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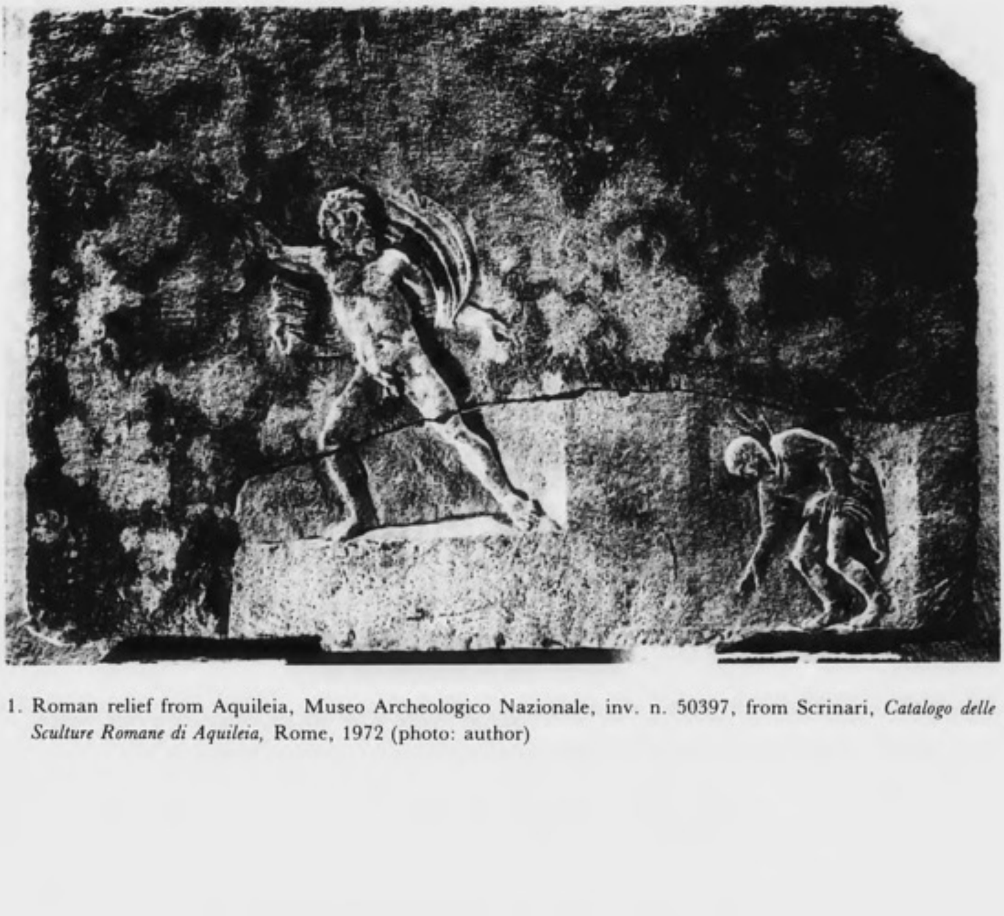

1. Roman relief from Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. n. 50397, from Scrinari, *Catalogo delle Sculture Romane di Aquileia,* Rome, 1972 (photo: author)

Alexander and Herakles: A Lost Work of Apelles?

CHRISTOPHER MOSS

Apelles of Kolophon was by all accounts the most brilliant and celebrated painter of antiquity. The ancient sources are unstinting in their praise of his splendid style and masterful, innovative technique. Pliny the Elder plainly states that Apelles' achievements were the foremost contribution to the art of painting, and that he was the greatest painter not only of his age, but of all time. His name eventually became such a byword that Roman poets could refer to painting in general as the *ars Apellea.*[1]

The praise showered upon Apelles' work by the ancient critics makes us regret even more keenly the complete loss of his paintings: not a single example has survived to the present day. The little information that we have about Apelles and his art has been patiently assembled from a variety of literary sources, the most important of which is the lengthy passage in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historiae* (XXXV. 79-97). Pliny's account does provide us with some useful pieces of information concerning Apelles' dates, style, technique, and major works, but these stand out like so many oases in a desert of anecdotal material which is probably mainly apocryphal, and at best tells us very little about Apelles as an artist.[2]

In the course of his discussion, Pliny describes or refers to seventeen of Apelles' paintings. Three of these, he tells us, were on public display in the imperial fora of Rome, and he had undoubtedly seen these paintings himself. An additional six paintings mentioned by Pliny were in his day still in Asia Minor and Alexandria. For descriptions of these he must have drawn on material from some of the one hundred authors mentioned in the indices to his work; we have no evidence that Pliny himself had traveled in Asia Minor. Seven of Apelles' works are mentioned briefly with no indication of their current whereabouts.[3]

On only one occasion is Pliny ambiguous about the location of a painting attributed to Apelles. His *Hercules aversus,* Pliny writes, is *in Dianae templo.* In 1896, Eugenie Sellers identified this *templum Dianae* as the Temple of Diana in the Circus Flaminius in Rome, and no objection to this identification has ever appeared in

[1] The most recent study of Apelles is that of W. Lepik-Kopaczyńska, *Apelles, der berühmteste Maler der Antike,* Berlin, 1962. See also the article by D. Mustilli, "Apelle," in *Enciclopedia d'Arte Antica,* I, Rome, 1958, 456-460. For ancient praise of Apelles, see Cicero, *Brutus,* 18, 70; Pliny, *Naturalis Historiae* XXXV.79; and Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* III.401. The term *ars Apellea* is found in Martial, XI.9 and Statius, *Silvae* I.1.100.

[2] The ancient sources are assembled in J. Overbeck, *Die antiken Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Künste bei den Griechen,* Leipzig, 1868, 591, 1067, 1073, 1090, 1446-48, 1481, 1687, 1726, 1745, 1748-49, 1751, 1759, 1766, 1772, 1774, 1827-1906, 1921. For Apelles' life and the anecdotal material, see Lepik-Kopaczyńska, 1ff. The best appraisal of Apelles' style is that of J.J. Pollitt, *The Ancient View of Greek Art,* New Haven, 1974, 298-301. For a commentary on Pliny's text, see the classic edition of E. Sellers, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art,* London, 1896, 120ff.

[3] The paintings in Rome: XXXV.27, 91, 93, 94; the paintings in Asia Minor: XXXV.92, 93; the painting in Alexandria: XXXV.93. Pliny's indices of sources for his chapters on the history of art are reproduced by Sellers, xiv, n. 1. For a critical study see M. Rabenhorst, "Die Indices Auctorum und die wirklichen Quellen der Naturalis Historia," in *Philologus,* LXV, 1906, 567ff.

print.[4] The two paintings mentioned by Pliny immediately before the *Hercules aversus* were both in the Forum of Augustus, and this fact must have persuaded Sellers that the *Hercules aversus* was also in Rome. It is less clear why she chose the Temple of Diana in the Circus Flaminius. Virtually all we know of this temple from the ancient sources is that it was vowed by M. Aemilius Lepidus in 187 B.C. and dedicated by him eight years later.[5] The painting of Apelles is not mentioned by any other ancient source.

Two considerations suggest that Pliny's *templum Dianae* was not the Temple of Diana in the Circus Flaminius. First is the fact that there was another temple of Diana in the city of far greater antiquity and importance. This was the Temple of Diana on the Aventine, traditionally founded by Servius Tullius as a common sanctuary for the ancient Latin League.[6] It was by far the oldest and most important temple on the Aventine, and from it the entire hill was known as the *collis Dianae.* We know that several notable statues of Diana were on display there, along with bronze stelai engraved with ancient laws.[7] It thus seems likely that a casual reference to a *templum Dianae* in Rome would refer to this venerable temple, which is mentioned frequently by Roman authors, and not to the shrine dedicated by Lepidus, which receives only two brief notices in Livy.

Secondly, it is strange that Pliny provides no phrase or epithet to more precisely identify the temple under discussion. The Temple of Diana on the Aventine was commonly known as *Aventina,* but also as *in Aventino* and *Aventiniensus,* and the inclusion of any one of these would have removed all doubt from his readers' minds.[8] In fact, it is Pliny's unswerving practice to include a brief topographical tag when one temple might be confused with another in Rome dedicated to the same god. Thus, when he refers to the Temple of Apollo Sosianus he calls it *ad Octaviae vero porticum,* while the temple of Apollo on the Palatine is *in Palatio* or *Palatina aedes.*[9] Similarly, when Pliny mentions the Temple of the Capitoline Triad, he specifies *in Capitolio,* while the Temples of Jupiter and Juno in the *Porticus Octaviae* are *intro Octaviae porticus.*[10] Other examples could be cited, but the point is already clear: Pliny uniformly included an identifying tag when referring to one of two temples in Rome dedicated to the same deity.

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[4] Sellers, 131, n. 9. Lepik-Kopaczyńska, 48, also believes that the painting was in Rome, although she does not specify which temple housed it.

The attribution of the painting to Apelles deserves closer scrutiny. Pliny's text (XXXV.94) runs as follows: "Eiusdem arbitrantur manu esse et in Dianae templo Herculem aversum." The wording suggests that the painting had been attributed to Apelles on stylistic grounds alone; the crux is the verb "arbitrantur." Some uses of the word suggest uncertainty (e.g., Terence, *Eunuchus* I.2.30), while others are closer to the legal application of the term which denotes merely "to state" or "to attest" (see Cicero, *Academicae Quaestiones* II.47.146). Since the implied subject of the verb must be Pliny's sourcebooks, the phrase may mean simply "My sources state that the *Hercules aversus* in the temple of Diana is by the same hand."

[5] Livy XXXIX.2; XL.52. See also S. Platner and T. Ashby, *A Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome,* Oxford, 1929, 150.

[6] On the foundation, see Varro, *De Lingua Latina* V.43, Livy I.45.2-6, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus IV.26. See also Platner and Ashby, 149-150.

[7] On the statues, see Strabo IV.1.15 and Pliny XXXVI.32. On the stelai, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus IV.26, X.32.

[8] *Aventina:* Propertius IV.8.29; *in Aventino: CIL* VI.32323, Censorinus, *De die natali* XXIII.6; *Aventiniensus:* Martial VI.64.13, Festus 165, Valerius Maximus VII.3.1.

[9] Apollo Sosianus: XXXVI.34; Apollo on the Palatine: XXXVI.13, 25, 32.

[10] Capitoline: XXXIV.10, 38; *Porticus Octaviae:* XXXVI.24, 35.

We can legitimately ask, then, given the absence of this topographical tag, whether the *templum Dianae* which housed Apelles' *Hercules aversus* was in Rome at all. We should not be unduly influenced by the fact that Pliny has just discussed two other paintings in Rome when he proceeds to the *Hercules aversus.* In fact, when cataloging the works of an artist, Pliny follows no regular geographical scheme, and makes no attempt to list consecutively works which are in the same city. The sculptures of Lysippos, for example, are mentioned in the following order: Rome, Rhodes, Delphi, Athens, Rome.[11] In similar fashion, Pliny inserts a notice of a sculpture of Praxiteles in Parium, on the Dardanelles, between his discussions of two Praxitelean works in Rome.[12] The same is true of Pliny's treatment of the paintings of Apelles, where the works are mentioned in the following order: Rome, Kos, Ephesus, Ephesus(?), Samos, Rhodes, Alexandria, Rome, *Hercules aversus.*[13] The Herakles painting could thus be in Rome, or in any of the other cities which occur earlier in the list, just as the works in Rome are widely separated in the discussion.

This unmethodical presentation is more easily understandable in light of Pliny's working habits. We know from a remarkable letter written by Pliny's nephew that he was accustomed to working during every waking hour, either reading a text himself or being read to by a servant, and always taking notes at a rapid pace.[14] The younger Pliny reports that his uncle took notes during meals, while traveling, while bathing, and even while entertaining, and that he was quite impatient, always aiming to get down the general sense of a passage rather than its exact wording. Even worse is the revelation that the elder Pliny fell asleep easily, and frequently dozed while working. (He was no doubt making up for sleep lost during the previous night: the younger Pliny states that his uncle arose between midnight and 2:00 A.M. and worked by lamplight until daybreak, when he would do the morning's errands and then return home to put in a second day's worth of study.) The result of this frenetic work was a compilation of information from two thousand volumes comprising one hundred and sixty sets of notes written in a tiny hand on both sides of the page. Without the convenience of index cards, it is easy to see how Pliny would have found it "practically impossible to obtain an orderly sequence of facts and events in the final version of the manuscript."[15]

Pliny's research methods are undoubtedly the source of confusion over which *templum Dianae* possessed the *Hercules aversus* of Apelles. The entry has probably slipped from its proper place into the section dealing with two other paintings currently in Rome. In fact, not long before his mention of the *Hercules aversus,* and clearly within the same paragraph by modern standards, Pliny refers to another *templum Dianae* which housed a painting of Apelles, and in this case he tells us specifically that it is the *templum Ephesiae Dianae,* the great Temple of Artemis at Ephesus.[16] It thus seems very likely that the *Hercules aversus* was also in the Temple of Ephesian

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[11] XXXIV.62-64.

[12] XXXVI.20-23.

[13] XXXV.91-94.

[14] Pliny the Younger, *Epistulae* III.5 (to Baebius Macer). See the excellent summary of the text and pertinent comments by E. Sjöqvist, "Lysippus," in *Semple Lectures,* Second Series, Cincinnati, 1973, 6ff.

[15] The quote is taken from Sjöqvist, 8. Cf. Pliny's own brief description of the *Naturalis Historiae* in his preface, 17-19.

[16] XXXV.92.

Artemis and not in Rome. Pliny, to give him the benefit of the doubt, may have even thought that the repetition of the phrase *templum Dianae* would be enough to indicate to his readers that the second painting was also at Ephesus. In another passage which contains an earlier reference to Ephesus, Pliny calls the Temple of Artemis simply *templum Dianae,* omitting the designation *Ephesiae,* and he may be employing an identical ellipsis here.[17] At worst, it is the kind of minor organizational error which seems not to have troubled him.

The Temple of Ephesian Artemis seems an especially likely place to find another painting by Apelles. We know that there must have been a fairly sizable and well-known group of paintings there; Pliny himself mentions five other pieces in the collection, including a renowned depiction of Odysseus by Euphranor and a portrait of a priest by the Athenian Nikias.[18] It is also worth noting that this was Apelles' native region: he seems to have been born at Kolophon, less than twenty-five miles from Ephesus, and most of his paintings, by Pliny's account, were still in southwestern Asia Minor, including two others at Ephesus itself.[19] Thus, it would not be surprising to find Apelles' *Hercules aversus* also in the collection of the Temple of Ephesian Artemis.

In the remainder of his brief description of this work, Pliny gives us only two inconclusive scraps of evidence. One of them is the participle which he employs to describe the figure of Herakles: *aversus.* The term can clearly mean "turned away," and so the painting is usually called "Herakles with averted face," or "Herakles with his face turned."[20] But Herakles' face cannot have been entirely turned away since Pliny goes on to say that Apelles had in fact depicted the face of Herakles rather than merely suggesting it, a feat which Pliny calls very difficult.[21] The implication seems to be that a lesser artist might have been constrained to give an incomplete or sketchy impression of the god's face, whereas Apelles' consumate skill had allowed him to paint a fuller portrayal. Lepik-Kopaczyńska proposed that a derivative copy of this *Hercules aversus* can be seen in the figure of Herakles in an allegorical painting from the basilica at Herculaneum.[22] But there is really nothing extraordinary about the portrayal of that Herakles' face. Although it is a fine piece of work, the face is seen in a standard three-quarter view with a slight downward tilt. Pliny's comment on the difficulty of Apelles' achievement suggests an odder angle, more contortion, motion, or something similar which made the face of Herakles exceedingly difficult to capture.

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[17] V.115.

[18] Euphranor's work: XXXV.129; Nikias' work: XXXV.132; the others: XXXV.92, 93, 147.

[19] Most modern authorities follow the Suda (s.v. Apelles) in naming Kolophon as Apelles' birthplace. See Mustilli, 456; Lepik-Kopaczyńska, 1ff. Strabo's statement (XIV.1.25) that Apelles was a native of Ephesus is probably based on the fact, related by the Suda, that he later became a citizen of Ephesus. There is also an unexplained tradition, maintained by Pliny XXXV.79 and Ovid, *Ars Amatoria* III.401, that he was born in Kos; this may be due to the presence of one of his famous works there (Pliny XXXV.91). For the locations of Apelles' other works, see Pliny XXXV.91-94; the two at Ephesus are mentioned in XXXV.92-93.

[20] The first translation comes from K. Jex-Blake, *The Elder Pliny's Chapters on the History of Art,* London, 1896, 131. The second is that of J.J. Pollitt, *The Art of Greece: Sources and Documents,* Englewood Cliffs, 1965, 167.

[21] XXXV.94: "...quod est difficillimum, faciem eius ostendat verius pictura quam promittat." The use of "promitto" to mean "suggest" in an artistic sense is unparalleled.

[22] Lepik-Kopaczyńska, 48ff, Abb. 2; she equates *aversus* with *obliqua facie.* For the painting, Naples Museo Nazionale 9008, see A. Stenico, *Roman and Etruscan Painting,* New York, 1963, Pl. 86.

A possible explanation of this difficulty lies in an alternate meaning of the term *aversus.* Roman authors do use that participle to describe someone tranquilly ''turned away,'' but also to denote ''turned in flight'' or ''put to rout.'' Livy, in fact, applies it to a vanquished enemy fleeing the battlefield, and similar usages occur elsewhere in Latin literature.[23] If the figure of Herakles in Apelles' painting were in full flight, perhaps glancing over his shoulder at his pursuer, we could more easily understand Pliny's observation on the difficulty of rendering his face in a convincing or complete manner. The agitated, twisted pose of a fleeing figure would satisfy both of Pliny's stipulations concerning the pose of Herakles, vague though they may be.

We can now turn to the second painting by Apelles at Ephesus, a work which Pliny calls *Alexander Magnus fulmen tenens.*[24] This was a portrait of Alexander the Great armed with a thunderbolt which elicited high praise from several ancient authors. Plutarch, for example, declared that while Alexander himself had been invincible, this Alexander by Apelles was inimitable.[25] Pliny tells us that the really remarkable aspect of this work was the way in which the thunderbolt and the fingers of Alexander seemed to actually project out of the surface of the painting. On the basis of this statement we have to reject a proposal made by Mingazzini that a copy of this Alexander is preserved in a wall-painting in the House of the Vettii in Pompeii.[26] In the Pompeian painting, a beardless divinity sits placidly on a golden throne, cradling a stylized thunderbolt in his lap; neither his fingers nor the thunderbolt seem to project in the least. In fact, the figure's left knee is much farther in the foreground than either the fingers or thunderbolt. The fresco in the House of the Vettii may be a portrait of Alexander in the guise of Zeus, but it is not based on the Ephesian painting by Apelles.

The same objection can be made about the other proposed reconstruction of Apelles' Alexander with thunderbolt. Furtwängler suggested that a miniaturized version of the painting can be seen on a carved gem in Leningrad.[27] In this depiction a beardless figure holds a thunderbolt vertically at eye level as if examining it. Once again, this is a very flat composition; even if enlarged considerably, the thunderbolt and hand would lie securely in the middle ground of the work, and could not be said to jut out of the picture.

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[23] Livy IX.19.7, XXII.19.11, XXXIV.15.2; Caesar, *Bellum Gallicum* I.26.

[24] XXXV.92: ''Pinxit et Alexandrum Magnum fulmen tenentem in templo Ephesiae Dianae viginti talentis auri.'' For this passage and others dealing with Ephesus Pliny seems to have drawn on an account by C. Licinius Mucianus; see Sellers, lxxxv ff.

[25] *De fortuna Alexandri* II.2; see also Plutarch, *Alexander* IV.2. This may in fact have been the portrait of Alexander which he himself saw during his stay at Ephesus: Aelian, *Varia Historia* II.3.

[26] P. Mingazzini, ''Una copia dell'Alexandros Keraunophoros di Apelle,'' in *Jahrbuch der Berliner Museen* 3, 1961, 1ff. For a convenient reproduction of the fresco, see J. Charbonneaux, R. Martin, and F. Villard, *Hellenistic Art,* New York, 1973, fig. 114.

[27] A. Furtwängler, ''Studien über die Gemmen mit Künstlerinschriften,'' in *Jahrbuch des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts,* IV, 1889, 69; his illustration is in the preceding volume, III, 1888, Taf. 11, n. 26. Furtwängler's suggestion is accepted by M. Beiber, ''The Portraits of Alexander,'' in *Greece and Rome,* Second Series, 1965, 12, n. 2, 184.

A similar figure is depicted on the reverse of a coin attributed to the Alexandrian mint at Babylon; see G.F. Hill, *Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia,* London, 1922, 191, no. 61, plate XXII.18. Whereas the figure on the Leningrad gem is nude and leans on a shield, the figure on the coin wears Macedonian military dress and Persian headgear and holds a lance. R. Holloway, *A View of Greek Art,* Providence, 1973, 181, calls the coin reverse a miniaturized version of Apelles' Alexander.

It makes far more sense to reconstruct Apelles' portrait of Alexander in the canonical stance of Zeus wielding his weapon, that is, with the thunderbolt raised aloft behind his head and the other arm extended straight forward for balancing and aiming. This pose, especially if depicted from a three-quarter viewpoint, would appear very three-dimensional indeed. It would also correspond perfectly to Pliny's description: the thunderbolt and the fingers of the free, extended hand would seem to project dramatically from the plane of the picture.[28]

Pliny, then, seems to have given us an account of two extraordinary paintings of Apelles which in his day were still preserved in the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus. The first of these, *Alexander Magnus fulmen tenens,* was a portrait of Alexander the Great wielding a thunderbolt, while the second, *Hercules aversus,* depicted the god Herakles in flight. Both subjects are highly unusual. It was certainly not common for Alexander to be depicted with the weapon of Zeus; in fact, Lysippos attacked Apelles for the impropriety of his work.[29] Similarly, none of the many exploits of Herakles, neither the canonical twelve labors nor the many lesser feats, portray the god as put to flight by an opponent. We should thus consider the possibility that Pliny neglected to mention that these two figures, both unorthodox, both by Apelles, and both in the Temple of Ephesian Artemis, in fact belonged to the same painting. We know that Pliny was perfectly capable of omitting major figures in his discussion of a painting. This is true not only of his treatment of works which he had never seen, but also of those which he himself had seen many times. A case in point is the painting by Apelles which the emperor Augustus had placed in the most frequently visited part of his forum.[30] When Pliny first mentions this work, he describes it as Castor and Pollux with Victory, while in a later passage he identifies the same work as *Castorem et Pollucem cum Victoria et Alexandro Magno.* In his first discussion of the work, Pliny simply failed to mention the figure of Alexander the Great, surely the focal point of the work, and we should not be surprised to find that he has made precisely the same omission in his treatment of Apelles' *Hercules aversus.*

The thematic link between the two figures of Alexander and Herakles is obvious: Alexander threatens his rival by brandishing the weapon of the greatest god, while the lesser god, Herakles, flees in terror. A similar scene is preserved on a Roman relief from Aquileia, with the two actors being Zeus and a wretched mortal who has already been struck by a thunderbolt which protrudes from his back (fig. 1).[31] Stories of Zeus striking down mortals were common and as old as Homer.[32] But it is an entirely different concept and an extraordinary one which places Alexander and Herakles in those roles. To understand it completely we need to investigate two aspects of Alexander which the ancient sources mention frequently: first, that

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[28] For a brief survey of the type, see E. Paribeni, "Zeus," in *Enciclopedia dell'Arte Antica,* I, Rome, 1958, 1260. See also the material collected by G. Mylonas, "The bronze statue from Artemision," in *American Journal of Archaeology,* 48, 1944, 143ff.

[29] Plutarch, *De Iside et Osiride,* 24.

[30] Pliny XXXV.27,93.

[31] Aquileia, Museo Archeologico Nazionale, inv. n. 50397. See V. Santa Maria Scrinari, *Catalogo delle Sculture Romane di Aquileia,* Rome, 1972, 194, fig. 604. This relief is, in fact, remarkably similar in composition to that proposed for the lost work of Apelles. The Aquileia relief is almost certainly derived from a painted source.

[32] Odyssey V.125; see also Hesiod, *Theogony,* 504ff.

Alexander claimed to be the son of Zeus, and second, that he was eager to surpass the deeds of Herakles.

Alexander claimed descent from Zeus through Achilles on his mother's side, and through Herakles, the founder of the Macedonian royal line, on that of his father; Plutarch states that this was common knowledge.[33] This claim was reinforced by Alexander's visit to the oracle of Zeus at Siwah where he was greeted as "son of Zeus." The Alexander historians preserve a number of tales with the same theme, including the story that Alexander had been fathered by Zeus Ammon, who approached his mother in the form of a large snake.[34]

The ancient sources are also in agreement that Alexander felt a strong desire to equal or surpass the deeds of Herakles. Arrian calls the feeling one of emulation *(philotimia).*[35] Other writers report that Alexander was fired with ambition to take the rocky citadel of Aornus in Bactria simply because Herakles had beseiged the place but failed to take it, and to visit the oracle at Siwah because Herakles had done so.[36] Even more intriguing is the report that Alexander appeared at public feasts wearing the lionskin which was Herakles' traditional garb and carrying the god's knotty club.[37] The source of this statement is Ephippus of Olynthus, a contemporary of Alexander who seems to have written an anti-Macedonian pamphlet filled with malicious rumors, and this story may thus be a fiction intended to libel Alexander. But it is worth noting that several Greeks of the mid-fourth century provided precedents for this sort of behavior. The best-known of these men was Menekrates, a physician from Syracuse who paraded himself in the guise of Zeus.[38] We are even told that Menekrates and his band attended a banquet at the court of Philip in Macedon, where mock sacrifices were offered to him. We do not know if Alexander was present or even born at the time. Menekrates, however, does provide an interesting precedent and lends a bit more credence to the account of Ephippus. If Alexander did in fact appear in public with the attributes of a god, he would not have been the first to do so.

Throughout these exploits Alexander was certainly aware of the tradition that there had been a multitude of Herakleses, each of whom began life as a mortal and was elevated to divine status by surpassing the accomplishments of the previous Herakles. The tradition was as old as Herodotus, but the fullest accounts of the myth come from Diodorus, who states that the current Herakles (i.e., the son of

[33] Herodotus VIII.138; Thucydides II.99; Arrian IV.7.4, IV.10.7, IV.11.6, VI.3.2; Plutarch, *Alexander,* 2. See A.R. Anderson, "Heracles and his Successors," in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology,* 1928, 39, 8ff.

[34] The primary sources on Alexander's journey to Siwah are Diodorus XVII.49-52; Arrian III.3-5; Plutarch, *Alexander,* 26-29; and Strabo XVII.1.43. The fullest examination of these sources is the one by W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great,* II, Cambridge, 1948, 347ff. For the story of the snake, see Plutarch, *Alexander* II.4, III.1.

[35] Arrian III.3.2.

[36] For the assault on Aornus, the sources are Arrian IV.28.1-5, Q. Curtius Rufus VIII.11.2; Diodorus XVII.85.2, and Justin XII.7.12. Arrian and Diodorus state explicitly that Herakles' failure made Alexander eager to take the place.

[37] Ephippus of Olynthus ap. Athenaeus XII.537e-f; ed., F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* II.126. See the thoughtful analysis by T. Hölscher, *Ideal und Wirklichkeit in den Bildnißen Alexanders des Großen,* Abhandlungen der Heidelberger Akademie der Wißenschaften, 1971, Zweite Abhandlung.

[38] We learn of Menekrates from a fragment of Hegesander quoted in Athenaeus VII.289c; ed., F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* IV.414. The best study is that of O. Weinreich, *Menekrates, Salmoneus, und Zeus,* Stuttgart, 1933. We should take special note of a previous imitator of Herakles, Nikostratos of Argos, who even wore the Heraclean lionskin into battle (Athenaeus VII.289b).

Alcmene) was the third mortal to hold that rank, and from Cicero, who numbered the son of Alcmene as the sixth Herakles.[39] Varro, who had apparently done his research even more thoroughly, had put together a list of forty-four successive Herakleses.[40] It is easy to understand how tales like these could have excited the imagination of Alexander.

We can thus briefly summarize the conditions which accompanied the production of Apelles' painting at Ephesus: Alexander, who claimed descent from Zeus, felt a strong rivalry with Herakles, at times undertaking difficult tasks merely to rival the deeds of the god. Herakles, on the other hand, was the one god of the Greek pantheon who could be replaced by a mortal. Any man who could equal or surpass the exploits of Herakles could expel the god from his place among the Olympians and become the new Herakles; indeed this very thing had happened repeatedly throughout history. Given this background, we can more easily understand the motif of Apelles' painting at Ephesus. It was the epitome of the laudatory work, showering a sort of double glory on Alexander: not only is he the son of Zeus, empowered to turn his father's weapon against his adversaries, but he will become the new Herakles, banishing the son of Alcmene from Olympus by surpassing his achievements on earth.

It is tempting to cite Apelles' painting at Ephesus as an authorized piece of pro-Macedonian propaganda. This view is encouraged by the fact that Apelles seems to have been an official court artist, traveling in Alexander's entourage and painting his portrait on innumerable occasions.[41] Pliny even states that Alexander would permit only Apelles to paint his portrait, but we should certainly take this statement *cum grano salis;* we know, for example, that Protogenes, an exact contemporary of Apelles, produced at least one painting of Alexander.[42]

However, we have very little hard evidence that Alexander would have encouraged the production of such a painting during his lifetime. Two poorly reported episodes connect Alexander with the pursuit of divine honors. First, in the spring of 327 B.C., an attempt was made to introduce the Persian ritual obeisance called *proskynesis* to Alexander's entourage, and it is clear that the Greeks in Alexander's retinue viewed it as an act suitable only for a god.[43] Modern investigators, however, have debated not only the extent of Alexander's involvement in planning this affair, but also his motivations for doing so. Was he in fact seeking the Greeks' recognition as a divine king, or merely trying to introduce a court ritual that could be shared by Greeks and Persians alike? Secondly, in 324 B.C., Alexander may have sent a request to the League of Corinth that they vote him divine honors, and in the following year the Greeks did send him an embassy of the sort that was usually sent to honor the gods.[44] The evidence for Alexander's request, however, is late and indirect, and it is certainly possible that the Greek cities dispatched the embassy of their own accord, hoping to win favor in Alexander's eyes. None of this evidence, therefore, compels us to conclude that Alexander actively campaigned for his own deification, or that he was likely to have commissioned a painting such as Apelles' at Ephesus. The numismatic evidence is equally inconclusive. The beardless Herakles, a standard obverse type on all of Alexander's coinage, may have been gradually transformed into a portrait of Alexander; but some prefer to see it as simply a continuation of a type which appeared on Macedonian coinage long before Alexander.[45]

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[39] Herodotus II.43-44; Diodorus III.73, V.76.1-2; Cicero, *De natura deorum* III.16. A similar account is preserved by Macrobius, *Saturnalia* I.20.6-7.

[40] Quoted by Servius, *Commentarius in Vergilii Aeneida* VIII.564.

[41] Pliny XXXV.85, 89, 93.

[42] Pliny tells us of Alexander's prohibition twice: XXXV.85 and VII.125. The work of Protogenes is also mentioned by Pliny in XXXV.106, where he calls it Protogenes' last work, hence it may have been painted after the death of Alexander.

[43] The ancient sources are Arrian IV.9.9-12; Q. Curtius Rufus VIII.5.5-24; Justin XII.7.1-3; and Plutarch, *Alexander* 54. U. Wilcken, *Alexander the Great,* trans., G.C. Richards, New York, 1967, 168ff., rejects the episode as an indication that Alexander was striving for divine recognition, and he is followed by J.P.V.D. Balsdon, "The 'Divinity' of Alexander," *Historia* 1, 1950, 363ff. An opposing view was taken by W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great,* II, Cambridge, 1948, 359-369.

Even if Apelles' work was not an officially commissioned piece, the Temple of Ephesian Artemis was an especially suitable place to display it. The great archaic Temple of Artemis, after all, had burned to the ground on the very night of Alexander's birth, and was only partially rebuilt when Alexander arrived in Ephesus in 334 B.C.[46] Alexander asked the Ephesians to name him as the dedicator of the new temple. (This was an honor that was accorded Alexander elsewhere; we still have the inscription which names him as the dedicator of the new Temple of Athena Polias in Priene.[47]) But when the Ephesians denied Alexander's request, he had to be content with arranging the finances of the temple; all tribute which had formerly been paid to the Persians was diverted by Alexander's order to the rebuilding of the temple.[48] It might have pleased Alexander especially, given this snub by the Ephesians, to have a painting in the new Temple of Artemis which likened him to two gods. Interestingly enough, Philip had already paved the way for this sort of display at Ephesus: the Ephesians had carried an image of Philip in a procession with the statues of the twelve Olympians.[49] Thus, whether Apelles' painting was a commissioned work or a spontaneous piece of flattery, it found an especially appropriate home in the Temple of Ephesian Artemis.

A few of the physical details of Apelles' painting at Ephesus can also be restored with some confidence. Pliny tells us explicitly that Apelles did not paint on walls, and this statement is reinforced by Pliny's frequent use of the word *tabula* to describe works of Apelles, and by the story that Apelles enjoyed exhibiting his pain-

[44] The evidence for Alexander's request consists of an epigrammatic response quoted by Plutarch, *Moralia* 210d, and Aelian, *Varia Historia* II.19. For a good analysis of the problem, see Balsdon, 383ff.

[45] A sobering analysis of the complexity of the numismatic evidence is given by A.R. Bellinger, *Essays on the Coinage of Alexander the Great,* American Numismatic Society, Numismatic Studies No. 11, New York, 1963, 14ff. In fact, precisely the same issue (from Sikyon and dating to about 330 B.C.) has been cited as bearing undeniable portraits of Alexander, and as an example of the pristine beardless Macedonian Herakles. See E. Sjöqvist, "Alexander-Herakles: A Preliminary Note," in *Bulletin of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts,* 51, 1953, 32; and M. Bieber, "The Portraits of Alexander the Great," *Greece and Rome,* Second Series, 12, 1965, 185.

[46] Plutarch, *Alexander* 3. On the length of the rebuilding program (120 years) see Pliny XXXVI.95. For the temple itself, see A. Bammer, *Die Architektur des Jüngeren Artemision von Ephesos,* Wiesbaden, 1972.

[47] Alexander's request: Strabo XIV.1.22. For the inscription from Priene, see W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum,* third ed., Leipzig, 1915-1924, 277.

[48] Alexander's order: Arrian I.17.10.

[49] Diodorus XVI.92.5, XVI.95.1. See the interesting discussion by E. Badian, "Alexander the Great and the Greeks of Asia Minor," in *Ancient Society and Institutions: Studies Presented to Victor Ehrenberg on his 75th Birthday,* Oxford, 1966, 41ff.

tings by moving them out onto his balcony.[50] The painting of Alexander and Herakles, then, was in all probability not executed in fresco technique on a temple wall, but was a portable easel painting done on a wooden panel and then fastened to one of the temple's walls. Both literary sources and architectural details suggest that most ancient galleries were set up in this way, with paintings on wood panels that could be removed from the walls, rearranged, or even transferred to another building; thus, Pausanias could see works of Polygnotus in the Propylaea in Athens, a structure not yet completed in Polygnotus' time.[51] Larger works must have been painted on more than one panel, and this may have been true of Apelles' work at Ephesus, especially if we accept Lepik-Kopaczyńska's suggestion that the figure of Alexander was over-life-size.[52]

We can now consider the composition of this newly interpreted work of Apelles in the context of other paintings which depicted Alexander in divine company. Two other paintings by Apelles belong to this group. The first of these is the previously mentioned depiction of Alexander with Castor, Pollux, and Victory, while the second was an allegorical group of Alexander, Triumph, and War with his hands bound behind his back.[53] Both of these paintings referred primarily to Alexander's military successes, but both hint at apotheosis. The depiction of Alexander and Herakles fits in neatly with these two, and we can easily see how all three could have come from the brush of the same artist. We also know of a work by Antiphilos which portrayed Alexander in the company of his father and the goddess Athena, and of a painting of Alexander and Pan by Protogenes.[54] Although we know nothing of these two works beyond their titles, they could easily have been formal, static compositions. The painting of Apelles at Ephesus was by contrast dramatic and innovative, and helps us to understand even more fully the judgment of the ancient writers who declared Apelles to be the most famous painter of antiquity.

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[50] Apelles' medium: XXXV.37; use of *tabula:* XXXV.27, 50, 84, 91, 94; balcony story: XXXV.84.

[51] Pausanias I.22.6. For a good review of the evidence in support of painting on wooden panels, see V.J. Bruno, *Form and Color in Greek Painting,* New York, 1977, 107ff. The reference to Polygnotan painting on wood occurs in Synesius of Cyrene, *Epistulae* 135; see R.E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora III: Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia,* Princeton, 1957, 43.

[52] Lepik-Kopaczyńska, 52. The large sum paid to Apelles for this work (twenty talents) may in fact be an indication that it was a large-scale painting. If there were some uncertainty in Pliny's sources concerning the attribution of the figure of Herakles (see note 4) it may have been because the two figures were on separate panels, perhaps improperly displayed by the time of Mucianus' visit to Ephesus.

[53] Pliny XXXV.27,93. Servius, *Commentarius in Vergilii Aeneida* I.294, indicates that the figure of War could also be identified as Furor.

[54] Antiphilos: Pliny XXXV.114; Protogenes, Pliny XXXV.106.

The Alton Towers Triptych: Time, Place, and Context

NANCY M. KATZOFF

The Alton Towers triptych in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London is an enamel of great visual appeal; its abstract composition of interlocking circles and square distinguishes it from enamels of similar date and scale (fig. 1). Unique in style and color, the overall geometric design is related to other enamel work, stained glass, and manuscript illumination of the Rhine/Meuse area of the twelfth century, but it is closest to certain diagrams used to illustrate scientific manuscripts. While most of the scenes on the triptych follow standard Mosan iconography, two appear here in an original form. The mystery of the origin and date of this piece ultimately must be solved using these clues.

The Alton Towers triptych measures 14½ inches high by 18¼ inches wide (370mm x 480mm). The black-painted wooden frame fastens shut with a simple bolt and is hollowed out to receive the enamel panels and the gilt inner frame. This inner frame consists of copper gilt strips chased with engraved designs: vines on the wings and pointed ovals on the central field. Inside, the beveling is stamped unevenly with a design of acanthus leaves. The central field is surrounded by a narrow strip of metal decorated in *émail-brun,* repeating shapes chased on the outermost frame. At the lower edge of each wing there is a strip of cabochon gems in plain settings.

The enamels themselves are three plates of copper or brass, gilded, engraved, nielloed, and with champlevé enamels. The figures are in gilt reserve with niello, some with enamel halos. The enameled background is cut by interlacing borders in enamel or reserve with inscriptions. The predominant colors are dark blue, cobalt blue, emerald green, and white, with traces of lemon yellow and dark red.

In the central panel, the Crucifixion is placed within a square turned on its corner. At the foot of the cross are full-length figures of Mary and St. John the Evangelist. Outside the square are the symbols of the four Evangelists and the inscription, "Christ dies on the cross and repays the debts of the first created man."[1] In a circle above, there is the scene of the Holy Woman at the Tomb and the inscription, "Like the Phoenix, reborn after three days, [He] triumphs over death twice."[2] Below the Crucifixion is another circle containing the Harrowing of Hell with an inscription reading, "He leads captivity captive and treads the foe underfoot."[3] In a decorative border surrounding the interlocking circles and square are medallions of the sun, moon, earth, and water; on the central axis at the bottom is Justice, at the top, Charity. All are identified by inscriptions in the border.

The circles and squares on the wings are the same size as on the central panel, but cut off to fit the narrower shape. On the left wing at the top of the circle, the

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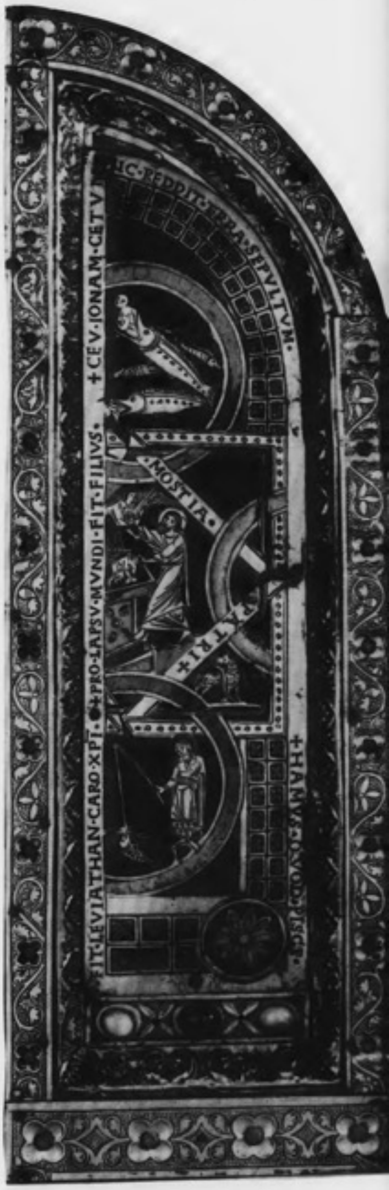
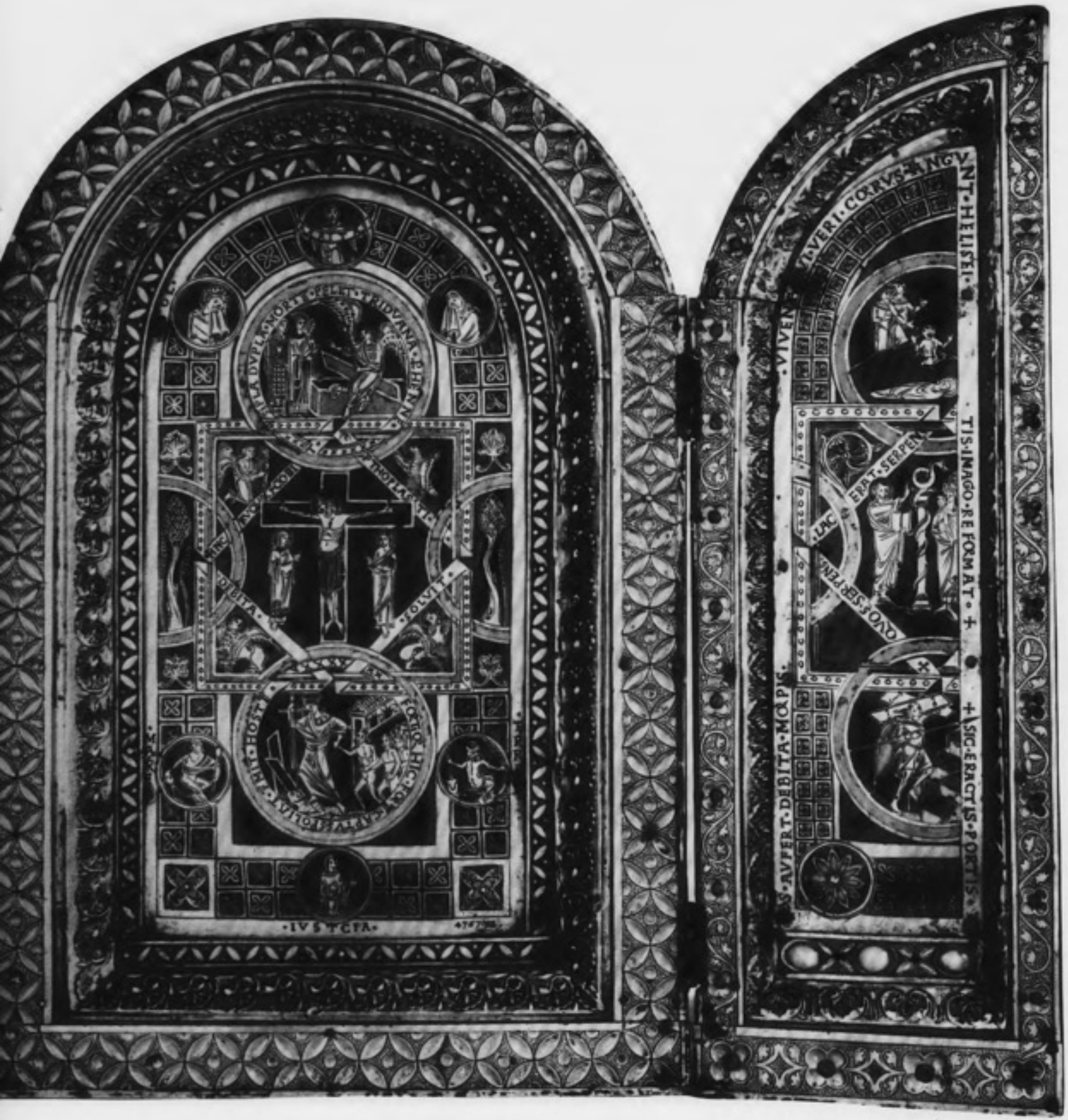
[1] IN CRVCE XPC (sic XP[IST]O) OBIT PTHO (sic P[RO]TH O) PLASTI DEBITA SOLVIT.

[2] SI[M]PLA DVPLA[M] MORTE[M] PELLIT TRIDVANA PHENNE.

[3] FORTIOR HIC FOR[ITER] CAPTVS SPOLIAT P[RE] MIT HOSTE[M].



1. Alton Towers Triptych. London, Victoria and Albert Museum (photo: Victoria and Albert Museum)


·IVSTICIA·
TIS·IMAGO·REFORMAT·+
+SIC·FRACTIS·PORTIS
AVFERT·DEBITA·MORTIS
QVOS·SERPENS
LACERAT·SERPENS
NT·HELISEI

story of Jonah and the whale is identified by the inscription on the border, "Just as the whale gives back Jonah, so the Earth gives back Him who has been buried."[4] In the middle, in an upturned square, is the Sacrifice of Isaac with the inscription, "For the fall of the world, the Son becomes the Host offered to the Father."[5] In the lower circle is the Catching of Leviathan with the inscription, "Bait for the fish, the flesh of Christ becomes a hook for Leviathan."[6]

On the right wing, in the upper circle are a shrouded corpse, a half-length figure, and two other figures all identified by the inscription, "Who touches the body of the true Elisha will live."[7] In the central position in the upturned square, Moses and the Brazen Serpent appear with the inscription, "Those whom a serpent bites, the image of a serpent restores."[8] In the lower circle, Samson carrying off the Gates appears with the inscription, "Having thus pulled off the gates, God takes away the penalty of death."[9]

The triptych came to the Victoria and Albert Museum from Alton Towers, home of the Earls of Shrewsbury. It was first exhibited in 1853 and acquired by the museum in 1858. It was presumed to have been in England for some time, but nothing more about its origins is known.[10] The problem of provenance was first tackled in 1904 by O. van Falke and H. Frauberger who attributed the triptych to Godefroid de Claire of Huy based on stylistic analysis of the frame.[11] Since then the triptych has been labeled Mosan,[12] Mosan?,[13] from Lorraine, Champagne or Northern France,[14] and Rhenish.[15] More recently Peter Lasko suggested that an old frame had been cut down to accomodate the enamels.[16] The Alton Towers enamels reveal a Rhenish style and Mosan iconography that are both geographically and stylistically contiguous.

Early scholarship likened the figures in reserve on the Alton Towers triptych to those on the top of the Stavelot portable altar of about 1150 in Brussels,[17] but the differences are more apparent than the similarities. Whereas the figures in the Stavelot portable altar have enameled robes set against a multicolored enameled background, the figures in our triptych are almost entirely of reserve gilt and niello. Each scene in the triptych is set against a flat field of deep color which highlights the linear quality of the reserve figures. Lasko pointed out that the figures in reserve are closer to the Rhenish Eilbertus tradition than to that of Stavelot.[18]

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[4] CEV IONAM CETVM SIC REDDIT TERRA SEPVLTVM.

[5] PRO LAPSV MVNDI FIT FELIVS MOSTIA (sic HOSTIA) PATRI.

[6] HAMVS QVOD PISCI FIT LEVIATHAN CARO XP[IST]I.

[7] VIVENT VIVERI (sic QVI VERI) CORPUS TANGVNT HELISEI.

[8] QVOS SERPENS LACERAT SERPENTIS IMAGO REFORMAT.

[9] SIC ERACTIS (sic FRACTIS) PORTIS. . .[THE]OS AVERT DEBITA MORPIS (sic MORTIS).

[10] P. Lasko, *Ars Sacra: 800-1200,* Harmondsworth, England, 1972, 213.

[11] O. van Falke and H. Frauberger, *Deutsche Schmelzarbeiten des Mittelalters,* Frankfurt, 1904, 77.

[12] J. Beckwith, *Early Medieval Art,* New York, 1964, 179.

[13] H. Swarzenski, *Monuments of Romanesque Art,* Chicago, 1954, fig. 423.

[14] M-M. Gauthier, *Émaux du moyen-âge,* Fribourg, 1972, 352.

[15] Lasko, 213. Recent scholarship tends to agree. A good bibliography may be found in D. Kötsche, "Zustand der Forschung der Goldschmiedekunst des 12 Jahrhunderts in Rhein-Maas Gebiet," in *Rhein und Maas, Kunst und Kulture, 800-1400,* Cologne, 1973, II, 191-236, especially 210.

[16] Lasko, 213.

[17] Falke, 77.

[18] Lasko, 213, pl. 182.

The technique of champlevé was revived in Europe about 1100 to imitate the expensive cloisonné technique of the Byzantine court. The earliest examples of European champlevé date from 1130-1140 and consist of small enamel plates pieced together to make larger objects.[19] By mid-century large enamel plates appear.[20] The Alton Towers triptych consists of three plates necessary for articulation: the central field and two wings. The ability to produce larger plates indicates a facility in enameling techniques unlikely in the first half of the century.

The triptych is enameled in cool colors: dark blue, cobalt blue, ultramarine, and emerald, with touches of white, red, and lemon. Mosan enamels usually show a warmer palette with larger quantities of red and yellow. In addition, the Alton Towers triptych exhibits little color mixing within the cells created by champlevé. With the exception of the water in Jonah and Leviathan, the background of Luna, and the yellow-to-white arc near Isaac, each area of color is a flat field of a single color. Mosan enamel work often shows color blending on folds and objects to give volume, or within cells for decoration. The figures in reserve and flat background color thus link the Alton Towers triptych to Rhenish, not Mosan, enamel style.

The dating of the triptych is also problematic. Lasko dates it earlier than the Mauritius portable altar of 1160 in the Saint Servatius Treasury in Siegburg.[21] There are similarities, such as the reserve figures set against an almost flat background, the use of the simple four-lobed flower, the types of trees, and the yellow halos. But the Mauritius altar includes color blending, the drapery has more abundant folds, and the figures show lively variation in pose. The earlier dating of the Alton Towers triptych is thus a reflection of the triptych's less polished style. But the lack of sophistication could be a result of a provincial workshop. In the inscriptions there are several deviations from the accepted medieval orthography which would lend credence to a provincial origin. Although the relatively large size of the enameled plates of the Alton Towers triptych indicates skill in handling materials of various melting points, the kind of glaze and technique remain conservative. A possible connection between our triptych and a group of enamels in Cologne done in 1165-1170 is suggested by the marked similarity in the pattern of crosses in squares.[22]

A look at its form will also suggest a later date for the Alton Towers triptych. The triptych form originated in Byzantium and was used both for reliquaries of the True Cross and for devotional ivories. In the Rhine/Meuse area various triptych reliquaries were known and imitated because of their great prestige.[23] One of the earliest triptych reliquaries of the True Cross crafted in the Meuse region is from Stavelot, dated 1156-58.[24] It must have helped set the fashion. In addition to the Stavelot triptych, there are several other extant Mosan True Cross reliquary triptychs, all dating from 1150 to 1165. The Alton Towers triptych is a devotional triptych probably inspired by the popularity of the reliquary form in the mid-twelfth century.

[19] Shrine of St. Victor of Xanten, 1130; Head Reliquary of Pope Alexander in Brussels, 1146.

[20] St. Remaclus altar, 1145-58, and the Eilbertus portable altar, 1133-1166.

[21] Lasko, 213.

[22] Chalice cup illustrated in Cologne, I, pl. H10. See also D. Kötsche, "Die Kolner Kelchkuppe und ihr Umkreis," in *The Year 1200,* The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1975, III, 139-162.

[23] A. Grabar, "Orfèverie mosan, orfèverie byzantine," in *L'art mosan,* ed. P. Francastel, Paris, 1953, 123.

[24] W. Voelkle, *The Stavelot Triptych—Mosan Art and the Legend of the True Cross,* The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, 1980, 11.

Another feature of enamels of the Rhine/Meuse region is the use of inscribed bands arranged in a geometric pattern. In the Alton Towers triptych the interlocking inscribed bands gain visual importance, for they link together scenes in an overall design and impart a clear order to the piece. A strong abstract pattern is created which orders and organizes the images and reflects the medieval world's ideas of theology, cosmology, number symbolism, and philosophy.

The interpretation of the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New Testament was an important part of the iconography of the arts in the region. The use of typologies culminated in the Klosterneuberg altar at the close of the twelfth century and the *Biblia Pauperum* at the close of the thirteenth. In its typologies, the Alton Towers triptych for the most part follows standard Mosan iconography as seen in the Stavelot portable altar, but there are significant differences.

The types and anti-types of the Alton Towers triptych are read across. In the top row of circles are the Resurrection and its types, in the upturned squares the Crucifixion is flanked by its best-known precursors, and at the bottom in circles is the Harrowing of Hell with its types. The scenes and the events which they prefigure are bound together in circles and squares by interlocking inscribed bands. The bands unify the parallel scenes horizontally by enclosing them in the same geometric forms. The bands interlock vertically, uniting separate scenes into panels of either Old or New Testament events. The central panel of the Alton Towers triptych contains the New Testament anti-types, and the wings contain the parallel Old Testament types.

The top scene in the central field is the Holy Woman at the Tomb which conforms to the usual representations of this treatment of Resurrection. The Jonah story accompanies it. The Jonah sequence in the triptych conflates two parts of the story: the swallowing and the spitting out of Jonah. The top scene on the right wing is unique: Elisha's bones reviving a dead man.[25] The artist must have invented the iconography which shows the corpse of Elisha in the cave, the revived man emerging from the cave, and two amazed witnesses.

In the next group of types, the image of the Crucifixion, located in the middle of the central panel, is paired with the Sacrifice of Isaac and the Brazen Serpent. There are two enamel examples contemporary with the triptych that show similar representations of the Isaac scene: an enamel plaque attributed to Godefroid de Claire in the British Museum, and the Balfour of Burleigh ciborium from England or Northern France in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Although made in three different locations, all three clearly derive from the same pictorial source or model tradition.

On the right wing is the Brazen Serpent, one of the most popular types. From the twelfth century on, there are two kinds of serpents: a small dragon presented on a column, and a snake hanging on a stick.[26] It is the former type that is popular in the Rhine/Meuse area. The serpent in our triptych is a cross between the two images because the dragon has a snake-like tail wrapped around the column. The only other example of a similar dragon/snake is in the Resurrection window at Châlons-sur-Marne of c. 1147,[27] which in other respects presents clear affinities with the Stavelot portable altar.

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[25] There have been many erroneous identifications of this scene. L. Grodecki, "A propos des vitraux de Châlons-sur-Marne: deux points d'iconographie mosan," in *L'art Mosan,* ed. P. Francastel, Paris, 1953, 168f., identifies it as a common Resurrection type Elijah and the widow of Zaraphat. M-M. Gauthier, 139, and L. Réau, *Iconographie de l'art chrétien,* Paris, 1955-9, I, 209, confuse it with a different Elisha story. Even the card in the showcase in the Victoria and Albert Museum describes it as "a dead man raised by Moses and the Brazen Serpent," an uncorrected typographical error.

[26] U. Graepler-Diehl, "Eherne Schlange," in *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie,* Freiburg im Breisgau, I, 1968, col. 583-5.

The bottom scene of the central panel is the Harrowing of Hell, the polar opposite of the Resurrection scene above it. The descent to the underworld stands for the devil's final defeat. While the types in the Alton Towers triptych emphasize the defeat of an enemy, they are unusual in other ways. The type on the left wing shows Christ, identified by His red halo,[28] catching Leviathan with a fishing rod. Since Christ is the anti-type and cannot be a precursor of Himself, this scene must be read as a New Testament illustration of an Old Testament text.

The catching of Leviathan is not usually depicted in typological cycles, although the type had been commented upon by the twelfth-century exegete Rupert of Deutz as a prophecy of Job's and Christ's victory over the devil.[29] The Leviathan is newly-injected into visual typological cycles, but a textual interest in the theme rather than a common pictorial source must be assumed, since the scenes are extremely varied. Leviathan first appears in the *Liber Floridus,* an illustrated encyclopedia rich in typologies, compiled by Lambert of St. Omer around 1120. Christ, victorious, is sitting on the back of a swimming, dragon-like Leviathan.[30] Another appearance of Leviathan, although variously interpreted, is the Crucifixion miniature in a manuscript at Oxford, Corpus Christi College, from about 1130-1140.[31] In the Châlons-sur-Marne stained glass, the figures are identified by a banderole as Job and Leviathan.[32] We have already seen that this window shares elements with Rhenish/Mosan typologies. The written reference to Leviathan suggests that this source was textual, not pictorial.

The *Hortus Deliciarum* of Abbess Herrade of Hohenbourg, written before 1176-1196, has a later and more complex Leviathan.[33] This illustration is a transcription of Honorius of Autun's description of the catching of Leviathan in the *Speculum Ecclesiae* of about 1120.[34] As in the triptych, Christ the fisherman holds a line, which here has a string of medallions representing Christ's ancestors, attached to it. The bait is a Crucifix with the triumphant Christ standing before it. The mouth of the dragon-like Leviathan stretches wide to receive the foot of the Cross.

[27] L. Grodecki, *Le vitrail romain,* Fribourg, 1977, pl. 98.

[28] The red halo is also found in the Stavelot portable altar and the window at Châlons-sur-Marne.

[29] L. Grodecki, *Mosan,* 169, n. 43, transcribes Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* CLXVIII, col. 1183-1184, Super Job commt: The lure, like Christ's humanity attracts. The hook, hidden like the divinity of Christ, captures Leviathan; and the ultimate redemption of humanity is brought about by Christ's sacrifice on the Cross.

[30] Lambert of St. Omer, *Liber Floridus,* ed. A. Derolez, Ghent, 1968, Ghent UB, 92, fol. 62v.

[31] Florence and John of Worcester, *Chronicles,* c. 1130-40, (Oxford, Corpus Christi College, MS 157, fol. 77v.). Arguments for Jonah, John, Tobias, and Job are noted with bibliography in C.M. Kauffman, *Romanesque Manuscripts 1066-1190,* London, 1975, 87f.

[32] The damaged inscription reads [Levia] THAN. On the banderole: N[um]QVIS LEVI[athan capies] S [h] A LEVI [athan capie]S [h]AMO. Transcribed in Grodecki, *Le Vitrail,* pl. 98.

[33] Herrade of Hohenbourg, *Hortus Deliciarum,* eds. R. Green, et al, London, 1979. Date from I, 1; illustration of Leviathan in II, 135.

[34] Grodecki, *Mosan,* 167, n. 40, cites Honorius of Autun, *Speculuum Ecclesiae* in Migne, *Patrologia Latina,* CLXXII, col. 906 and col. 937-8.

There is a strong parallel between the fishing Christ of the triptych and that of the *Hortus Deliciarum.* This image of Christ as fisherman, though simpler in the triptych, is so clear it is tempting to surmise that, had it been invented earlier in the century, it too would have become a standard type. The fact that it only appears twice helps to strengthen the case for the dating of the triptych nearer to the date of the *Hortus Deliciarum,* in the last quarter of the twelfth century.

Paired with the Leviathan is Samson, one of the most important types for Christ. Samson and the Gates of Gaza often has the Resurrection as an anti-type. In our triptych the anti-type is the Harrowing of Hell. The other known example of Samson and the Gates of Gaza as a type for the Harrowing of Hell is the painted vault in St. Maria Lyskirche in Cologne, built in 1220.[35] The unusual pairing of Samson and the Harrowing of Hell found both in a church in Cologne and on the triptych shows that, in content as well as drawing style and enamel technique, the triptych resembles work done in the Cologne area. The deviations from standard Mosan iconography point to a date in the last quarter of the twelfth century and to Rhenish origin.

The program of the triptych includes medallions of cosmological significance. In the central field are six small medallions containing figures identified by inscriptions: Sol, Luna, and Karitas appear in the top third; Mare, Terra, and Justicia in the bottom third. Such personifications, though common in the Rhine and Meuse regions, find their origins in late antique gods.

A fourth-century silver plate from Parabiago now in Milan features the sun and the moon as the elements Ignis and Aer. They are identified by their placement and headdresses as sun and moon. A ninth-century illustration to Bede's scientific treatise *De Natura Rerum* shows the sun with the traditional headdress (fig. 2). Moreover, the manuscript's diagram of the course of the sun, a square inscribed within a circle with multiple bands at the circumference, looks like an early ancestor of the geometric divisions of the Alton Towers triptych.

In the triptych, the moon represents the element air through classical iconography and represents the Old Law through Christian iconography. On Christ's right is the sun, representing the element fire and the New Law. Thus, Luna and Sol play multiple roles: as elements, as the symbols of the Old and New Law, as witnesses to the Crucifixion, and also as indicators of the heavens to which Christ has ascended in the top scene.[36]

Similarly, the figures of Mare and Terra, in addition to their traditional pagan meaning, represent the earthly and material life as well as the direction Christ must take to descend into Hell. The Crucifixion takes place between heaven and earth and is a conquest of both the material world, represented by the base elements, and death itself, represented by the narrative of the Harrowing of Hell. This idea occurs several centuries earlier, in a Carolingian Crucifixion ivory in Munich (fig. 3) where the conquest of death is represented by a Last Judgment scene.[37] Of the

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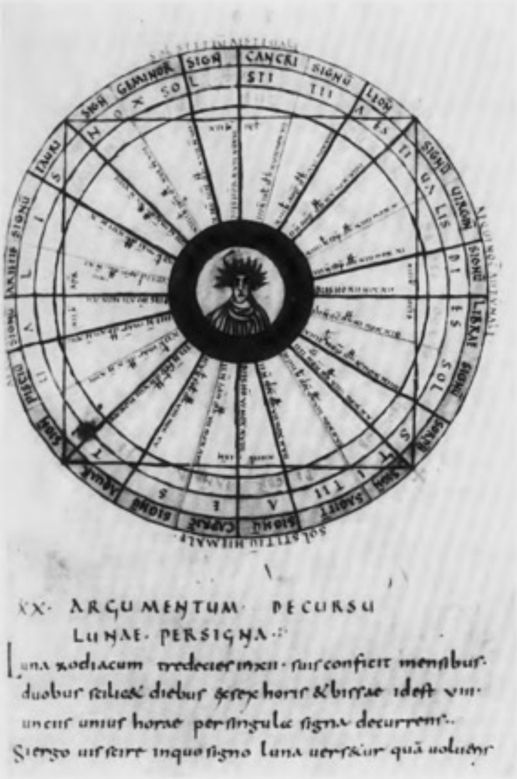
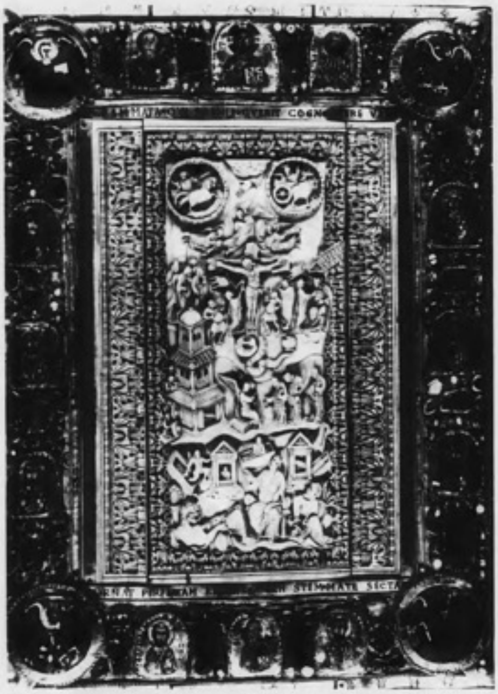
[35] P. Clemen, *Die romanische Monumentalmalerei in der Rheinlanden,* Dusseldorf, 1916, 587f., fig. 404.

[36] Discussions of the Sun and Moon are found in S. Ferber, "Crucifixion Iconography in a Group of Carolingian Ivory Plaques," in *Art Bulletin,* 1966, 323-334, esp. 329; and L. Hautecoeur, "Le soleil et la lune dans les Crucifixions," in *Revue archéologique,* Paris, 1921, 15-32.

[37] Discussed in Ferber, 323f.



2. Cursus Solus, from the Venerable Bede, *De Natura Rerum,* Salzburg, c. 818. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, clm 210, fol. 136r (photo: Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek)



3. Crucifixion Ivory, upper cover, ninth century. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, cod lat 4452 (photo: Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek)

seven virtues, only two are represented on the triptych: Justice between earthly elements belongs to the material world, and Charity at the top belongs to the heavenly sphere.[38]

Although figures in the triptych are labeled Sol, Luna, Mare, and Terra, it is clear they also represent the four elements. The four elements reflect the four parts of the world and the whole is bound up in a diagram of the world. This diagram is a schema, not to be confused with geographical maps which co-existed with diagrams but were different in appearance and purpose.[39]

The concept of the world is expressed in various ways. Heaven and earth are indicated by the placement of the elements. The Crucifixion occupies the central position, which agrees with New Testament exegesis placing it and Jerusalem at the center of the world. The interlaced, inscribed bands on the triptych create shapes that suggest the arrangement of the central panel is based on a world diagram.

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[38] M-M. Gauthier cites an inscription on a twelfth-century plaque in Berlin: God is love and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in Him. "Deus caritas est Qui manet in caritate in Deo manet et Deus in eo," 140.

[39] J. Lelewel, *Géographie du moyen-âge,* Brussels, Epilogue, 1857, 35-43. There are examples of both in Lambert's *Liber Floridus:* T-shape map diagrams: 94v, 19r, 138v, 225v, 226r; a circular map with countries and rivers: 92v; and a map of Europe within the tripartite division seen in the schemata: 241r.

The use of inscribed bands is common in Mosan art, the quadrilobe divisions on the Stavelot portable altar and the stained glass at Châlons-sur-Marne being two examples. Unlike the interlocking design of the triptych, however, quadrilobe designs essentially encircle a central square, enclosing and isolating it. The triptych, on the other hand, shows a central square turned on its corner set within another square; the triangles formed are the equivalents of the quadrilobes. The interlaced circles at the four corners of the upturned square link it to other images above, below, and on either wing.

This design is not merely a successful decorative invention on the part of the artist, but lies deep within the tradition of medieval scientific schemata. Medieval book illustrations were more than contemporary comments on an earlier text. They were interpretive, treating not only narrative themes, but dogma, typology, and allegory. These illustrations would suggest higher levels of Christian meaning which could be understood only through the study of scripture and theology.[40] The Alton Towers triptych offers these many layers of interpretation and, like many illustrations, is independent of a specific text.

Circular compositions can be interpreted as an abstraction of the map of the world with different points added: the four seasons, humours, elements, zodiac, months, ages, etc. While antique cosmologies were circular, the Middle Ages took a decisive step in representing the Earth as a square reposing in the middle of the cosmos (figs. 4, 7, and 8).[41] Once the abstraction of concentric circles was abandoned in favor of a combination of circles and squares, the images could expand in complexity and variety. Clearly the Alton Towers triptych fits into this group of circular and square diagrams reflecting a similar concept of the world spanning several centuries.

One of the earliest of these diagrams is the map of the world from the c. 818 copy of Bede's *De Natura Rerum* (fig. 4).[42] The three known continents, divided by an inverted T-shape (which later will stand for major rivers), fill the central lozenge. Inscribed in the surrounding band are the seasons and climates. At each corner, circles indicate the winds or cardinal points. The world is diagrammatically defined by lines drawn from the four winds. The world is composed of the elements which are written in the triangular segments along with descriptions of their properties. This diagram is a reflection of the Carolingian renascence, alluding to, but independent of, Bede's eighth-century text.[43] The early authors continued to be the basis of late medieval learning, but the schemata updated the text.[44]

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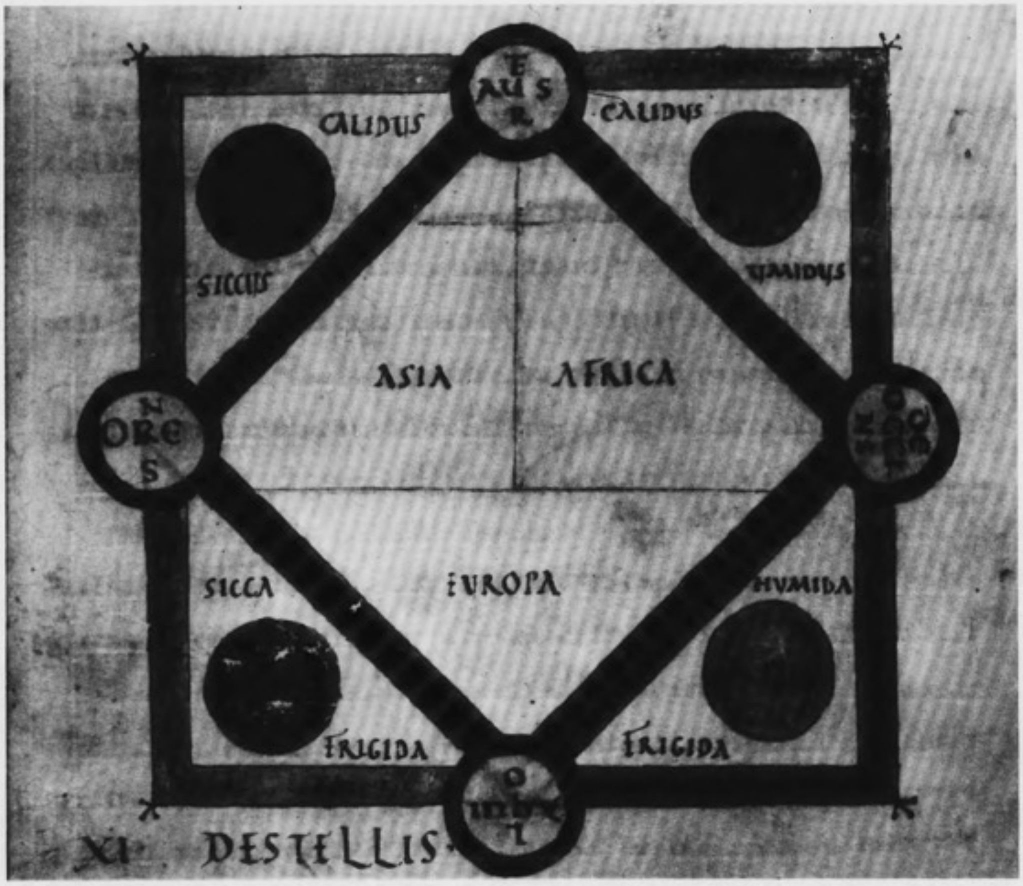
[40] Kauffman discusses diagrams, 42f.

[41] E. Beer, *Die Rose der Kathedral von Lausanne und der Kosmologische Bilderkreis des Mittelalters,* Bern, 1952, 33f; and Beer, "Nouvelles réflections sur l'image du monde dans la cathédrale de Lausanne," in *Revue de l'art,* 1970, 61.

[42] Although the manuscript is generally believed to come from Salzburg, Ferber feels this map is from a manuscript written in St. Armand, France, 328, n. 48.

[43] While it is known that Bede's contemporaries did include maps and plans in their books, a scheme reflecting Bede's eighth-century view of the Earth would have to be divided into two parts, one above and one below the torrid zone. See Bede, *de Elementis philos,* IV, 225, quoted in Lelewel, 117, n. 6. Lelewel then cites Rabanus Maurus (d. 856), XII, 2, 171-2, which is a contemporary description of the c. 818 diagram, 119f.

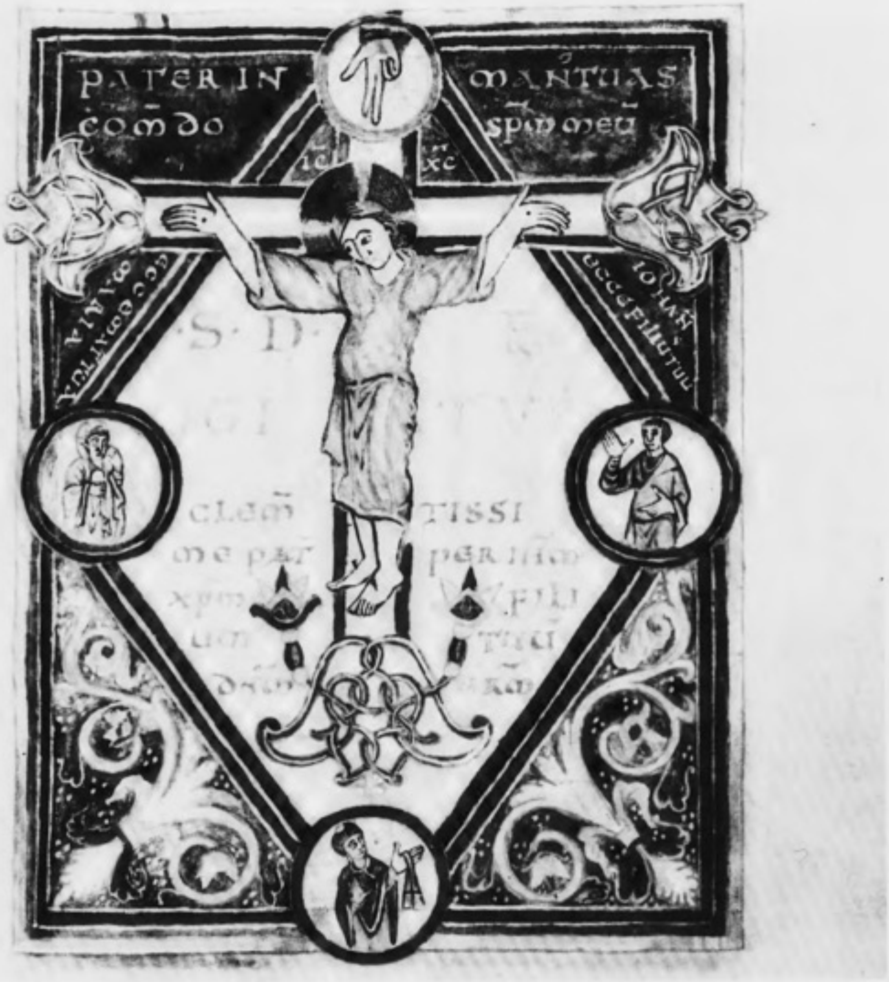
[44] H. Bober, "An illustrated Mediaeval School-Book of Bede's *De Natura Rerum,*" in *The Journal of the Walters Art Gallery,* 1956-7, 75-89, esp. 81f.



4. Map of the world, from the Venerable Bede, *De Natura Rerum*, Salzburg, c.818. Vienna, National-bibliothek 387, fol. 134 (photo: Oësterreiches National-bibliothek)

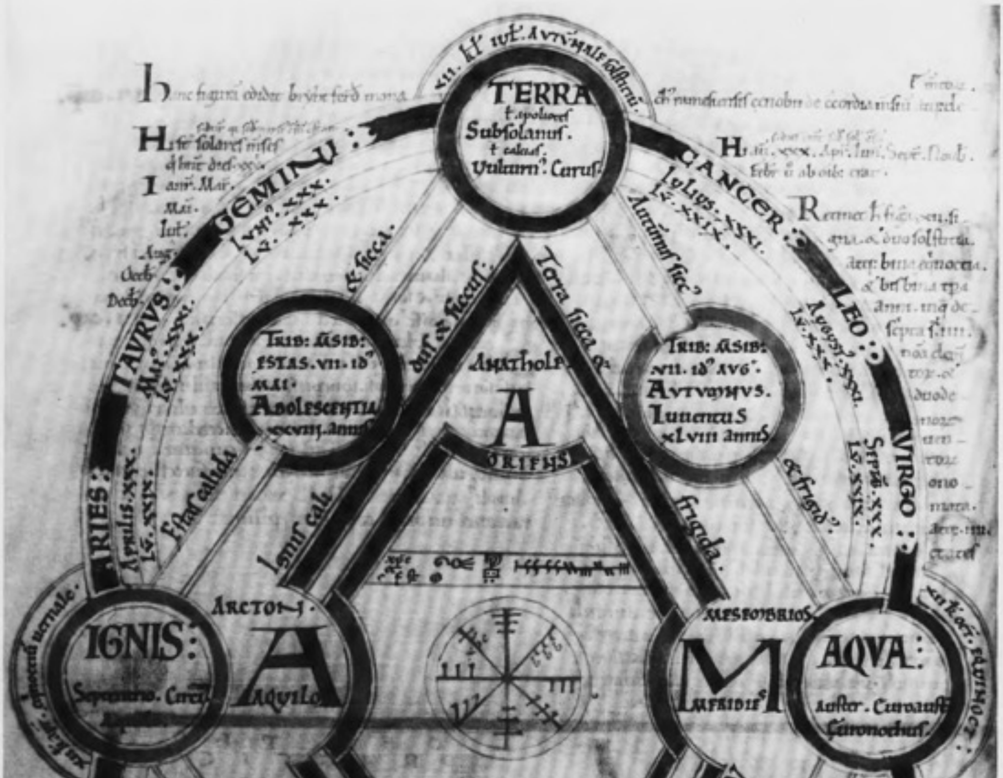
There are parallels between the Alton Towers triptych and this diagram of the world: the inscribed bands, the square within a square, the intersecting circles at the corners, references to the elements and the poles. In the diagram a T-shape separates the continents. In the enamel the central square has been rotated so the T-shape becomes a crucifix in the center of the triptych and the world. The ninth-century diagram reflected the way medieval scholars conceived of the world. Similar schemata had great influence for centuries, for example the tenth-century *Te Igitur* from the Fulda Sacramentary (fig. 5).

While the illustration to Bede shed some of its scientific notations in subsequent religious manuscript illuminations, in scientific diagrams the opposite occurred; the T-shaped map of the world disappeared while the overall schema was re-

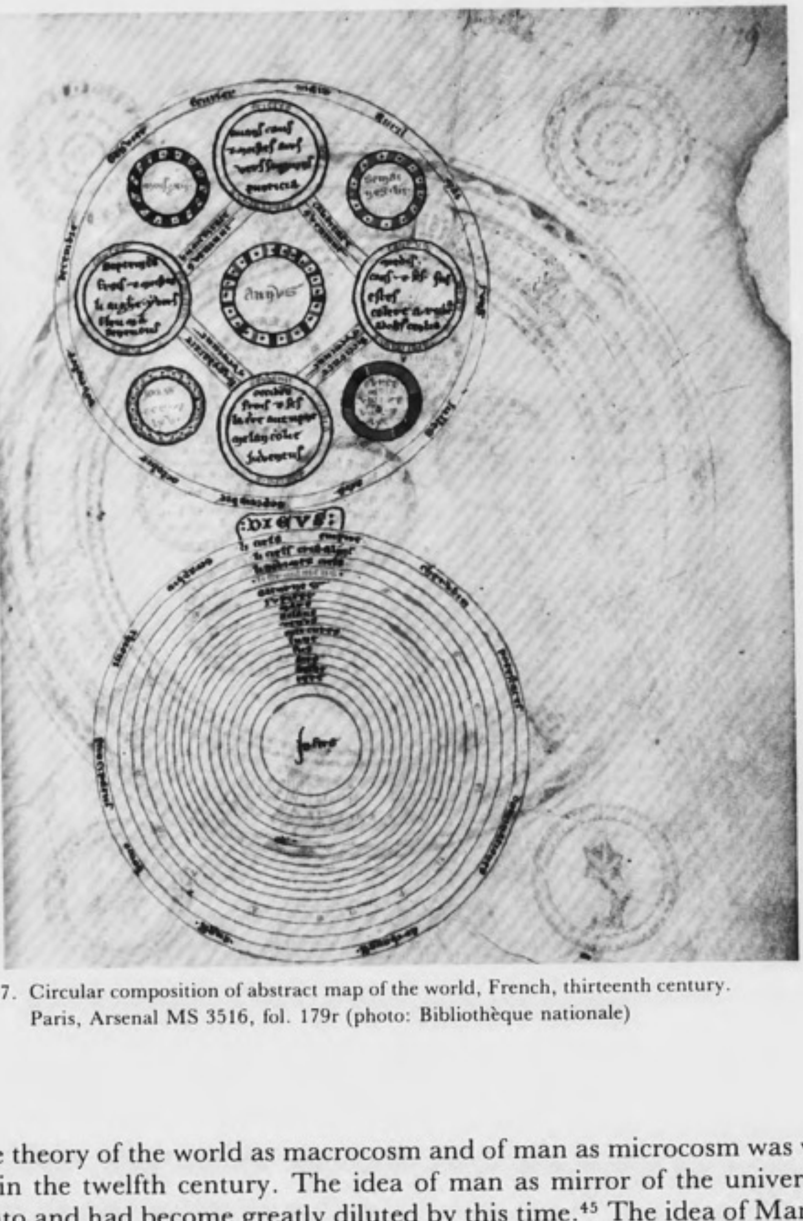


5. *Te Igitur*, Crucifixion, tenth century, Fulda Sacramentary. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, clm 10077, fol. 12r (photo: Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek)

tained. Byrhtferth's Diagram is from a natural science textbook of about 1090 (fig. 6). It shows four elements, the seasons, and the four humours in an ordered manner that recalls the Bede manuscript. The compartmentalization, the cosmological diagrams, the clarifying inscriptions found in this manuscript are found in later Mosan art; but in no other enamel is the diagram as similar to the scientific schemata as in the Alton Towers triptych.


TERRA
Subsolanus
Vulturnus. Eurus
IGNIS
Septentrio. Circius
AQVA
Auster. Euroauster
AER
Zephyrus
Affricus. Chorus
GEMINI
CANCER
LEO
VIRGO
LIBRA
SCORPIUS
SAGITTARIUS
CAPRICORNUS
AQVARIUS
PISCES
ARIES
TAURUS
Anathole
A
ORIENS
ARCTOS
A
Aquilo
MESEMBRIOS
M
Meridies
DISIS
D
OCCIDENS

6. Byrhtferth's Diagram, c. 1090. Oxford, St. John's College 17, fol. 7v (photo: Bodleian Library)



7. Circular composition of abstract map of the world, French, thirteenth century. Paris, Arsenal MS 3516, fol. 179r (photo: Bibliothèque nationale)

The theory of the world as macrocosm and of man as microcosm was very important in the twelfth century. The idea of man as mirror of the universe came from Plato and had become greatly diluted by this time.[45] The idea of Man as soul of the world was popularized by the ninth-century scholar Duns Scotus[46] whose theory is still illustrated in the twelfth-century manuscript *Clavis physicae* of

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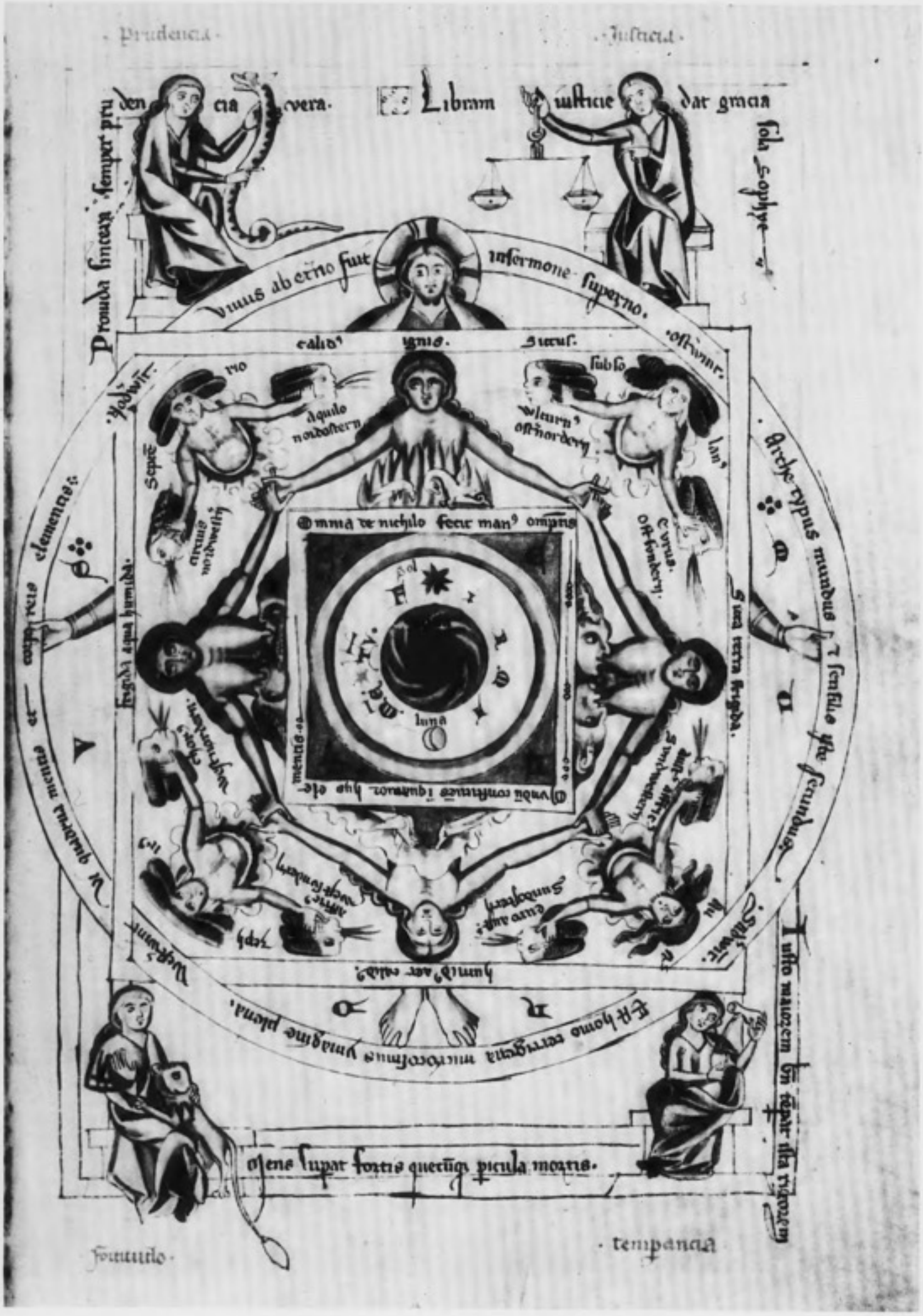
[45] For further information see H. Bober, "In Principio: Creation Before Time," in *De artibus opuscula XL: Essays in Honor of Erwin Panofsky,* ed. M. Meiss, New York, 1961, 13-28; and J. Chydenius, *The Theory of Medieval Symbolism,* Helsingfors, 1960, on how Plato survived and in what form.

[46] M-Th. d'Alverny, "Le cosmos symbolique du XIIe siècle," in *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen-âge,* Paris, 1953, 31-84, discusses an illuminated manuscript of Duns Scotus and his place in the body of critical thought.


prudencia
Iusticia
Libram iusticie dat gracia
ignis
sol
luna
fortitudo
temperancia

8. Macrocosm in Four Groups, Kloster Alderbach, c. 1295. Munich, Staatsbibliothek, clm 2655, fol. 105r (photo: Bayerisches Staatsbibliothek)

Honorius of Autun.[47] The figure of a woman is surrounded by medallions of the sun and moon, the four elements, and their scientific qualities. Honorius explained the correlation between man and the elements: flesh equals earth; blood equals water; breath equals air; and heat equals fire. The destiny of man is tied to the universe man shapes. This well-known commentator was but one among many who drew upon pagan cosmological notions and infused them with the spirit of twelfth-century theology.

The central field of the Alton Towers triptych is a New Testament narrative, as well as a cosmological diagram. As the elements are related to the nature of man, so is the Crucifixion and the diagram that contains it. This is also seen in a miniature of about 1191-98, showing *Locus* and the Four Elements (fig. 9). The lozenge with inscribed borders features *Locus* in the center surrounded by the four elements; the scales of justice are placed below the figure. While here the Creator is in the center, in the triptych the center is specifically Christ's sacrifice for mankind. The triptych is at once an object of religious devotion, a symbol of the nature of the world, and a comment on the cosmological significance of His sacrifice.

The diagram of the microcosm and the macrocosm was still relevant in the late thirteenth century. The Macrocosm in Four Groups (fig. 8), one of the most copied works of the thirteenth century,[48] is a complex diagram of a square with the elements and winds inscribed in a circle. The head, feet, and arms of Christ Logos dominate and surround the cosmos. The personified elements form a barrier with their arms around a second square in which the terrestrial globe is centered. In addition, four virtues and four groups of animals are included.[49] The relationship with the triptych is striking. Both include interlocking circles and squares, inscriptions in the margin, Christ as the central focus, and a reference to the elements and the virtues. This image of the universe reaches back to the ninth-century world diagram.

Although the Alton Towers triptych stands out as a unique piece of enamel work stylistically, it is firmly in the tradition of the medieval idea of the universe. Related to the ninth-century manuscript in its complex interlocking of circles and square, the Alton Towers triptych is part of the continuum of artistic and scientific thought. The use of medieval schemata as a basis for a visual statement makes the triptych more than a narrative of biblical events. The abstract shapes are a schematic statement, a summing up of the universe.[50] Locked within the eye-catching design, in addition to the religious message, is a commentary on the nature of the universe and the relationship of man to that universe. While the eye is seduced by color and line, the greatest appeal is to the intellect with allusions to theology, philosophy, and cosmology. The triptych is indeed a summation of medieval thought.

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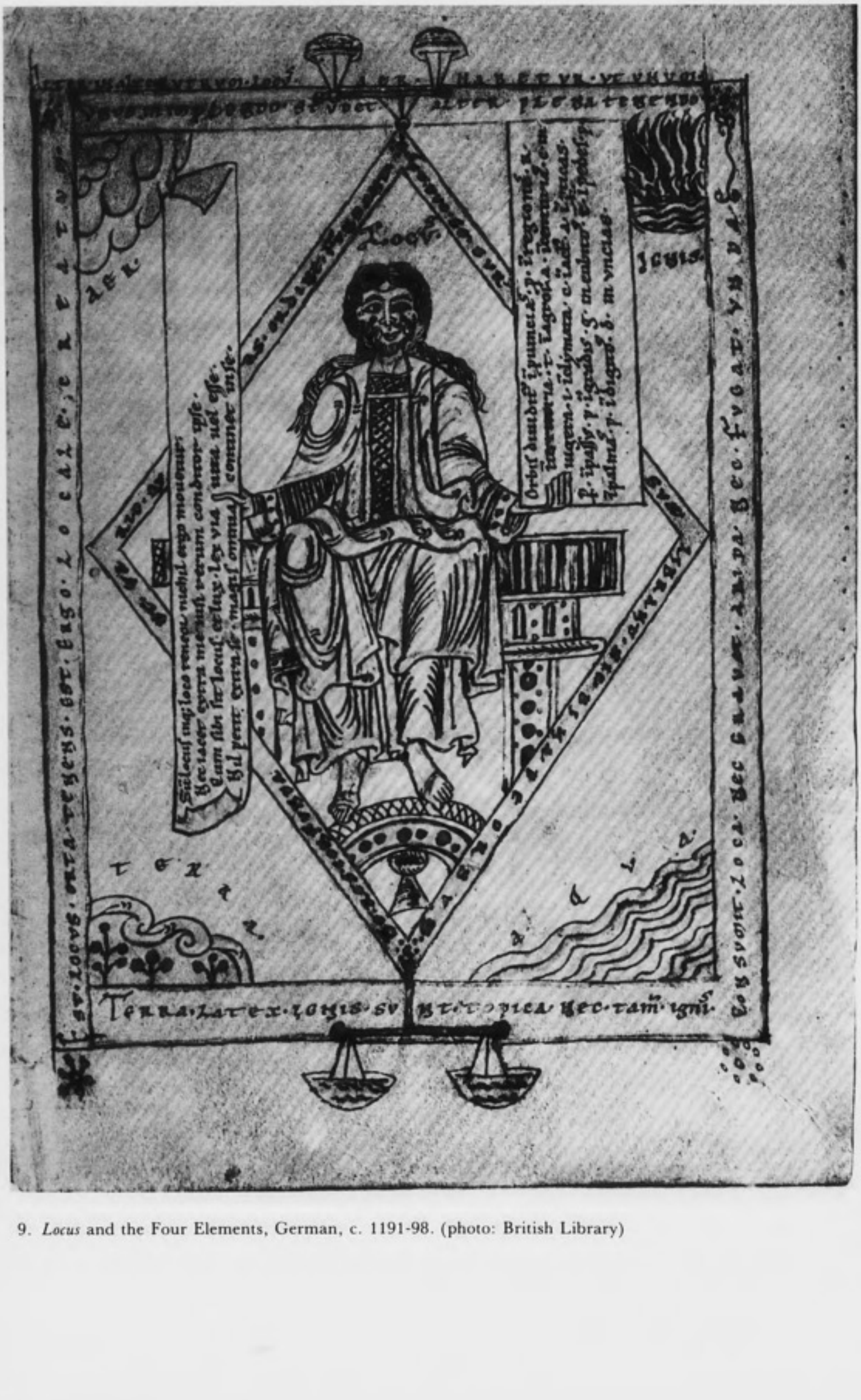
[47] (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, MS lat. 6734), described in M-M. Davy, *Initiation à la symbolique romane (XIIe siècle),* Paris, 1964, 41f.

[48] Beer, *Revue,* 61.

[49] d'Alverny, 78, transcribes the inscription as: "Viuus ab eterno fuit in sermone superno/Archetypus mundus et sensilis iste secundus/Est homo terrigena microcosmus ymagine plena/Vi quadra mentis et corporis elementis." He was alive from the beginning above all, that second archetype, sinless and feeling; He is a microcosm with an earth-born image, full of four-fold strength of mind and of elements of the body.

[50] Bober, *Walters,* 81f.


Locus
aer
ignis

9. *Locus* and the Four Elements, German, c. 1191-98. (photo: British Library)

Is it a backward-looking piece, a conservative reflection of its time? Is it the sole surviving piece of a Rhenish workshop? One possibility does not exclude the other. It is my opinion that the triptych is the work of a provincial craftsman filling a complicated program using all the resources at his disposal, borrowing when possible, inventing when necessary, and creating an original piece. Support for a provincial provenance can be seen in the inscriptions, written with deviations—if not outright misreadings — from the usual medieval orthography, and in the enamel technique which, while showing skill in handling and size, is conservative in the choice of opaque enamels and flat color fields. Moreover, the figures are drawn in a stiff, elongated style, less fluid than, but reminiscent of, monuments of the Rhenish school mentioned earlier. The complex typological program relies on Mosan typologies when possible. It would seem that the craftsman of the Alton Towers triptych was following a precedent rather than setting one. Since the devotional triptych became frequent only after the many Mosan reliquary triptychs of the 1150s and 1160s, and since there is a close parallel in iconography with a miniature from the *Hortus Deliciarum* of 1176-96, I would date the triptych to the last quarter of the twelfth century, a few decades later than is usually assumed. Even without precise dating and provenance, the triptych remains a handsome reflection of the ideas of the Rhine/Meuse region in the twelfth century.

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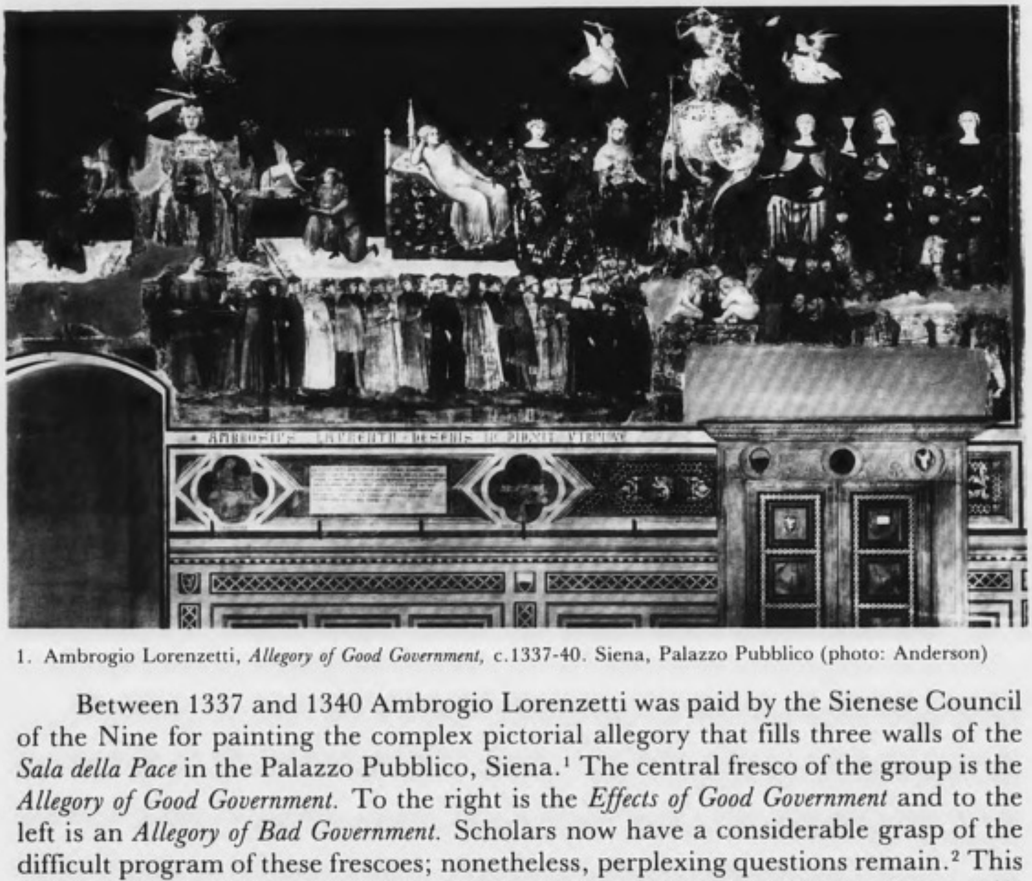
Notes on Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good Government*

DEBORAH LEUCHOVIUS



1. Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegory of Good Government,* c.1337-40. Siena, Palazzo Pubblico (photo: Anderson)

Between 1337 and 1340 Ambrogio Lorenzetti was paid by the Sienese Council of the Nine for painting the complex pictorial allegory that fills three walls of the *Sala della Pace* in the Palazzo Pubblico, Siena.[1] The central fresco of the group is the *Allegory of Good Government.* To the right is the *Effects of Good Government* and to the left is an *Allegory of Bad Government.* Scholars now have a considerable grasp of the difficult program of these frescoes; nonetheless, perplexing questions remain.[2] This article addresses the allegorical associations of the twenty-four Sienese citizens who

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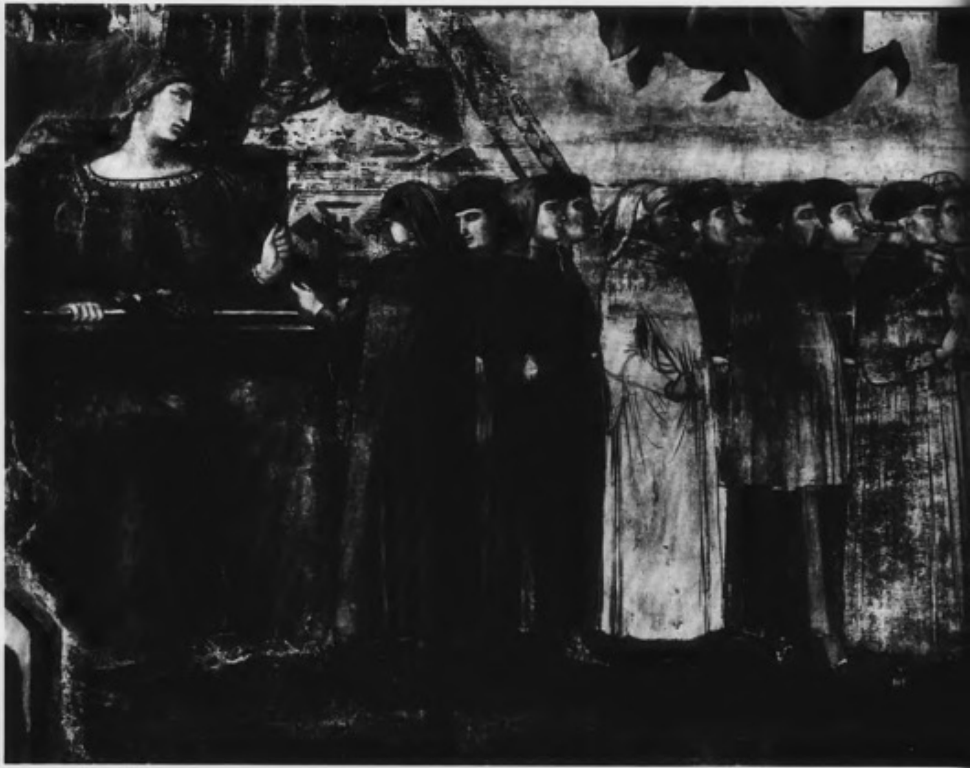
This article is derived from a study of Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Allegory of Good Government* done under the direction of Dr. James H. Stubblebine, whom I would like to thank for his guidance and thought-provoking criticism. I am also indebted to Dr. Sarah Wilk for her help and encouragement, and to Dr. William Bowsky who kindly gave his expert criticism to the author.

[1] On the dates see C. Brandi, "Chiarimenti sul 'Buon Governo' di Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Bollettino d'Arte,* XL, 1955, 119-123 and G. Milanesi, *Documenti per la storia dell'arte senese,* Siena, 1854, 195-197.

[2] For interpretations of the program see N. Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art: the Frescoes by Ambrogio Lorenzetti and Taddeo di Bartolo in the Palazzo Pubblico," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXI, 1958, 179-207; G. Rowley, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti,* Princeton, 1958; U. Feldges-Henning, "The Pictoral Programme of the Sala Della Pace: A New Interpretation," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXXV, 1972, 145-162; E. Southard, *The Frescoes in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico, 1289-1539: Studies in Imagery and Relations to Other Communal Palaces in Tuscany,* New York, 1979; C. Frugoni, "The Book of Wisdom and Lorenzetti's Fresco in the Palazzo Pubblico at Siena," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XLIII, 1980, 239-241.



are represented in the *Allegory of Good Government* (fig. 1) and considers the relationship between a 1339 revision of the Sienese Constitution and Ambrogio's own commission.

The citizens (fig. 2) play a prominent role in Ambrogio's work; they link the two sides of the painting, and unite the figure of *Ben Comun,* to the right of the center, with the figure of Justice, at the far left, by holding cords which run from one allegorical figure to the other. It has been suggested that these twenty-four citizens represent government officials and that their number refers to the Council of Twenty-Four, the early form of Sienese self-government which presided over Siena from c. 1236 to 1271.[3] At the time this painting was commissioned, however, Siena was governed by the Sienese Council of the Nine. The decision of the Nine to represent twenty-four government officials rather than their own number may rest partially in the fact that Siena under the Nine continued to look back to the rule of

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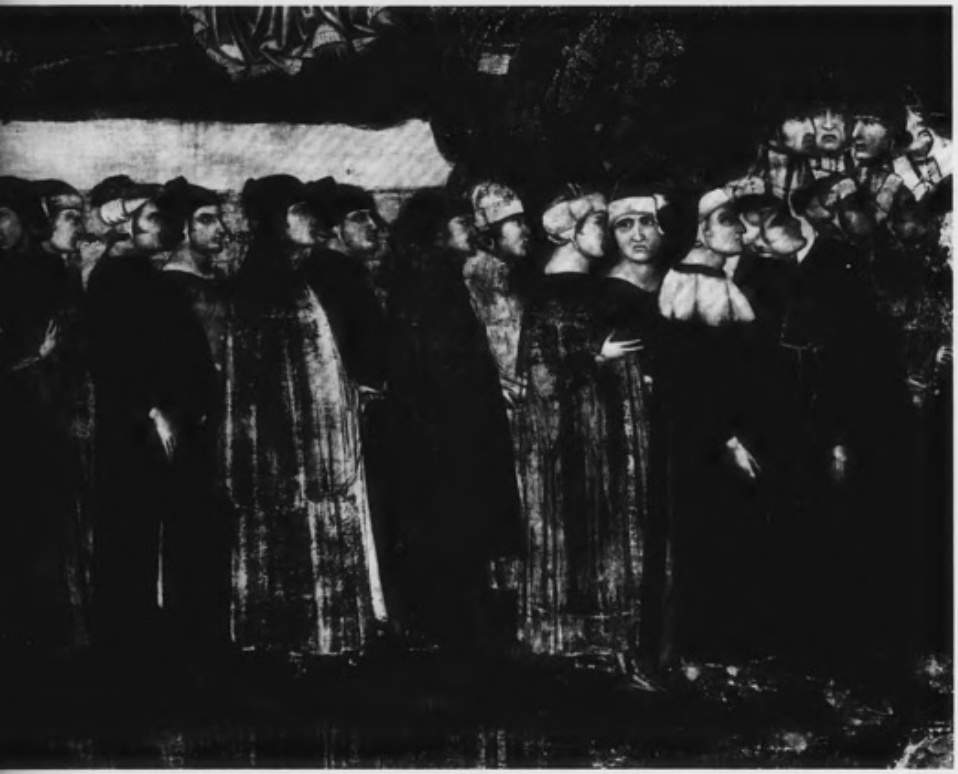
[3] G. Rowley, I, 102.



2. Detail of fig. 1, the citizens (photo: Anderson)

the Twenty-Four with great pride.[4] However, there is reason to offer further speculation as to why the Nine would choose to have twenty-four government officials represented in Ambrogio's allegory. The number of the citizens may also refer to the Twenty-Four Elders of the Apocalypse, equated with the twelve patriarchs of the Old Testament and the twelve Apostles of the New Testament, who sit with the Lord in the Court of Heaven at the Last Judgment.

Precedents exist for the association of the twelve patriarchs and the twelve Apostles with contemporary rulers. In the portal sculpture at St. Denis the Old Testament patriarchs were seen as the spiritual ancestors of the kings of France.[5] This connection had been established since Carolingian times when the French coronation rites first expressed the hope that the Lord would bestow the virtues of

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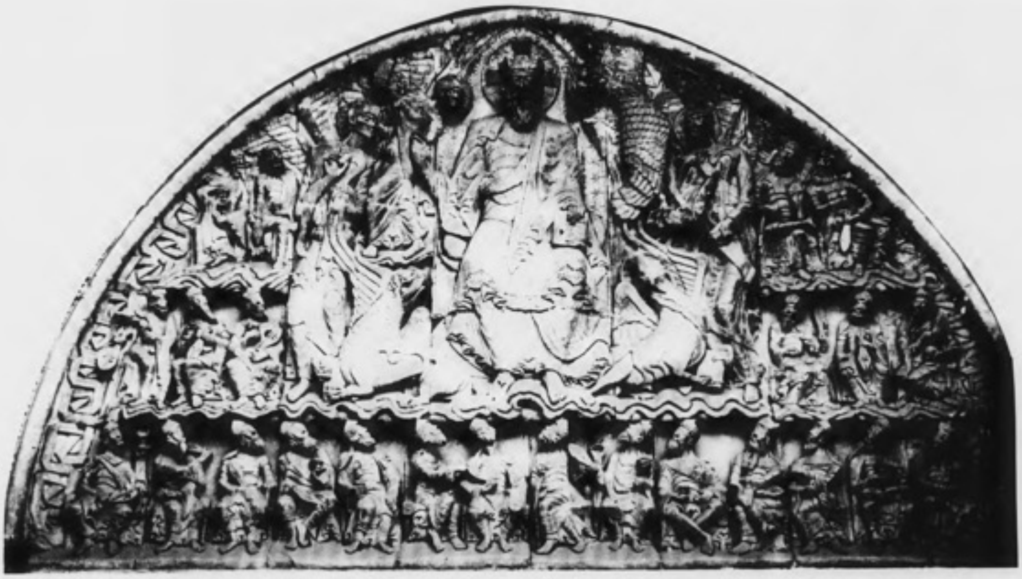
[4] W. Bowsky, "Medieval Citizenship: The Individual and the State in the Commune of Siena, 1287-1355," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History,* IV, 1967, 225; N. Rubinstein, 179. In 1260, under the Council of the Twenty-Four, Ghibelline Siena inflicted a crushing defeat upon Guelph Florence at the battle of Montaperti. This victory prompted the dedication of the city to the Virgin, an act which is commemorated elsewhere on the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico.

[5] A. Katzenellenbogen, *The Sculptural Programs of Chartres Cathedral,* first ed., New York, 1959, 27-28, 34.



3. *Last Judgment,* c.1115-35. Moissac, tympanum of the south portal, St. Pierre (photo: Studio Violle, S.A.)

the Old Testament kings and early leaders of the Jewish people on those who were regarded as their spiritual successors.[6] Medieval rulers were also regarded as successors of the Apostles; this continued a tradition that began with Constantine who was referred to as the "thirteenth Apostle."[7] In Ambrogio's allegory these monarchical precedents have been adapted to suit the representation of Siena's republican government.

Ambrogio's citizens continue this tradition of allying spiritual leaders with secular ones. They are related to the Twenty-Four Elders not only by number but by their presence at a scene of Judgment which, not surprisingly, resembles a Last Judgment. The Elders appear in numerous medieval representations of the Last Judgment, as at Moissac (fig. 3).[8] In Ambrogio's allegory, as in traditional scenes of the Last Judgment, both *Ben Comun* and Christ respectively are seated frontally on their thrones as if in judgment, and both are encircled by other figures. *Ben Com-*

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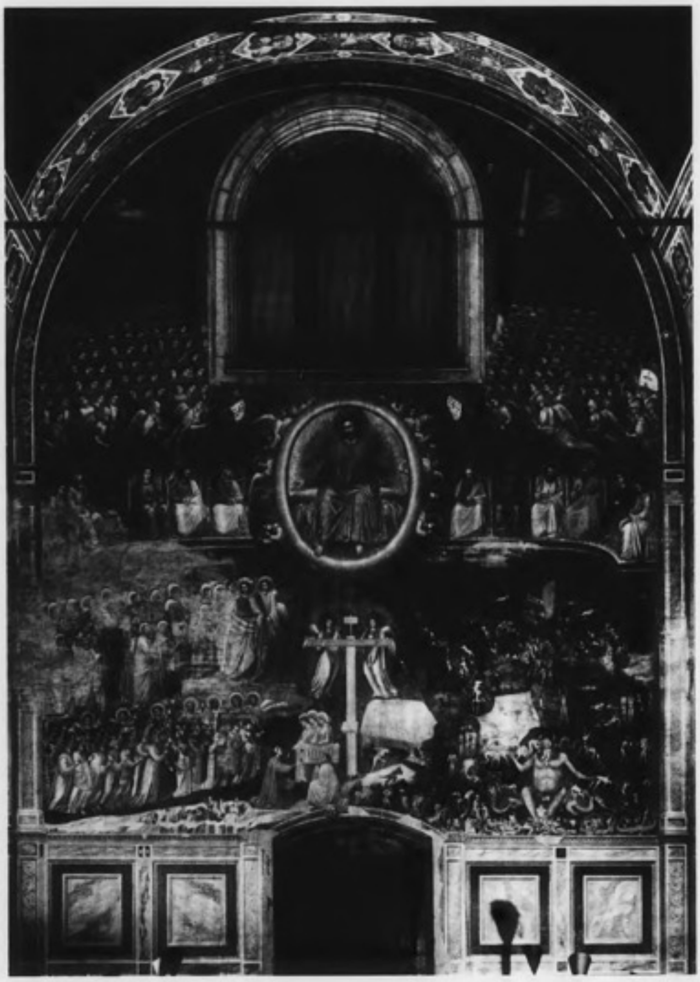
[6] E.H. Kantorowicz, *Laudes Regiae, A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Medieval Ruler Worship,* Berkeley, 1946, 56-57.

[7] Kantorowicz, 67.

[8] Other examples of the Last Judgment in which the Elders appear include the central tympanum, Abbey Church, St. Denis, c. 1137; the west portal, central tympanum, Chartres Cathedral, c. 1140-50; the *Porticó de la Gloria* at Santiago da Compostela, c. 1168-88; the *Silos Apocalypse,* 1190, (British Library, MS. Add. 11695, fol. 83); (Cambridge, Trinity College, MS. R. 16.2, mid-thirteenth century, fol. 4 and fol. 5r); (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. Bodley 352, early twelfth century, fol. 5v and fol. 6r); (Cambrai, Bibliothèque Municipale, MS. 386, ninth-tenth centuries, fol. 10v); (Trier, Stadtbibliothek, MS. 31, ninth century, fol. 16v and fol.18v); the San Pietro ad Oratorium fresco, early thirteenth century, near Capestrano, Italy; and the Florence Baptistry mosaic; mid-thirteenth century, where Christ sits in judgment amidst the Twenty-Four—the twelve Apostles to his right and the twelve Old Testament figures to his left—who are here accompanied by the Virgin and St. John the Baptist.



4. Giotto, *Last Judgment*, c.1305. Padua, Arena Chapel (photo: Gabinetto)

un is surrounded by nine crowned virtues, six of whom are enthroned. These nine virtues, who have been associated with the Nine Governors of Siena through numerical analogy, are arranged in a pattern which is similar to Christ surrounded by the twenty-four crowned and enthroned Elders of the Moissac tympanum.[9] Furthermore, as in other Last Judgment representations, such as Giotto's *Last Judgment* from the Areña Chapel in Padua (fig. 4), Ambrogio's just citizens stand at the right of the Christ/*Ben Comun* figure while evildoers are being led to their punishment at his left. The Apocalyptic associations of this program are further elaborated on the side walls. The depiction of the ideal city in which Good Government and Justice reign refers to Heavenly Jerusalem while the city of Bad Government refers to Babylon.[10]

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[9] The numerical analogy is made by Feldges-Henning, 162.

[10] Feldges-Henning, 160-162; Frugoni, 241.

In this context, the number of the twenty-four citizens is a significant reference to the Twenty-Four Elders who sit with the Lord in the Court of Heaven (Revelations 4:4). The government of the Nine is thereby linked with the Nine virtues who sit with *Ben Comun.* All the figures in the fresco can thus be seen to have an allegorical interpretation, one which is clearly derived from Christian sources although conveying the message of the Sienese Commune. The association of civic subject matter with the great themes of Christian art would have been the most elevating way for Ambrogio to present secular subjects.

Although the secular aspects of Ambrogio's work often receive the most attention, it should not be forgotten that it was created for a society where religion and government had close ties, where political thought could be termed "political theology."[11] It is therefore interesting to consider religious doctrine in relationship to Siena's predominantly mercantile and banking oriented government. The teaching of the Gospels about the acquisition of worldly goods had been unmistakable: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 19:24). The Gospels repeatedly warned men against the pursuit of wealth for it would distract them from the service of God. Canon Law made it equally clear that the Church officially adopted this view.[12] Banker, merchant, and businessman thereby became unavoidably linked with sin. If the members of the Sienese Government of the Nine were touched by a sense of guilt for their pursuit of material wealth, their just administration of Siena and their commissioning of Ambrogio's *Allegory of Good Government* could then be seen, in part, as an effort to atone for the sins which were inherent in their daily life. The desire of the Nine to inspire themselves to achieve their ideal would be given greater force, as their salvation was more dependent on their actions while in government office rather than when functioning in their usual occupations.

The question remains, however, as to what the specific motivation might have been for the Nine to commission Ambrogio's frescoes when they did. Scholars have suggested that a political crisis occurred, prompting the commission.[13] But there was no truly threatening crisis very near to the date of Ambrogio's work.[14] However, it is significant that in 1337 the City Council ordered a revision of the constitution. The first draft was completed by August 1337 and it was entirely finished by mid-1339, dates remarkably close to the dates of payments made to Ambrogio.[15] While a connection between Ambrogio's frescoes and this constitution based on their temporal relationship alone may be inconclusive, the similarity of their content reveals interesting parallels. The constitution is summarized in a poem which was contained within the document:

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[11]. A union of Last Judgment imagery with secular and civic functions also occurs in northern Europe, where paintings of the Last Judgment were commissioned for and prominently placed within Town Halls. Craig Harbison discusses the later northern version of this phenomenon in *The Last Judgment in Sixteenth Century Northern Europe,* New York, 1976, 51-63.

[12] For example, a saying attributed to St. Augustine, "Business is in itself evil." Sir W. Ashley offers this quote from St. Augustine, *"Merito dictum negotium, quia negat otium, quod malum est, neque quarit veram quietum, quae est Deus,"* from the *Corpus Juris Canonici,* Decr. I, dist. 88, c. 12 (1618 ed., 2, 95) in *An Introduction to English Economic History and Theory,* third ed., New York, 1966, Book 1, 129.

[13] Southard, 29; Feldges-Henning, 162.

[14] W. Bowsky, "The Medieval Commune and Internal Violence: Police Power and Public Safety in Siena, 1287-1355," in *The American Historical Review,* LXXIII, 1967, 34.

[15] On the dating of the constitutional revision, see Bowsky, "Medieval Citizenship," 240.

> *Ecce statutorum distinctum dogma novorum*
> *Quo Sena mando vetus, ut vivet quisque quietus.*
> *Dico Dei iura, fiscalia publica cura*
> *Cui datur et quales, sibi subsint officiales.*
> *Ordine dispono, civilia iura pono*
> *Litibus optatum reprimens dispendia fatum.*
> *Ne quis ledatur proprio set iure fruatur*
> *Institie frenis dignis premo crimena penis.*
> *Pacis cultores roborans, expello furores*
> *Corrigit et gesta male, syndicat hec mea sesta.*[16]

The *Allegory of Good Government* accurately reflects the concerns of the constitution as presented in the poem: the fair management of public funds, the maintenance of civil order, the just punishment of evildoers, and the perpetuation of a Siena where all will live in peace.[17] Both the constitution and the allegory encompass the functions and ideals of the Sienese government and were created for an administration that governed with an awareness of the past, pride in current achievements, and hope for an even greater future. The constitution was intended to serve as inspiration and safeguard, insuring that Siena would be governed justly by its leaders in the years to come, and the fresco mirrors these concerns.

It is therefore possible that these two commissions were jointly conceived. It is also possible that Ambrogio's work is a visual translation of the legal document and was perhaps devised by the same advisers.[18] Even if the constitution and the fresco were two independent but parallel responses to a common stimulus, it is worthwhile to ponder their mutual inspiration. This inspiration, in fact, may stem from an inner reorganization and updating of communal structure, rather than from a reaction to an outer threat.

These speculations contribute some interesting new possibilities to the study of Ambrogio's frescoes and other trecento civic commissions. The chronological connection and analogous concerns of the artistic and legal commissions should prompt further consideration of the birth of Ambrogio's commission, perhaps directing our gaze off of an old path and onto a more promising one. Also, the possible relationship of the twenty-four citizens in Ambrogio's *Allegory of Good Government* to the Twenty-Four Elders of the Apocalypse suggests that a further study of religious sources is necessary to better understand not only Ambrogio's imagery but other early civic imagery as well.

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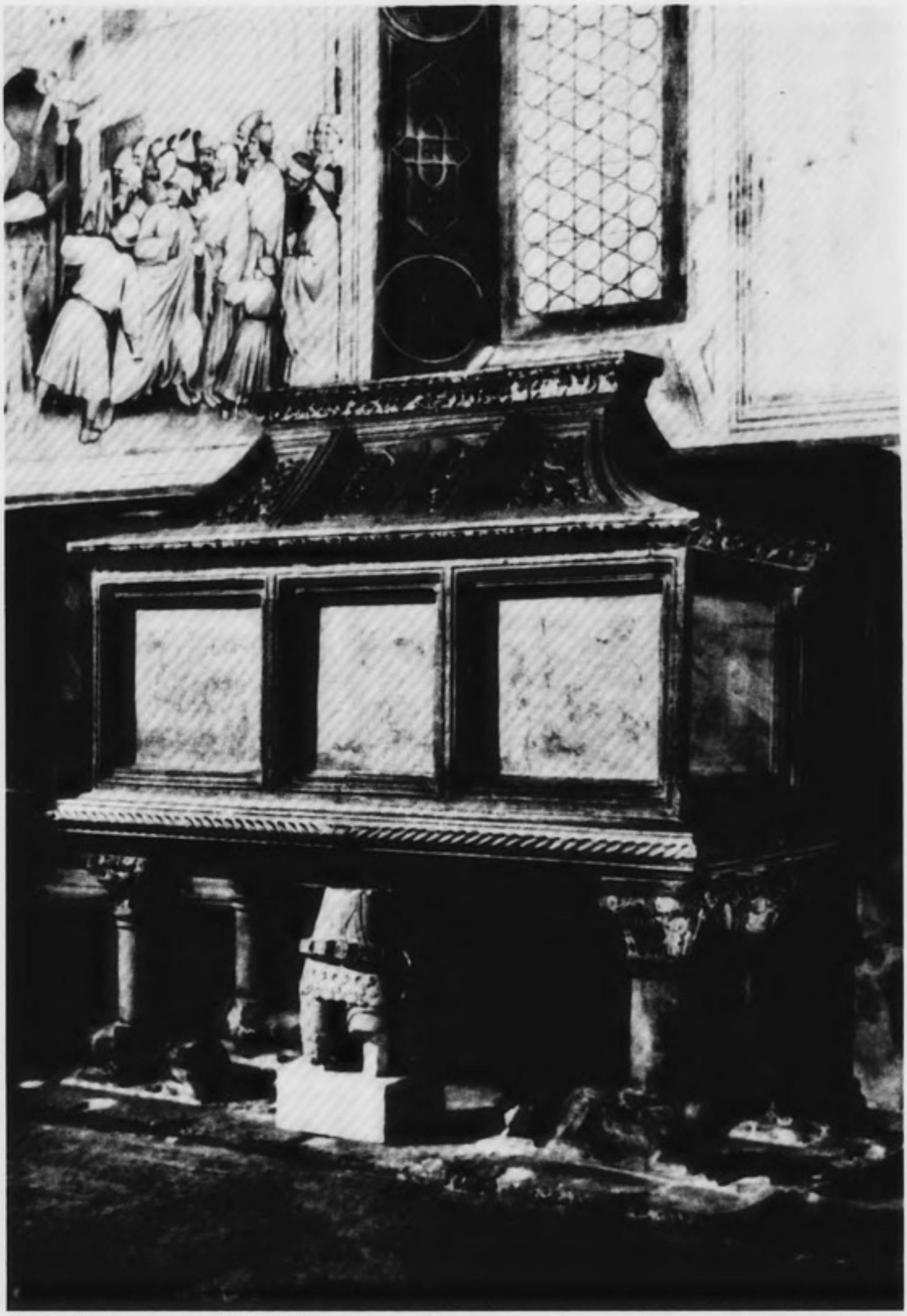
[16] This poem is reproduced in Bowsky, "Medieval Citizenship," 239, and in *Il costituto del comune de Siena volgarizzato nel MCCCIX-MCCCX*, ed. A. Lisini, Siena, 1903, I, xvi.

[17] The poem is paraphrased by the author.

[18] Bowsky, "Medieval Citizenship," 240, and "The *Buon Governo* of Siena (1287-1355): A Mediaeval Italian Oligarchy?," *Speculum*, XXXVII, 1962, 374. The commune paid two juriconsults for the 1337 draft of the constitution. While these two men, Niccola of Orvieto and Messer Benamatodi Michelle, a citizen of Prato, may not have had the advanced education required to devise Ambrogio's learned program, the Nine had close contact with others who did. Many family members of high government officials were faculty members at the Sienese University.



1. *Arca* from the tomb of Raimondino de' Lupi, 1377-84. Padua, Oratory of St. George (photo: Edizioni di Comunità)

The Tomb of Raimondino de' Lupi and Its Setting

MARY D. EDWARDS

For my parents

The building in Padua known as the Oratory of St. George was originally erected in the late 1370s to house the tomb of its patron, Raimondino de' Lupi, Marchese di Soragna. Though it is difficult to appreciate fully today, the chapel as it was first conceived was a stunning *gesamtkunstwerk* in which architecture, painting, and sculpture interrelated optimally. In this paper I shall reconstruct and interpret the original scheme by focusing on the interrelationships between the tomb, now largely demolished, the architecture, and the frescoes which still cover the building's walls.

Raimondino de' Lupi was a condottiere whose family had been banished from their native Parma. He fought alongside Charles IV, was knighted by him in 1332, and once served as his ambassador in Venice. Because the Carrara family of Padua had sheltered Raimondino during part of his banishment, he had good reason toward the end of his life to ask permission to build a mortuary chapel in the cemetery of the Santo in Padua.[1]

Work on the Oratory is documented between 1377 and 1384, but the exact date of the architecture and its decoration is uncertain.[2] The Oratory was built by May, 1378, but Raimondino's interior scheme was still incomplete when he died on November 30, 1379.[3] The completion of the interior seems to have become the responsibility of Raimondino's kinsman and primary executor, Bonifazio de' Lupi, also a condottiere.[4]

Although the architect of the Oratory is unknown, as is the sculptor of the tomb, we do know that the master decorator of the chapel's walls was Altichiero da Zevio, who previously had painted Bonifazio's chapel of S. Giacomo (now S. Felice) in the Santo. Altichiero probably began the frescoes in the Oratory after completing those in the Santo in 1379. Certainly, the frescoes in the Oratory were completed by May, 1384, as was the tomb, which, documents disclose, was at least gilded by Altichiero.[5]

Raimondino's tomb consisted of an *arca* on stilts and a baldacchino so large that it nearly touched the ceiling. According to Valerio Polidoro's guide to the San-

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[1] For the banishment of the Lupi from Parma and for Raimondino's fighting with and being knighted by Charles, see *Chronicon Parmese,* ed. Giuliano Bonazzi, Città di Castello, 1902, 91, 220, and 221. For the other biographical details, see B. Gonzati, *La Basilica de S. Antonio descritta ed illustrata,* II, Padua, 1852, doc. LIII.

[2] For the documents, see A. Sartori, "Nota su Altichiero," *Il Santo,* III, 1963, 291ff.

[3] For the argument that the Oratory was completed by May, 1378, see R. Simon, "Altichiero versus Avanzo," *Papers of the British School at Rome,* n.s. XXXII, 1977, 259.

[4] For the document naming Bonifazio and others as executors and for the colorful chronology of events in Bonifazio's life, see Sartori, 308-309, and 321-322.

[5] For the dating of the frescoes of the Oratory between 1379-84, see Simon, 260. For the document of May 30, 1384, which includes mention of Altichiero's having gilded the *arca,* see Sartori, 306.

to of 1590, the tomb was located "nel mezo dell' illustre luogo."[6] At that date the chapel functioned both as an Oratory which was used by a confraternity and as a chapel available to the public. Because of the immensity of Raimondino's tomb, the worshippers had difficulty seeing the altar. Moreover, the tomb's significance was misunderstood by the uneducated masses, for they wrongly assumed that the *arca* contained not the remains of a soldier of fortune, but a "corpo santo." This led them to venerate the monument in an exaggerated fashion, some even kissing it. In 1592, during a redecoration program, the friars, troubled by such displaced veneration, dismantled the baldacchino and removed it from the center of the Oratory. Thus, the altar became more visible and the public was cured of its idolatry. Thereafter, with the approval of the heirs of the Lupi family, who had been consulted, the *arca* alone stood in the center of the chapel while parts of the baldacchino stood around the chapel walls.[7] At the time of the Napoleonic invasion of Italy, the Oratory was used as a prison for soldiers, who demolished the remaining pieces of the baldacchino and opened the *arca.*[8] Today, only the *arca,* again closed, and two fragments of the baldacchino survive.

Raimondino's funerary complex can be reconstructed on the basis of five descriptions dating from the fifteenth to the nineteenth century. Only two of these are eyewitness accounts, that by Michele Savonarola of about 1445 and that by Valerio Polidoro of 1590. The other three, by Portenari in 1623, by Gonzati in 1852, and by an anonymous archivist of unknown date, are essentially summaries of the earlier descriptions.[9]

According to these texts, the monument rested on a three-stepped platform. The *arca,* as can still be seen, has a rampant wolf carved in relief on its lid and is supported by four columns mounted on the backs of four couchant wolves, the wolf being the family emblem of the Lupi (fig. 1). The *arca* was, and still is, encased in large squares of African marble, three on each long side, one at each end.

The *arca* was protected by a vaulted baldacchino supported by six columns of Istrian marble placed equidistantly, three on a side. The vaults were crowned by an immense pyramid with two wolves, nearly touching the ceiling, at its apex. Around the base of the pyramid stood ten over-life-sized figures made of *pietra colombina,* one woman and nine men in armor placed three on each side, with two on each end. The men had shields and wore crested helmets and breastplates. Each of the breastplates probably was decorated with a rampant wolf, judging from the

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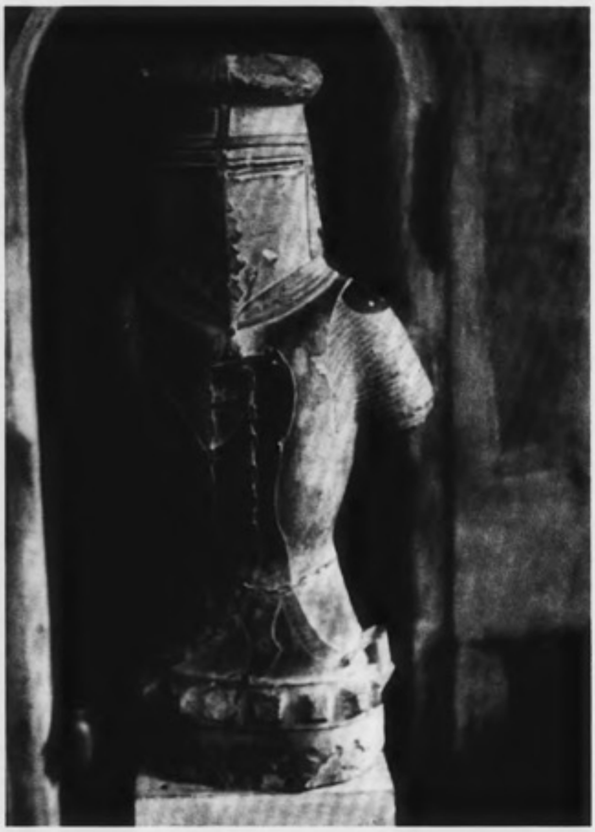
[6] *Le religiose memorie scritte dal r. padre Valerio Polidoro Padovano nelle quali si tratta della chiesa del glorioso S. Antonio, Confessore da Padova,* Venice, 1590, 37.

[7] Gonzati, II, doc. CXLVII, provides most of the above details concerning the history of the tomb. But this document, which is not Gonzati's personal compilation of data, as is document LIII, is undated, hence problematic. H. Kruft regards it as a summary of several documents. See his *Altichiero und Avanzo, untersuchungen zur oberitalienischen malerei des ausgehenden Trecento,* Bonn, 1964, 172, note 2. For the placement of the parts of the baldacchino around the walls of the chapel and the earlier desire to make the altar visible, see A. Portenari, *Della Felicità di Padova,* Padua, 1623, 488. Portenari erroneously dates the dismantling of the baldacchino to 1582 in the passage just cited.

[8] Gonzati, I, 271, note 2, where it is also reported that the soldiers destroyed the altar, and Gonzati, II, 79, doc. LIII, where it is stated that the bones in the *arca* were scattered.

[9] For the five descriptions, see M. Savonarola, *Libellus de magnificis ornamentis regie civitatis padue,* ed. A. Segarizzi, Città di Castello, 1902, 33; Polidoro, 37; Portenari, 488; Gonzati, II, doc. CXLVII, and Gonzati, II, doc. LIII.



2. Fragment of anthropomorphic finial of the lost baldacchino of the tomb of Raimondino de' Lupi (photo: author)

surviving fragments, a torso and the pelvic section of two of the statues (fig. 2). All the figures stood on pedestals which bore their names, and they seem to have been painted in colors as well as decorated with silver and gold. The inscriptions recorded by Polidoro and Angelo Portenari show that the ten included Raimondino, his parents, his brothers, and his nephews.[10]

Raimondino's tomb takes its place in a series of increasingly monumental tombs created in Italy in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its forms are either direct derivations from, or at least unintentional echoes of, those of earlier tombs. The motif of columns rising from the backs of couchant wolves to support the *arca* is similar to that of columns rising from the backs of lions which support the thirteenth-century *arca* of Rolandino dei Romanzi, now in the Museo Civico in Bologna.[11] The pyramid atop the baldacchino no doubt resembled the pyramid on the arcaded baldacchino protecting the sarcophagus of Rolandino dei Passageri (who died in 1300), still standing in Bologna's Piazza S. Domenico. Or perhaps it resembled those on the baldacchini covering the Veronese tombs of Guglielmo di

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[10] Polidoro, 38, and Portenari, 488. The inscriptions correspond almost exactly except that Portenari replaces Montinus with Constantinus.

[11] For the Romanzi tomb, see E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture,* New York, 1964, fig. 286. Couchant beasts also support the columns of the porticos over the portals of numerous North Italian Romanesque churches, such as the Duomo and S. Zeno in Verona, where Altichiero worked before coming to Padua.

Castelbarco (who died in 1320), Cangrande della Scala (who died in 1329), Mastino II della Scala (who died in 1351), or Cansignorio della Scala (who died in 1375).[12] The inclusion of sculptural portraits of the deceased accompanied by contemporaries, all upright and alive, recalls the free-standing group portraits found on the problematic tomb of Emperor Henry VII of 1315 in the Camposanto of Pisa, or that of the Canonist Cino dei Sinibaldi (who died in 1337) in the Duomo of Pistoia.[13] The former, as plausibly reconstructed by Valentiner, shows Henry enthroned and flanked by four smaller but standing councilors, two on each side; the latter shows Cino seated on a chair as if lecturing and flanked by six smaller but standing students, three on each side. A striking feature of Raimondino's tomb is that the family portraits seem to have been the only statues decorating the monument. The angels, saints, and/or allegorical figures found on many thirteenth and fourteenth-century funerary complexes, including those of Henry and Cino, apparently were absent from this tomb — at least according to the descriptions.[14]

It is also striking that the figure of Raimondino, unlike the larger and centrally located Henry or Cino, apparently was undifferentiated from his kinsfolk either by size or by placement on the baldacchino. He is not singled out in the texts as having been bigger than others, nor is he singled out as having been elevated or even centrally located between two relatives on one of the presumably longer sides of the baldacchino. Thus, the statement made by the sculptural decoration of Raimondino's monument seems to be pro-family in nature — pro-secular and non-royal family — a statement which is underscored by the presence of the family emblem at the base of the columns of the *arca,* on the *arca's* lid, at the apex of the pyramid, and on the chests of the warrior kinsmen.[15] And, even though the remains of only one member of the family celebrated on the baldacchino are contained within the *arca,* that member was not made to appear any more important than his relatives.[16] No relief narratives relating the events of Raimondino's life cover his *arca,* as is the case, for example, with Cangrande's tomb. Indeed, not even his effigy appears on his sarcophagus. In short, it seems to have been the family as a unit which was glorified in this monument, not an individual member of the family. Perhaps this unusual emphasis is a result of the tomb having been sculpted after Raimondino's death when the three familial executors, two of whom were portrayed on the tomb, took over responsibility for the commission.

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[12] For the Passageri tomb, see Panofsky, fig. 287. For the tombs of Castelbarco, Cangrande, Mastino II, and Cansignario, see J. White, *Art and Architecture in Italy, 1250-1400,* Baltimore, 1966, figs. 149-A, 192-B, and 191. It should be noted here that the baldacchino covering the so-called tomb of Antenor in Padua includes a modest cone in its center. Raimondino's funerary complex has been likened previously to those of the Scaliger family, as well as to other tombs. See Gonzati, II, 79, doc. LIII, and Kruft, 69.

[13] For a reconstruction of the tomb of Henry VII and for an illustration of that of Cino, see W. Valentiner, *Tino di Camaino, a Sienese Sculptor of the Fourteenth Century,* Paris, 1935, plates 6, 7, and fig. 1, respectively. Valentiner discusses Henry's monument, 16ff.

[14] It is always risky to argue on the basis of silence. But given the length of and the wealth of detail in Polidoro's eyewitness description of the tomb, it seems unlikely that other figures were portrayed. For a reconstruction of Raimondino's funerary complex which, in fact, is free of any statues other than the portrait figures, see the drawing by G. Vicinelli in G. Mellini, *Altichiero e Jacopo Avanzi,* Milan, 1965, fig. 157.

[15] A non-secular, pro-family statement was made by Giotto in the Arena Chapel of Padua in the first decade of the fourteenth century with his fresco, *Adoration of the Magi.* There the Holy Family is touchingly represented as a viable nuclear family unit, with Joseph made equally as important as Mary in the surface organization, for, unlike earlier treatments of the subject, the Christ Child is placed equidistantly from Joseph and Mary. Moreover, Joseph has been shown both awake and erect rather than asleep and seated as in earlier representations, hence he is more involved as a parent. Giotto's picture perhaps initiates the shift in emphasis toward the middle-class family values in depictions of the Holy Family in the Trecento, as Howard Davis has observed in lecture. A royal, pro-family statement was made by Giovanni and Pace da Firenze in relief in S. Chiara in Naples in the tomb of Robert of Anjou (who died in 1343). There the centrally located and slightly larger King is flanked by six family members, three on each side. For a description and an illustration, see Panofsky, 86-87, and fig. 398.

[16] According to the inscription over the door, the Oratory was built for Raimondino and his family. But, only the body of Raimondino was placed in the *arca.* When the *arca* was opened in the nineteenth century, no skulls were found, just bones sufficient for one body, undoubtedly that of Raimondino. See Gonzati, II, 80, doc. LIII.

The frescoes which decorate the walls of the Oratory of St. George include an Infancy Cycle introduced by the *Annunciation* (on the entry wall); the *Crucifixion* and the *Coronation of the Virgin* (on the altar wall); and cycles of the lives of St. George, St. Catherine, and St. Lucy, in addition to a votive panel (on the side walls). The scenes on the end walls are separated by fictive cosmati borders; those on the side walls are divided by decorative bands which contain shields bearing rampant wolves.[17]

The pro-family statement expressed by the tomb extends itself into the frescoes of the narrative zone in several ways. First, there is the family emblem of the rampant wolves. In addition, the saints chosen for the frescoes are the patron saints of the more important members of the Lupi family. St. George, to whom six scenes are given, was the patron of both Raimondino and his father, Rolandino. A soldier, as were so many of the Lupi, George is shown slaying the dragon, baptizing King Sevio, drinking poison, surviving torture by the wheel, miraculously causing pagan temples to fall, and, in the last scene, awaiting decapitation. St. Catherine, to whom four scenes are given, was the patron of Raimondino's mother, Matilda. She is portrayed refusing to worship idols, expounding before philosophers, kneeling on a torture wheel, and anticipating her beheading. St. Lucy, to whom four scenes also are given, was the patron of Raimondino's brother, Guido. She is shown standing before the consul, Paschasius, dragged by oxen, martyred by fire, oil, and the knife, and mourned on a funeral pyre after her last communion.

Finally, the pro-family statement is emphasized because the same ten members of the Lupi family who seem to have appeared on the tomb apparently are depicted in the votive panel as well. There they kneel before the enthroned Virgin and Child in a neat line, Matilda and Rolandino at the head, Raimondino at the foot, with each member identified by an inscription.

The frescoes in the vault of the chapel depict a celestial canopy divided into three compartments which recall the three panels on each long side of the *arca.*[18] These compartments are defined by wide bands fashioned as a series of trompe l'oeil openings in which rest the busts of haloed figures. Each of the three compartments contains a star-studded field of blue, a centralized mandorla, the contents of which are lost, and four surrounding trompe l'oeil openings with figures. These figures represent the symbols of the four Evangelists, the four Church Doctors, and four prophets (fig. 3).[19]

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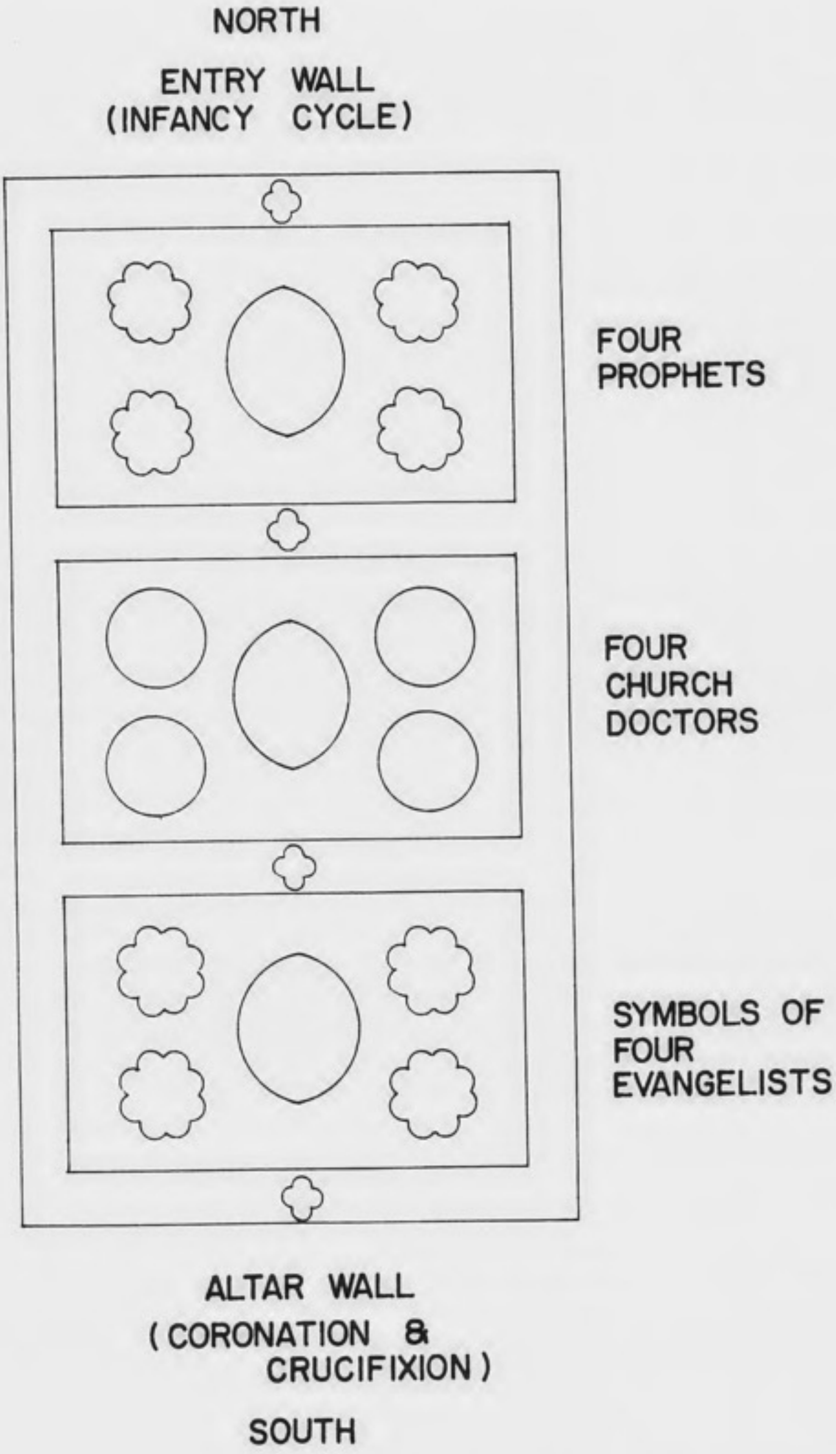
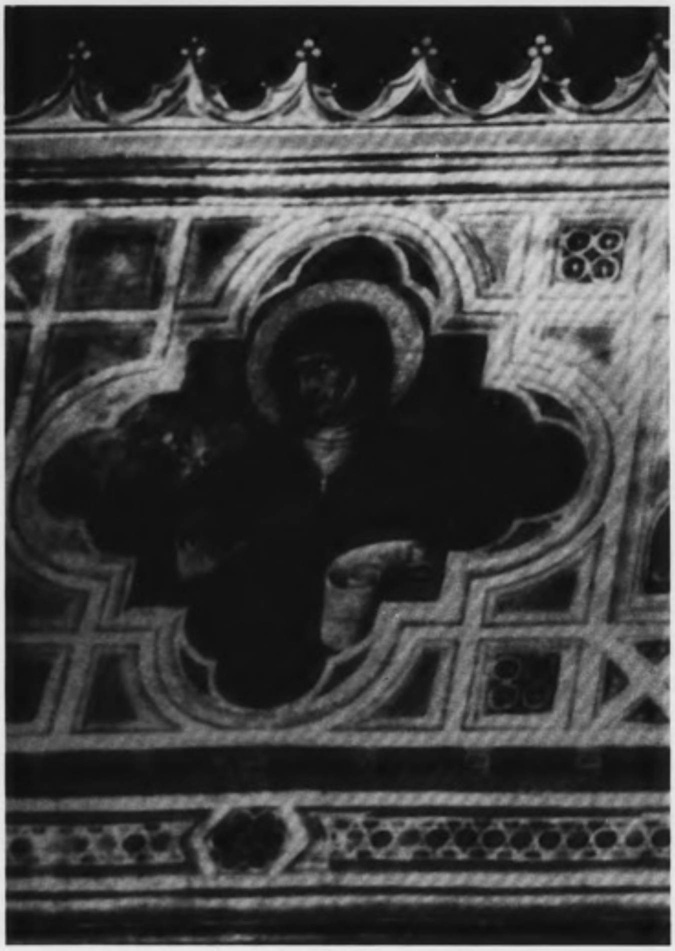
[17] For illustrations of the frescoes in the Oratory, see Mellini, figs. 162-194.

[18] For an enlightening study of celestial canopies in general, see K. Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," *Art Bulletin,* XXVII, 1945, 1-27.

[19] Only the symbols of the four Evangelists are well preserved today. But Ernst Foerster, who restored the frescoes in the 1830s, stated that the compartments in the vaults contained four Prophets and four Doctors as well. See Gonzati, I, 284. For an illustration of the vault, see Mellini, figs. 273-275.


NORTH
ENTRY WALL
(INFANCY CYCLE)
FOUR PROPHETS
FOUR CHURCH DOCTORS
SYMBOLS OF FOUR EVANGELISTS
ALTAR WALL
(CORONATION & CRUCIFIXION)
SOUTH

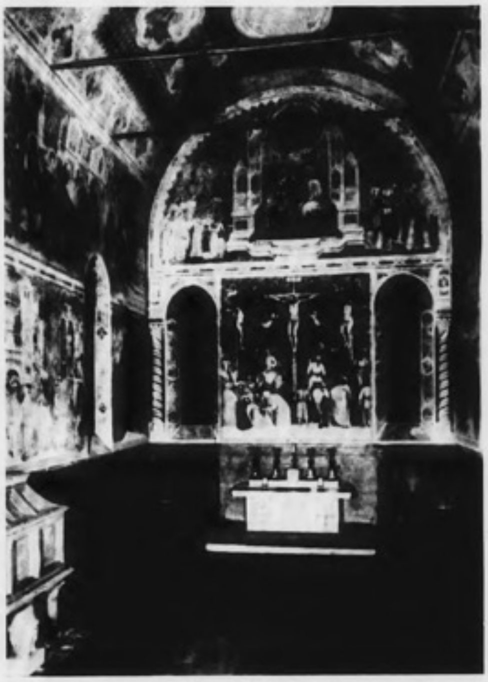
3. Diagram of the frescoed vault of the Oratory of St. George (drawn by George Salinas)



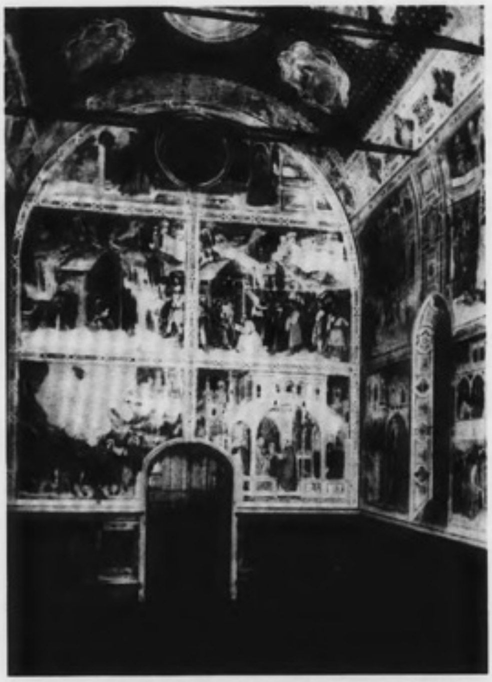
4. Decorative band in the vault of the Oratory of St. George with trompe l'oeil gothicized crenellations above and fictive brackets below (photo: Edizioni di Comunità)

It is obvious that the canopy is a celestial canopy, identified not only by the stars within it, but by the delicate inner frames in the form of gothicized crenellations which enhance each compartment, and by the several dozen trompe l'oeil brackets which illusionistically support it along its long sides. An inner, gothicized frame is found nowhere else in the frescoes except in the upper part of the *Coronation,* which is the only narrative scene to represent an event taking place in Heaven. Thus, the crenellations must denote celestiality. The fictive brackets make the canopy appear to be a zone structurally distinct from the narrative zone of the side walls, which further emphasizes its separateness from the earthly realm (fig. 4).

The distinction between heavenly and earthly realms is also underscored by the treatment of the outer frame of the *Coronation.* It, too, is illusionistically supported, not by brackets, but by trompe l'oeil engaged spiral columns located between the oblong windows in the altar wall and the southern two corners of the building. Moreover, the frame along the bottom edge of the *Coronation* illusionistically extends forward beyond the picture plane and the trompe l'oeil moulding surrounding the *Crucifixion* below. In fact, so great is the projection into the viewer's space that the frame's fictive underside, shown perspectively receding,



5. Altar wall of the Oratory of St. George (photo: Edizioni di Comunità)



6. Entry wall of the Oratory of St. George (photo: Edizioni di Comunità)

is clearly visible. Thus, the *Coronation* also is a realm made to appear structurally separate from the earthly realm portrayed directly beneath it, in this case, the *Crucifixion.*[20]

In arranging the frescoes on the walls of the Oratory, Altichiero and his assistants have stressed the longitudinal axis of the chapel so as to direct the viewer's eye past the tomb toward the altar, and, simultaneously, have accentuated the presence of the tomb. Thus, they have recognized both the commemorative and liturgical functions of the building by means of the pictorial design, whether on the purely visual or iconographic level.

The longitudinal axis of the Oratory is already accented architecturally by the placement on the entry and altar walls of oculi of equal size directly opposite one another (figs. 5 and 6). The artists have emphasized further this axis by means of the two-dimensional decoration in three ways.

First, they have caused the narrow, geometrically decorated band which vertically divides the panels containing the Infancy Cycle on the entry wall to coincide with the longitudinal axis of the chapel. The axis is already pictorially reinforced in a more traditional fashion by the placement upon it of Christ's cross in the *Crucifixion* on the altar wall opposite. Second, the three mandorlas on the crest of the vault have their points aligned with the longitudinal axis. As a result, these almond-shaped forms guide the eye like so many arrowheads backwards and forwards

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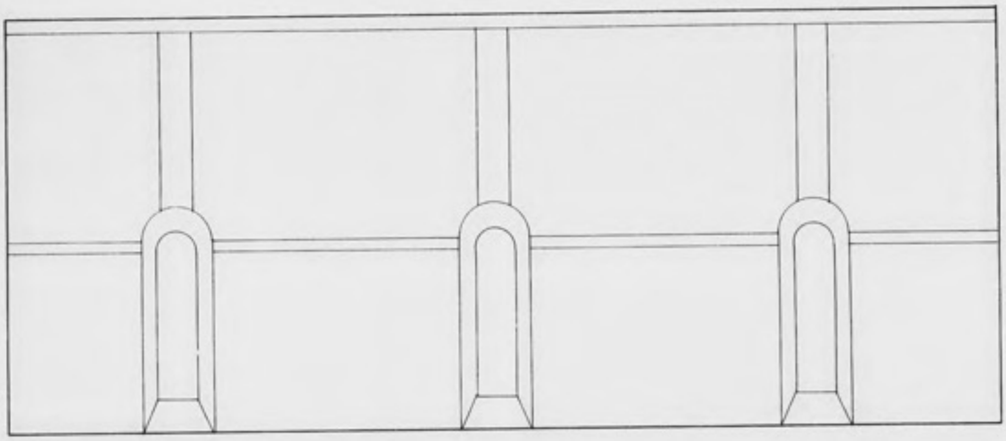
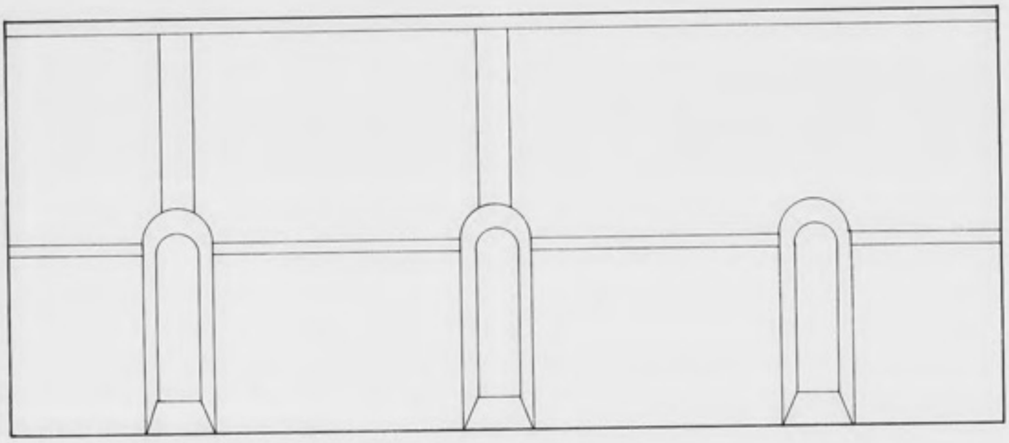
[20] For a detail of the altar wall, see Mellini, fig. 163.



WESTERN WALL



EASTERN WALL

7. Diagram of the Western wall of the Oratory of St. George (drawn by George Salinas)
8. Diagram of the Eastern wall of the Oratory of St. George (drawn by George Salinas)

along the vault between the entry and altar walls. Third, the artists have shown the bust-length figures within the openings of the decorative bands that occur at the apex of the vault falling *length-wise* along the longitudinal axis, as if they are lying face down upon it. In contrast, they have oriented all forty-two other figures within the openings of the bands in the vault *perpendicularly* to this axis, as if they are standing upon a support behind the curvature of the vault.[21] Therefore, the busts on

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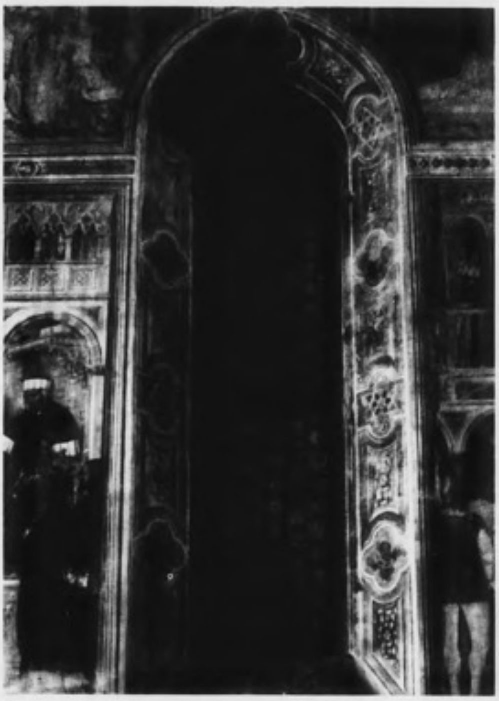
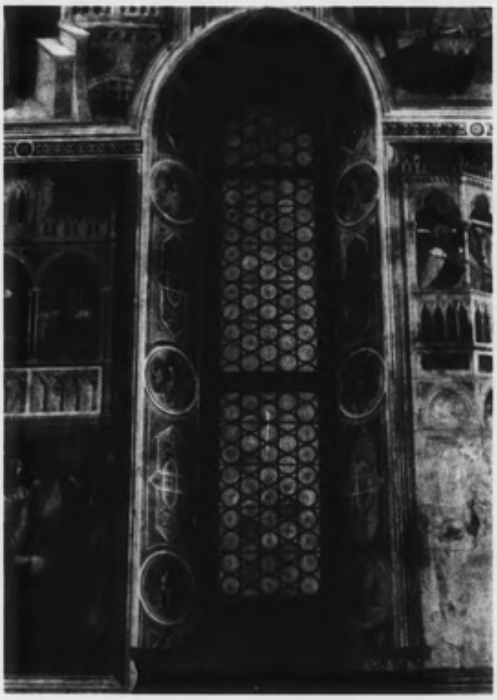
[21] One of the four figures in the bands on the apex of the chapel's vault is too worn for one to discern his/her orientation, but it is unlikely that it would be at variance with the others on the apex. It should be remembered that Giotto oriented the three bust-length figures in the bands on the apex of the vault of the Arena Chapel in a similar fashion, the other such figures having been oriented perpendicularly to the longitudinal axis. Giotto did not stress the longitudinal axis as did Altichiero and his assistants, however, for instead of painting three mandorlas (with points aligned longitudinally) on the crest of a tripartite vault as did the latter, Giotto painted two roundels (obviously without points) on the crest of a bisected vault.



9. One of the four oblong, corner windows in the lateral walls of the Oratory of St. George (photo: author)



10. One of the two centrally placed, oblong windows on the lateral walls of the Oratory of St. George (photo: author)

the apex of the vault, like the mandorlas, intensify the entry-wall/altar-wall thrust of the longitudinal axis. It is particularly these last two devices that so effectively would have propelled the viewer's psychological interest past the enormous tomb, which apparently stood squarely between the entry and altar walls.

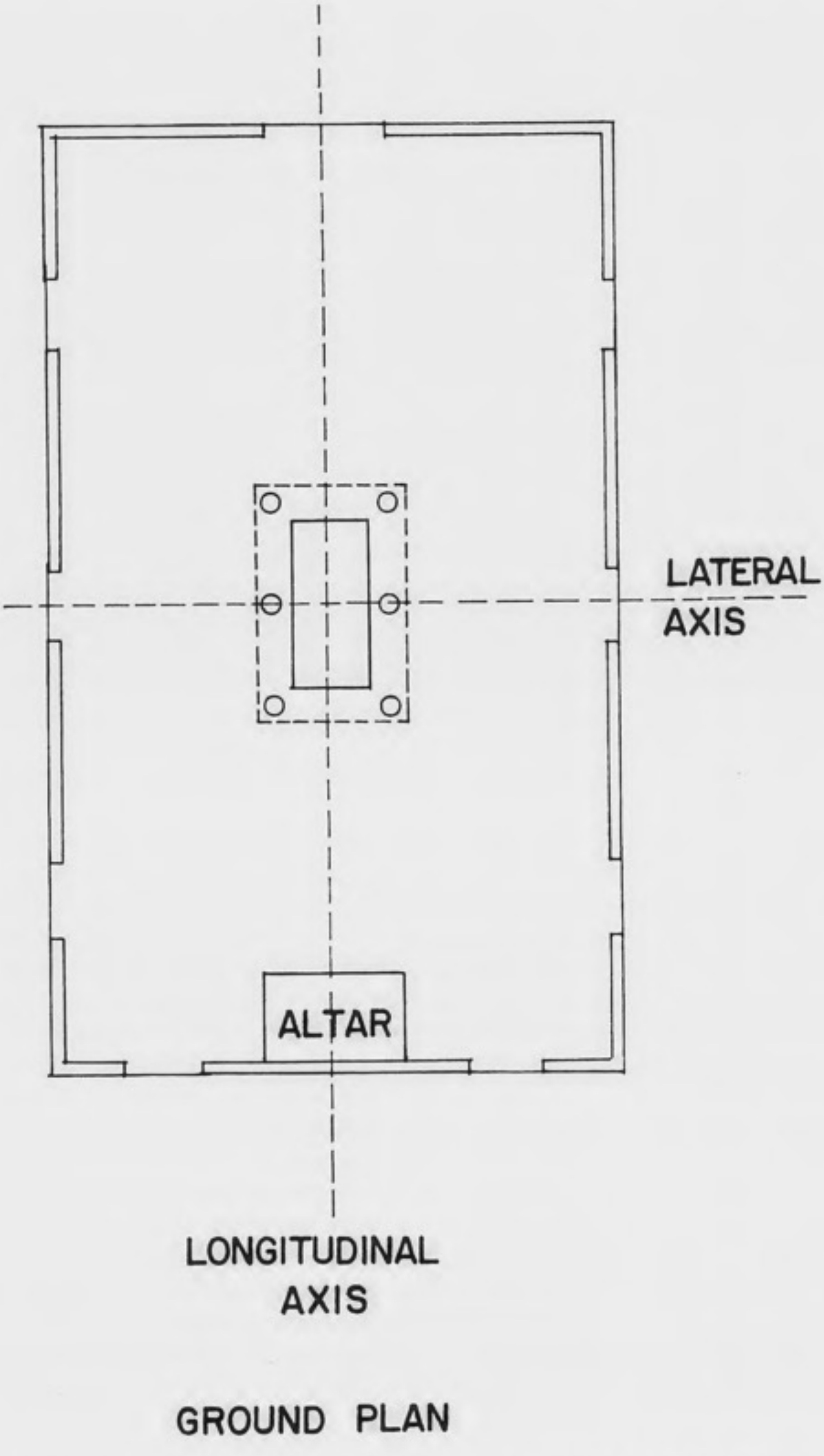
But even as the artists seem to have sought to carry the viewer's attention past the tomb and toward the altar, they apparently also sought to accentuate the presence of the tomb by means of the two-dimensional decoration. They have achieved their second aim in several ways.

For instance, they have established a subtle visual stress at the lateral axis of the building, which is already architecturally marked by the placement there of oblong windows mirroring one another in shape and size. They have done this by dividing the narrative zone of the side walls into four pairs of formats, an even rather than an odd number of vertical units. Apart from the discrepancy created by the double-width format of the votive fresco, these vertical units are disposed in a bilaterally symmetrical pattern on either side of the central window on each side wall. This strengthens further the visual stress at the lateral axis (figs. 7 and 8). Moreover, the artists have separated the second and third vertical pairs of narrative panels on the upper section of these walls by wide decorative bands which rise from the arches of the centrally-placed windows of the side walls, emphasizing the lateral axis of the chapel even more. In addition, they have decorated the embrasures of the windows at the center of these walls differently from those of the other identically shaped windows on the lateral walls (figs. 9 and 10). In fact, the embrasures of the centrally placed windows of the side walls duplicate those of the similarly shaped windows of the more important altar wall; thus, the greater importance of the centrally placed windows vis-à-vis the others on the side walls is discreetly implied. This is especially so since the embrasures of the centrally placed windows of the side walls and those on the altar wall contain *seven* images of saints within fictive openings rather than only *five* as do the embrasures of the other windows (figs. 9 and 10). This causes the former to carry more weight in the theological sense.

Because the artists have visually stressed the lateral axis as well as the longitudinal axis of the chapel, they have created an invisible cross in space at the building's center where the tomb apparently stood. Thus, not only was the tomb's presence pinpointed by the intersection of axes both within the architecture and the two-dimensional decor, but, had the *arca* survived in situ, the remains of Raimondino would have been, in effect, forever blessed by a permanent though invisible "sign of the cross" (fig. 11). This is even more evident when one recognizes that Raimondino apparently rested between the pictorial and actual crosses on or in front of the vertical axes of the two end walls of the chapel. On the altar wall is the pictorial cross in the *Crucifixion* placed on axis and before it is the actual cross on the altar (fig. 5); on the entry wall is the axially placed cruciform configuration created by the intersecting vertical and horizontal borders which separate the scenes of the Infancy Cycle (fig. 6).

But the artists have done something more. Though the side walls are broken into four basic units by wide decorative bands, the vault is broken into only three units. The result is that the location of the centrally placed tomb was emphasized by the bands which function as the borders of the central compartment of the celestial canopy of the vault, which in turn acted as an overhead frame (fig. 3). Moreover, the outer four trompe l'oeil openings within this central compartment are different in design than are those within the other two compartments, for they have smooth, circular, rather than scalloped, borders. This sets the central compartment apart from the others, thereby accenting the tomb below even more.

The artists also may have intended the iconography within the vault to refer directly to the tomb as well as to the frescoes on the end walls of the chapel. The portion of the celestial canopy nearest the entry wall with the Infancy Cycle contains the four prophets. Thus, the representation of the tradition of the Old Law under which Christ was raised is nearest the pictures primarily devoted to His infancy. The portion of the celestial canopy nearest the altar wall, which depicts the *Crucifixion* and *Coronation,* contains the symbols of the Four Evangelists. Thus, the representation of the tradition of the New Law which finds its springboard in Christ himself, is nearest the pictures devoted to two of the most significant events,


LATERAL
AXIS
ALTAR
LONGITUDINAL
AXIS
GROUND PLAN

11. Ground plan of the Oratory of St. George showing the original placement of the tomb at the intersection of the longitudinal and lateral axes (drawn by George Salinas)

one earthly and one celestial, in the adult life of Christ and His mother, Mary. Finally, the portion of the celestial canopy over the tomb contains the four Church Doctors. Thus, the representation of the ecclesiastical tradition most close in calendrical time to Raimondino was originally nearest his burial spot and his remains. This centralized placement of the four Doctors allows them to act as Heavenly intercessors for Raimondino's soul on its path from the tomb directly below to the celestial canopy in which they reside.[22] And the figure(s) originally in the now vacant mandorla, whether the Virgin and Child, Christ, or God the Father, would have established, along with the centralized tomb, an invisible vertical axis in the chapel. This vertical axis, which would have bisected the already accentuated longitudinal and lateral axes of the Oratory, would have created two more invisible crosses in space, both of which would have further pinpointed the remains of Raimondino lying at their common base.

In this paper I have tried to show that the tomb of Raimondino de' Lupi, fourteenth-century Marchese and condottiere, made an innovative, pro-family statement in stone. This funerary complex was unlike any other before its time. Its sarcophagus had neither narrative reliefs portraying the life history of Raimondino nor an effigy of the deceased on its lid. It was protected by a baldacchino which gave equal emphasis to the deceased, his parents, his brothers, and his nephews. I have also tried to show that the tomb's setting was new. While the programs of many chapels designed before the Oratory of St. George separate the realms of Heaven and Earth, none, to my knowledge, situate a tomb within a chapel so that a boldly centralized location is repeatedly underscored by cruciform configurations, and so that the route to the Heavenly realm to be taken by the soul of the deceased is so clearly spelled out pictorially. Most significantly, sculpture, architecture, and painting collaborate fully in the Oratory of St. George. Thus, in the final analysis, it is not important how many hands one might stylistically isolate when scrutinizing the frescoes.[23] Nor is it important whether or not Altichiero did in fact carve the tomb or only, as the documents inform us, ''gild'' it. It is important that only one mind was in control of the entire decorative scheme in this chapel, that of the capo, Altichiero da Zevio.[24] He orchestrated what was one of the best-articulated, hence most successful *gesamtkunstwerken* of the Trecento.[25]

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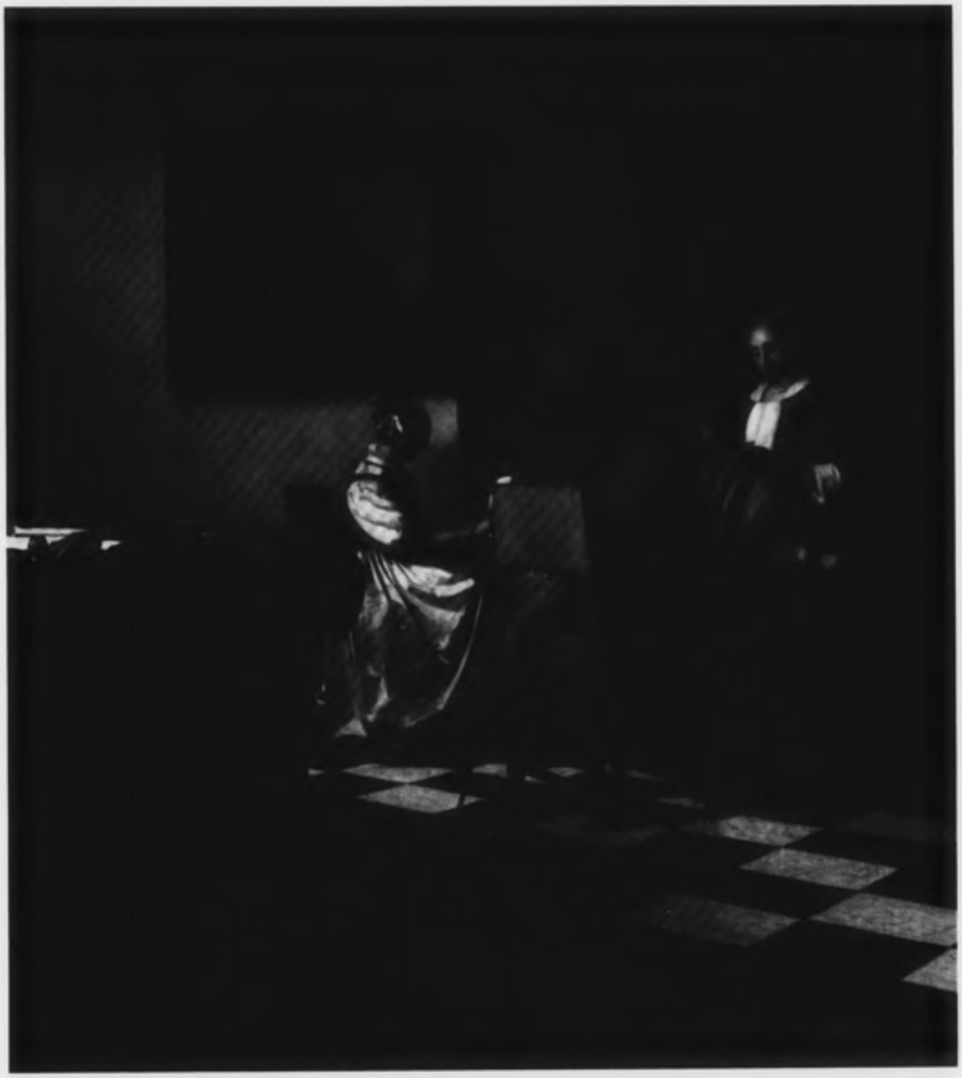
[22] Altichiero placed the Prophets, Symbols of the Evangelists, and Church Doctors in chronological order in the vault of Bonifazio's chapel in the Santo. The deliberate breaking of chronological order in the Oratory, given the artist's precedent, suggests all the more strongly that Altichiero intentionally related the figures in the vaults to the end walls and the tomb, as is argued here.

[23] This writer believes that the hand of Avanzo can be detected in the Oratory.

[24] Sartori thinks that Altichiero designed both the tomb and the Oratory itself but he does not elaborate. See Sartori, 297.

[25] In a sense, the Oratory and its decoration look forward to the funerary chapel of the Cornaro family by Bernini in the seventeenth century, also a *gesamtkunstwerk.* In that monument, members of the Cornaro family—all of equal size—appear in portrait form on balconies at either side of the chapel. See R. Wittkower, *Gian Lorenzo Bernini, the Sculptor of the Roman Baroque,* New York, 1955, 28ff., and fig. 58.



1. Jan Vermeer, *The Concert,* c.1665. Boston, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

Vermeer's *The Concert:* A Study in Harmony and Contrasts

IGNACIO L. MORENO

Until recently, nineteenth-century misconceptions about Vermeer's art as a straightforward image of reality, and twentieth-century preoccupations with abstract values in art, have, in their combined effect, tended to obscure the true concerns of Vermeer as an artist.[1] Scholarship has begun to demonstrate that Vermeer was very much a man of his time, and that his paintings cannot be adequately understood except in the historical and artistic context of seventeenth-century Holland.[2] New studies have shown, for example, that there are previously unrecognized moralizing and didactic overtones in Vermeer's paintings and that the means by which the content of his works is communicated are closely tied to the standard repertory of images and emblems.[3] The current reexamination of Vermeer's art in no way detracts from its timeless and universal values. On the contrary, it makes these values more accessible and comprehensible and allows for an interpretation of his work that is less restricted by the prevailing outlook of the periods in which previous interpretations were made.

Part of the pleasure of Dutch genre paintings for the seventeenth-century viewer was the deciphering of their meanings by reference to emblems, proverbs, or commonly understood images.[4] Vermeer was uncommonly subtle in conveying his message. He apparently sought to make his work more poetic and evocative by avoiding overly explicit literary references.[5] The viewer for whom Vermeer's paintings were intended was probably fairly sophisticated and did not need to have the content of his pictures made too obvious. As a result, the meaning of Vermeer's work often eludes or appears ambiguous to the modern viewer. One of the difficulties for the scholar, therefore, lies in trying to balance subjective responses with objective criteria on one hand, and in avoiding an overly literary interpretation of Vermeer's work on the other.

A painting by Vermeer which poses a particularly challenging problem is *The Concert* of about 1665 (fig. 1), in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston,

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I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., for suggesting the topic of this paper and for his helpful criticisms.

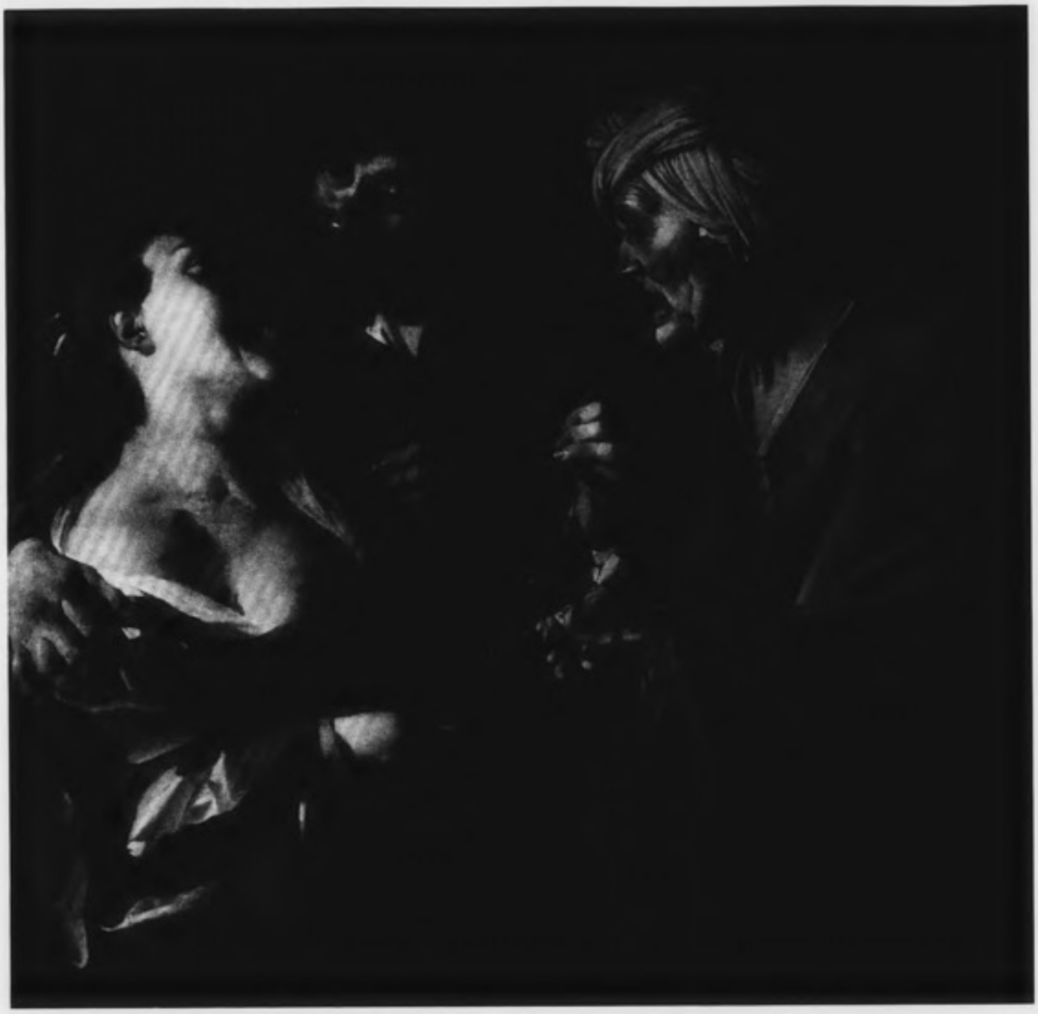
[1] The rise of nineteenth-century Realism and the writings of Thoré-Bürger contributed much to this limited view of Vermeer's art. See A. Blankert, *Vermeer of Delft,* Oxford, 1978, 67-69. For an example of a rigidly formalistic approach to Vermeer's art by a twentieth-century scholar see B. Nicolson, *Vermeer, Lady at a Virginal,* London, 1946.

[2] This new approach is best exemplified by E. de Jongh, *Zinne- en Minnebeelden in de Schilderkunst van de 17e eeuw,* n.p., 1967; S. Slive, " 'Een dronke slapende meyd aan een tafel,' by Jan Vermeer," *Festschrift Ulrich Middeldorf,* Berlin, 1968, 452-59; and M.M. Kahr, "Vermeer's *Girl Asleep:* A Moral Emblem," *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal,* VI, 1972, 115-32.

[3] See note 2 above. On emblems, see W.S. Heckscher and K.A. Wurth, "Emblem, Emblembuch," in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte,* Stuttgart, 1959, V, cols. 193-227.

[4] For a study of the ways in which the element of realism in Dutch genre painting was conditioned by iconographic considerations, see S. Slive, "Realism and Symbolism in Seventeenth Century Dutch Painting," *Daedalus,* XCI, 1962, 469-500; see also R.H. Fuchs, *Dutch Painting,* New York, 1978, 36ff.

[5] The unusually specific symbolism of Vermeer's *Allegory of Faith* appears to have been determined by the unique circumstances of its execution. See Blankert, 58-59.



2. Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress,* 1623. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. Purchased, Maria T.B. Hopkins Fund

which has been given various interpretations in the literature on the Delft artist.[6] The composition shows three figures in an interior, two of whom are seated. One is a young woman in profile seated before a virginal. The other is a man, his back turned to the viewer, who wears a sword and holds a lute. To the right of the man is a standing woman holding a sheet of music in her left hand and keeping time with her right hand.[7] Her lips are parted as if she is singing. In the left foreground is a carpet-covered table with a violin lying on top of it. A viola da gamba lies on the floor next to the table.

[6] L. Gowing, *Vermeer,* London, 1952, 52; A.P. de Mirimonde, "Les sujets musicaux chez Vermeer de Delft," *Gazette des Beaux Arts,* VI, 1961, 29-52; F.W. Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667),* New York, 1974, 61; Blankert, 67-69; and, A.K. Wheelock, Jr., *Jan Vermeer,* New York, 1981, 120-122.

[7] Other examples of a female figure keeping time are found in Gabriel Metsu's *Musical Company* (Leningrad, Hermitage); Pieter de Hoogh's *Family Portrait Group Making Music,* 1663 (Cleveland Museum of Art); and Gerard Terborch's *Two Music-Making Maids,* c. 1657 (Paris, Louvre).

The standing woman appears to be pregnant.[8] Her age is difficult to determine; she appears to be older than the seated woman, perhaps an older sister or friend. On the wall behind her is a painting by Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress* (fig. 2), which was owned by Vermeer and appears in another of his paintings.[9] On the left is a landscape which has not been identified with any known painting. A landscape also appears on the lid of the virginal.

A. P. de Mirimonde has read a somewhat sinister meaning into this outwardly placid domestic scene.[10] Drawing a parallel between the painting by Baburen on the wall and the group making music, he has suggested that the subject of Vermeer's painting is an elegant brothel in which a certain decorum is observed in spite of the illicit activity going on. He identifies the standing female figure as a procuress, the man as a client, and the seated woman as a prostitute. De Mirimonde also sees a wry commentary on the inconstancy of false love in Vermeer's placement of the unused instruments in the foreground.[11] He suggests that these are provided for the benefit of clients who may prefer to play different instruments in keeping with the degree of their sexual passion. But as far as the women are concerned, one client is just like any other. De Mirimonde extends this interpretation to encompass the landscape on the wall, which is dark and foreboding in the manner of Ruisdael's landscapes.[12]

I would suggest, however, that Vermeer's *Concert* actually represents a domestic interior in which the elements, including Baburen's painting, which serve to expand the meaning of the work, are moralizing in intent. The device of a picture within a picture in seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting could be used in a variety of ways: for example, to reinforce the main subject, or to add comic, theatrical, or moralizing overtones. In Jan Steen's *The Physician's Visit* of about 1665 (fig. 3), the amorous scene of Venus and Adonis on the wall serves to explain the nature of the young woman's "illness," that is, pregnancy.[13] The parallel between the lovesick young woman and Venus is reinforced by the boy playing with a bow and arrows in the lower left, a contemporary Cupid. A mocking tone is added by the picture of "Pickle-Herring" in the upper right and by the clothes of the doctor, who is dressed in the costume of a character from the *commedia dell' art.*[14]

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[8] Seventeenth-century Dutch women's fashions did not always allow one to determine whether a woman depicted in a painting is pregnant or not. An especially ambiguous example is Vermeer's *Woman with a Pearl Necklace,* c. 1662-65 (Berlin-Dahlem, Gemäldegalerie), in which the woman's jacket with fur trim entirely covers her abdomen. However, a comparison between the figures in Vermeer's *Woman reading a Letter at an open Window,* c. 1659 (Dresden, Staatliche Gemäldegalerie), and his *Woman in blue reading a Letter,* c. 1662-65 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), leaves no doubt that the latter, like the woman standing in *The Concert,* is pregnant. Cf., the remarks made by M.M. Kahr, *Dutch Painting in the Seventeenth Century,* New York, 1978, 287, and A.E. Snow, *A Study of Vermeer,* Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1979, 6ff.

[9] Baburen's painting also appears in the background of Vermeer's *Lady seated at the Virginal,* c. 1673-75 (London, National Gallery).

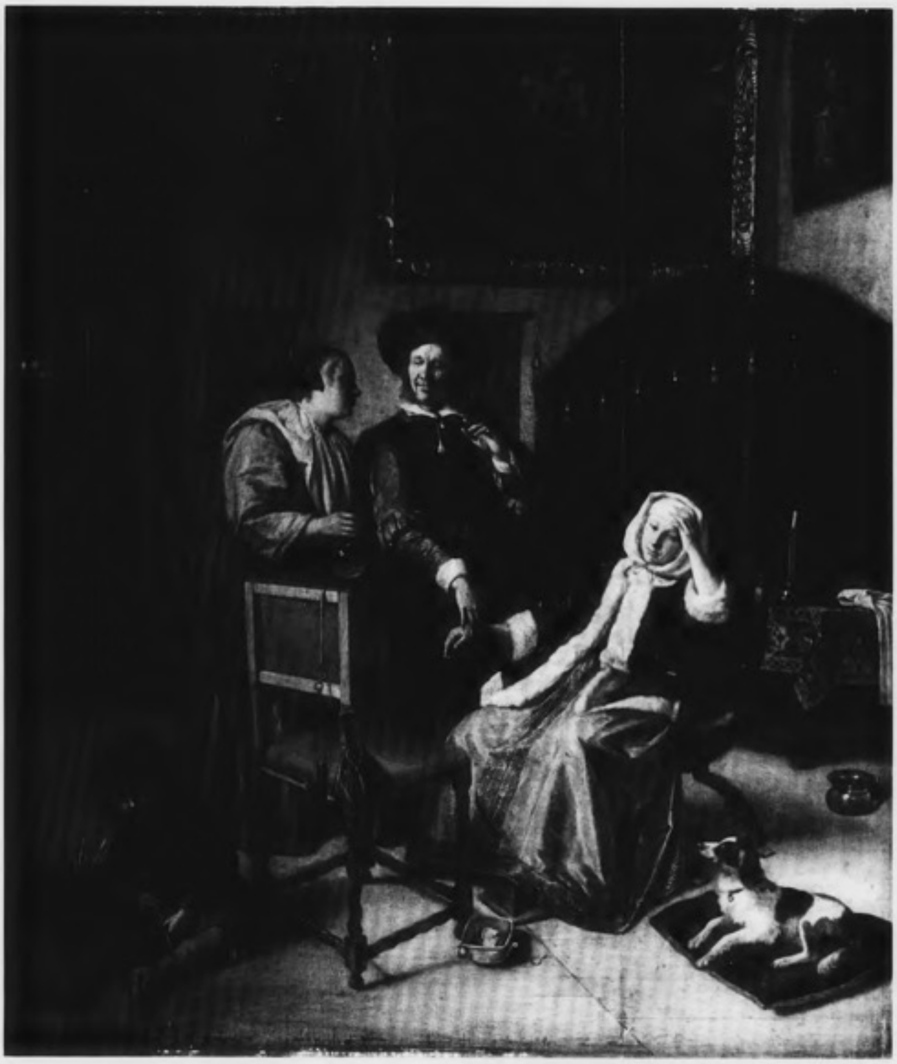
[10] De Mirimonde, 29-52, took up an interpretation suggested by Gowing, 52, and elaborated on it in his article.

[11] De Mirimonde, 43. This interpretation has been echoed by other scholars, for example, Blankert, 77, n. 73 and Kahr, *Dutch Painting,* 282-84.

[12] De Mirimonde, 42f.

[13] London, National Gallery, *Dutch Genre Painting,* exh. cat., 1978, 6.

[14] The original painting which was used by Steen is discussed in S. Slive, *Frans Hals,* London, 1970, 94ff, figs. 86-93. The use of costumes from the *commedia dell'arte* is discussed in S.J. Gudlaugsson, *The Comedians in the Work of Jan Steen and His Contemporaries,* Soest, Netherlands, 1975, 8ff, figs. 5-17.



3. Jan Steen, *The Physician's Visit,* c.1665. London, Victoria and Albert Museum

The picture within a picture, however, also was used as a contrast to the main subject of a painting. An example is Gabriel Metsu's *A Man and a Woman Seated by a Virginal* of about 1665 (fig. 4). The partially covered painting on the wall at the left is a version of Metsu's own *Twelfth-Night Feast.* The feast was an event accompanied by wild revelry, which contrasts with the decorous scene in the foreground.[15] The woman is handing a sheet of music to a man so he can accompany her on the violin. The man in turn politely offers the woman a glass of wine.

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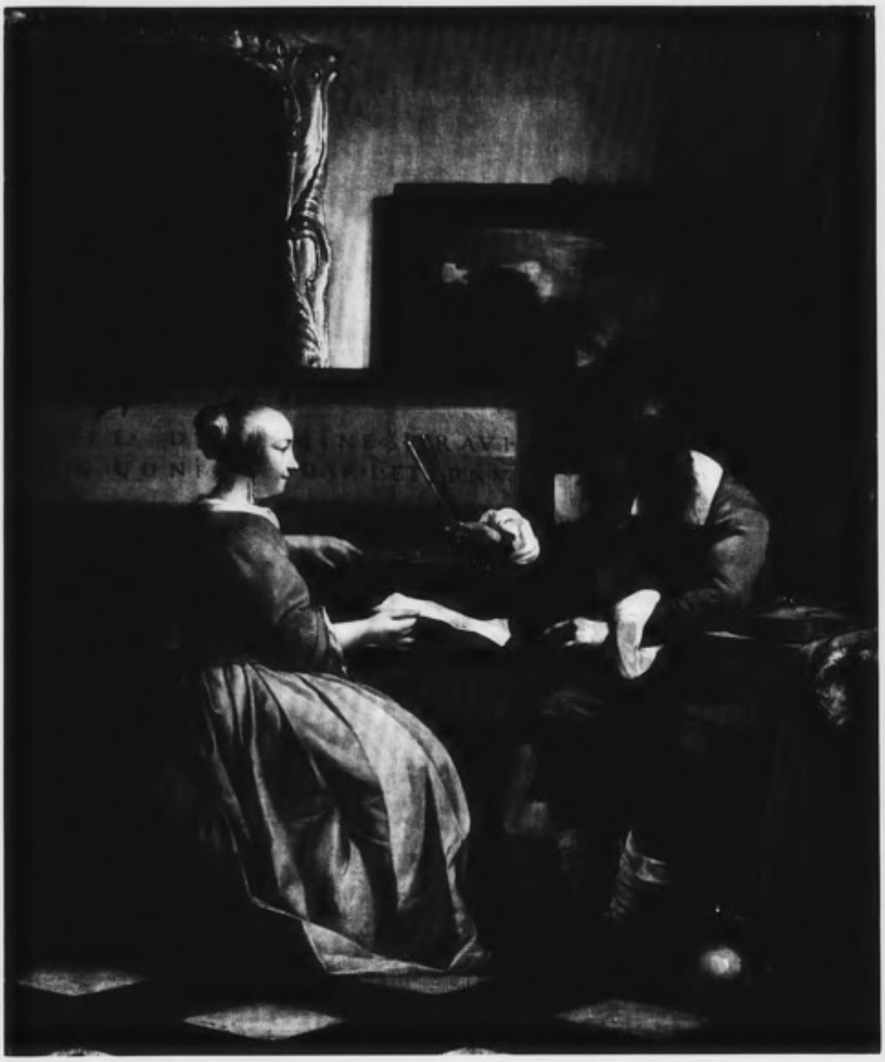
[15] Robinson, 61, fig. 18. See also London, National Gallery, 17. A discussion of the use of pictures within pictures which contrast with the main scene, and some of the associated problems involved in interpreting these works, is found in P. Sutton, *Pieter de Hoogh,* Oxford, 1980, 42-45.



4. Gabriel Metsu, *A Man and a Woman Seated by a Virginal,* c.1665. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees, The National Gallery, London

The inscriptions on the virginal are from the Book of Psalms and would appear to be ironic since the subject of the painting is a duet, which symbolized the harmony of love.[16] Nevertheless, the inscriptions may also be reminders that the pleasures of life can be enjoyed as long as one avoids excess and does not forget one's responsibilities toward God.[17]

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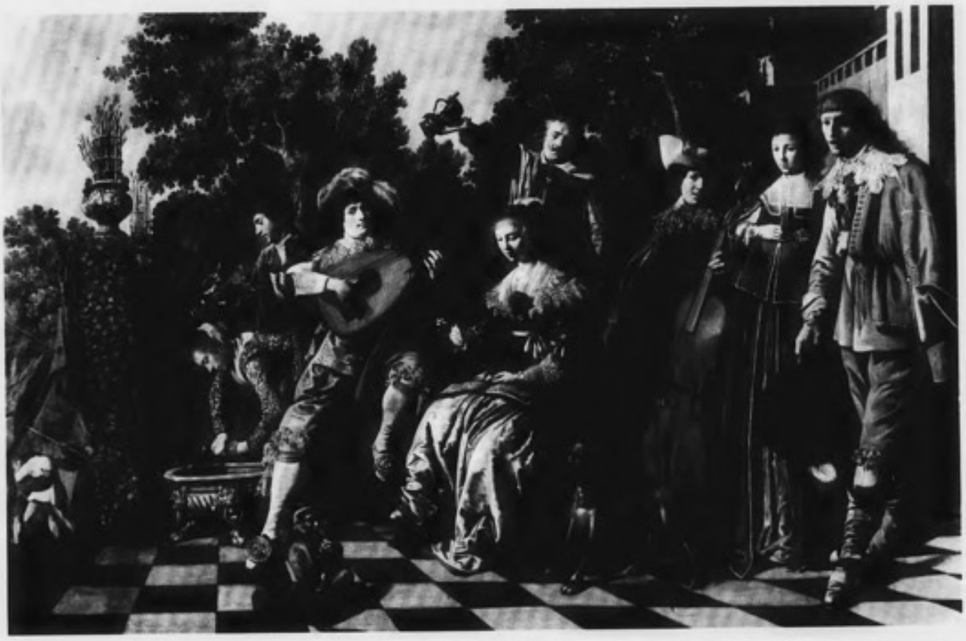
[16] The inscriptions read IN*TE*D(O)MINE*SPERAVI*/NON*CONF(UN)DAR*I*AETERNU and OMNIS *(SPIRITUS LAUDE)T*DOMINUM (Psalm 31, verse 1 and Psalm 71, verse 1: ''In thee Lord do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed,'' and Psalm 150, verse 6: ''Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord'') as described and translated in London, National Gallery, 17, where the duet as harmony of love is also discussed.

[17] This attitude is also expressed in Martin de Vos' engraving representing the element of Earth; see P. Fischer, *Music in Paintings of the Low Countries in the 16th and 17th Centuries,* trans. R. Koenig, Amsterdam, 1975, 33-35.



5. Jan Miense Molenaer, *Musical Party*, 1633. Richmond, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

Thus, due to the variety of ways in which a picture within a picture could be used, additional clues must be sought in Vermeer's *Concert* for the way in which he intended his painting to be interpreted. Such a clue is provided by the standing woman keeping time. A female figure making a similar gesture appears in Jan Miense Molenaer's *Musical Party* of 1633 (fig. 5). As J. J. van Thiel has shown, this painting is a Mirror of Virtue, in which the young couple entering at the right is surrounded by emblematic allusions to the path of moderation and temperance which they ought to follow in their marriage. Temperance is symbolized by the man in the background who is pouring water into wine in order to dilute it. Closely connected with him is the woman keeping time for the musicians. Her activity is also associated with the idea of Temperance.[18] The dog next to her is the traditional symbol of fidelity.

In opposition to the virtues of temperance and moderation, symbolized by the central figures, are the vices of anger (Ira), cruelty, and voluptuousness. These are symbolized by the two men fighting in the background at the lower left, and the cat and the monkey in the foreground, respectively.[19] The artist is showing us those vices which the couple must avoid in their marriage. The discord of the fighting men and the lust of the monkey, incongruously embracing the cat, stand in sharp contrast to the measured harmony of the music being played and the moderation in pleasure that is being observed by the main figures.

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[18] P. J. J. van Thiel, "Marriage Symbolism in a Musical Party by Jan Miense Molenaer," *Simiolus*, II, 1967-68, 91-99. See especially note 2. Time in association with the virtue of Temperance is also found in a painting formerly attributed to de Hoogh, *Merry Company Group*, present whereabouts unknown. See Sutton, *Pieter de Hoogh*, pl. 180, cat. D 11.

[19] Van Thiel, 92ff.

The similarity between the female figure associated with the virtue of temperance in Molenaer's *Musical Party* and the figure keeping time in Vermeer's *Concert* strongly suggests that Baburen's *Procuress* in the background of Vermeer's painting should be seen not as a parallel, but as a contrast to the group in the foreground.[20] Thus, the man with his back turned to the viewer can be understood as a suitor of the young woman playing the virginal. And, therefore, it seems more accurate to regard the standing woman as simply an older and more experienced person, perhaps even married, who is helping the young lovers to stay on the path of virtuous moderation in their relationship.

Furthermore, the gloomy landscape on the wall reminiscent of Ruisdael's landscapes, in which decaying tree trunks and vegetation are often found, offers an appropriate parallel to Baburen's *Procuress* and a contrast to the bright landscape on the lid of the virginal.[21] The unused instruments in the foreground of *The Concert* may then be understood either as an invitation to the viewer to participate in the concert, thereby emulating the virtuous example of the music-makers, or simply as a group of thematically related objects which help the viewer to enter more easily into the space of the room. The cool tonalities and the sense of calm and stability of Vermeer's composition reinforce the iconographic content of the work, and are a visual metaphor for the harmony of love.[22]

This analysis suggests that Vermeer's attitude toward the relationships between men and women was consonant with the balance, harmony, and clarity of the visual elements in his work. The color and composition of his paintings are characterized by measure and restraint, yet the textures of objects are rich and vibrant, the people are alive with the complexity of genuine human emotions, and the spaces they inhabit are charged with a subtle energy. In the final analysis, form and content in Vermeer's work imply levels of human experience which a strictly art historical interpretation cannot hope to explain. But any elucidation of other levels of meaning must proceed from an objective account of what we can be reasonably sure were the artist's intentions.

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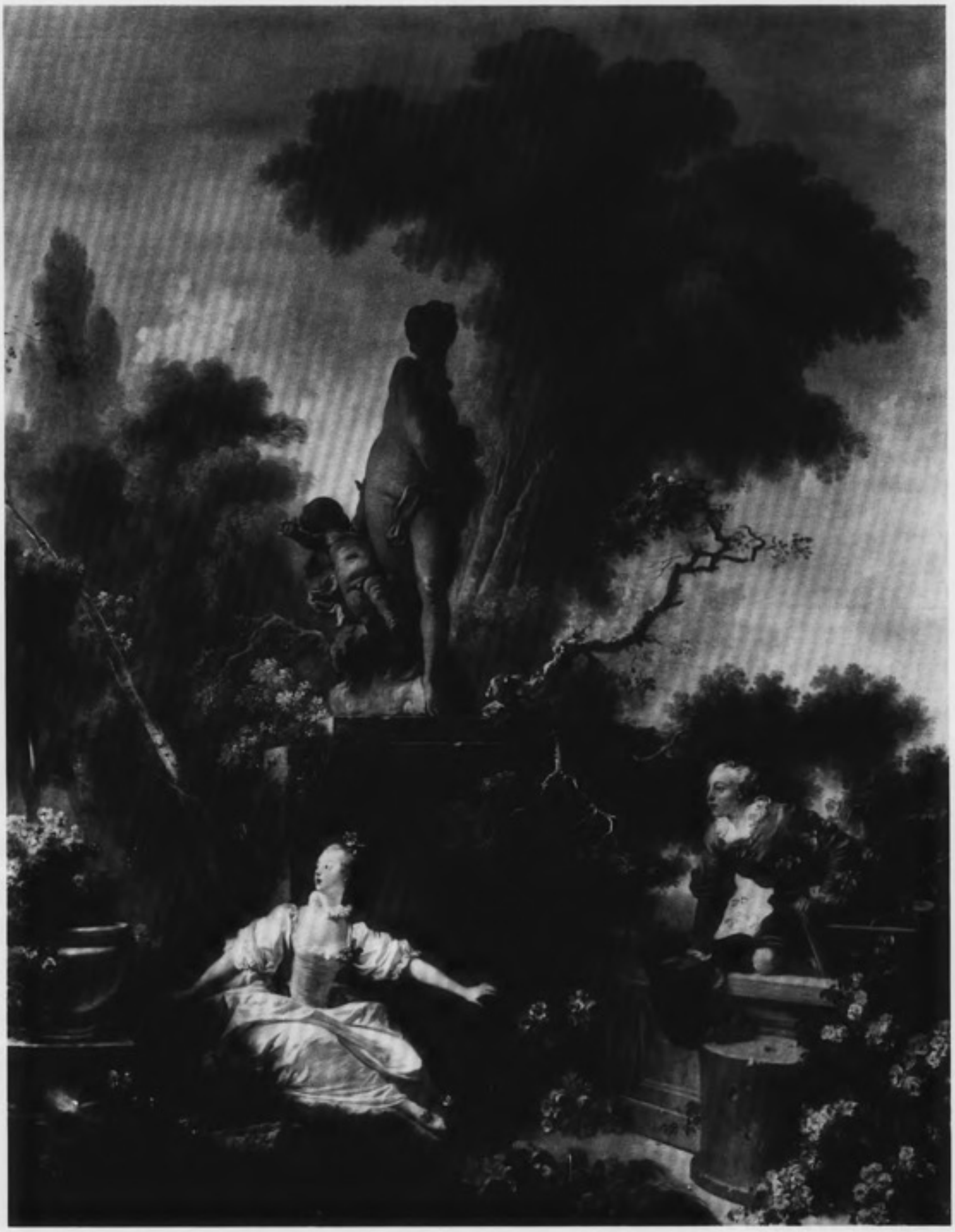
[20] Both Robinson, 61, and Wheelock, 120-122, interpret the painting in the background in contrast to the main scene, but they do not discuss the iconographic significance of the figure keeping time.

[21] Wheelock, 120.

[22] The theme of courtship is not confined to *The Concert* in Vermeer's oeuvre, as scholars generally agree. Two examples which are more explicit than *The Concert* in their subject matter are Vermeer's *The Glass of Wine,* c. 1658-60 (Berlin-Dahlem, Gemäldegalerie) and *Woman and Two Men,* c. 1658-60 (Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum). The painting incorrectly titled *The Music Lesson,* c. 1665-66 (London, Buckingham Palace), painted about the same time as *The Concert* and which may have been inspired by Frans van Mieris' *The Duet,* 1658 (Schwerin, Staatliches Museum), has also been interpreted as a scene of courtship. See Kahr, *Dutch Painting,* 283; Blankert, 162, Cat. No. 16; Gowing, 52.



1. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Pursuit of Love: The Storming,* 1771-73. New York, The Frick Collection

Fragonard's *The Pursuit of Love*

LYNNE KIRBY

> What was so new in these projects of docility that interested the eighteenth century so much? It was certainly not the first time that the body had become the object of such imperious and pressing investments .... However, there were several new things in these techniques .... What was then being formed was a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy,' which was also a 'mechanics of power,' was being born; it defined how one may have a hold over others' bodies, not only so that they may do what one wishes, but so that they may operate as one wishes, with the techniques, the speed and the efficiency that one determines. Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies.
>
> Michel Foucault
> *Discipline and Punish*

The unfortunate reception of Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Pursuit of Love* is a familiar story to art historians. Now in the Frick Collection, these four paintings were commissioned by Madame Du Barry, the mistress of Louis XV, for her new pavilion at Louveciennes.[1] Fragonard worked on the canvases *in situ* between 1771 and 1773. Shortly after their completion, Du Barry returned the paintings to their author, and replaced them with a series by the history painter and Academy favorite, Joseph-Marie Vien. Reasons for the rejection are not documented; scholars generally attribute the decision to changes in taste at the Court.[2] That is, Vien's series, *The Progress of Love in the Hearts of Young Girls,* is appreciated for its Neoclassicism, in opposition to Fragonard's Rococo.

To locate the unacceptability of Fragonard's images within the whimsical realm of "taste," however, explains very little about how works of art operate within history, at a variety of levels of meaning, in relation to different types of spectators. The assumption that stylistic taste is a primary determining force in artistic change begs the question of why taste itself changes, and easily lends itself to a reductionist view of the particular construction of specific works. It is my contention that Madame Du Barry's taste and personal reasons for returning the pain-

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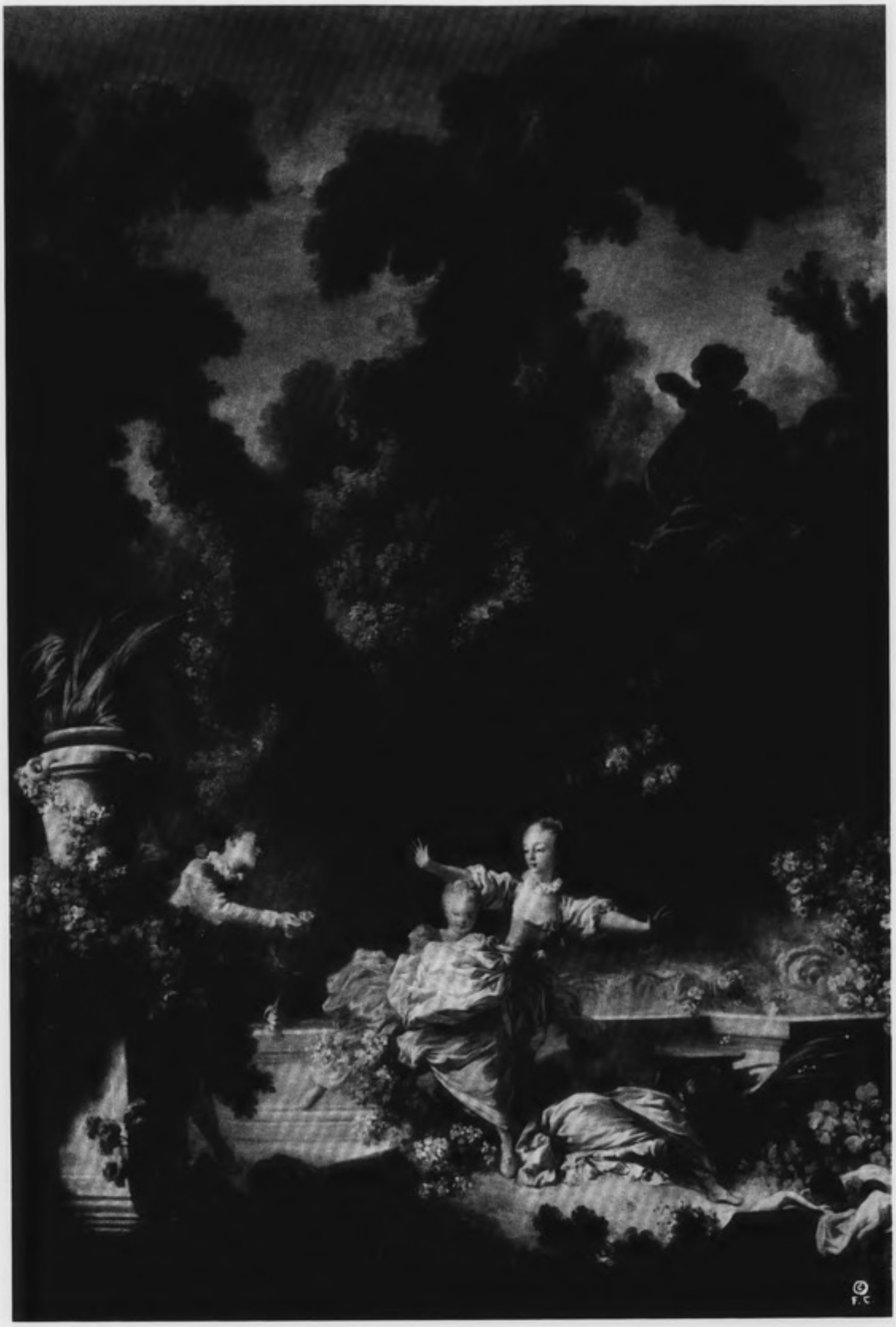
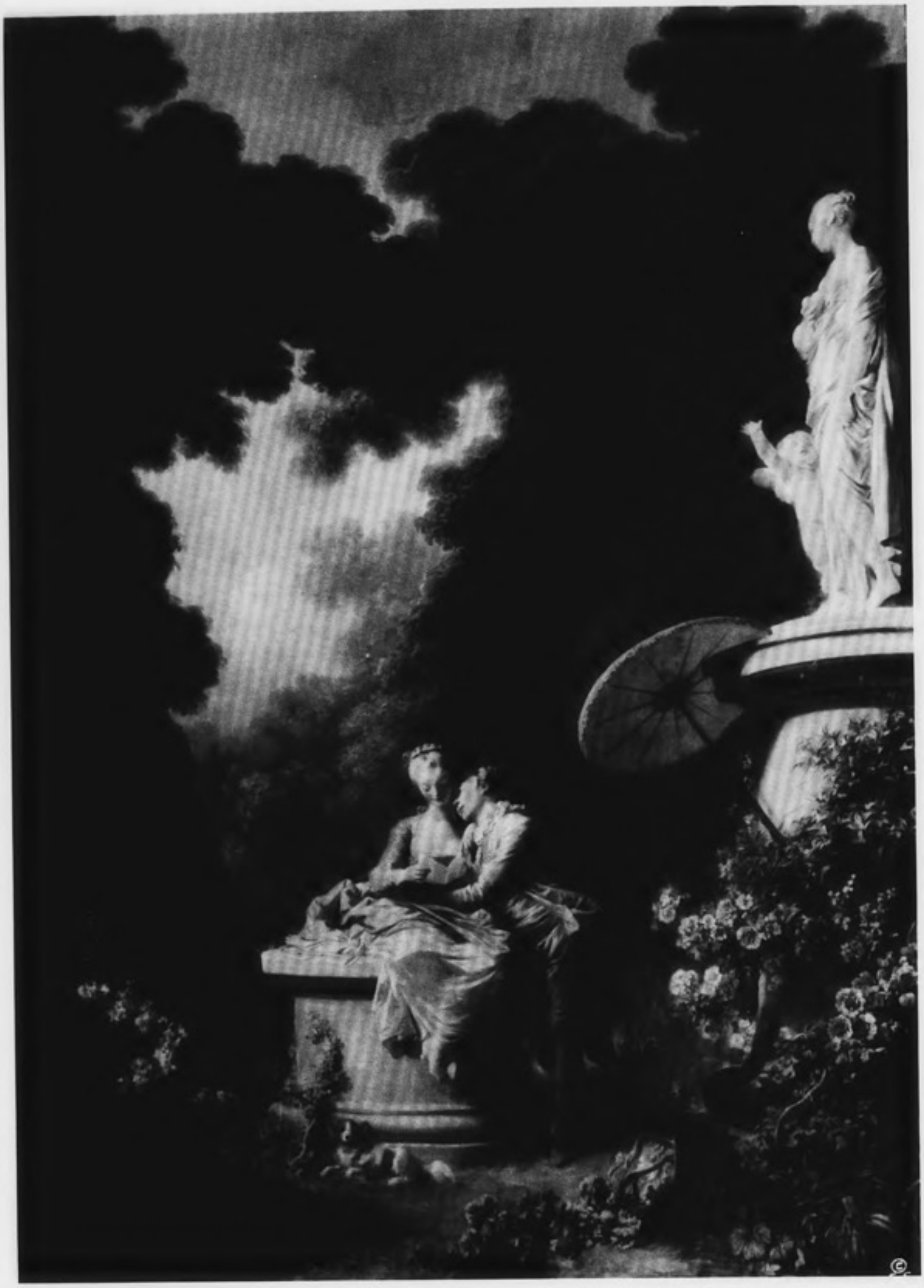
Many of the ideas put forth in this article were delivered in a paper at the Frick Collection in April, 1981. A greatly expanded version of both papers appears in my Master's thesis of May, 1981 (State University of New York at Binghamton).

[1] Franklin M. Biebel, "Fragonard and Madame du Barry," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts,* LV-LVI, December, 1960, 207.

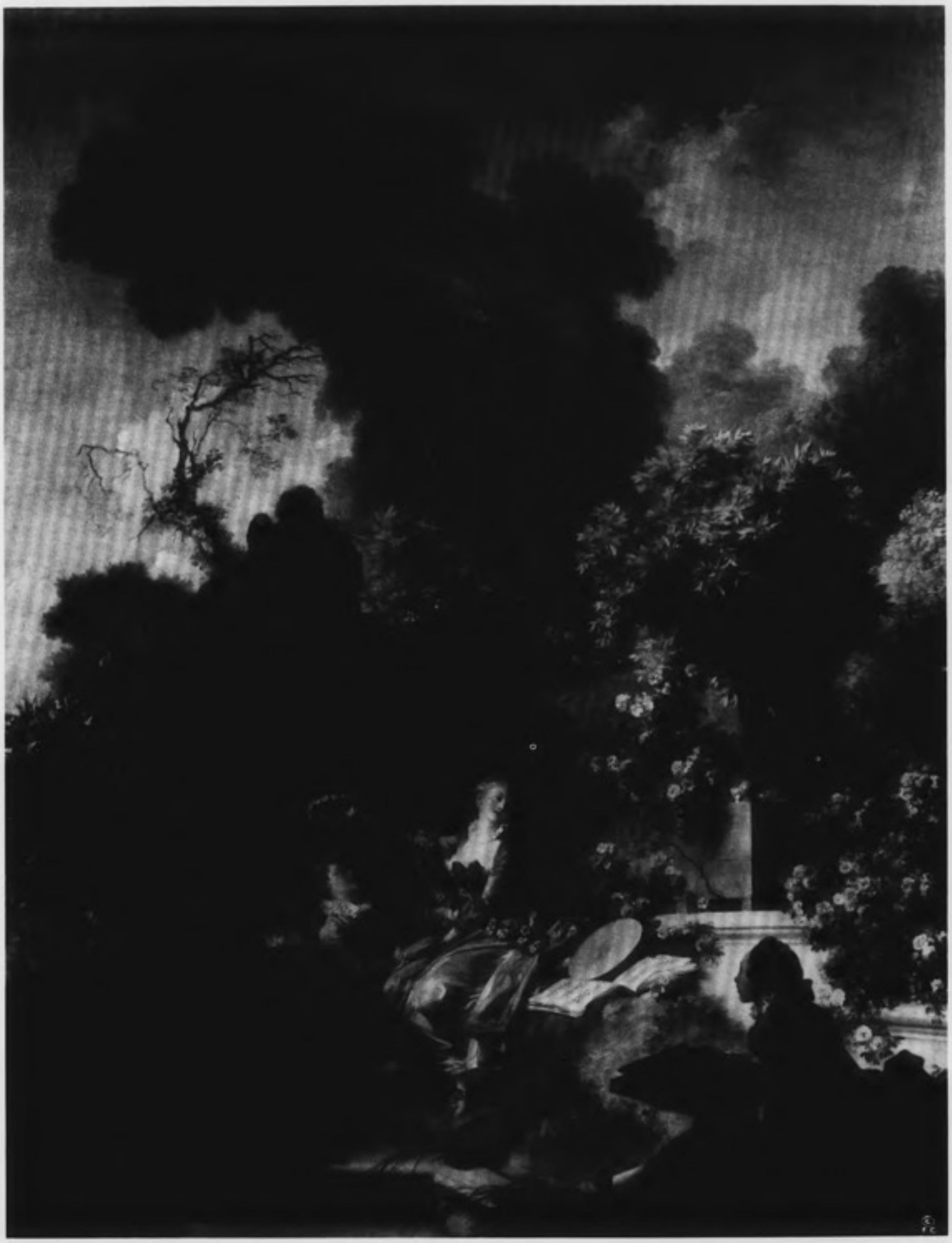
[2] See Biebel, 213; Georges Wildenstein, *The Paintings of Fragonard—Complete Edition,* New York, 1960, 18; Wend Graf Kalnein and Michael Levey, *Art and Architecture of the Eighteenth Century in France,* Baltimore, Md., 1972, 181; and Donald Posner, who, though he departs somewhat from the "style" theory, ultimately refers to taste as the criterion for rejection in his "The True Path of Fragonard's 'Progress of Love,' " *Burlington Magazine,* CXIV, August, 1972, 533.



2. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Pursuit of Love: The Pursuit,* 1771-73. New York, The Frick Collection



3. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Pursuit of Love: Love and Friendship,* 1771-73. New York, The Frick Collection



4. Jean-Honoré Fragonard, *The Pursuit of Love: The Crowning,* 1771-73. New York, The Frick Collection

tings matter far less than the ideological consequences of the rejection of Fragonard's imagery and that Vien represents interests much greater than her own. I am taking the aesthetic break represented by the rejection as evidence of ideological differences with social and political implications.

The circumstances of that rejection are complex. In order to do justice to that complexity, we must first realize that Fragonard's images were meant for specific spectators: partisans of aristocratic ideology of the early 1770s. *The Pursuit of Love* does not simply reflect that ideology, however; rather, the paintings are dynamic aspects of an upper-class social-sexual discourse which was unacceptable to the Crown's desired image of itself at this time. By discourse I mean ideology in practice, a process of signification through which individuals position themselves relative to social behavior and attitudes. As aspects of discourse, the Frick paintings allowed the upper-class spectator a political position of privilege; this privilege was refused by Vien, whose series more effectively served the Crown's public image of itself as authoritative and moral. In addressing various elements of the aristocratic discourse of which Fragonard's images form a part, I will focus on those "unacceptable" features of the paintings which in some sense express a resistance to authority, and provide a space of resistance for the aristocratic spectator. The "unacceptability" turns, I think, on sexuality—in particular, female sexuality—and may be analyzed in light of three mutually implicative categories: the Body, the Look, and the Code.

The Body

One may begin by looking at the body etiquette of the female figures in *The Pursuit of Love.* In *The Storming* (fig. 1), considered the first painting of the series, the female is spotlighted by her theatrical posture, by her position near the vortex of a flurry of foliage and beneath a statue of Venus and Cupid, and by the contrast of her silvery white dress and ivory-colored arm against a darker background. She is propped-up, exhibited—displayed. Her proportionally small size in relation to the rest of the painting gives her doll-like dimensions equally characteristic of the figures in the other three paintings. In *Love and Friendship* (fig. 3), considered the third painting, exhibitionism is featured by the decorative placement of the girl on a statue base or pedestal, not unlike a tiny porcelain figurine.[3] Also posed like a china doll, the girl in *The Crowning* (fig. 4), the fourth painting, is set off as display by the use of color: dressed in gold and white, seated theatrically on an embankment, she is framed chromatically by the two males dressed in red.

It is important to realize that the histrionic body etiquette exaggerated within Fragonard's series has an aristocratic reference by virtue of the relationship between class status and the act of display in the eighteenth century. Upper-class position and public display intersected in almost everything the upper-class man and woman did, from the toilette,[4] to the parading walk through the park, to the visit to the Opéra.[5] In fact, as Richard Sennett has pointed out, actual theatre space was traditionally as much the province of the aristocrat as it was the domain of the professional thespian.[6] Until the late 1750s, upper-class patrons sat on the stage, walking and talking even during the performance of plays.[7] Significantly, within the oeuvres of Fragonard and Watteau, the aristocrat and the actor are figured as nearly interchangeable, as performers of stylized social ritual.[8] But, most important for our purposes, the "arts of appearing" were socially coded as upper-class, and embodied by the aristocratic woman.[9] Upper-class events, like those imaged by Moreau le jeune and Fragonard,[10] upper-class furniture, interiors, and fashion were geared to the display of women, in contrast to the more characteristically "male" exhibitionism of the age of Louis XIV.[11]

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[3] A similar comparison was made by the Goncourts, who described Fragonard's figures in general as "porcelaine." Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, *French XVIII century Painters,* trans. Robin Ironside, London, 1948, 299.

The postures alone, however, do not exhaust exhibitionism in *The Pursuit of Love.* In various ways, Fragonard overdetermines display by displacing the excessive ornamentation characteristic of aristocratic fashion in the 1770s onto the space and objects surrounding the figures.[12] Throughout the series, a plethora of details, such as abundant foliage, vases, stools, musical instruments, a parasol, exaggerates and repeats the phenomenon of display itself. This activity centers on the female figures, while the males, placed at the edge of activity, act as pictorial details framing female exhibitionism.

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[4] Sébastien Mercier, in his *Tableau de Paris*, VI, Paris, 1782/83, 148-149, explains that the toilette was actually a two-part event. The first part was the early morning toilette, which was, except for chambermaids, private, or "*fort secret.*" This was the foundation phase, in which washing and most of the cosmetic application took place. The second toilette, to which privileged friends, lovers, and purveyors of luxury items were admitted, was, according to Mercier, only a game invented by coquetterie. Cosmetic preparation at this time was redundant, and calculated to make the studied facial expression, the programmed sweep of the already-brushed hair seem as unplanned as possible. The function of this second toilette was display and titillation.

[5] The Opéra, or theatre, was the place where public display was perhaps most self-conscious. For example, Mercier recommended that one go to the Opéra, if one wished to know the latest hairstyles. See Mercier, III, 59. In Moreau le jeune's *Monument to Costume* series (1776) the theatre appears frequently as a site of display for the latest fashions. For reproductions of the entire series, see Joseph Widener, *French Engravings of the Eighteenth Century,* II, London, 1923. As we see in Moreau's prints, showing off rich clothing was an important component of display for the upper classes. While people of all classes tried to imitate upper-class dress as a sign of a definable place in society, boundaries existed which certain classes were discouraged from crossing, especially regarding women's clothing. See Richard Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man,* New York, 1978, 66-67; see also Mercier, III, 127.

[6] Sennett, 80.

[7] Sennett, 75.

[8] The interplay between theatre costume and aristocratic fashion is related to this; as Sennett notes, new clothing styles were often tested out in the theatre, on stage, before being "tried out" on the streets, in public, by members of the upper classes. See Sennett, 71.

[9] See Sennett, 68, and Eduard Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart,* II: *Die Galante Zeit,* Munich, 1910, plate 189, *Le Bourgeois et la bourgeoise,* which shows a bourgeois family *en promenade,* and to which a paragraph is appended explaining how the bourgeoise tries to imitate the dress of the noblewoman, but will only dare to go so far.

[10] See in particular Moreau's *La Sortie de l'Opera,* from the *Monument to Costume,* and Fragonard's depictions in the 1770s of upper-class social events, such as *The Swing* (c. 1775, Washington, D.C., National Gallery), and *Blind Man's Bluff* (c. 1775, Washington, D.C., National Gallery), in which the body etiquette of the blind-folded woman is identical to that of the running girl in *The Pursuit.*

[11] The eighteenth-century salon, which was in general woman's domain, served as another context for display: of bodies, and of conversational skills. As the site of multiple mirrors surrounding chairs and sofas designed to accomodate female fashions, the salon foregrounded the display of the *salonniers,* and directed their attention to that fact.

[12] Aristocratic female fashions reached unprecedented levels of exaggeration in the 1770s: skirts became wider and more decorative; the new, more rigid corset tightened waists and pushed up breasts, which were often simultaneously exposed and decorated with gauze kerchiefs; and coiffures, which were extremely tall and elaborate, often elicited critical commentary in the form of caricature. See Moreau's *Monument to Costume,* and caricatures reproduced in Millia Davenport, *The Book of Costume,* New York, 1976, 694, for illustrations.

In *The Storming,* the display of the girl is additionally broadcast by the convergence of the diagonal outbursts of the background trees with the branches in the foreground, which refigure the gesture of throwing the arms out in wide-open display. In *The Pursuit* (fig. 2) as well we find an echoing trace of the girl's gesturing arms and body in the left-of-center background tree, and in various reeds whose blades thrust outward. In both paintings, the excess of lush flowers and objects enveloping the human figures continues the repetition of ostentatious display. Similar interrelationships of components within the other paintings (such as statue/figure group comparisons) also underscore the fact of female exhibitionism.

This effusion of elements which signify display continually draws attention to the importance of the woman-as-spectacle. There is a certain audacity in focusing so much on exhibiting,[13] on female appearing, which becomes more significant as an aspect of resistance to authority if we turn to the implications of that posture, and look at the attitudes it serves.

The body etiquette of the female figures in *The Pursuit of Love* may be seen as part of a social-sexual discourse which informs a certain bodily geography of the deployment of sexual force. This discourse maps out the more or less peripheral areas of the woman's body as a loose network of sites for erotic attention, focusing on anatomical extremities: feet, hands, the head and neck, and the chest or breasts. Throughout Fragonard's series, hands are thrown out for examination, tiny feet extend delicately from beneath skirts, chests are thrust forward, and necks exposed and admired. We must take seriously such features as the highlighting of the girl's gesturing hands in *The Storming* and *The Pursuit,* and the complicity of clothing articles like the frilled collars, which decoratively draw attention to the necks they adorn, and to the chests they help segment off from the rest of the body. Bows and flowers, emphasizing the breasts and shoes, also contribute to the signifying of a particular kind of sexuality.

Over and over in eighteenth-century aristocratic fiction, and in prints popular

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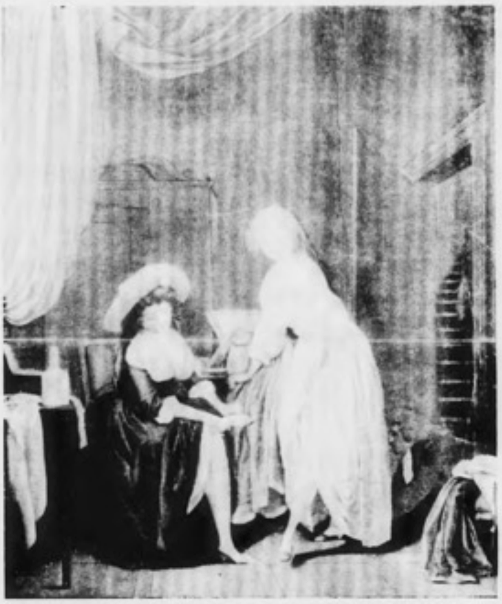
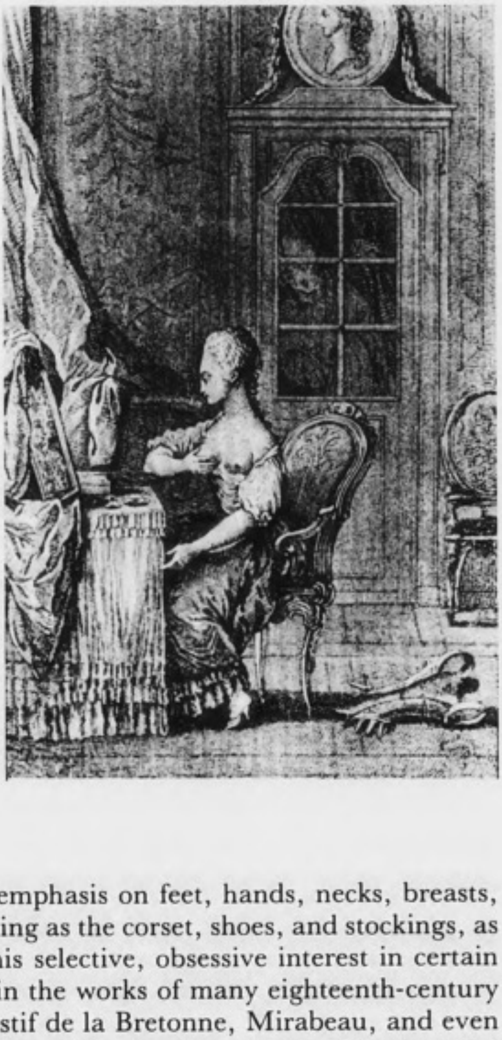
[13] This audacity extends to consideration of the size of the paintings, which are quite large for such a playful series of *fête galante* genre scenes. (Watteau's *fêtes galantes,* for example, generally run much smaller in size; see *The Complete Paintings of Watteau,* with an introduction by John Sunderland, New York, 1968, for painting sizes.) Painting size was traditionally an index of the importance and seriousness of the images contained by the frame, and in the eighteenth century, large size was associated with history painting. Fragonard's paintings, approximately seven by ten feet, thus compete with history painting, the increasingly special province of Royal commissions in the 1770s, in asserting the value of their subject matter; they disobey the rules of their genre, and by overcoding the *fête galante,* infringe on a genre to which they had no claim. That is, *The Pursuit of Love* resists the authority of genre rules, which had become ever more important to the Crown at this time. Although these images were commissioned for specific panels in the salon at Louveciennes, the effect of the finished paintings must have suggested their greater suitability for the *dessus-de-porte.* By contrast, Vien's series is much closer to history painting, by virtue of its classical setting and costume, the absence of excess decorative detail as in *The Pursuit of Love,* and the moral theme of nuptial love. Display is also not foregrounded to the same extent as in the Frick paintings. That Vien was the Academy's favorite history painter, and that he was executing works dealing with French history at this time (1773) is significant in this regard. We should also note that two of the paintings in Vien's series were shown in the 1773 Salon, which is another indication of the seriousness of the commission. See Jean Locquin, *La Peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785,* Paris, 1912, xxxxx; and *French Painting 1774-1830: The Age of Revolution,* Detroit, 1975, 660.



5. Boilly, *La Comparaison des petits pieds,* c.1786 (from Edouard Fuchs, *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart,* II: *Die Galante Zeit,* Munich, 1910, 152-153)



6. De Longeuil, after Eisen, *Le Matin,* 1771 (from Fuchs, 147)

among the upper classes, we find erotic emphasis on feet, hands, necks, breasts, and buttocks, and on such articles of clothing as the corset, shoes, and stockings, as quasi-autonomous objects of desire.[14] This selective, obsessive interest in certain female body parts and clothing is found in the works of many eighteenth-century writers, including Marivaux, Duclos, Restif de la Bretonne, Mirabeau, and even Rousseau;[15] they describe with sensual fervor the familiar tropes of fragmented female anatomy: the *pied mignon,* or tiny foot, the alabaster neck, the delicate hands, etc. In works by Restif and Mirabeau, typical of later eighteenth-century

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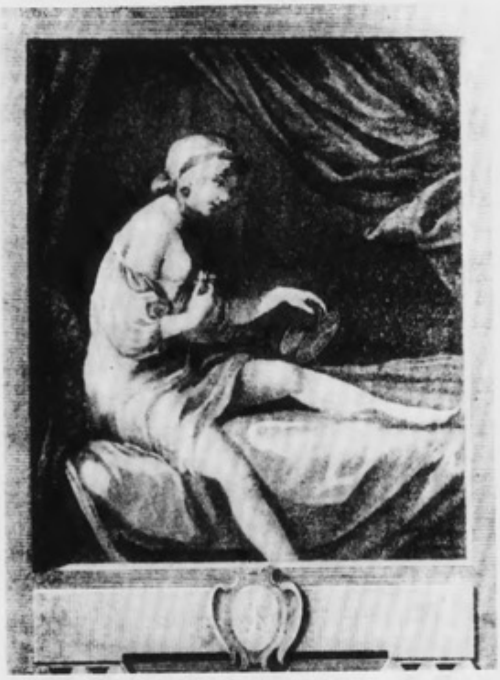
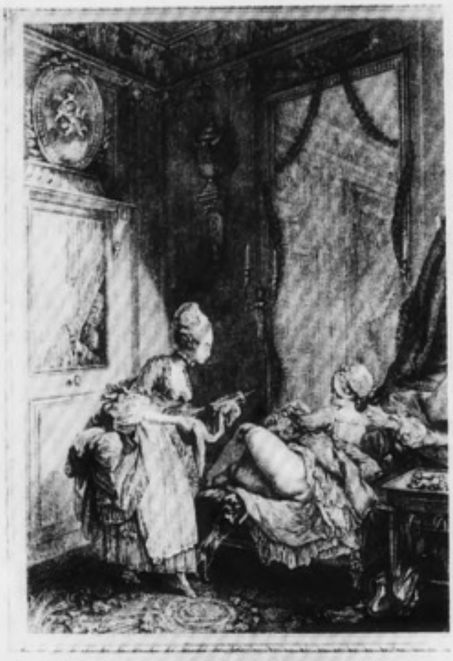
[14] On the erotic significance of corsets, see David Kunzel, "The Corset as Erotic Alchemy: From Rococo Galanterie to Montaut's Physiologies," in *Woman as Sex Object,* eds. Thomas B. Hess and Linda Nochlin, New York, 1972. See also Fuchs, II, fig. 271 (anon., *The Footbath).* Other prints that exemplify the erotic attention to the foot: *Le Boudoir,* c. 1780, by Marchand, after Fragonard; (Fuchs, II, 248-9); *Foreplay,* 1771, by Queverdo (Fuchs, II, fig. 288); and *Coquetterie,* after Le Clerc (Fuchs, II, fig. 309). In *La Comparaison,* by Bouillard, after Schall (Fuchs, II, 144-145), three bathing women posed in the Three Graces formation are judged by their backsides. (Cf. Boucher's typical nudes: women viewed from behind.)

[15] Pertinent passages by Marivaux and Duclos are cited in Philip Stewart, *Le Masque et la Parole,* Paris, 1973, 46-47; see also Restif de la Bretonne, *Oeuvres,* II, IV, Geneva, 1971; Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les Confessions,* Bordas, France, 1966, 69-70; Dorat, *Les Baisers,* in *Collection complète des oeuvres de M. Dorat,* Neuchatel, 1775; Denis Diderot, "Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville," in *Dialogues,* trans. Francis Birrell, New York, 1969, 138; and Philip Stewart, "Representations of Love in the French Eighteenth Century," *Studies in Iconography,* 4, 1978; pertinent passages by Mirabeau are cited in Barry Ivker, *An Anthology and Analysis of 17th and 18th century French Libertine Fiction,* Ann Arbor, Mich., 1977, 100.



7. Saint-Aubin, *La Comparaison du bouton de rose* (from Fuchs, 95)



8. Charles Eisen, *Le Curieux* (from Fuchs, 116)

erotic fiction, women's bodily extremities receive elaborate libidinal attention.[16] Restif, a libertine and a moralist at the same time, was not a nobleman, but the aristocratic sense of refined sexual pleasures runs deep in his writing.[17] From "Le Pied de Fanchette" (1768) to the essays in *Les Contemporaines* (1780/83) and beyond, Restif indulges a fixation on shoes and feet with anecdotes about male sexual fantasies that revolve around high heels and small, clean feet.[18]

A more common example of such privileged exhibitionism is in representations of the *comparaison,* a popular theme in later eighteenth-century art.[19] In the *comparaison,* women compare breasts, and occasionally feet, legs, and buttocks, for their value as beautiful, erotic objects. The evaluation can take several forms. Two women may compare themselves to each other, as in Boilly's *Comparison of the Small Feet* (fig. 5); or one woman may compare one of her breasts to the other, as in De Longeuil's *Le Matin* (fig. 6), where an aristocratic woman regards herself in the mirror, while a voyeur peers in through the window. Or she can perform the "comparaison du bouton de rose," illustrated in Gabriel de Saint-Aubin's print of the same name (fig. 7). In this latter type of comparison, as Philip Stewart notes, a pun is set up, "both verbal and visual, since *bouton de rose* is both the rose bud and a metaphor for the nipple."[20]

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[16] See in particular Mirabeau's *Le Rideau Levé, ou l'éducation de Laure,* cited in Ivker.

[17] On Restif's paradoxical position, see Mark Poster, *The Utopian Thought of Restif de la Bretonne,* New York, 1971.

[18] For example, in *Le Pied de Fanchette,* the fifty-year old male guardian of young Fanchette is obsessed with her foot, which absorbs almost all of his sensual fervor, mostly while she is not aware of it: "Il avait un soin particulier d'orner cette partie des attraits de la jeune Florangis par la chaussure la plus élégante; il ne trouvait jamais qu'une boucle fut assez galante et d'assez bon goût." (Restif, IV, 250.)

[19] Stewart, "Representations of Love," 6.

This special sexualization of particular female body parts and their role in organizing male desire may be called fetishistic. By fetishism I mean the overvaluation, as Freud said, of such sexual objects as sites of libidinal investment inhibiting the procreative aim, and often genital sex.[21] Freud locates the experience of displacing libidinal desire away from the genitals and investing it in another object or body part within the sphere of the castration complex, a process he describes in his short narrative on the clinical basis of fetishism.[22] The essay is problematic for many reasons, including the questions of castration, and of the possibility of the fetishization of the genitals themselves.[23] And certainly eighteenth-century upper-class fetishism was not the perversion it was for Freud and nineteenth-century bourgeois culture.[24] Indeed, in writers like Mirabeau and Sade, non-genital forms of sexual pleasure are represented as "natural."[25] Semi-pornographic engravings like *Le Curieux* (fig. 8) also show that genital sex was either peripheral to, or only one aspect of the Rococo aesthetic of *variété*.[26]

But fetishism is only half of this non-procreative sexuality in *The Pursuit of Love*. Donald Posner is certainly correct to see in *The Storming* the paradigm of bather and toilette scenes (popular in the eighteenth century), where women are surprised in their privacy by male viewers.[27] However, concomitant with the surprise is voyeuristic consumption, which in the series underscores the display as fetishistic. That is, the exhibitionism of the female body does not exist apart from the representation of the voyeur's gaze; the girl never looks back to recognize that she is being viewed. In the tradition of *The Swing,* Fragonard here makes explicit the scopophilic drive that fuels primary fetishistic urges.[28] In fact, in none of the Frick paintings does the girl ever confront the gaze of her suitor. The erotic charge of this lack of visual recognition is analogous to a convention popular in literature of the period, by which an aristocratic woman faints in the arms of her lover, in order to enjoy sex, without taking conscious responsibility for it.[29] For the upper-class spectator, these same social-sexual attitudes are at play throughout the series, undermining moral sincerity and commitment.

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[20] Stewart, "Representations of Love," 6.

[21] Sigmund Freud, "Fetishism," trans. Joan Rivière, *International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* IX, 1928, 161; and Sigmund Freud, "Three Essays on Sexuality," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* trans. James Strachey, London, 1962, VII, 153-154.

[22] Freud, "Fetishism."

[23] Fetishization of this sort does occur in the rare but noteworthy eighteenth-century representations of women regarding their genitals in the mirror; see in particular a print by Huet (Fuchs, II, plate 15), which shows the genitals as isolated, fragmented, and objectified in a manner similar to that of the comparison.

[24] See Freud, "Three Essays," 153-154.

[25] In both authors, the interest in the capacity of non-genital body parts to satisfy desire is typified by the recurrence of anal sex as a motif.

[26] *Le Curieux,* in which the syringe acts as a substitute phallus, is an example of how popular pornography's allusions to intercourse concentrate as much, if not more, on anal intercourse as on genital sex. As Posner notes, the theme of the "remedy" may be traced back in art to the seventeenth century. Its overtly lascivious significance, and performance for male spectators within the image are more characteristic of later eighteenth-century art, especially prints. See Donald Posner, *Watteau: A Lady at her Toilet,* New York, 1973, 43-48.

[27] Posner, "The True Path," 530.

[28] Compare *Frivolous Love,* by Beauvarlet (supposedly after Boucher), in which the active dimension of voyeurism is redundantly expressed in the gesture of a young man who reaches his arm through a boudoir window, and with a stick lifts the kerchief from the breast of a sleeping young girl who dozes at her toilette table; in Fuchs, II, fig. 71.

What is important for our purposes is that upper-class sexual practices, however multifarious, were characteristically fetishistic as *processes* of displacement from a morally directed goal—i.e., reproductive sex. The obsessive emphasis on acts of display and visual consumption in the Frick paintings implicates them as signs of a refined, non-reproductive sexuality given over to pleasures in what has been called ''the wasteful use of bodies,''[30] or, in the view of medical theorists, physiocrats, and the state in the latter third of the eighteenth century, ''the squandering of vital forces.''[31]

I emphasize the fetishistic and voyeuristic traits of this ''marginal'' sexuality because of their ideological significance. For example, fetishistic discourse takes on particular class meaning in a *Journal encyclopédique* of 1782, in which the value of the breast was debated: was it merely beautiful, or did it only serve a utilitarian purpose?[32] Talking about the ''useful'' but unattractive breast is a way of referring to the bourgeois ideal of female sexuality: the wife and mother, the ''functional'' woman. The ''beautiful,'' decorative breast may be seen as a reference to the aristocratic woman, whose breasts were literally made non-functional by the stiff, inflexible corsets she wore.[33] Fragonard's female figures clearly sport the ''beautiful'' breast, and the body of displaced sexual pleasure.

From bourgeois and Enlightenment viewpoints, upper-class sexuality was peripheral to the meaningful, that is, to procreative sex. Contemporary writers on population and morality, such as Plombaine and Jaubert, drew precise connections between what was commonly, though mistakenly believed to be a decline in population, and the ''unnatural,'' immoral sexual practices of the upper classes.[34] For the state especially, which measured the wealth of the nation by population size, the aristocratic discourse of which Fragonard's images form a part violated efforts to multiply the French population and direct its sexuality towards a productive end.[35] It resisted what Jacques Donzelot calls an ''economy of the body,'' and a material responsibility to the state.

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[29] Stewart, ''Representations of Love,'' 15.

[30] Jacques Donzelot, *The Policing of Families,* trans. Robert Hurley, New York, 1979, 15.

[31] Donzelot, 25.

[32] Cited in Kay Wilkins, ''Attitudes towards Women in Two Eighteenth-Century French Periodicals,'' *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture,* 6, 399.

[33] See Jacques Gelis, Mireille Leget, and Marie-France Morel, *Entrer dans la vie—Naissances et enfances dans la France traditionelle,* Paris, 1978, 111.

[34] These writers, along with other contemporary ''populationists'' like D'Alembert, Plumard de Danguel, and, of course, Moheau, are cited at length in Joseph J. Spengler, *French Predecessors of Malthus,* New York, 1965, especially chapters two and three; see in particular p. 102, where Spengler paraphrases Moheau as follows: ''It was essential to the continuation of population growth. . .that extra-marital sexual relations be made impossible, that economic inequalities be reduced, and that the tax system be made to favor population growth.''

[35] An important indication of the state's concern with population at this time is the instituting of census-taking beginning in 1772. See Alain Soboul, *La France à la veille de la Révolution,* I, Paris, 1969, 45.

> . . . [I]n short, what was denounced was the lack of a *social economy.* At its wealthiest extreme, criticism was aimed at the organization of the body with a view to the strictly wasteful use of it through the refinement of methods that made the body into a pure pleasure principle; in other words, what was lacking was an *economy of the body.*[36]

Indeed, demographic studies for the period show that contraception, not reproduction, took priority in aristocratic social-sexual behavior.[37] The relations between reproduction and production, however accurate or inaccurate, between certain ideologies of behavior and their broad effects were, as noted, also perceived by contemporary observers.[38] For all the rigidity and stylization of posture, the female in *The Pursuit of Love* signifies the resistance of the body to a ''political anatomy,'' to the docility demanded by authority.[39] Next to Fragonard's exhibitionistic females, Vien's modest, more mature women look almost motherly (figs. 9-12). Certainly their classical robes and restrained postures locate them closer to the bourgeois ''Pudicitas'' image of responsible womanhood, than to the image of woman as a site of dispensable desire, an image respected by Fragonard and, for that matter, Madame Du Barry. In Vien's series as well, sexuality is subordinate to morality and marriage (according to the narrative).

The Look

However, we cannot reduce the Royal rejection of Fragonard's paintings simply to an ideological attitude towards reproduction. Exhibitionism, and looking in particular, are ideologically meaningful in other ways, as important aspects of a feature of the aristocratic game of love. This is coquetterie, on whose conventions the Frick images depend — in relation to activity within the frame, and in direct relation to the spectator, about which I will say more below.

In all four paintings the girl refuses to recognize the gaze of the suitor. This is a flirtatious device based on typical features of coquetterie: insincerity, infidelity, and equivocation.[40] Rousseau defined coquetterie in the conventional eighteenth-century way when he described coquettes as women who knew how "sans rien permettre, ni rien promettre, faire espérer plus qu'elles ne veulent tenir."[41] In *The Pursuit of Love,* the absence of eye contact and face-to-face body posture establishes the game of separating representation and reference, the speciality of coquettes who signify one thing, and mean another.

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[36] Donzelot, 12-13.

[37] During the second half of the eighteenth century, births among the aristocracy tended to decrease, while those of other classes, particularly that portion of the peasantry which supplied the cities with a growing wage-earning class, increased. A study of fertility and birth rates in the Parisian peerage reveals that over the course of the century, the number of births declined significantly from 403 births per year for every 1,000 married women in the first half of the century, to 148 in the second half. See Louis Henry, ''The Population of France in the Eighteenth Century,'' in *Population in History,* eds. D.V. Glass and D.E.C. Eversley, London, 1965, 444-445, 452. In the absence of indications that there were correspondingly high mortality rates for this same group, various twentieth-century scholars attribute the decline to an increase in the practice of birth control, and strongly support the thesis that deliberate, programmatic contraception became commonplace among the upper classes in the latter part of the eighteenth century. See Soboul, 52; Henry, 452; Pierre Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime,* II: *les pouvoirs,* Paris, 1973, 192-193.

[38] For example, Moheau blamed wealthy women for setting a bad example for other social classes by ''cheating'' nature, or using contraception (Spengler, 102); Plombaine, for his part, ''attributed the low level of natural increase in the cities and in the upper classes to prostitution and libertinism, which reduced the frequency of marriage, weakened marital ties, and spread venereal disease, which, in turn, led either to sterility or to incapacity to produce healthy offspring'' (Spengler, 89); and Féline, in *Catéchism des gens mariés,* Caen, 1782, found the ''sin of Onan'' all too common among married men (text cited in Gélis et.al., 25).

[39] See quotation from Foucault at the beginning of this paper in Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* trans. Alan Sheridan, New York, 1979, 136-138.

While on the one hand the disjuncture of gazes gives a certain power and pleasure to male viewing, it serves at the same time to lead the suitor on, and ensure that his pleasure will only be voyeuristic (and hence fetishistic). In *The Crowning,* considered the final painting in the series, we see that the young man is still deriving his pleasure from looking at a woman who refuses to look back. But as a sequence or not, in all of the paintings, the female acts as a flirtatious diversion, an end to which is not produced as part of the series.

This diversionary function of the female complicates a reading of the images on at least two levels. At one, it gives a kind of power to the girl; she is pursued and visually dominated, but never really "caught." The question of who holds power is thus introduced into the series.[42] In *The Crowning,* sexual power is especially ambiguous. The male figure is physically subordinate, but dominates visually. The female figure is situated in the opposite position. At the same time, while she holds the authority to consummate the relationship, her authority is uncertain: she crowns, yet does not crown; her gesture stops in mid-air. The uncertainty as to whether she will complete the frozen gesture corresponds to the asymmetry of gazes, the equivocation of the girl's bodily attitude, and the disparity between the gifts of exchange: wreath vs. garland.

In Vien's version of the crowning of love (fig. 11), authority unambiguously belongs to the male. Here the suitor firmly places the wreath on the head of his lover, who also reaches for a wreath. The symmetry of the gifts, like the symmetry of gazes and bodily attitudes becomes a sign of recognition, and very unflirtatious commitment; it is a sign of female submission to male power. In the next and final scene, *The Temple of Hymen* (fig. 12), the woman smiles acceptingly on the moral outcome of her decision, and gives herself in marriage to the suitor. In contrast to Fragonard's paintings, Vien's series thus makes a more appropriate image for the representation of Royal, male authority.

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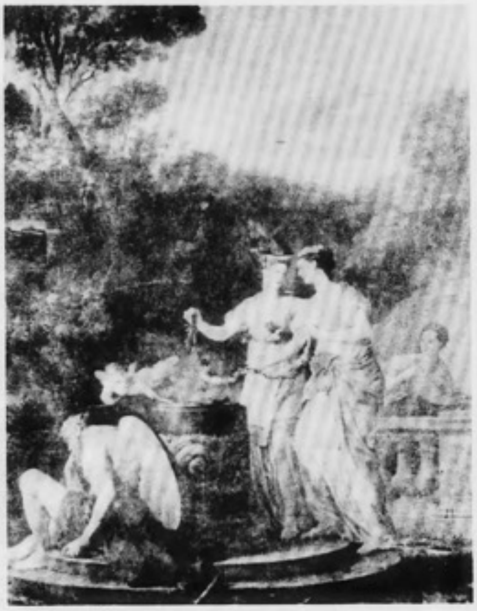
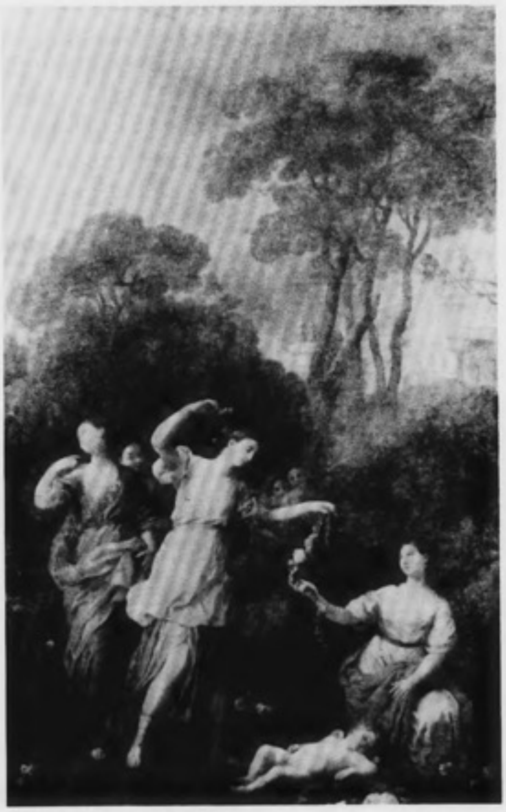
[40] Marmontel equated female coquetterie with flattery and attractiveness. See *Memoirs of Marmontel,* trans. Brigit Patmore, London, 1930, 203; in *Les Liaisons dangereuses,* the Vicomte de Valmont assesses it more negatively, labeling it "ce regard menteur qui séduit quelquefois et nous trompe toujours." See Pierre Choderlos de Laclos, *Les Liaisons dangereuses,* Paris, 1964, 28. (Originally published in 1782). Coquetterie was, above all, a conscious, calculated posture designed to please and deceive. See Stewart, *Le Masque et la parole,* 91-93.

[41] Rousseau, *Confessions,* 56.

[42] The questions of sexual identity and sexual power were pertinent ones for contemporary writers, from Antoine-Léonard Thomas, who believed upper-class women were too independent in manners and morals, and not domestic enough, to Prost de Royer, who felt that women were independent in a false way, and that they should be allowed a greater role in the state bureaucracy. See Antoine-Léonard Thomas, "Essai sur le caractère, les moeurs, et l'esprit des femmes dans les différens siècles," in *Oeuvres complètes de Thomas,* IV, Paris, 1802; Antoine-François Prost de Royer, *De l'administration des femmes,* Geneva, 1782.



9. Joseph-Marie Vien, *The Progress of Love in the Hearts of Young Girls: The Vow of Feminine Friendship,* 1773. Chambery, Prefecture



10. Joseph-Marie Vien, *The Progress of Love in the Hearts of Young Girls: The Meeting with Love,* 1773. Paris, Louvre

Images of authority are precisely what Louis XV needed at this time. From 1771-1774, Louis exerted an unprecedented political authority over the aristocracy by exiling the Paris *Parlement,* and imposing taxation on the nobility as a class.[43] The *Parlements* were a traditional juridical structure composed primarily of ennobled bourgeois, whose main function was conservative: the defense and protection of noble privilege and the *ancien régime* structure in general.[44] The king's act, which was also motivated by the threat of a renewed bid for power by the noblesse, provoked widespread hostile reaction; even for members of the upper classes not directly threatened by the situation, it was perceived as an attack upon privilege and the foundations of society.[45] The king's sense of power and authority, over both unruly subjects *and* his coquettish mistress, was clearly more effectively served by Vien than by Fragonard.[46]

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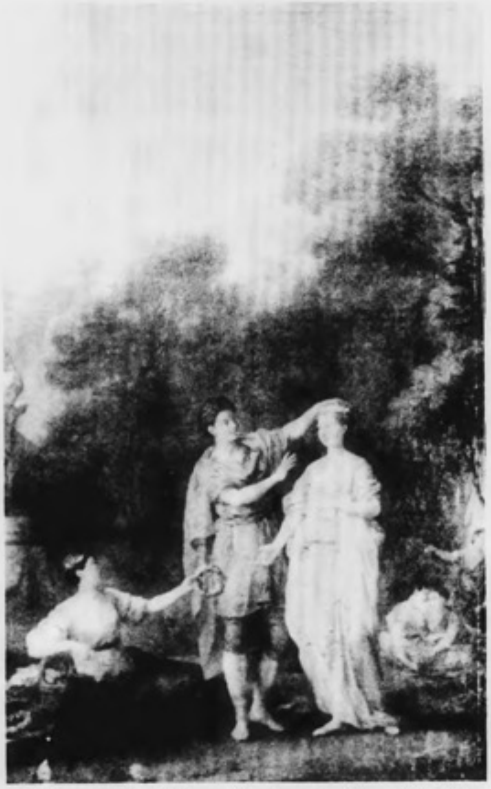
[43] Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France,* I: *Old Régime and Revolution, 1715-1799,* Baltimore, Md., 1962, 96-97.

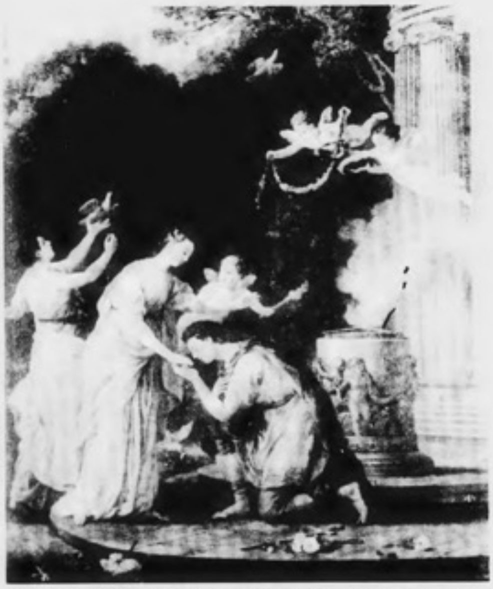
[44] Cobban, 65-68.

[45] Cobban, 96.

[46] Unlike Madame de Pompadour, Madame Du Barry made her name on, above all, her beauty, and was not above scandal also. See Biebel, 219.



11. Joseph-Marie Vien, *The Progress of Love in the Hearts of Young Girls: The Lover Crowning his Mistress,* 1773. Paris, Louvre



12. Joseph-Marie Vien, *The Progress of Love in the Hearts of Young Girls: The Temple of Hymen,* 1773. Chambery, Prefecture

In addition to the question of power dynamics, woman-as-diversion in the Frick paintings further alienates the ideology of the images from Royal interests. As the fetishized, non-reproductive object of an endless pursuit, the female distracts male energy, visual and libidinal, from more productive, useful investments. Looking within *The Pursuit of Love,* unlike the subservience of the gaze to a moral telos, as in Vien, is an aspect of aristocratic leisurely consumption, geared to unproductive activity, and a wasteful investment of time in a diversionary object.

The spectator of the paintings is directly addressed as a visual consumer, for the same elements that serve on one level to emphasize display, act on another to overdetermine the process of looking. Fragonard's series is overloaded with signifiers of looking, signs that point as much to what the spectator is doing, as to what the spectator is seeing. The superabundance and visual variety of flowers, tree branches, and clumps of foliage, and objects such as those mentioned above, scatter optical attention and distract focus from the central event in each painting. In *The Storming* and *The Pursuit,* for example, visual unrest is bolstered by the explosion of diagonals in the background trees, whose foliage impinges on the foreground, making relationships of depth ambiguous. Such ambiguity motivates visual search and research. Diffuse, unfocused lighting and the multidirectionality of gazes also help disrupt the illusion of focus in the images, and defuse contemplative viewing. The spectator cannot trust his vision to encompass the precise relations among the pictorial details, without continually looking about for clues to meaning. Again, Vien's paintings are a contrast in their relative absence of distracting detail, and their clarity of composition. Although this is certainly not yet Davidian representation, Vien's Rococo is sober, serious, and clearly organized compared to Fragonard's. As Diderot said of Vien on one occasion, he allows the viewer time to look.[47]

The ''endless pursuit'' of viewing in *The Pursuit of Love* both addresses and encourages the upper-class spectator as a wasteful user of visual energy, an active consumer of leisure events. As Antoine-Léonard Thomas remarked in 1772, in reference to the decorative, spectacle-oriented upper-class life, ''L'enthousiasme nait d'une âme ardente, qui crée des objets au lieu de les voir. Aujourd'hui on voit trop. . .''[48] Thomas thus opposes creation, which I will liken to production, to mere seeing, or visual consumption. In other words, in relation to aristocratic social-sexual attitudes, the act of seeing and looking connotes something uncreative, unproductive, and decorative, intimately linked with exhibitionism. For what was aristocratic ideology, if not an investment of belief in a class which does not produce, but consumes—a class which was, in terms of creativity, decorative to society?

For the upper-class spectator of the Frick paintings, Fragonard affirms and exaggerates the aristocratic privilege of leisure time for doing nothing but looking, here a form of consuming. If we take Thomas' opposition seriously, we can see aristocratic ''vision'' as part of an ideology of non-derogation. For a nobleman to derogate meant betraying class privilege and losing nobility, by involving himself directly in manual labor or business affairs, or by engaging in any of various ''ignoble'' activities.[49] Although the growing *haut bourgeois* class of capitalist entrepeneurs, bankers, and rentiers could not be said to literally, manually produce either, it was directly involved in the distribution and exchange of goods, and the production of capital, which was essential to the survival of the state.[50] The bourgeois' role as *homme d'affaire* involved functional preoccupations with a utilitarian value from the Crown's point of view.

As a class, the nobility did not generate anything needed by the state or the nation, and was often referred to as ''la classe stérile,'' that is, economically sterile.[51] Effectively ''sterile'' in a reproductive and productive sense, the aristocratic spectator addressed by Fragonard's series was implicity rejected along with the paintings in 1773. In *The Pursuit of Love,* social-sexual behavior not only indexes a refusal to act responsibly in the sexual arena. These attitudes, centered on the image of the female, also index irresponsibility in the productive realm, thus opening up a position for the viewer within an ideology of refusal to certain kinds of authority.

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[47] In reference to the Salon of 1767, Diderot said: ''Vien vous enchaine et vous laisse tout le temps de l'examiner.'' Cited in Diderot, *Sur l'art et les artistes,* ed. Jean Seznec, Paris, 1967, 130.

[48] Thomas, 304.

[49] Pierre Goubert, *The Ancien Régime—French Society 1600-1750,* trans. Steve Cox, New York, 1973, 166-167.

[50] Goubert, *L'Ancien Régime,* II: *les pouvoirs,* 147-148; Soboul, 123, 128-129.

[51] Spengler, 151.

The Code

As suggested above, coquetterie provides the *modus operandi* of the processes of display and looking described earlier; it is the visible edge of a complex aristocratic social-sexual discourse. The importance of flirtation does not end with its representation in the paintings, however. The coquetterie of Fragonard's young women invites the upper-class spectator to participate in an extended game of flirtation that continues beyond the flirtations of the figures depicted, and involves more or less conscious codes (for the spectator) of interpretation.

The equivocation of coquetterie is raised to another level for the aristocratic spectator in iconographic readings of the paintings. Here the distance between representation and reference, codified by upper-class social practice, is given a further decorative character. For example, in *Love and Friendship,* various iconographic symbols would have been seen as ambiguous. Wilibald Sauerländer, though, has assigned a one-dimensional interpretation to this painting, as well as to the other three.[52] He identifies the statue group as the allegory of Friendship, representations of which were available in eighteenth-century engravings.[53] Here love solicits the aid of friendship, in order to achieve the young man's goal of winning over the young woman. The dog is thus seen as symbolizing fidelity, while the parasol is supposed to underscore the perennial quality of friendship, as it can be used in all seasons and all types of weather.[54]

Certain clarifying features are lacking, however. For one thing, the type of friendship represented in the image is left unqualified. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century iconology books typically included representations of *kinds* of friendship, for example, useless friendship.[55] Fragonard's contemporary Cochin illustrated Friendship with symbols of useless friendship and hateful or untrue friendship alongside faithful friendship.[56] As Posner has noted, friendship often functioned in upper-class social practice as a stage in the game of love; it could serve as a prelude to the sexual relationship, although this "platonic" phase was certainly not without its sexual dimensions.[57] Posner cites the writings of Casanova, who for one young woman was just a "friend," as long as he only kissed her—albeit on the neck, lips, and breasts.[58] "Ami" often had a double meaning as ''friend'' and ''lover'' in eighteenth-century parlance.[59] In this sense, the spaniel at the woman's feet takes on a connotation that renders its symbolism ambiguous. With the type of friendship unqualified, the notorious masturbatory relationship between upper-class ladies and their dogs must be admitted as an experience-based interpretation for the contemporary aristocratic spectator.[60] (Fragonard's famous *Girl Making Her Dog Dance on her Bed* is a prosaic example of this relationship.[61])

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[52] Wilibald Sauerländer, "Über die ursprüngliche Reihenfolge von Fragonards 'Amours des bergers,' " *Münchner Jahrbuch der Bildenden Kunst,* 19, 1968, 127 ff.

[53] Sauerländer, 144.

[54] Sauerländer, 147.

[55] J.B. Boudard, *Iconologie,* Vienna, 1766, 29-31 (different kinds of friendship). See Cesare Ripa, *Iconologie,* trans. Jean Baudouin, Paris, 1644, 107, where "true friendship" is represented by the three graces each symbolizing a different aspect of friendship. See also *Baroque and Rococo Pictorial Imagery,* 1758-60 Hertel edition, trans. from German by Edward A. Maser, New York, 1971, 53.

[56] See Sauerländer, fig. 15.

[57] Posner, "The True Path," 530.

[58] Posner, "The True Path," 530.

For the eighteenth-century upper-class spectator, *Love and Friendship* is a painting rich in equivocal imagery, both iconographically and social-sexually. Sauerländer's very project of fixing statically *the* meaning of this imagery is self-defeating. This is equally true of *The Crowning*. Here we find an abundance of equivocal symbols with more than one iconographic meaning. Sauerländer sees this scene as a betrothal.[62] If this is the case, there are signs that marriage is not at all taken seriously, either by the coquettish relationships already established, or by the symbolic equivocation. Sauerländer sees the boxed myrtle tree at left as a sign of betrothal, basing his view on a German dictionary of customs, which notes that brides often carried myrtle branches in the wedding ceremony.[63] The source itself is suspect. But, as Sauerländer also notes, the myrtle tree is the tree of Venus,[64] and this is consistently the reading given in eighteenth-century iconology literature.[65] In light of the appearance of Venus in *The Storming,* this second iconographic reading seems more plausible.

Other elements, such as the musical instruments, the roses, and the garlands of flowers have traditional erotic significations that could allow one to see the figure group as anything from the crowning of love, to the crowning of pleasure, to the crowning of joy.[66] Equally equivocal is the statue of the sleeping Cupid: does this represent that the job of love is completed, or is it the sleep that comes after making love?

Conventional aristocratic attitudes defined love and sex as extraneous or decorative to marriage.[67] One found sexual pleasure in extra-marital affairs, not

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[59] See Laclos, 43.

[60] See Posner, *Watteau,* 80-82.

[61] The painting, which is in a private collection, is dated c. 1770.

[62] Sauerländer, 140.

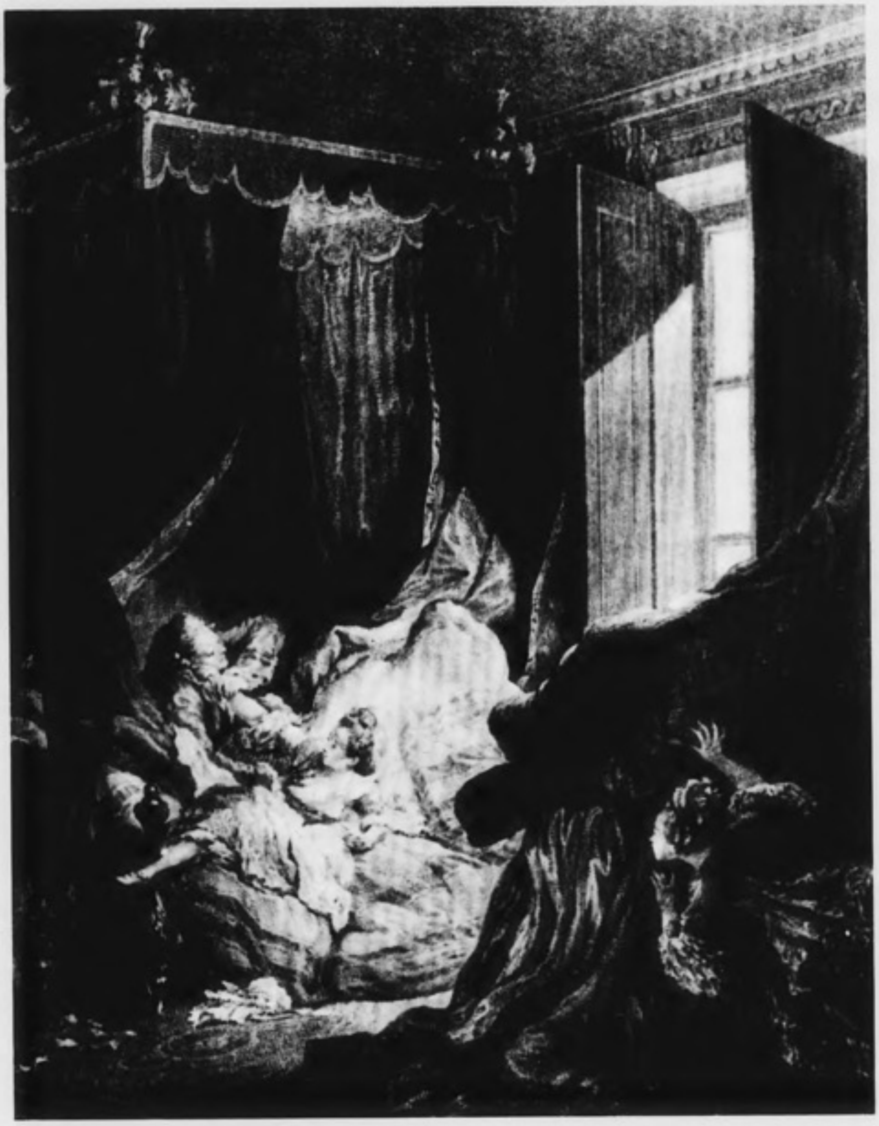
[63] Sauerländer, 140.

[64] Sauerländer, 140.

[65] See Maser, 23; Boudard, 119; Baudouin, 153. The myrtle tree could also signify the amorous aspects of friendship (Boudard, 29); luxury (Baudouin, 106); and pleasure (Boudard, 66), all of which derive from the association with Venus.

[66] In Boudard, 66, the allegory of pleasure shows a male figure crowned with roses and myrtle, and playing a lyre; the open music book is also an emblem of pleasure, joy, and the satisfaction of the senses (Boudard, 23). The garland of flowers could represent the contentment of love: ''L'action d'orner le coeur d'une guirlande de fleurs nouvelles, est l'image de la joie d'un amant, qui se fait à embellir ce qu'il aime'' (Boudard, 119). The frequent appearance of garlands in later eighteenth-century prints is closely connected with sexual themes. See Stewart, ''Representations of Love,'' 11.

[67] See, for example, Nicolas-Thomas Barthe, *Les Fausses Infidélités,* 1768, in *Chefs-d'oeuvre des auteurs comiques,* Paris, 1846, 4-6; Bernard-Joseph Saurin, *Les Moeurs du Temps,* 1760, in *Chefs-d'oeuvre des auteurs comiques,* Paris, 1846, 12 (as the Marquis phrases it, ''On épouse une femme, on vit avec une autre, et l'on n'aime donc que soi.''); Thomas, 298: ''On doit donc renvoyer la fidélité des mariages au peuple. . . ;'' Mercier, VI, 324, on the infidelity of Parisian wives.



13. Delaunay, *L'Epouse indiscrète,* 1771 (from Jean Adhemar, *Graphic Art of the 18th Century,* London, 1964, 159)

with one's spouse; this approach was frequently illustrated in such engravings as *L'Épouse Indiscrète* (fig. 13). In short, marital love and sex were considered bourgeois.[68] Before Fragonard's image, the upper-class spectator could see *The Crowning* as having nothing to do with marriage, or as an ironic game that refuses to take permanent relationships seriously. Placed on the level of blatant artifice, as indicated by the presence of the artist, love becomes nothing *but* representation.

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[68] Stewart, *Le Masque et la parole,* 17.

The series thus serves no higher end—no didactic, moral function, as in Vien—than itself. Fragonard makes serious, unequivocal meaning decorative to the reading of the images, permanently deferring the closure of meaning. As mentioned earlier, this can connote the infinite delay of genital sex in fetishism.

The equivocation of interpretation allowed the aristocratic spectator to play a flirtatious game with meaning that appealed to a mode of representation particularly upper-class. In other words, the very processes by which the spectator could produce meaning in relation to Fragonard's images become a feature of upper-class social-sexual discourse. This is a significant factor in the constitution of a privileged position vis-à-vis the paintings. It makes the spectator complicit in defining coquetterie as it operates within the images, producing a flirtatious spectator in the process.

Interpretive equivocation and lack of commitment extend to the temporality of *The Pursuit of Love.* The question of the sequential order of the series has long been a subject of debate.[69] Attempts to read the pictures as a temporal narrative, however, are self-defeating; the series is preeminently without temporal closure. The pursuit of love was a cliché tried and true for the upper classes; lovers were substitutable, repeatable entities, and the game was as infinitely renewable as aristocratic fashion.[70] As Damours' Ninon de Lenclos says, resistance is more often a proof of experience, not of virtue.[71] Variety, surprise, resistance, and pleasure were continuing aspects of the game of love and an ''endless present'' of sensation.[72] While an ordered sequence may well have been intended for the series, what is important is that for a particular type of spectator, the cycle would not end.

The idea that the series concerns identical actors or figures from one painting to the next can also be questioned. Inconsistencies in hair color, hair style, costume, and setting cast doubt on the supposed continuity of the ''story.'' The young women in *The Storming* and *The Crowning* seem miles apart in appearance. The shifts in identity can be accounted for, however, if the images are viewed as paradigmatic aspects of the game of love, and not as constituent elements in a progressive, logical sequence. Taken as part of the lack of temporal finitude in the series, these alterations in identity reinforce the idea that the coquettish young girls, inconstant as an image for the spectator, signify infidelity to their suitors as well.

Unlike Fragonard's repeatable cycle, Vien's series ends emphatically in marriage, the logical culmination of an unequivocal narrative. In relation to bourgeois features of Englightenment discourse, marriage here points to a sexuality with a moral purpose, clearly indicated by the turtle doves of chastity. As in the preceding paintings, symbols are unambiguous; their certainty for the spectator is reinforced by the fleshliness of the allegorical figures (like Father Time in *The Oath of Feminine Friendship)* and putti, which signifies the proximity of the abstract to the real, of representation to reference. The seriousness with which the preceding scenes are treated also climaxes in ritual sanctity in *The Temple of Hymen,* where the altar and classical temple impart a sense of sacred virtue lacking in Fragonard's series.

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[69] See Posner, ''The True Path,'' 526; Sauerländer, 138-140; and Biebel, 210.

[70] See Laclos, 43; and Stewart, *Le Masque et la parole,* 17-20, 27, 42.

[71] Cited in Stewart, *Le Masque et la parole, 50.*

[72] See Jean Starobinski, *The Invention of Liberty 1700-1789,* trans. Bernard Swift, Geneva, 1964, 10. The ''endless present'' is constituted by what we may call unending visual digressions in the series and in each painting. See Carol Sherman, ''Passing Symmetry: Space and Time in Eighteenth-Century Esthetics,'' *Stanford French Review,* Fall 1979, for an excellent discussion of the Rococo sense of non-linear, playful, digressive time in relation to Diderot. Remarking on one of Diderot's texts, Sherman observes, ''It is digression itself, made of *emboîtements* and *enchevêtrements,* '' an observation which could easily describe the sense of time available to certain spectators in *The Pursuit of Love.*

In *The Pursuit of Love,* temporal openness fails to call a halt to the exhibitionistic display of the female figure, to voyeuristic and fetishistic pleasure; it fails to channel the coquette into moral commitment, and sexual/marital responsibility; it fails to direct the spectator towards some useful lesson, while allowing an endless play of interpretive and visual pleasure. It is not merely display, voyeurism, and flirtation which contrast with Vien and thus with Royal interests. It is their infinite repeatability and non-directionality which defeat ''progress,'' and an authoritative message. In the series, there is no sign of an ending, of anything beyond the series, which continually, flirtatiously refers back to itself for want of narrative impetus, moral direction, and interpretive clarity.

Flirtation as a posture of insincerity and lack of commitment positions the spectator within an ideology of irresponsibility. In *The Pursuit of Love,* it reinforces the opposition of the nobility to the Crown's efforts to produce responsible subjects, efforts served by Vien. The various levels of authority indexed by Fragonard's images—the authority of a didactic message, the authority of one reading of a series, the authority of Royal power and discipline—thus allow us to see the issue of ''rejection'' as more than a matter of mere taste.

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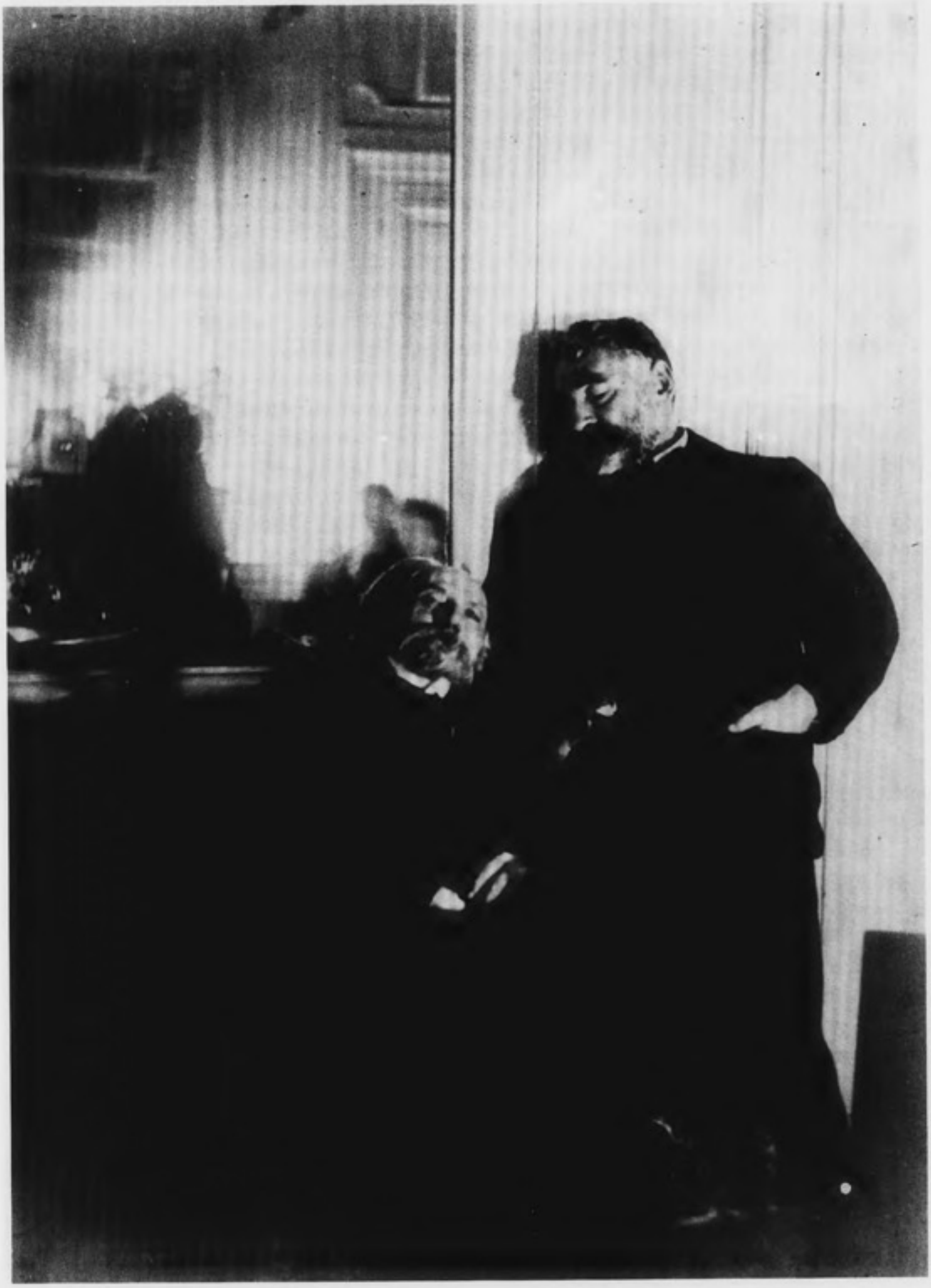

1. Edgar Degas, *Renoir and Mallarmé, in the mirror Degas and Madame and Mademoiselle Mallarmé in Berthe Morisot's Salon,* c.1895, photograph. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Mrs. Henry T. Curtiss, 1965

Degas' Photographic Portrait of Renoir and Mallarmé: An Interpretation

WAYNE L. ROOSA

The growing interest among art historians in the history of photography has led to new analyses and stimulating theories about the nature of this medium. Much attention has been focused upon the interaction between photography and painting; arguments and counter-arguments continue to arise concerning photography's proper status as an art form.[1] Clarity on such a theoretical issue can be achieved only after more individual photographs receive the detailed attention regarding style and content that paintings have long received. But do photographs merit this kind of attention? Does the close study of at least some photographs—whatever their relationship to painting might be — ever reward the viewer in aesthetic or intellectual terms? My purpose here is not to offer theoretical answers to these questions; it is, instead, to offer a detailed analysis of a particular photograph which I believe does reward the viewer. Such an analysis is valuable, both for itself and as another piece of evidence in the theoretical debate. The photograph is Edgar Degas' *Renoir and Mallarmé in Berthe Morisot's Salon,* taken around 1895 (fig. 1).[2]

A confident interpretation can be made in this case because much is known about Degas as a painter and a photographer. Writings from the period, comparison with Degas' other works, and the internal formal evidence of the photograph itself provide a reliable basis for interpretation. Among the writings from the period is a letter by then-Symbolist Paul Valéry, describing the photograph and the session during which it was taken:

> Degas loved and appreciated photography in an epoque when artists either scorned it or would not dare to admit that it could serve them. He made it something very beautiful: I jealously preserve a certain print that he gave to me.
>
> Near a large mirror one sees Mallarmé leaning on the wall, Renoir, on a couch, seated full-front. In the mirror, in the state of phantomes, Degas and his camera, Madame and Mademoiselle Mallarmé can be divined. Nine lamps of oil, a terrible quarter of an hour of immobility for the subjects were the conditions of this manner of masterpiece.
>
> I have there the most beautiful portrait of Mallarmé that I have seen, apart from the admirable lithograph by Whistler, the execution of

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The present study is condensed and revised from a larger study of Degas' relationship to Symbolism written under the direction of Dr. Jack Spector, whose keen insight and helpful criticism are greatly appreciated. I also want to thank Karl Sandin for his advice on editing.

[1] This paper deals with photography's status as an art form, not with photography's influence on the art of painting which is a separate issue.

[2] To my knowledge, only Douglas Crimp has offered an interpretation of this photograph in "Positive/Negative: A Note on Degas's Photographs," *October,* Summer 1978, 89-100.

> which was another torture for the model, endured with all the grace in the world: nearly glued to a stove, roasting, without daring to complain. The result was worthy of a martyr. There is no likeness more delicate, more *spiritual* than this portrait [italics Valéry's].[3]

The conditions of the session recorded by Valéry—nine oil lamps, a quarter-hour of immobility, and the near roasting of Mallarmé—demonstrate the careful attention Degas gave to his photographic compositions. Mallarmé, for example, surely could have been spared discomfort from a hot stove had it not been important for him to occupy that precise position against the wall.

Other writers' accounts of Degas' photographic sessions reinforce the view that he carefully planned his compositions. Daniel Halévy wrote of a sitting that took place after dinner one December evening in 1895.

> He [Degas] seated Uncle Jules, Mathilde, and Henriette on the little sofa in front of the piano. He went back and forth in front of them running from one side of the room to the other with an expression of infinite happiness. He moved lamps, changed the reflectors, tried to light the legs by putting a lamp on the floor—to light Uncle Jules' legs, those famous legs, the slenderest, most supple legs in Paris which Degas always mentions ecstatically.
>
> "Taschereau," he said, "hold onto that leg with your right arm, and pull it in there, there. Then look at that young person beside you. More affectionately—still more—come—come! You can smile so nicely when you want to. And you, Mademoiselle Henriette, bend your head—more—still more. Really bend it. Rest it on your neighbor's shoulder." And when she didn't follow his orders to suit him he caught her by the nape of the neck and posed her as he wished. He seized hold of Mathilde and turned her face towards her uncle. Then he stepped back and exclaimed happily, "That does it."[4]

These documents portray Degas' fierce resolve to realize his compositional intentions in photography.[5] The determining principles underlying the compositions of these photographs were neither limited to nor inherent in photography, but were the same principles already used by Degas in his paintings. It would be erroneous to attribute to Degas a separate set of standards for painting and photography. As the painter Henry Lerolle said, "[Degas] composed his photographs exactly like he composed his paintings; he didn't place you in some extravagant manner, but in foreshortened studies not always comprehensible at first."[6]

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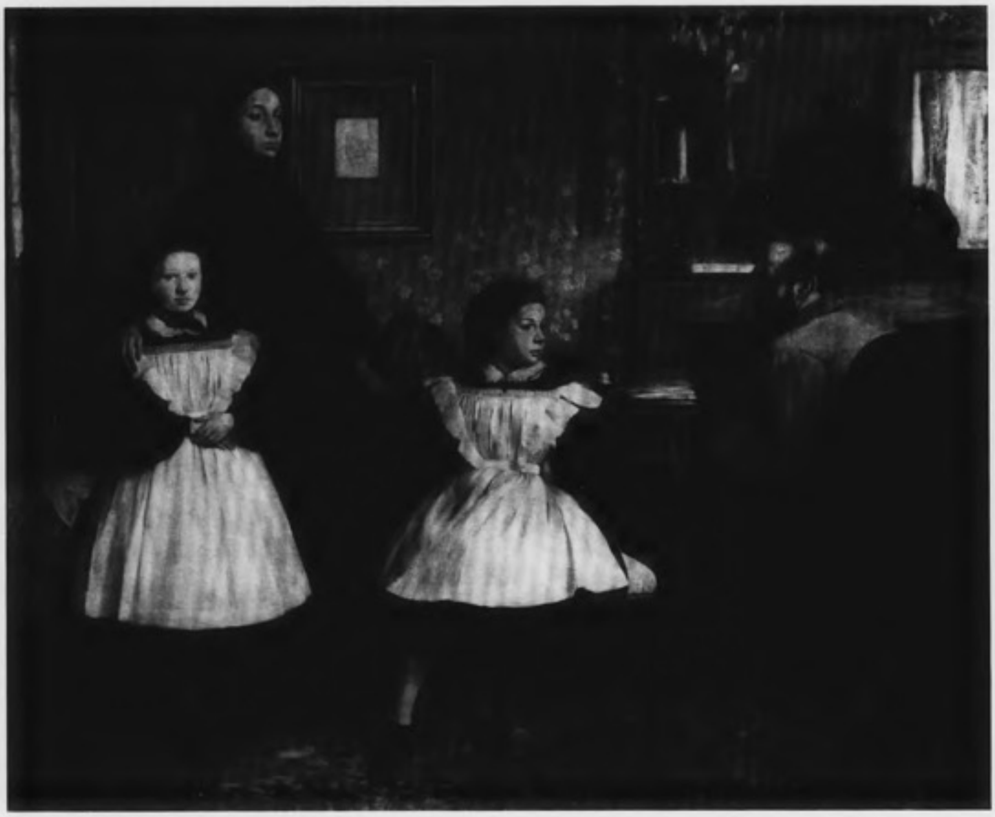
[3] Valéry's letter to editor Pierre Borel appears in Jeanne Fèvre, *Mon oncle Degas,* ed. Pierre Borel, Genève, 1949, 140, note 1. I would like to thank Dr. Virginia Rauch for her help on certain points of translation.

[4] Daniel Halévy, *My Friend Degas,* trans. Mina Curtis, Middletown, Conn., 82-83. Crimp, 89-91, reproduces and interprets the photograph which may have resulted from this session.

[5] Similarly, in the photograph, *Parody of Ingres's "Apotheosis of Homer,"* 1885, Degas shows his concern about compositional matters. In a letter to Ludovic Halévy, Degas criticizes his parody, saying, "My three muses and two choir children ought to have been grouped against a white or light background. The forms of the women in particular are lost. The figures ought also to have been compressed more." Quoted by Theodore Reff, *Degas: The Artist's Mind,* New York, 1976, 53.

[6] René Gimpel, *Diary of an Art Dealer,* London, 1966, 413.



2. Edgar Degas, *Portrait of the Bellelli Family,* 1859-60. Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume (photo: Musées Nationaux, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

The subtle complexity of Degas' painted portraits is well known. Works such as the psychologically complex *Portrait of the Bellelli Family,* for example, carry much content through the composition of figures and gestures (fig. 2). Jean Sutherland Boggs demonstrated concerning the Bellelli portrait that the carefully calculated distances between figures, the use of gestures which link or separate people, and the devices of furniture edges or architectural elements that unite or isolate figures all work together to give insight into the emotional tensions between family members.[7] If the statements already quoted from Valéry, Halévy, and Lerolle are trustworthy, we can expect a similarly rich meaning in the figures and composition of Degas' photographic portrait of Renoir and Mallarmé. As with the Bellelli portrait, this photographic work functions on two levels. On one level, it is simply a group portrait of friends, a kind of artistic family portrait. What is interesting, however, is Degas' perceptive attention to the different personalities and attitudes of each sitter. Thus, reading their gestures and the composition on a second level gives deeper insight into these men.

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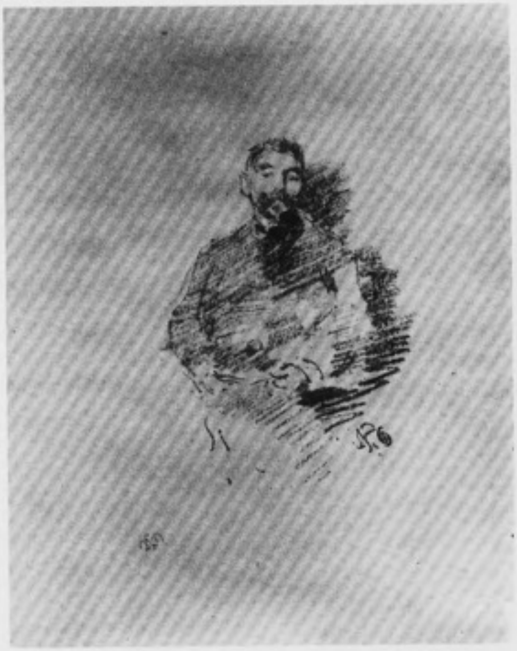
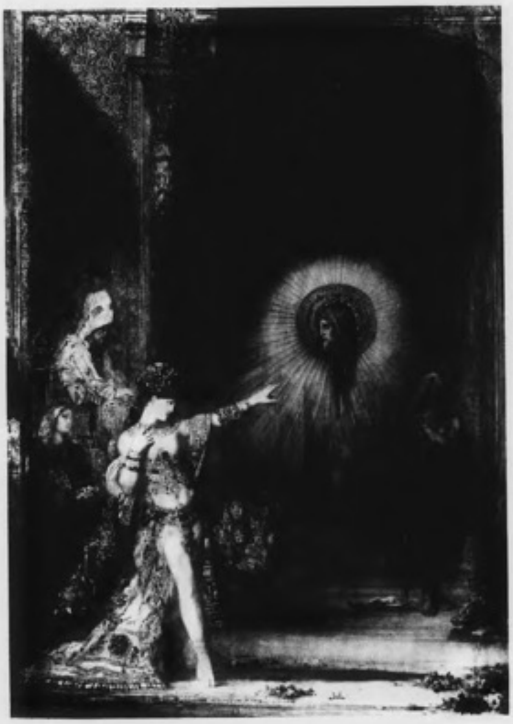
[7] Jean Sutherland Boggs, *Portraits by Degas,* Los Angeles, 1962, 11-16.



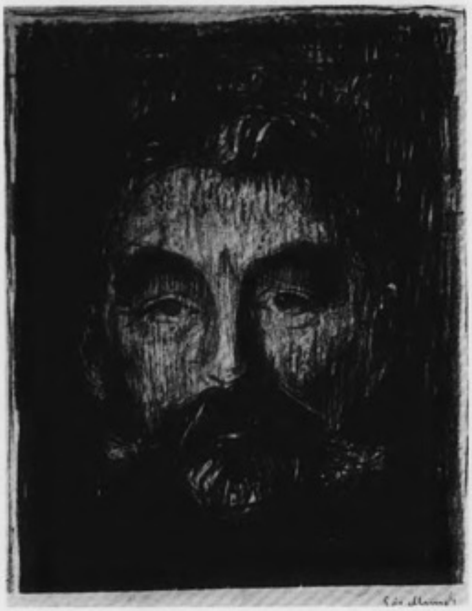
3. James A.M. Whistler, *Stéphane Mallarmé,* 1894, lithograph. The Brooklyn Museum, Gift of the Rembrandt Club



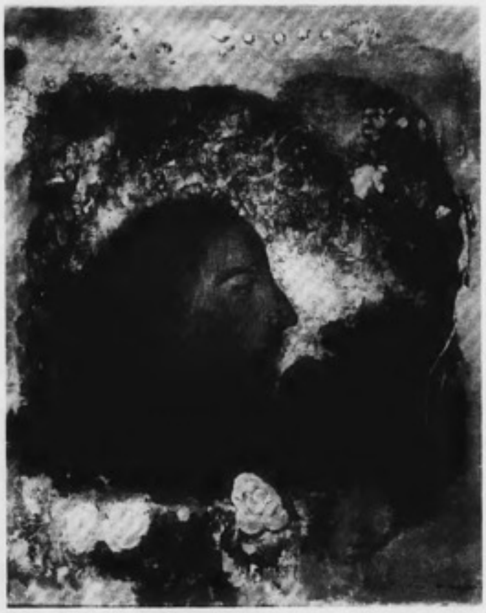
4. Gustave Moreau, *The Apparition,* 1876. Paris, Louvre, Cabinet des Dessins (photo: Musées Nationaux, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

Valéry provided a good starting point for interpretation when he commented upon the figure of Mallarmé. This image of Mallarmé greatly pleased Valéry's esoteric, Symbolist taste. To him it was "the most beautiful portrait of Mallarmé I have seen, apart from the admirable lithograph by Whistler" (fig. 3). The last sentence of the letter defines his use of 'beautiful': "There is no likeness more delicate, more *spiritual* than this portrait." Typical of Symbolist interests, he stresses the delicacy and spirituality of the figure. It is especially significant that Valéry found these qualities in a photograph, since the Symbolists were generally critical of photography as being too material. Compared to Whistler's subtly drawn lithograph printed on soft white paper, Degas' photograph could seem somewhat prosaic. Yet Valéry saw them both as spiritual portraits of the highest order. Of course, he may have looked at Mallarmé's image with a prejudiced eye, knowing him to be a sensitive, spiritually-minded man. But Valéry was hardly a visually naive person unacquainted with art; more importantly, the purpose of his letter was to praise Degas' photography which, in this instance, he found spiritually edifying.

In order to discern what satisfied Valéry about this picture we might ask if it shares any similarities with Symbolist portraiture in general. One of the overriding concerns of Symbolist portraiture was the spiritual aspect of the sitter. Supposing there to be a dichotomy between spiritual and physical reality, the Symbolists plac-



5. Edvard Munch, *Portrait of Mallarmé,* 1896, lithograph. The Art Institute of Chicago, Stanley Field Fund



6. Odilon Redon, *Portrait of Gauguin,* 1904. Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume (photo: Musées Nationaux, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

ed more emphasis upon the head than on the rest of the body. The preferred head positions were directly frontal or completely profile; the eyes either confront the viewer with a mysterious, hypnotic stare, look deliberately upward, downward, or off to the side, or simply remain closed. A particular motif used frequently was the head isolated or detached from the body. This motif received a variety of treatments. In extreme cases, the head might be severed, as in Moreau's depiction of St. John the Baptist in *The Apparition* (fig. 4).[8] On a less spectacular level, the isolated head signified the Symbolist desire to spiritually transcend the mediocrity of mundane life in an industrialized Europe. Therefore, many portraits of Symbolist poets and artists exclude the body altogether; for example, Munch's *Portrait of Mallarmé* (fig. 5).[9] In this context, the emphasis is upon the intellect, the imagination, and the penetrating eyes, all attributes of the head which has a life apart from the body.

Other Symbolist portraits employed the profile view, as in Redon's *Portrait of Gauguin* (fig. 6). The head does not look out toward the viewer, but off to the side

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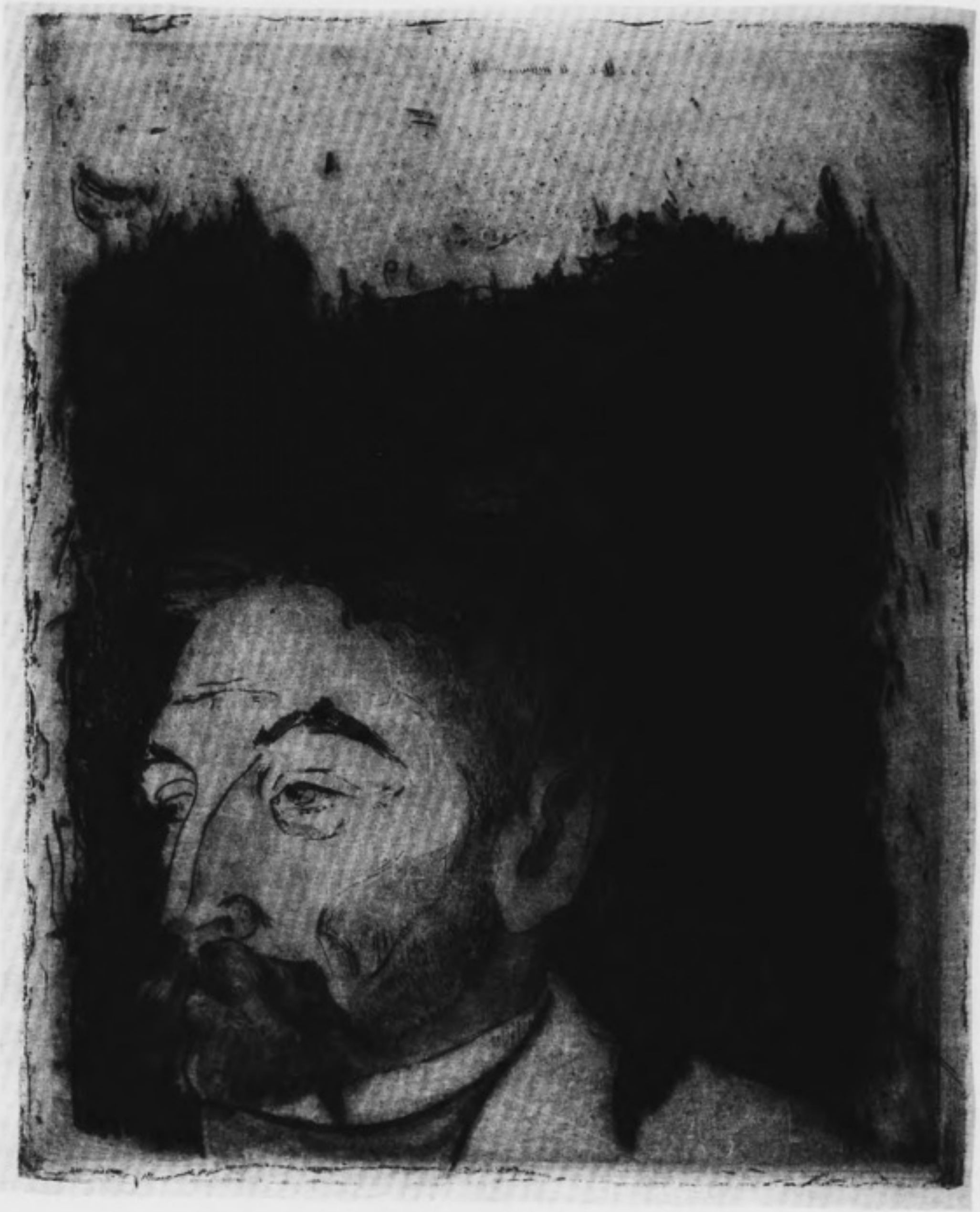
[8] See Jean-Pierre Reverseaur, "Pour une étude du thème de la tête coupée dans la littérature et la peinture dans la seconde partie du XIXe siècle," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts,* LXXX, 1972, 173-184.

[9] For other examples, see Valloton's portraits of Mallarmé, of Rimbaud, of Huysman (all are india ink drawings, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Lausanne); Redon's *Self-Portrait,* c. 1888 (charcoal, The Hague) and his *Hommage to Gauguin,* 1904 (pastel, private collection, Paris); Constant Montald's *Portrait of Emile Verhaeren,* 1903 (Collection of M. Jean Goffin, Brussels); Gauguin's *Self-Portrait with a Halo,* 1889 (National Gallery, Washington, D.C.); or Munch's *Self-Portrait with Skeleton Arm,* 1895 (Munch-Museet, Oslo); his *Portrait of Stanislaw Przybyszewski,* c. 1894, and his *Portrait of August Strindberg,* 1896. Mallarmé's poetry also contains the image of the detached head. See, for example, *Hérodiade,* III, "Cantique de Saint Jean," where the image appears twice.



7. Paul Gauguin, *Portrait of Stéphane Mallarmé,* 1891, etching, printed in brown. The Art Institute of Chicago, Albert H. Wolf Memorial Collection

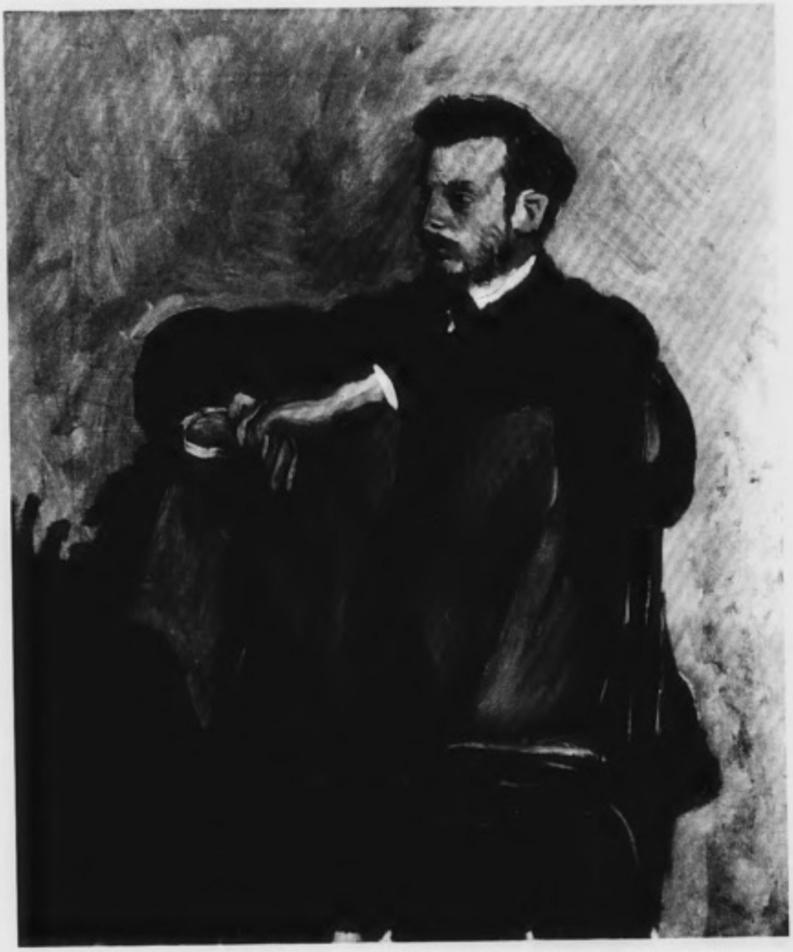
into a different realm. Another intriguing example of the profile motif is Gauguin's *Portrait of Mallarmé*, 1891 (fig. 7). This subtle work is neither as exotic as the Redon nor as iconic as the Munch. Gauguin does not eliminate the shoulders or fully detach the head. Nevertheless, a variety of devices isolate the head from the body. The head turns to one side in opposition to the shoulders which are shown in frontal view. His thin white collar, the brightest area, separates the head with a quiet finesse. Mallarmé's right shoulder falls into deep shadow and, although fully depicted, it does not compete with the profile. Finally, a dark area of shadow surrounds the head, accentuating the profile and absorbing the cranium into a mysterious realm from which the raven-like bird emerges.

Such a quintessentially Symbolist image of the poet is strikingly similar to the way Degas posed Mallarmé in the photograph. The frontal position of the shoulders, the head turned in profile, the separating white collar, and the large shadow area are the same. It would not be surprising if Degas were quoting Gauguin. He respected Gauguin far more than he did the other Symbolist-oriented artists.[10] There are many instances of stylistic affinities and influences between their other works.[11] Any number of Symbolist works may have added to Degas' understanding of what constitutes a Symbolist portrait. But of the many Symbolist portrayals of Mallarmé that Degas could have known, Gauguin's is one of the most subtle, attaining a quality of mystery without being extreme. For that, Degas would have respected it. But whether or not Degas' photograph specifically alludes to Gauguin's work, one thing is clear: Degas' treatment of Mallarmé is consistent with Symbolist portraiture and taste.

Mallarmé's erect figure, frontally-held shoulders, and sharply turned head are all the more striking in contrast to the casually seated Renoir who looks straight at the viewer. The significant differences in their poses become apparent through a simple comparison of how their white collars function. While both collars form prominent white lines between heads and bodies, the results are quite different. For Mallarmé, the dividing collar heightens the strong opposition of the head seen in profile versus the body seen frontally. His collar only completes an already present separation. For Renoir, the line of the collar cannot overcome the strong unity of a head and body both facing in the same direction. At most, the collar line, reinforced by the lines of the mirror frame, only isolates Renoir's head in the corner of the mirror. As we shall see later, this isolation has a purpose. These differences in pose should not be surprising: Renoir, after all, was an Impressionist. It would be odd

[10] In the 1890s, Degas described Gauguin as "a man who died of hunger and who I profoundly regard as an artist" (Françoise Sevins, "Degas à travers ses mots," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LXXXVI, 1975, 29, note 92). On the other hand, Degas accused most Symbolists of being false Sophists whom he could not stand (Sevins, 23, note 11). Degas was instrumental in Gauguin's invitation to participate in the Impressionist exhibitions of 1879, 1880, and 1881 (John Rewald, *The History of Impressionism*, New York, fourth rev. ed., 1973, 423). Degas was one of the first to acquire Gauguin's work for his own collection. Degas owned one of the pictures Gauguin exhibited in 1881 (Reff, 263). Degas eventually owned eight of Gauguin's works (P.-A. Lemoisne, *Degas et son oeuvre*, Paris, 1946, I, 179). Rewald shows that, while the two men had quarreled prior to 1886, Gauguin turned to Degas for a period around 1886, when Gauguin's work began showing an "independence from nature, a vague tendency to use exaggeration as a means to go beyond Impressionism" (Rewald, *Impressionism*, 542-543).

[11] See Lemoisne, 179; Rewald, *Impressionism*, 449; John Rewald, *Post-Impressionism, from Van Gogh to Gauguin*, New York, 1956, 74-75, 186; Haavard Rostrup, "Eventails et pastels de Gauguin," *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, LVI, 1960, 157-164; H.R. Rookmaaker, *Gauguin and 19th Century Art Theory*, Amsterdam, 1972, 121-122, 127; Reff, 242, 263-268, 336, note 108.



8. Frédéric Bazille, *Portrait of Renoir,* 1867. Paris, Jeu de Paume, formerly in Musée des Beaux-Arts d'Algiers (photo: Giraudon, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

for him to assume a pose that reflects Symbolist taste. Instead, his pose is like those often found in portraits by Impressionists. His casual posture typifies the informal quality of Impressionist portraiture. Bazille's portrait of Renoir, relaxing in a chair with his knees drawn up, is an example of this type (fig. 8). Even more similar in gesture is Degas' portrayal of Manet in *Manet Listening to His Wife Play the Piano* (fig. 9). In the photograph, the backward tilt of Renoir's head may even suggest an unusual viewing point, a device that Degas and the Impressionists often employed.[12] The portrait of Renoir, then, reflects the Impressionist tradition of which he was a part.

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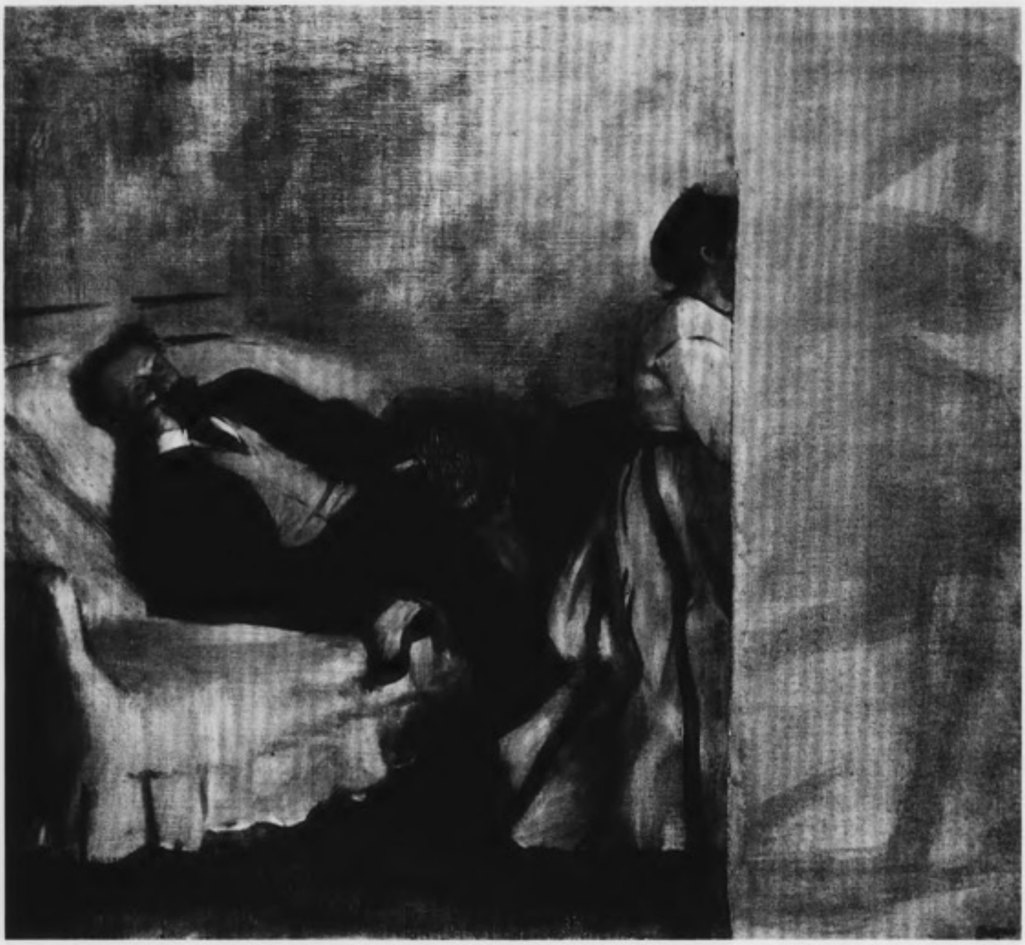
[12] It is possible that Renoir tilted his head back to rest on a support, steadying it for a long exposure. But an examination of the photograph shows this is not the case. The back of the couch does not extend high enough to support the head; and because of the thickness of a couch-back, his head could not reach the mirror to lean against. Even if there is some support, the radical tilt of the head is unusual for nineteenth-century photographs, in which sitters usually hold their heads erect.



9. Edgar Degas, *Manet Listening to his Wife Play the Piano,* c.1865. Tokyo, Musée d'Art moderne français, formerly in the collection of Baron Matsukata (photo: Caisse Nationale des Monuments Historiques, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

Thus, Degas has placed two men of radically different viewpoints together in one photograph. Although personal friends, Renoir and Mallarmé stood on opposite sides of the philosophical and stylistic battle taking place between Impressionism and Symbolism at the end of the century. Degas acknowledges—or even pays tribute to—their differences through the gestures and compositions of their figures. These differences are accentuated by the image's background. Background settings always played a profound role in Degas' art. The iconographic possibilities of backgrounds was part of the theory of Naturalism developed by Degas and Edmond Duranty as early as 1876.[13] Duranty's *La nouvelle peinture* explains somewhat programmatically the potential of a properly treated background. He makes it clear that the details of the background can illuminate the character, profession, and personal habits of the main figures.

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[13] Edmond Duranty, *La Nouvelle Peinture,* ed. M. Guérin, Paris, 1946 [first ed., 1876]. For Degas' role in the development of the ideas discussed by Duranty, see Georges Rivière, *M. Degas, bourgeois de Paris,* Paris, 1935, 67; M. Guérin's introduction to Duranty, 10; and Reff, 237-238.

> The purpose of the drawing according to the ideals of these moderns is . . . the observation of the intimacy of a man with his apartment, of the special trait imprinted on him by his profession ... We no longer separate the personage from the background of an apartment ... The language of the empty apartment ought to be rather clear so that one can deduce from it the character and habits of those who inhabit it.[14]

It might seem that the "language" of Berthe Morisot's salon could tell little about the character and habits of Renoir and Mallarmé, even if it might tell something about Morisot. In light of the philosophical and artistic differences between these two men, it would seem that no single background could simultaneously comment on their respective attitudes. Yet Degas masterfully controls the iconography of the background in his photograph. Behind Renoir is a large mirror full of reflected light. Its surface, covered with a diffuse light that slightly blurs objects, suggests the quality of Impressionist painting and is an entirely appropriate background for an Impressionist. That same light serves a very different function behind Mallarmé. There it saturates a blank white wall with its brilliance.

Degas was not the first artist to refer to the image of whiteness when portraying Mallarmé. After all, bright or empty whiteness was an important recurring image in Mallarmé's Symbolist poetry.[15] Manet's portrait of Mallarmé, for example, shows the poet contemplating the white pages of a book. Undoubtedly, this refers to passages like that from *Brise marine* which tells of "the desolate light of my lamp on the blank paper, defended by its own whiteness."[16] But Degas' use of whiteness is not as literal as Manet's. Whiteness in Degas' photograph is not a symbolic object such as a blank page: it is an entire backdrop evoking the mentality of the figure. This indirect approach is analogous to a more allusive use of whiteness in other poems by Mallarmé. While discussing works like *Un coup de des,* for example, Mallarmé encouraged his readers to:

> obey the invitation of this vast white space left deliberately at the top of the page as if to produce a separation from everything, from what has already been read elsewhere.[17]

In both Manet's portrait and Mallarmé's *Brise marine* the white page is a described object within the larger work. In contrast, the whiteness in Degas' photograph, as in *Un coup de des,* functions allusively as the symbolic background against which Mallarmé's profile, or text, is isolated.[18] Thus, the background not only tells about the professions (in this case, painting and poetry) of the figures, but it also accurately pinpoints crucial characteristics of their respective works: scattered light reflecting off the surface of objects versus the brilliant white void.

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[14] Duranty, 42-45.

[15] I would like to thank Jeffrey Wechsler for suggesting to me the idea that this background refers to Mallarmé's image of whiteness. For Mallarmé's use of this image in his poetry, see Pierre Guiraud's concordance, *Index du vocabulaire du symbolisme: III: Index des mots des poésies de Stéphane Mallarmé,* Paris, 1953, i-iv, 3.

[16] *Mallarmé,* intro., ed., and plain prose trans. Anthony Hartley, Baltimore, 1965, 29.

[17] Hartley, xxix.

[18] Recall Valéry's description of how Mallarmé had to pose for a quarter of an hour "nearly glued to a stove, roasting, without daring to complain." It is unlikely that Degas would submit Mallarmé to these conditions unless it were important for him to stand precisely where he does in the composition.

If each half of the composition comments separately on the man within it, then the juxtaposition of the halves provides a commentary on the relationship of the two men to one another. Mallarmé's thoughtful head gazes down from its higher position onto the top of Renoir's head.[19] While Mallarmé's line of vision takes in Renoir's head, our line of vision sees something more—something Degas set up for us to see. If the viewer stops to examine carefully how Renoir's pose relates him to the background, it becomes apparent that he is very accurately positioned. His white collar actually continues the mirror frame, isolating his head in the corner of the mirror. This isolation draws attention to the fact that his head is oddly close to the heads of Madame Mallarmé and her daughter reflected in the mirror behind him. From our vantage point we see a cluster of three detached heads hovering under Mallarmé's gaze. They grow less material, "in the state of phantoms" (to quote Valéry's description), as they recede into the background. Even an Impressionist's head, it seems, can reveal surprising qualities in the company of a Symbolist. Renoir, in the meantime, remains unaware of what occurs in the realm above.

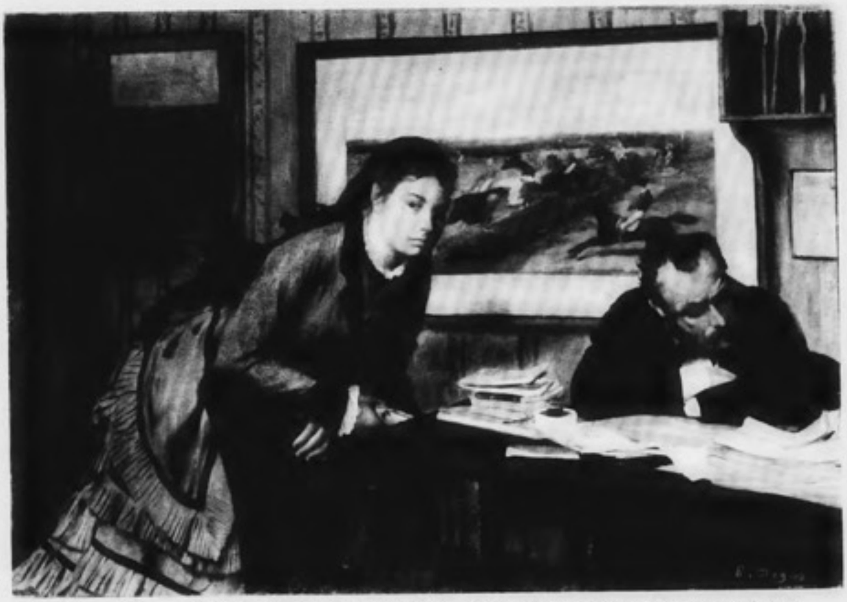
If such a reading of the frame and reflected heads in relationship to Renoir's head seems too speculative, it must be pointed out that this is not an isolated example. Degas frequently gave additional meanings about persons he portrayed by juxtaposing their heads to frames and images inside frames. Two, of several possible examples, are *Sulking* and *The Cellist Pilet* (figs. 10 and 11).[20] In both cases the figures appear to be placed casually within their settings. Yet their heads break into picture frames in precisely calculated places. In *Sulking,* the heads overlap both the frame and matting and touch the horses in the picture on the wall. The horses leap like silent messages from the man's head to the woman's over the barrier that divides them.[21] The cellist Pilet's head overlaps only the frame, entering the realm of the figures in the lithograph on the wall. A respectful distance still remains because, as Theodore Reff has shown, the figures are some of the most illustrious musicians and composers of the preceding generation, including Chopin, Liszt, Berlioz, and others.[22] While Pilet sits thoughtfully and composes, this group serves as a host of historical muses at the back of his mind. The fact that Degas' paintings repeatedly involve meaningful relationships between background elements and figures strongly supports the kind of complexity for which my interpretation argues in the photograph of Renoir and Mallarmé. Valéry's letter, Halévy's journal entry, and Lerolle's remarks are convincing evidence that Degas' photographs can be equally as rich in meaning as his paintings.

[19] It is conceivable that Mallarmé's higher position, which allows him to look down on Renoir, implies the Symbolists' higher spiritual aspirations and aloofness. Degas was surely aware of the Symbolists' attitude as expressed, for example, by Redon's well-known criticism of the "low-vaulted ceiling" of Impressionism (Robert Goldwater, *Symbolism,* New York, 1979, 1). He also would have known works by Redon which raise this issue, such as *The Eye Like a Strange Balloon Floats Towards Infinity* (1882), where the water below is treated with the broken light effect of Impressionism in opposition to the Symbolist eye above that carries the detached head up to heaven.

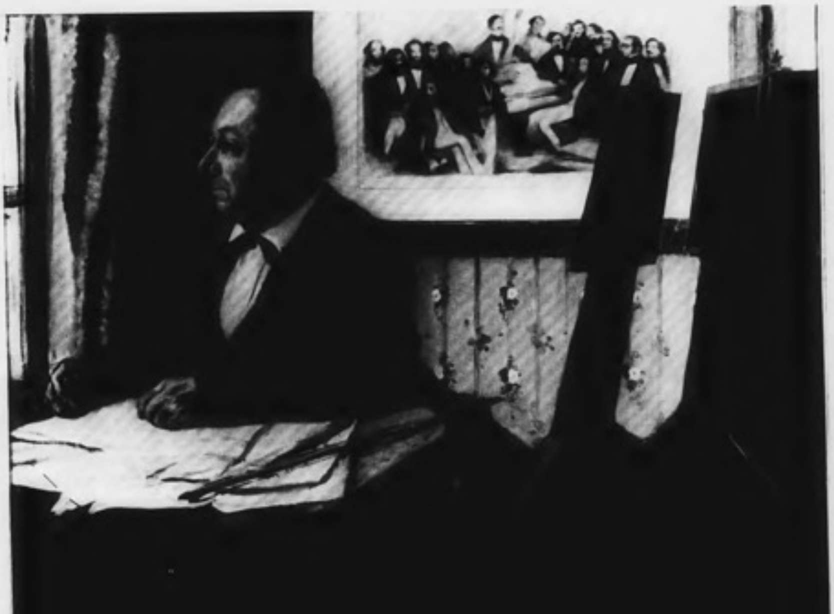
[20] For a discussion of *Sulking* and *The Cellist Pilet,* as well as several other examples, see Reff's chapter "Pictures within Pictures," 90-146.

[21] Reff, 119.

[22] Reff, 121-123.



10. Edgar Degas, *Sulking*, 1869-71. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Bequest of Mrs. H.O. Havemeyer, 1929, The H.O. Havemeyer Collection



11. Edgar Degas, *The Cellist Pilet*, c.1869. Paris, Louvre, Jeu de Paume (photo: Musées Nationaux, ©SPADEM, Paris/VAGA, New York, 1981)

Any image including Renoir and Mallarmé together evokes interesting questions. But they are not the only important figures in the photograph: reflected in the mirror is Degas in the act of taking the photograph.[23] Although not immediately noticeable and almost anonymous with his face obliterated by the light, he is still an important presence. Before a confident interpretation of Degas' role can be formulated, however, certain technical problems must be addressed. The extremely blurred quality of the reflection and the obscuring of Degas' head by the light raise the question of how much importance to place on this passage. Some degree of blurriness is unavoidable. The focal length from the camera to Renoir and Mallarmé is only half that of the focal length from the camera to the mirror and back to the camera again, via the reflection. If the two figures are in sharp focus, any reflections must be slightly out of focus. The salon appears to be large enough and the distances great enough to cause this amount of blurring. Degas was obviously aware of such visual phenomena: blurred reflections in a mirror had previously appeared in both his Bellelli portrait and in his photograph of Paul Poujard, Mme. Arthur, and himself. Therefore, we must assume that Degas knew his reflection would be blurred, but that he still chose to use it.

The blurring, however, is not what makes Degas' face invisible; that is a result of the light. Whether Degas knew the light would obscure his head—and, therefore, whether any part of an interpretation should be based upon this effect—is difficult to demonstrate. Technically speaking, the light is easy to explain. The brightness of the illumination on the faces of Renoir and Mallarmé indicates the strength of those nine oil lamps; the mirror, being a highly reflective surface, would gather and reflect much light; Degas' head (with his white hair and beard), as the brightest area in the mirror image, would gather and reflect the most light. The much darker areas of the camera and Degas' body would reflect the least light and, therefore, would be the clearest part of the reflection. None of this would necessarily be predictable or even visible to Degas as he looked through the camera.[24] It is debatable, but not impossible, that Degas had intended the resulting light effect. Douglas Crimp, apparently assuming that Degas did intend it, builds his interpretation upon this element:

> While those nine oil lamps have inscribed the features of Mallarmé (and Renoir) on this print . . . they have at the same time effaced the features . . . of Degas. Just at the point where we should see Degas' face . . . there is an elision, an absence. What we do see in that mirror is a camera, and behind the camera another mirror, which in turn reflects the first mirror, which . . . Suspended in the specular infinitude that is this photograph, its author is reduced to a specter. Degas has included

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[23] Degas' oeuvre contains so many examples of mirrors reflecting figures it cannot be doubted that this inclusion of himself was intentional. See as examples, *Madame Jeantaud before a Mirror*, c. 1875 (Lemoisne no. 371); *Portrait of Madame Dietz-Monin*, 1879 (L., no. 534); *Young Woman before a Mirror*, 1889 (L., no. 983); *Woman Leaving the Bath*, c. 1877 (L., no. 423); *Actress in Her Dressing Room*, c. 1878-80 (L., no. 516); and *Woman Combing Her Hair*, c. 1895 (L., no. 1228). He also used mirrors to single out individual dancers or smaller groups within the larger scene in paintings of the dance. See *The Dance Lesson*, c. 1876 (L., no. 403); *The Ballet Class*, c. 1878 (L., no. 479); *Four Dancers*, 1884 (L., no. 769).

[24] I would like to thank Amy Stromsten, professor of photography at Rutgers University, for her insights concerning the technical aspects of this photograph.

> himself in his photograph only to disappear, in a way that cannot but remind us of Mallarmé's own self-effacement in the creation of his poetry . . . The disappearance of which Mallarmé speaks and which Degas effects in his photograph is one in which the medium itself—its autonomous *being*—overwhelms both its ostensible subject and its author in order to achieve that supreme fiction that was Mallarmé's goal . . . this is a "Mallarméan" photograph.[25]

Crimp's interpretation cannot be questioned on the basis of whether Degas controlled the light effect because we cannot know if he did so. It can be questioned, however, on other terms. Crimp's conclusion that the photograph is a "Mallarméan" photograph—i.e., a fully Symbolist work—implies that Degas not only understood, but created within one of Mallarmé's most sophisticated Symbolist concepts. This is problematic since Degas claimed not to understand Mallarmé's work.[26] Theodore Reff argues that Degas' problematic relationship with Mallarmé "reveals . . . the fundamental differences between Degas and the Symbolist writers."[27] Reff cites, for example, an incident when Degas abruptly walked out during Mallarmé's reading of his tribute to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, claiming not to understand a word.[28] Then, in a famous exchange, Degas asked Mallarmé for advice in writing poetry. Mallarmé's counsel indicated that Degas simply was not thinking in the same mode as the poet: "But Degas, you can't make a poem with ideas . . . *You make it with words.*"[29] For all of the admiration Symbolist writers held for Degas, there is no evidence that he even returned their respect, let alone saw himself as one of them. As Reff says, "their [Symbolist writers] relations with him were largely one-sided: while they admired his supremely intellectual art and intransigent personality, he professed not to understand or appreciate their writings, clinging instead to his Romantic tastes and Naturalist theories."[30]

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[25] Crimp, 94-95.

[26] It is one thing to say, as I have above, that Degas understood and made reference to specific, well-known Mallarméan symbols—such as whiteness—in his portrait of the poet; it is very different, and assumes a great deal more, to say, as Crimp does, that Degas understood and adopted for his own creative process the highly abstract concepts of Symbolist poetry.

[27] Reff, 189. Reff clearly acknowledges the subjective quality of Degas' late art, yet still argues for these differences.

[28] Reff, 189-190. Reff also notes Valéry's recording of several incidents when Degas refused to comprehend Mallarmé.

[29] Reff, 191. Reff points out an apparent irony noticed by Valéry, who said "Degas saying that drawing was *a way of seeing form,* Mallarmé's teaching that *poetry is made with words,* were summing up, each for his own craft, a truth." [Valéry's italics.] But Valéry's equation that Degas' drawing is to form what Mallarmé's words are to poetry may well be stated from Valéry's own Symbolist point of view. It is just as likely that Degas' "drawing is a way of seeing form" has its source in a more classical tradition, as when Ingres advised the young Degas (a piece of advice he long cherished) to "study line . . . draw lots of lines, either from memory or from nature" (Reff, 43). The kind of drawing that bears real parallels with Mallarmé's concept of poetry is that of Gauguin in the 1890s. Consider, for example, a passage in Gauguin's writing from March, 1899: (first loosely quoting Mallarmé) "My dream is not tangible . . . like a musical poem, it can do without a libretto. Citation Mallarmé. Consequently the essential thing in a work is immaterial and superior and consists exactly in that which has not been expressed: it results from the *lines* [my italics], without colors or words, it has not been constituted in a material sense" (Rookmaaker, 151). And as Gauguin explicitly stated in a letter, the new style he found after 1888 at Pont Aven "is not at all like Degas" (Rookmaaker, 127).

[30] Reff, 188.

The difficulty with seeing Degas' photograph of Renoir and Mallarmé as a truly "Mallarméan" work increases if we examine other late works by Degas. Although the late works are increasingly emotive and subjective, are any of them truly Symbolist? Crimp suggests that Degas' twenty-one landscapes, painted in 1892, qualify as Symbolist works.[31] Crimp perceptively describes them as "an art of evocation, of allusion . . . Landscape in which Degas supplanted the visible world with the visionary.[32] Yet there is that troublesome discussion about these landscapes between Degas and Daniel Halévy's father. The elder Halévy, surprised that Degas painted these landscapes, asked Degas about them, suggesting a definition of landscape:

> "What kind of things are they? Vague things? . . . Reflections of your soul? . . . Amiel said, 'a landscape is a reflection of the soul.' Do you like that definition?"
>
> "A reflection of my eyesight," Degas replied. "We painters do not use such pretentious language."[33]

Once again Degas rejects the subjectivity of the Symbolist viewpoint.

What other interpretation could be given, then, to Degas' mysterious inclusion of himself in the mirror? We must not overlook the fact that this photograph includes *three* men. Valéry's letter focuses only on Mallarmé; that does not mean only Mallarmé was important to Degas. Crimp briefly mentions Mallarmé and focuses on Degas. But the photograph includes Renoir, Mallarmé, and Degas. There is no reason to think Renoir was less important to Degas than Mallarmé. We must consider Degas in relationship to both Renoir and Mallarmé, or, stated in broader terms, in relationship to both Impressionism and Symbolism. If the treatment and juxtaposition of Renoir and Mallarmé is, on one level, a commentary on the differences between Impressionism and Symbolism, to which side does Degas give allegiance? Here, the choice to place himself in the mirror serves Degas well, enabling him to be simultaneously in the picture with his two friends and apart from them in his own space. Just as his work, especially in this late period, encompasses both sides, Degas, in this position belongs neither to the Impressionists, nor to the Symbolists: he is, instead, a subtle alternative. Degas' paintings in the 1890s verify this idea. The late works of dancers, for example, poignantly mix the realistic details of Impressionism with the extremes of artificial beauty loved by the Symbolists (fig. 12). The intense color, vigorous brushwork, and thick textures in these works reach a subjectivity far closer to Symbolism than to the more naturalistic world of Impressionism. But no matter how ecstatic the color, light, and textures, there are always elements of realism: backstage glimpses, slippers being adjusted, or ugly profiles displaying bulbous noses.

This sharp juxtaposition of the awkward and the exquisite reflects precisely Degas' attitudes about art in the 1890s. One of his sonnets, *Danseuse,* makes this abundantly clear.[34] The first three stanzas trace an idyllic image in which the

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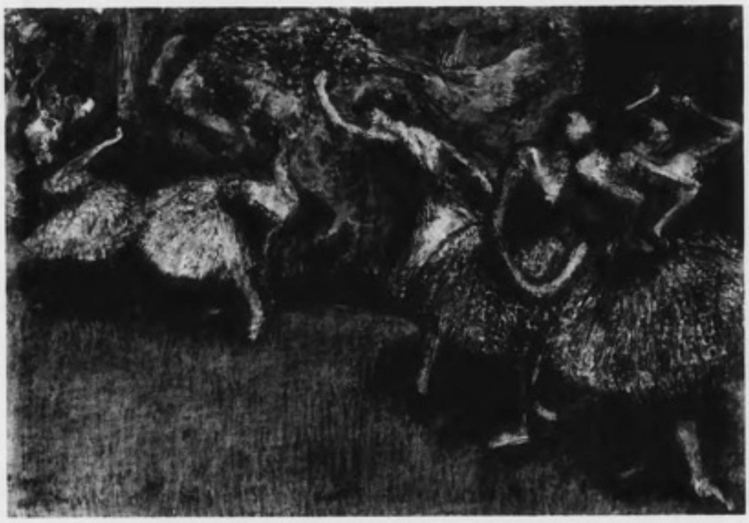
[31] Crimp, 92-93.

[32] Crimp, 92-93.

[33] Halévy, 66.

[34] *Huits sonnets d'Edgar Degas,* preface Jean Nepreu Degas, Paris, 1946, 31. According to J.N. Degas, 14, this sonnet was written after 1889.



12. Edgar Degas, *Ballet Scene*, c.1907, pastel on cardboard. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, Chester Dale Collection

dancer soars like a bird through the lovely air of Cythera. But the fourth stanza shatters the enchantment: the dancer bends her legs too far in a graceless moment, and plops like a frog into a pond. How accurately Edmund de Goncourt described Degas as ''an extremely sensitive person who is aware of the contradictory nature of things.''[35]

In fact, it is Degas' acceptance and exploration of the ''contradictory nature of things'' that unites his late work. The result is a profoundly complex and rich art that is unique. In his photograph, Degas comments upon this idea by the way he composes Renoir and Mallarmé. On a deeper level, the photograph—ostensibly a portrait of Renoir and Mallarmé—is also a commentary on Degas' own style and attitudes about art in 1895. He exercises his mastery and understanding of both Naturalism and Symbolism by using a camera, that so-called ''mindless'' tool of naturalistic documentation, to create an image that requires intellect and imagination to comprehend. Degas could have painted this composition. But a painted composition could too easily be understood as a complete fabrication. A photograph, on the other hand (with no overt manipulations such as composite negatives), firmly suggests a scene that is part of normal visual reality—even if only a few have the eyes to really see it. The camera proves the naturalness of the scene while the mind discovers the meanings within.

Why did Degas use a mirror to include himself? Only with a mirror could he show himself using the camera. Thus, the subtly self-concious nature of the image's content is expressed through an equally self-conscious use of photography, in which the act of taking the picture becomes an integral part of the picture's meaning. By including himself in the act of creating, Degas reminds us that it is he who stands back and comprehends these complexities and, more importantly, that it is he who actually has the power to capture such paradoxes within a single image.

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[35] E. and J. de Goncourt, *Journal, mémoires de la vie littéraire*, ed. R. Ricatte, Monaco, 1956, X, 164-165.