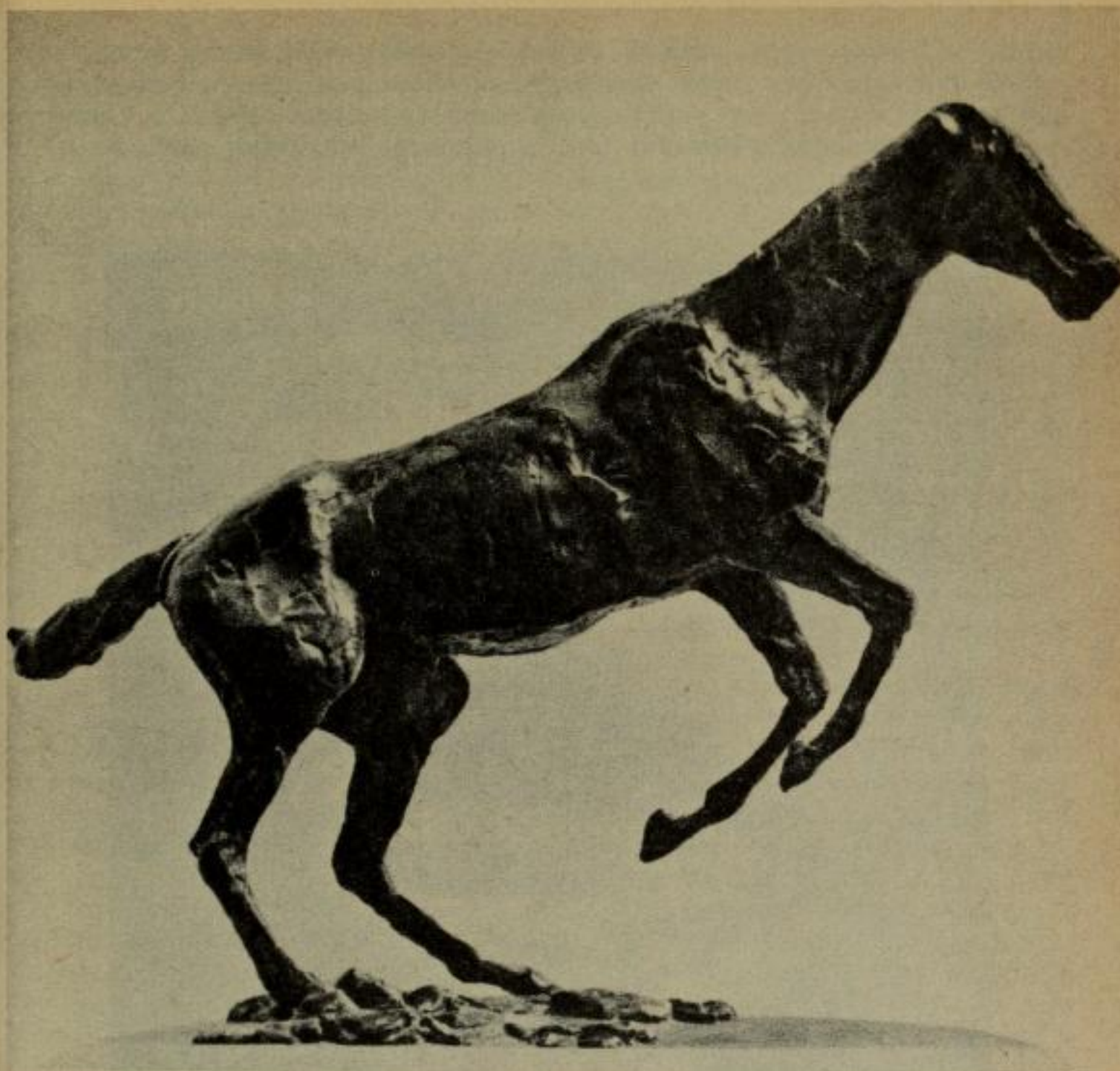
The story goes that Griffith, when directing one of his early films, was so much struck by the beauty of a girl at a certain moment of the action that he had the cameraman take a series of shots of her, coming closer and closer each time, and then intercalated her face in the appropriate contexts. Thus the close-up was invented. This story illustrates the manner in which one of the great pioneers of filmcraft applied his

genius to its problems, seeking less to operate on the actor (by making him play differently, for instance) than to modify the relations between him and the spectator (by increasing the dimensions of his face). It is interesting to note that when this bold innovation of cutting a body at the waistline changed the whole course of the motion picture, commercial photographers, even the least advanced, had long given up the habit of taking their sitters full length, and were taking them half length, or their faces only. For when the camera and the field were static, the shooting of two characters half-length would have necessitated making the whole picture in this manner; the change came with the discovery of variable planes and "cutting."

Thus the cinema acquired the status of an art only when the director, thanks to this use of different planes, was emancipated from the limitations of the theatre. Henceforth it could choose the significant shots and co-ordinate them, thus remedying its silence by selectivity, and—ceasing to be a record of stage plays—become the ideal medium for pictorializing the anecdote.



ART OF THE STEPPES (5th CENTURY B.C.). KOSTROMSKAIA, KUBAN. HORSE



DEGAS: HORSE

The divorce of painting from the anecdote had taken place fifty years before this happened. And the cinema confirmed this separation. The suggestion of movement, as found in Degas' "snap-shots" and in the abstractions of Scythian plaques, had taken the place of the representation of movement in the plastic arts. The long-standing feud between purely pictorial expression and the delineation of the world (on which academic art had thrived) now became pointless. The cinema took over the illustrative values which were the artist's when painting was the handmaid of representation, make-believe and emotional appeal, as it took over the methods and glamour of the stage, the cult of beauty

and facial expression. Dimly, across the mists of time, we seem to glimpse a rough-cast mask, chanting and swaying to the slow rhythm of a ritual dance, when today before our eyes there looms in close-up some immense, contorted face, muttering across the shadows it submerges.



SUMERIAN MASK (3rd MILLENNIUM B.C.)

The liberation of art from narrative assured that mastery of the visible world which every great painter was henceforth to exercise. Never before in the history of art had one and the same impulse given rise to works so diverse as those of Daumier and Manet; of Renoir, Monet, Rodin and Cézanne; of Gauguin, Van Gogh and Seurat; of Rouault, Matisse, Braque and Picasso. And this very diversity served to throw light on many other forms of art, from such resuscitated artists as Piero della Francesca and Vermeer to the Romanesque frescoes

and to Crete; just as, from Polynesian art to the great periods of China and India, it is throwing light on the long record of successive conquests that make art history. Michelangelo had a collection of antiques, and Rembrandt (as he used to say) of coats-of-mail and rags-and-tatters; in Picasso's studio—whence day after day he looses on the world those strange works in which the conflict between the artist and life's forms moves to a climax—the show-cases look like a miniature museum of "barbarian" art. This multifariousness of forms in modern individualist art has made it easier for us to accept the infinite variety of the past, each style of which as it emerges, suggests to us an individual artist, at long last resuscitated. The Masters of Villeneuve and Nouans, Grünewald, El Greco, Georges de Latour, Uccello, Masaccio, Tura, Le Nain, Chardin, Goya and Daumier have been either hailed as revelations or promoted to the front rank; while a host of other arts have come to the fore: from Pheidias to the *Koré of Euthydikos*, then the Cretans; from the Assyrians to Babylon; then, yet further back, to the Sumerians. And all are seemingly united by virtue of the metamorphosis they undergo in this new realm of art which has replaced that of beauty; as though our excavations were revealing to us not so much the world's past as our own future.

Not that these works on entering our Museum without Walls will disclaim history—as did the classical works when they entered the official museums of the recent past. Rather, they still link up with history, though precariously (the link is sometimes snapped); their metamorphosis, though infusing new life into history as well, does not affect it to the same extent as it affects the works of art themselves. And while we have come to know cultures other than those which built up the European tradition, this knowledge has not modified our general outlook to the same extent as the works of art have affected our sensibility. It is in terms of a world-wide order that we are sorting out, tentatively as yet, the successive resuscitations of the whole world's past that are filling the first Museum without Walls. We have seen how greatly our efforts to elucidate this order (associated with the discovery that the values of art and those of culture do not necessarily coincide) have modified our attitude towards Greece; our notions of the life and history of art, indeed our notions of art itself, have changed still more, now that the significance of ancient statuary is being appraised in terms of the ancient world as a whole; and now that the struggles of dying Rome against the hordes of barbarism are being replaced in our memories by those of dead Delphi against the East, India and China, and the non-Romanized barbarian world. With the result that a large share of our art heritage is now derived from peoples whose idea of art was quite other than ours, and even from peoples to whom the very idea of art meant nothing.

André Malraux

Voices of Silence

Translated from the French
by Stuart Gilbert

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