

1976

BRITISH ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ITALIAN PRIMITIVES, 1815-1865, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE MID NINETEENTH-CENTURY FASHION

COOPER, ROBYN

<http://hdl.handle.net/10026.1/2687>

<http://dx.doi.org/10.24382/4531>

University of Plymouth

All content in PEARL is protected by copyright law. Author manuscripts are made available in accordance with publisher policies. Please cite only the published version using the details provided on the item record or document. In the absence of an open licence (e.g. Creative Commons), permissions for further reuse of content should be sought from the publisher or author.

British Attitudes towards the Italian Primitives,
1815-1865, with special reference to the mid
nineteenth-century fashion

Robyn Cooper,
D. Phil. Thesis,
University of Sussex.

University of Plymouth Library
Item No 5006126397
Shelfmark



D 17836

VOL 1

PT 1

THE BRITISH LIBRARY
BRITISH THESIS SERVICE

COPYRIGHT

Reproduction of this thesis, other than as permitted under the United Kingdom Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under specific agreement with the copyright holder, is prohibited.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

REPRODUCTION QUALITY NOTICE

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the original thesis. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction, some pages which contain small or poor printing may not reproduce well.

Previously copyrighted material (journal articles, published texts etc.) is not reproduced.

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

TARGET B

Volume 2
of this thesis has not
been filmed.

Please apply direct to
the issuing
university/awarding
body.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	iii
<u>CHAPTER I</u> The Reputation of the Primitives. Decline, Survival and Revival to 1815	1
<u>CHAPTER II</u> British Interest in the Primitives, 1815-1835	50
<u>CHAPTER III</u> The Beginnings of the Fashion for the Primitives	101
<u>CHAPTER IV</u> The Literature of Art	146
<u>CHAPTER V</u> Ruskin and the Primitives	206
<u>CHAPTER VI</u> The Decoration of the Houses of Parliament and Church Art	254
<u>CHAPTER VII</u> The Pre-Raphaelites and the Primitives	303
<u>CHAPTER VIII</u> The Arundel Society	343
<u>CHAPTER IX</u> The National Gallery and Sir Charles Eastlake	396
<u>CHAPTER X</u> The Manchester Exhibition, Collectors, and Tourists	450
<u>CONCLUSION</u>	509

The following abbreviation has been used:

J.W.C.I. Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld
 Institutes

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the fashion for the Primitives in Britain in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. By "Primitives" I mean the painters of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. I have concentrated on Italian artists. However, since interest extended to earlier Netherlandish and German painters, some mention will be made of attitudes to them also.

In my analysis of this fashion I have chosen to treat as self-contained units its various manifestations. Therefore, a short sketch of the course of the fashion might be useful here. 1836 is a good starting point. In that year a government select committee on the arts recommended the acquisition of earlier paintings for the National Gallery, and the decoration of public buildings with fresco. This was also the year in which A.F. Rio's influential history of early Italian painting, De la poésie Chrétienne, was published. About this time too George Darley was taking up the cause of the Primitives in the pages of the Athenaeum.

The next useful date is 1841. Another select committee on the arts set in motion the fresco experiment on the walls of the new Houses of Parliament. The National Gallery purchased its first earlier Italian paintings, by Francia and Perugino. Mrs Jameson's Memoirs of Earlier Italian Painters was published in serial form in the Penny Magazine. Then in 1842 we find the publication of the English translation of Kugler's Handbook to the Italian schools of painting. In

the same year appeared the first guide which drew the traveller's attention to the merits and location of early paintings, the Murray Handbook to northern Italy, compiled by Francis Palgrave. It was followed by Octavian Blewitt's Handbook to central Italy in 1843. In 1845 Mrs Jameson's popular Memoirs of Earlier Italian Painters appeared as a book. In 1846 the second volume of Modern Painters announced Ruskin's conversion to the early masters. In 1847 there is Lord Lindsay's Sketches of the History of Christian Art, and the sale of the collection of Primitives formed by William Young Ottley.

1848 is a crucial year for the history of the fashion. There were two important sales of collections of Primitives, the Thomas Blayds and William Coningham sales. Mrs Jameson published the first volume of her Sacred and Legendary Art series. The National Gallery acquired its first trecento painting. Some forty "ancient works" were exhibited at the British Institution. The Arundel Society, whose principal aim was to disseminate information about mediaeval art, was founded. Lastly, 1848 was the year of the formation of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, dedicated to the regeneration of British art through a return to the inspiration of the early masters.

The fashion continued to spread during the 1850s. Gustav Waagen's Treasures of Art in Great Britain reveals the increase in the number of collectors of Primitives, and at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857 the art-loving public could see displayed examples of earlier works from private collections. Meanwhile, a re-organized National

acceptable paintings not generally found appealing visually.

The next two chapters go into the relationship between the Primitives and contemporary art. These follow on naturally from the chapters on the literature of art for they illustrate well the literary basis of the fashion. The debates and arguments about the influence of the early masters on modern British painting fed the desire to know what the real "pre-Raphaelites" actually looked like. And the final three chapters look at reproductions of the work of the Primitives, at the acquisition and exhibition of paintings in private and public collections, and the change in the sight-seeing habits of tourists in Italy.

Chapters I and II give the background to the fashion. The first chapter traces the history of attitudes until the early nineteenth century. The second chapter deals with English reactions on the re-opening of the Continent after the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars which had effectively sealed Britain from foreign ideas and travel for twenty years.

Gallery, under the guidance of its first Director, Sir Charles Eastlake, had begun purchasing Primitives in a comprehensive and systematic way, and in the year of the Manchester Exhibition the important Lombardo-Baldi collection was acquired. It was also in the mid 1850s that A.H. Layard set about injecting some energy and efficiency into the Arundel Society, and in 1856 the first of the Society's immensely popular chromolithographs - after a fresco by Perugino at Panicale -- appeared.

By now the vogue was well and truly established. Fraser's Magazine in 1855 described the enthusiasm fashionably extended to Fra Angelico as "hysterical".¹ That is an overstatement. The extent and seriousness of mid nineteenth-century interest are matters too large to be dealt with in this very swift introductory survey. But clearly, as the word "fashion" suggests, the taste for the earlier painters was in many, if not most, instances an affectation. Those at the forefront of the taste felt that genuine interest and appreciation were confined to a "small class of admirers".² The Primitives never became truly popular painters. On the other hand, it is undeniable that, as a result of the fashion, knowledge of the Primitives was widespread among the educated population. The names of Giotto, Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Gaddo Gaddi, Ghirlandaio and Perugino were declared to be

-
1. Fraser's Magazine, vol. lli (October, 1855), p.432.
 2. Sir Charles Eastlake said this in his evidence to the Royal Commission into the Royal Academy, Parliamentary Papers (1865), vol. xxvii, p.75.

"well-known" in 1852.³ In 1865 it was claimed: "Fra Angelico's name is almost a household word in this country".⁴

The fashion for the Primitives was not long-lasting, and began dying away in the 1860s. Even through the 1850s, when interest was at its height, there were many who objected to what they felt to be an excessively enthusiastic and uncritical adulation of the early masters. By 1866 a correspondent in the Art Journal was announcing that a "cure" for the "delirium" of "quattrocentism" was now being effected,⁵ and so successful was this cure that we find A.H. L. Ford in 1870 declaring the reaction against the productions of the Primitives to be no less foolish than the earlier mania.⁶ Of course there was no question of the Primitives slipping back into their former obscurity, and in fact we find the merging of the end of the fashion of the mid-nineteenth-century with the beginnings of a new fashion, very differently based, which comes to a climax towards the end of the century.

This study of the earlier fashion has kept three objects in view. Firstly, there are the reasons for this sudden upsurge of interest in the earlier masters. Secondly, there are the sources of and influences on the critical evaluation of the Primitives and the interpretation of the

3. H.N. Humphreys, Ten Centuries of Art. Its Progress in Europe from the IXth to the XIXth Century (London, 1852), p.58.

4. Athenaeum (29 July, 1865), p.153.

5. Art Journal (October, 1866), p.320.

6. Edinburgh Review, vol.cxxxi (April, 1870), p.416.

history of Italian painting from Cimabue to Raphael. Thirdly, the manifestations of the fashion require close examination. It is one of the basic arguments of this thesis that a distinctive feature of this fashion is the desire of its leaders to make the population at large more aware of the work of the Primitives. The means by which knowledge was disseminated is as important and revealing as what was actually said and written.

The chapters dealing with the fashion have not been haphazardly ordered. The third chapter goes into its beginnings in the late 1830s. It is followed by two chapters on the literature of the Primitives. The intimate links between art and literature in the nineteenth century have often been commented on. Victorian art and criticism have frequently been accused of being too literary. Leaving aside the rights and wrongs of this kind of accusation it is certainly true that pictures at this time were painted to be read. Paintings were compared with books, galleries with libraries. Mrs Jameson even conceived a plan for arranging pictures in galleries by subject.⁷ As well as this general prejudice there were particular circumstances which rendered the fashion for the Primitives especially literary in its basis. In the first place they were introduced to the public through the literature of art some years before examples of their work were generally accessible. Secondly, literature was important for making interesting and

7. See her introduction to Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, and of the Progress of Painting in Italy (London, 3rd ed., 1859), pp.xii-xvii.

CHAPTER I

The Reputation of the Primitives. Decline, Survival
and Revival to 1815

Giotto's importance as an innovator was recognized in his own life-time, and in the two centuries between his death and the publication of Vasari's Lives, a theory of the revival of the arts was developed, based on the interpretation of what was seen in the light of classical literary sources.¹ It was believed that Giotto and his successors had restored Antique principles by bringing art back into rapport with nature. The centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire had been a dark age in which art had wandered far from nature and the true rules. Architecture degenerated into the maniera tedesca (Gothic), painting into the maniera greca (Byzantine). The only link between Giotto and this middle age was Cimabue, who is esteemed chiefly for the discovery of his famous pupil. Giotto learned his art from nature, not from his master. There was no suggestion either that he might have been familiar with the work of the Ancients. The revival of painting was a single, miraculous event, for which no explanation could be given.

-
1. For attitudes towards the earlier Italian painters of Vasari and his predecessors see especially, Julius von Schlosser, La letteratura artistica, trans. Filippo Rossi (Firenze, Wien, 1950); G. Previtali, La fortuna dei primitivi dal Vasari ai neoclassici (Torino, 1904), pp.3-21; Herbert Weisinger, "Renaissance Theories of the Revival of the Fine Arts", Italica, vol.xx (December, 1943), pp.163-170.

In the sixteenth century the reputation of the painting of the first centuries of the revival declined.² With Raphael, Michelangelo and Titian painting had reached perfection. There were no difficulties that the artist could not conquer; no grace or beauty he could not express. But until Vasari it would seem that commentators had difficulty in devising a formula for distinguishing between the achievements of artists during the revival, and those fortunate to live at the time of art's perfection.

Vasari's Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects (1550)³ surpassed all previous writing in the scope and thoroughness of its treatment. The quantity of the Lives -- two fat volumes as opposed to the few pages of earlier histories of painting -- was alone sufficient to give dignity and importance to his subject. Vasari follows earlier commentators in attributing the decline of classical art to Christian intolerance and barbarian destructiveness, although he also suggests that there was already evidence of decay. He is unable to give reasons for the revival, whose beginning he dates at 1250, and he resorts to God's mercy and the fashionable notion of the wheel of fortune. Where

-
2. This is obvious when we compare Cristoforo Landino's remarks on artists in the introduction of his Dante commentary in the late fifteenth century with the alterations in his text by Sansovino for the new edition published in 1564. Giotto is no longer "perfecto" but "eccellente"; his successors are not "mirabili pittori" but "uomini chiari"; and Masaccio instead of being the "optimo imitatore di natura" becomes an "ottimo inventore". See Ottavio Morisani, "Art Historians and Art Critics - - - III. Cristoforo Landino", Burlington Magazine, vol. xcv (August, 1953), pp.267-70.
 3. A second edition, corrected and expanded, with an appendix dealing with living artists, was published in 1568.

he is original is in the organization of the history of the revival into three periods, the first initiated by Giotto, the second by Masaccio, and the last and greatest by Leonardo. A little over a third of the book is devoted to the first two periods. In dealing so thoroughly with painters unfashionable by this time, Vasari was partly motivated by his desire to provide for posterity a record of names worthy of memory and of works which, by the perishable nature of their material, would one day vanish. As an artist writing for other artists he also felt that many useful lessons might be extracted from the lives, habits and paintings of the early masters. In particular he drew attention to the accuracy of their observation of natural phenomena and of their depiction of gesture and expression.⁴ Finally, he thought them historically interesting as showing the state of art at a particular stage of its development and of illustrating its progress from the revival to the perfection. He drew an analogy between the three periods and the biological process. There is antique precedent for this analogy, although its application to the history of art was novel. The first period he compared to childhood, the second to adolescence, and the third to maturity.

4. e.g., from Ambrogio Lorenzetti modern masters have learnt how to represent a storm; from Antonio Veneziano they can learn "to paint their figures in a manner that they may appear to be speaking". The best known example of the practical value of earlier works is the Brancacci chapel, in the church of the Carmine at Florence. Vasari gives a long list of modern masters who studied there. Lives of the most Eminent Painters, Sculptors, & Architects, trans. Gaston du C. De Vere, 10 vols (London, 1912-15), vol.i, p.155; vol.ii, pp.16, 190.

Each period was characterized by its own particular "manner". In the earliest the rough and harsh style of the Greeks, with staring eyes, feet on tiptoe, and sharp hands, was left behind. There was a general improvement in design, drawing and colouring. Draperies were more realistic, heads more animated, and a beginning was made in the art of foreshortening. But there remained a certain roughness and unnaturalness. The second period saw a marked improvement in all departments of art through the discovery of anatomy and perspective, and closer acquaintance with the Antique. However, art fell short of perfection through excessive diligence and a too studious display of its difficulties, which resulted in a dry, hard and harsh style. The perfection of the third period was from the addition of a quality of grace, lightness, facility, spontaneity, in sum of sprezzatura, to the artist's imitation. This went beyond correct measurement without conflicting with it, and was achieved after painters had seen the newly unearthed statues, such as the Laocoon and the Apollo Belvedere. It must be emphasized however that for Vasari the most important factor in the revival of art was the conquest of nature, not the recovery of the Antique.

In order to give the efforts of the artists of the first and second periods their proper due Vasari thought up the principle of what has been called "Vasarian historical relativism".⁵ Judged by the absolute standards of the

5. Previtali, op.cit., p.9. See also, E. Panofsky, "The First Page of Giorgio Vasari's 'Libro'", Meaning in the Visual Arts (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1970), pp.246-52.

perfetta regola their works, especially those of the first stage, hardly merited serious consideration. But by the relative standard of what was possible at the time, their achievements were little short of miraculous. This double standard explains much of the inconsistency between what Vasari writes in the prefaces and in the individual biographies. It was partly inspired also by his desire not to take sides in the artistic controversies of the time. On the one hand, he was anxious to avoid the imputation of uncouthness for his praise of the Primitives from classically minded connoisseurs and artists. On the other hand, he did not want to appear too harsh because of the Counter-Reformation sympathy with the piety shown in the early pictures. For this reason he made much of the religious inspiration of the paintings of Fra Angelico, and remarked that painters of holy subjects should be holy men.⁶ Vasari's favourable comments on the Primitives reveal, however, more than political wisdom or the desire to be just. Despite the dependence on traditional ways of writing about art, despite the assumptions and prejudices, he often comes across as someone acutely sensitive to the artistic merits of the earlier painters. Many of his judgements are still valid, and he shows some understanding of the individual artistic personality, as when he writes that Simone Martini did everything "with ingenuity, with discretion, and with most beautiful grace".⁷

There can be no doubt that Vasari dominated attitudes towards the history of Italian art for the next three centuries.

6. Vasari, op.cit., vol.iii, p.33.

7. Ibid., vol.i, p.169.

It was only in the nineteenth century that his interpretation of Italian painting in terms of progress towards visual truth was questioned. Although his Florentine bias has been exaggerated, nonetheless it did tend to lead to the neglect of painters of other schools. His interest in the art of northern Europe was superficial, and he was principally responsible for the myth that all the Italians acquired from the North was the technique of oil-painting. We must wait until the mid nineteenth century for the recognition of the influence of northern Gothic painting on the trecentists, and of Flemish realism on the quattrocentists. It was also unfortunate that Vasari's dogmatic prefaces were better known than his more moderately worded biographies, of which in any case only the juicier anecdotes were remembered. Thanks to Vasari, Andrea del Castagno survived as the murderer of Domenico Veneziano, Filippo Lippi as the dissolute monk, and so on. In this respect his influence was especially harmful in the nineteenth century, when it was believed that a man's character could be read in his works. On the other hand, the Lives kept alive many names that might otherwise have been forgotten. Not until Lanzi's history in the late eighteenth century was so much to be written about the earlier Italians. Most importantly, Vasari's notion of historical relativity and his belief in the historical importance of the Primitives were in the future to open the way to renewed interest and appreciation.

Another way back to the Primitives was via their religious content and expression. And here also nineteenth-century attitudes were anticipated in the sixteenth century at the time of the Counter-Reformation. The Dialogues of

Giovanni Andrea Gilio, published in 1564, praised painters before Raphael for their piety, modesty, lack of artifice, and diligence, and attacked the moderns for putting art before modesty.⁸

Nonetheless, despite such a defence, the fortunes of the Primitives were clearly on the wane. In the late sixteenth, seventeenth, and the first half of the eighteenth centuries their reputation sank to its nadir. Their paintings disappeared from view into the attics of palazzi and the cupboards of sacristies. Altarpieces were cut up and dispersed or left in dark little chapels where they vanished behind grime and the smoke of burning incense and candles. Frescoes were whitewashed over, like the Giotto in S. Croce in Florence, or had windows cut through them, as happened to the Piero della Francesca at Arezzo. Whole fresco cycles were shut up and forgotten, like the Giotto in the Arena Chapel at Padua, or the Fra Angelicos in the chapel of Nicholas V in the Vatican.

The taste of the age had no sympathy for these "barbarisms", which violated the rules of art, founded on reason and the example of the Antique, that theoreticians were endeavouring to establish. Prejudice against the Primitives was stronger than it had been in Vasari's day. For Vasari the dividing line between the modern and the middle age was 1250. From Cimabue and Giotto on painters had sought with increasing success to imitate nature. By the seventeenth century, however, not nearness to nature but

8. Previtali, op.cit., pp.28-30.

distance from the Antique became the criterion by which earlier artists were judged, and they were found wanting. "Gothic", a term which had been applied strictly to architecture, became a blanket word of abuse for all art before about the end of the fifteenth century. Thus Roger de Piles, among the least bigoted of theorists at the time, wrote: "All that has nothing of the Antique gust, is call'd a barbarous or Gothicue manner, which is not conducted by any rule, but onely follows a wretched fancy, which has nothing in it that is noble".⁹ This manner lasted until 1450 in Italy, and much later in northern Europe because artists had not the advantage of seeing "those fair Reliques of Antiquity".¹⁰ As well as being born at the wrong time earlier Flemish and German painters had the additional handicap of being born in the wrong place.

The few accounts of the history of Italian painting were taken from Vasari. There were some four of these published in England between 1622 and 1699, one of them a translation from a French work.¹¹ All of them are much condensed, inaccurate and distorted versions of Vasari, and reveal that with regard to painters before Raphael the compilers had no idea of what they were writing about. Only in Italy, among

9. See his notes on C.A. du Fresnoy, De Arte Graphica. The Art of Painting, ... with remarks by ROGER DE PILES. Translated into English ... By Mr Dryden ... (London, 1695), p.95.

10. Ibid., p.94.

11. J.R. Hale, England and the Italian Renaissance. The growth of interest in its history and art (London, 2nd ed. revised, 1963), ch.3.

local scholars and antiquaries, was there any fresh research into the early history of Italian painting, stimulated by the desire to establish the claims of the school of art of their particular city against Vasari's assertion of the Florentine origins of the revival. Florentine counter-claims kept the polemic alive. The Church also encouraged research into the early history of Christian art to help establish its title to supremacy and the authority of its saints.¹²

The occasional reference to older paintings by English travellers of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was most probably due to Italian contacts. John Raymond's Itinerary (1648), one of the most popular guide-books of the time, would have been impossible without some real knowledge of Italian books, and information supplied by the natives.¹³ He was the first to mention the frescoes in the Piccolomini Library at Siena by Pintoricchio and in the Campo Santo at Pisa. There are references to the earlier Italians, too, in An Account of some of the statues, bas-reliefs, drawings, and pictures, in Italy (1722), written by Jonathan Richardson, a well-known painter, connoisseur and theorist, from the notes of his son, also called Jonathan. The travel-books of John Breval and Edward Wright contain some comments as well.¹⁴ Alongside the usual

12. Previtali, op.cit., ch.2.

13. John Walter Stoye, English Travellers Abroad, 1604-1667. Their influence in English Society and Politics (London, 1952), p.190.

14. Edward Wright, Some Observations made in travelling through France, Italy, &c. in the Years 1720, 1721 and 1722, 2 vols (London, 1730), and John Breval, Remarks on several parts of Europe, relating chiefly to their antiques and history. Collected upon the spot in several tours since the year 1723, 2 vols (London, 1735). For the reaction of English travellers to the Primitives in the seventeenth century, see especially, Hale, op.cit.

strictures against the dryness and hardness of the old style one finds appreciative remarks. Ghirlandaio is praised by the Richardsons for his "fine Airs, and noble Attitudes; very Simple and Gentile",¹⁵ while Fra Angelico is also "very Gentile".¹⁶ Wright says of Carpaccio's St Ursula, that it is "of a dry manner, according to that Age; but an excellent close Pursuit of Nature",¹⁷ and at the Campo Santo he discovers that "many of the Countenances are expressive and good, particularly those of Giotto and Benozzo".¹⁸ One very interesting traveller in Italy in the early eighteenth century was John Talman, first director of the Society of Antiquaries. Between 1710 and 1717 he executed and commissioned drawings of Ravenna mosaics, thirteenth-century Pisan sculpture, and after "Giotto" in the Campo Santo.¹⁹

We also find certain quattrocento painters being included in collections. In the collection of Charles I were paintings by Bellini and Mantegna, notable among which was the latter's Triumphs of Caesar.²⁰ The Earl of Arundel

15. An Account of some of the statues, bas-reliefs, drawings, and pictures, in Italy, &c. With remarks (London, 1722), p.49.

16. Ibid., p.62.

17. Wright, op.cit., vol.i, pp.72-3.

18. Ibid., vol.ii, p.385. The Vasarian attribution of the St Job frescoes to Giotto was not questioned until the nineteenth century.

19. Hugh Honour, Review of Previtali's La fortuna dei primitivi, Burlington Magazine, vol.cviii (April, 1966), p.206. The "Giotto" was among the collection of drawings of the Duke of Argyll, sold on 21 May, 1798.

20. His other Mantegnas were the Dead Christ (now in the Brera) and the Domination of the Virgin (now in the Prado). For Charles I's collection, see especially, "Abraham van der Dort's Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I", ed. and intro. Oliver Millar, The Walpole Society, vol.xxxvii (1958-60).

owned paintings attributed to Bellini, Mantegna and Antonello da Messina,²¹ and the Marquess of Hamilton had a Bellini and an Antonello da Messina.²² At a less elevated level we find that Richard Symonds, an officer in the Court of Chancery, had two Mantegna prints in his large collection of prints and drawings formed in Italy in 1650-1651,²³ and John Michael Wright, a Scots painter, had rare engravings of Mantegna's work.²⁴ In the first half of the eighteenth century we find that the collections of John Pitt and Lord Houghton each had a painting given to Bellini,²⁵ and that there were works attributed to Mantegna, Perugino and Carpaccio in the collection of General Guise, bequeathed to Christ Church at Oxford in 1765.²⁶ This interest was by no means a British phenomenon.²⁷ The interest

-
21. See Mary F.S. Hervey, The Life, Correspondence and Collections of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel (Cambridge, 1921), Appendix v, pp.473-500.
 22. See E.K. Waterhouse, "Paintings from Venice for Seventeenth-Century England: some records of a forgotten transaction", Italian Studies, vol.vii (1952), pp.1-23.
 23. See Henry and Margaret Ogden, "A Seventeenth Century Collection of Prints and Drawings", Art Quarterly (Winter, 1948), pp.42-73.
 24. Stoye, op.cit., p.215.
 25. For John Pitt, see the sale catalogue of the collection of William Morton Pitt (Christie's, 1 June, 1811). It states that the collection was formed fifty or sixty years earlier by John Pitt. It also contained a "Masaccio" (lot 29). For Lord Houghton, see Horace Walpole, Aedes Walpolianae: or, a description of the collection of pictures at Houghton-Hall in Norfolk, etc., (London, 2nd ed., 1752).
 26. See Horace Walpole, Catalogue of the collections of pictures of the Duke of Devonshire, General Guise, and the late Sir P. Bute (Strawberry-Hill, 1760).
 27. The best known foreign example is Cardinal Richelieu's Cabinet du Roi which included paintings by Mantegna, Lorenzo Costa and Perugino from the Studiolo of Isabella d'Este.

in the earlier Venetians was no doubt an extension of the taste for the sixteenth-century Venetians, favourites with collectors until the mid eighteenth century. Mantegna was appreciated for his passion for classical antiquity and the accuracy of his archaeology. Perugino would have been interesting as the master of Raphael. Also remarkable in these collections is the inclusion of earlier Northern paintings, the most common attributions being van Eyck, Durer, Holbein, Massys and Mabuse.

Perhaps more interesting were the collections of drawings which, following the example of Vasari, aimed at historical completeness. There were a number of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century drawings in the collection of Jonathan Richardson, including one of Giotto's Navicella mosaic in St Peter's at Rome.²⁸ He also had a Carpaccio drawing from Sir Peter Lely's collection.²⁹ Richardson's drawings descended down to the collections of Sir Thomas Lawrence, William Young Ottley and William Roscoe. Then there was Sir Andrew Fountaine who had a collection of drawings by Flemish Primitives.³⁰ And when John Talman was in Italy he inspected sixteen folio volumes of drawings which included examples attributed to "Greeks" and Cimabue, and which was apparently sold to Lord Somers. Richardson

28. Richardson thought this was by Giotto. The drawing is now in the Musée Bonnat, Bayonne, and is attributed to Parri Spinelli. He also mentioned that Lord Pembroke had a drawing of the Navicella more perfect than his (Richardson, op.cit., p.293).

29. Gerald Reitlinger, The Economics of Taste. Volume II. The Rise and Fall of Objects d'Art Prices since 1750 (London, 1963), pp.70-71.

30. Honour, op.cit.

organized this collection for him, and purchased some of the drawings for himself.³¹

Thus we find that during the centuries of their decline the Primitives were not entirely forgotten and that the curiosity and open-mindedness of antiquary, traveller and collector acted as a counter-balance to the anti-Gothic polemic. Nonetheless these were the "dark ages" for the earlier painters. Their revival, as opposed to their survival, began in the second half of the eighteenth century.³² The reasons for the renewed interest are found in the complicated, inter-acting cultural and intellectual movements of the time: the Enlightenment, the Mediaeval and

31. See John Talman's letter to Dr Aldrich, Dean of Christ Church, from Florence in about 1709 or 1710, describing the collection which belonged to the Bishop of Arezzo, and was then in the possession of his nephew. The letter is printed in Horace Walpole, A catalogue of the curious collection of pictures of Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, etc. (London, 1758), pp.73-79, where there is a note about its purchase. The letter is also printed in Archaeologia, vol.1 (1770), pp.130-135. It is worth mentioning that similar collections of drawings were formed in France, e.g., that of Pierre de Crozat, the Parisian banker and patron of Watteau, which seems to have been acquired by the art theorist and writer, Pierre Jean Mariette. See P.J. Mariette, Description sommaire des desseins des grands maîtres d'Italie, des Pays-Bas et de France, du Cabinet du feu M. Crozat, etc. (Paris, 1741) and F. Basan, Catalogue raisonné des différents objets de curiosités dans les sciences et arts, qui composoient le cabinet de feu M. Mariette (Paris, 1779). Several of Crozat's drawings by ancient masters came from Vasari's collection.

32. For the revival of the Primitives, see especially, C. von Klenze, "The Growth of Interest in the Early Italian Masters", Modern Philology, vol.1v (October, 1906), pp.207-74; Tancred Sorenius, "The Rediscovery of the Primitives", Quarterly Review, vol.cccxxxix (April, 1923), pp.258-71; Lionello Venturi, Il gusto dei primitivi (Bologna, 1926); André Chastel, "Le Goût des 'Préraphaélites' en France", introduction to exhibition catalogue, De Giotto à Bellini (Paris, 1956); Previtali, op.cit., ch.4 and appendices 1 and 2.

Neo-classical revivals, Romanticism. Initially it reflected the growing interest in history and the belief that all the products of man were of value as historical evidence, however intrinsically worthless. But the paintings of the early masters belonged to an age which men were ceasing to condemn for its barbarism, ignorance of the Antique, and lack of taste. There was not one, but two, Middle Ages in the thought of the late eighteenth century. There was the historical fact -- still considered to have come to an end around 1500 -- whose literature, architecture and history was attracting scholarly attention. And there was the fantasy created in response to the multifarious cravings of the age -- for the primitive, the irrational, the exotic, the picturesque, the natural, the non-classical, the wild and the romantic. The Mediaeval revival began in England, where indeed survival and revival shaded imperceptibly into each other, as a literary movement, expressed in the study of early folk-literature, in the "Ossianic" poems of James Macpherson and in the Gothic horror novels of Horace Walpole and Maria Edgeworth. The erection of "Gothick" ruins, the fashion for gothicizing houses begun by Walpole at Strawberry Hill in 1753, indicate an enthusiastic if uninformed appreciation of mediaeval architecture, while a more serious interest was reflected in topographical publications. From England, the enthusiasm for the Middle Ages spread quickly to other countries, who turned to their own national pasts in a similar spirit of whimsy, nostalgia and serious enquiry. In Germany the Revival was particularly emotional, intense and nationalistic. It is characteristic

of the complexity of the late eighteenth century scene that an interest in the earlier painters should also be associated with the Neo-classical revival, on the historical ground that the influence of Antiquity, though weakened and debased, survived throughout the Middle Ages.

The appeal of the Primitives was principally historical, as illustrating the progress of painting from its revival to its perfection, and as products of the Middle Ages. The prejudices against their art, particularly of course that of the fourteenth century and earlier, were still considerable and were to remain so for a long time. For most art lovers the "hardness" of their style and the defects in their anatomy, perspective and chiaroscuro proved insurmountable barriers. Nonetheless we do find a taste developing for their paintings, though confined for the most part to artists at the very end of the fifteenth century.

That the paintings of the Primitives were in some limited way found appealing may be attributed to the growing importance attached to the expression and communication of sentiment in art, to the diversification of ideas of beauty with the formulation of the categories of the "sublime" and the "picturesque", and to the reaction, both moral and artistic, against the frivolity and artificiality of the Rococo. A moralistic and high-minded view of the function of the arts found the mediaeval painter who addressed himself to everyone more worthy of praise than the modern artist who pandered to the jaded senses of his aristocratic patron. Vasari had called the period preceding Raphael the infancy of art. The image survived and was given a deepened significance by the romantic idealization of childhood, whether of

the individual man or of a civilization, for its innocence and spontaneity. The experience, skill and knowledge of maturity barely compensated for the loss of the special characteristics of infancy.

Two of the qualities for which the Primitives were praised had been mentioned as redeeming virtues by the sympathetically disposed since Vasari's day: the closeness of the observation (though not the representation) of nature, and the truth of gesture and expression. Now they were praised also for their gravity, simplicity, sincerity, naiveté, unaffectedness and diligence. In addition, in the Madonnas of the early Raphael and of certain late quattrocentists, especially Francia and Perugino, there was found a pleasing sentimental grace and elegance.

With the renewed appreciation of the Primitives we find the beginnings of the decline of the reputation of the Bolognese -- the Carracci, Guido, Domenichino, etc. Although their paintings were still generally thought to rank equal with the works of Raphael and Correggio there were a few people who criticized the Bolognese for their lack of originality and sacrifice of the spiritual side of art to the mechanical. Sir Joshua Reynolds was among the first in his Fifteenth Discourse in 1790.³³

The attitudes towards the art of the Primitives which I have briefly summarized were common to both the Neo-classical reaction and that Romantic-Mediaeval taste which first appeared in Germany at the end of the eighteenth

33. Discourses on Art, intro. Robert R. Warx (London, 1966), p.241.

century. Classicism and Romanticism were not as antithetical as is generally supposed, both movements, for example, reflecting a nostalgia for the past. As far as the earlier painters were concerned another common bond was the belief in their technical incompetence. The Romantic, as well as the Neo-classicist, did not question the classically-influenced pictorial conventions which had dominated painting since the sixteenth century. However there were important differences in their attitudes. The Neo-classicist admired the earlier painters -- and it is significant that his admiration could comprehend the trecento -- because he discerned in their art certain formal affinities with the Antique, such as the composition on a single plane, or the clarity of the outlines. The Romantic, on the other hand, was more interested in the mediaeval and Christian content of their art which he interpreted as expressing values the very antitheses of classical art: beauty of spirit as opposed to beauty of form. It was the Romantic interpretation of the Primitives which was to be most influential in the nineteenth century.

The revival of the Primitives was a European phenomenon. It began in Italy where the interest of scholars and collectors spread to French, German and British residents and visitors. They carried the taste back to their own countries, although in England its development was slowed down by the outbreak of the Napoleonic wars which effectively sealed the island off from the Continent for twenty years. It must be emphasized of course that we are not describing a popular taste but one which was confined to very small numbers of people. Before tracing the development of English

interest against this European background, I wish to discuss briefly the histories of Lanzi and Seroux d'Agincourt, as they were important source-books for the history of Italian art in the nineteenth century.

The second half of the eighteenth century in Italy saw the publication of histories of art which though still local in scope were no longer parochial in sympathy, such as Antonio Zanetti's Della pittura veneziana (1771), and Guglielmo della Valle's Lettere Sanesi (1785), where we find the first expression of the idea, which became a cliché in the nineteenth century, that if the Florentines were superior to the Sienese in the mechanics of art, the Sienese surpassed them in poetry and invention.

The summation of all preceding Italian efforts was Luigi Lanzi's Storia pittorica della Italia (1792-6), written with the purpose of giving Italy a history important to her fame. In place of Vasari's biographical scheme Lanzi has organized Italian painting into fourteen different geographical schools, each with its characteristic style, and these in turn are subdivided into smaller schools of masters and pupils. The development of each school, which Lanzi believed to follow invariable laws, is traced separately. His bias is Florentine, but his arguments are more subtle than those of his predecessors. He argues that not all improvements in painting originated in Florence, but maintains that the Florentine contribution was the greatest.³⁴ His account of the revival of painting shows

34. Storia pittorica della Italia dal risorgimento delle belle arti fin presso al fine del XVIII secolo, 6 vols (Bassano, 1809), vol. I, pp. 23-37.

how far scholarship had advanced since Vasari. He notes the survival of painting in Italy throughout the dark ages, recognizes a native tradition existing beside the maniera greca, gives due importance to works of non-Florentines like Giunta Pisano and Guido da Siena (unknown to Vasari), and realizes the influence of the sculpture of the Pisani on painting. He also argues that Giotto's improvements could not be attributed simply to his genius and suggests that he must have studied Antique sculpture.³⁵

Lanzi's interpretation of the history of Italian painting is still within terms of a continuous progress towards the "golden age" of the sixteenth century, and the balance of his treatment is weighted more heavily on the post-Raphaelite period. Nonetheless his discussion of the earlier painters is distinguished for its judiciousness, sympathy and lack of bias. His pre-occupation with isolating and analysing styles leads him to many remarkable insights, as when in his account of the Venetian trecento he distinguishes between the native manner and the style introduced by Giotto.³⁶ Lanzi's scholarship is no less remarkable, and he breaks new ground in his treatment of the Bolognese trecentists and the late fifteenth-century

35. Ibid., p.20.

36. Ibid., vol.iii, pp. 10-11. He disputes the attribution of the St Francis altarpiece in S. Croce to Cimabue on the grounds that it is not his style; and though he accepts Vasari's attribution of Pietro Lorenzetti's Crucifixion in the lower church of S. Francesco, Assisi, to Cavallini, he does say that the style reminds him of Simone Martini, i.e., he does detect a Siennese element; and he discerns the influence of Piero della Francesca, a painter barely known at that time, on Bramante.

Ferrarese. His taste is in many ways traditional -- he is an enthusiastic partisan of the School of the Carracci, for example. Yet few critics of the time or even later showed such positive appreciation of the paintings of the Primitives as Lanzi did. Although the figures in Giunta Pisano's Crucifix at Assisi were not life-like, and the design dry, nonetheless this picture was greatly superior to "Greek" works in knowledge of the nude, disposition of the draperies, and the expression of suffering in the heads.³⁷ He thought the face of Guido da Siena's Madonna at Siena "lovely" (amabile),³⁸ and praised the sublimity of the heads of Cimabue.³⁹ Giotto's was a milder genius,⁴⁰ and Lanzi found in his works grace and elegance as well as grandeur. Cimabue was the Michelangelo of his age, Giotto the Raphael -- an analogy that was to be popular with English writers. His comments on fifteenth-century painters are perhaps less interesting. However his sympathetic criticism of the paintings of Gozzoli, whose frescoes in the Campo Santo placed him next to Masaccio, and the paintings of Masaccio, Francia, Ghirlandaio and Pintoricchio no doubt assisted the high reputation they were to enjoy in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The other influential history of Italian art researched in the late eighteenth century was Seroux d'Agincourt's Histoire de l'art par les monuments depuis sa décadence au

37. Ibid., vol.i, p.17.

38. Ibid., p.307.

39. Ibid., p.17.

40. Ibid., p.18.

IV^e siècle jusqu'à sa renouvellement au XVI^e.⁴¹ Seroux was a Frenchman who settled in Rome in 1782 after travelling around Italy. His history was written between 1779 and 1789, but publication was delayed by the outbreak of war, and it was issued in parts between 1810 and 1823.

Seroux's bias is classical. His basic theme is the continuity of the classical tradition in European art throughout the Middle Ages, though in such a degenerate form that the monuments he discusses do not merit the name of "art" and are interesting only as part of the general history of the human spirit, and as a necessary link in the chain of the history of art. He sees himself as completing Winckelmann's history of Greek art, though whereas Winckelmann had showed artists what they must follow he, alas, must show them what to avoid. Despite these prejudices, however, Seroux does show sympathy in his treatment of individual artists and works.

The text is accompanied by some three thousand illustrations. Seroux believed in letting the monuments speak for themselves. The sections on architecture, sculpture and painting all begin with engravings showing art in its Antique perfection. These are followed by a long series of illustrations of the decline and revival, and they end on the triumphal note of the glory of the second age of perfection.

41. For Seroux d'Agincourt, see M. Lamy, "La découverte des primitifs au XIX^e siècle. Seroux d'Agincourt (1730-1814) et son influence sur collectionneurs, critiques, et artistes français", Revue de l'art ancien et moderne, vol. xxxix (mars, 1921).

Compared with Lanzi's history Seroux's is badly organized. For example, Crivelli, Mantegna, Giovanni Bellini, Antonello da Messina and Uccello are all included in the epoch begun by Giotto, not that of Masaccio. His scholarship is less sound and his connoisseurship more insecure, mainly because he was less familiar with the actual works, relying as he did on the drawings of a small army of copyists.⁴² On the other hand, Seroux does attempt to give an historical context to his monuments in a tableau historique, unlike Lanzi who only occasionally refers to the historical background. Seroux understood the importance of the mendicant orders in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries;⁴³ and saw the rapid progress of the arts in the fifteenth century as belonging to a general advance in human industry, expressed also in literature, commerce, science and agriculture.⁴⁴

Seroux d'Agincourt's Histoire was valuable perhaps principally for the engravings which, for all their smallness and crudity, gave people some idea of what early paintings looked like. The publication of reproductions was of crucial importance in the revival of the Primitives. Chief among these were Da Morrona's Pisa illustrata (1787-93) and Lastri's

42. e.g., Seroux puts Simone Martini in the School of Giotto, whereas Lanzi states that his more vivid colour sets him apart from Giotto's followers. Seroux says that the frescoes in S. Clemente at Rome are later works of Masaccio, while Lanzi, though accepting the attribution to Masaccio, says they are early works.

43. Histoire de l'art par les monuments depuis sa décadence au IV^e siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XII^e (Paris, 1810-1819), Vol. I, p. 30.

44. Ibid., p. 90.

Etruria pittrice (1791). Engravings after cycles of early frescoes began to appear also, for example, of Signorelli's frescoes at Orvieto and of Fra Angelico's frescoes in the Vatican, re-discovered in 1778 by the German archaeologist, Alois Hirt. Then there were Carlo Lasinio's popular engravings after the Campo Santo frescoes issued between 1806 and 1822. One of the earliest publications after an earlier painter was by an Englishman living in Florence, Thomas Patch.

For the beginnings of English interest in the Primitives we must go to Florence. Ignace Hugford, a Florentine-born painter, dealer and connoisseur,⁴⁵ was one of the first collectors of early Italians. It is not certain when he began collecting, but by 1767 he had at least two quattrocento paintings, and at least one trecento painting at the time of his death in 1778.⁴⁶

Thomas Patch was a caricaturist and a connoisseur.⁴⁷ In 1769 he conceived the ambitious plan of publishing

45. For Hugford, see John Fleming, "The Hugfords of Florence", The Connoisseur, vol. cxxxvi (October and November, 1955), pp. 106-110, pp. 197-206.

46. His collection included Starnina's Thebaid, Fra Angelico's Tobias, Botticelli's St Augustine (bought as a Filippo Lippi), and Memling's Virgin and Child with Two Angels (bought as a van Eyck) -- all now in the Uffizi. Another picture from his collection in the Uffizi is a portrait generally considered to be a Self-Portrait by Filippino Lippi, and which Hugford supposedly bought as a Masaccio. However it has been recently argued that the painting is a forgery by Hugford himself. See Bruce Cole and Ulrich Middeldorf, "Masaccio, Lippi, or Hugford?", Burlington Magazine, vol. cxiii (September, 1971), pp. 500-507.

47. For Thomas Patch, see especially, P.J.B. Watson, "Thomas Patch (1725-1782). Notes on His Life, together with a Catalogue of His Known Works", The Walpole Society, vol. xxviii (1939-40), pp. 15-31.

Etruria pittrice (1791). Engravings after cycles of early frescoes began to appear also, for example, of Signorelli's frescoes at Orvieto and of Fra Angelico's frescoes in the Vatican, re-discovered in 1778 by the German archaeologist, Alois Hirt. Then there were Carlo Lasinio's popular engravings after the Campo Santo frescoes issued between 1806 and 1822. One of the earliest publications after an earlier painter was by an Englishman living in Florence, Thomas Patch.

For the beginnings of English interest in the Primitives we must go to Florence. Ignace Hugford, a Florentine-born painter, dealer and connoisseur,⁴⁵ was one of the first collectors of early Italians. It is not certain when he began collecting, but by 1767 he had at least two quattrocento paintings, and at least one trecento painting at the time of his death in 1778.⁴⁶

Thomas Patch was a caricaturist and a connoisseur.⁴⁷ In 1769 he conceived the ambitious plan of publishing

45. For Hugford, see John Fleming, "The Hugfords of Florence", The Connoisseur, vol. cxxxvi (October and November, 1955), pp. 106-110, pp. 197-206.

46. His collection included Starnina's Thebaid, Fra Angelico's Tobias, Botticelli's St Augustine (bought as a Filippo Lippi), and Memling's Virgin and Child with Two Angels (bought as a van Eyck) -- all now in the Uffizi. Another picture from his collection in the Uffizi is a portrait generally considered to be a Self-Portrait by Filippino Lippi, and which Hugford supposedly bought as a Masaccio. However it has been recently argued that the painting is a forgery by Hugford himself. See Bruce Cole and Ulrich Middeldorf, "Masaccio, Lippi, or Hugford?", Burlington Magazine, vol. cxlii (September, 1971), pp. 500-507.

47. For Thomas Patch, see especially, F.J.B. Watson, "Thomas Patch (1725-1782). Notes on His Life, together with a Catalogue of His Known Works", The Walpole Society, vol. xxviii (1939-40), pp. 15-21.

engravings after famous Tuscan painters, in which he was encouraged by the Florentine scholar Giovanni Bottari.

Only three volumes appeared. The first, in 1770, contained engravings from the frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, most of them of heads, attributed to Masaccio but actually almost all of them from the paintings of Filippino Lippi. (Fig. 1)

Horace Walpole was transported with them. "They are nature itself", he wrote to his friend Sir Horace Mann, the English Resident in Florence, and suggested that Patch do a similar set of engravings after Fra Bartolommeo, "another parent of Raphael, and whose ideas I thought, if possible, greater".⁴⁸

This Patch did, but Walpole was disappointed with the result.⁴⁹

The last volume published by Patch was after the frescoes

in the Manetti chapel, also in the church of the Carmine, which were then ascribed to Giotto.⁵⁰ (Fig. 2) He clearly

did not think much of them, for he had praised the Brancacci chapel frescoes for being so different from "the disagreeable stiffness in the horrible spectres of the School of Giotto".⁵¹

The value of the Manetti chapel frescoes was strictly historical. They might give some pleasure to those willing "to reflect on the different stages of painting".⁵²

48. Letter, 20 January, 1771. Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Thomas Mann, ed. W.S. Lewis, Warren Huntington Smith and George L. Lam (New Haven, 1967), vol.vii, p.267 (vol.xxiii of The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, ed. W.S. Lewis).

49. Letter, 28 December, 1771, ibid., p.362.

50. This chapel was destroyed by fire in 1771. The frescoes were apparently not much damaged by the fire itself -- Patch sawed off some fragments -- and were presumably destroyed in the re-construction of the church.

51. The Life of Masaccio (Firenze, 1770), p.II.

52. Introduction, Life and Works of Giotto (Firenze, 1772).

engravings after famous Tuscan painters, in which he was encouraged by the Florentine scholar Giovanni Bottari. Only three volumes appeared. The first, in 1770, contained engravings from the frescoes in the Brancacci chapel, most of them of heads, attributed to Masaccio but actually almost all of them from the paintings of Filippino Lippi. (Fig. 1) Horace Walpole was transported with them. "They are nature itself", he wrote to his friend Sir Horace Mann, the English Resident in Florence, and suggested that Patch do a similar set of engravings after Fra Bartolommeo, "another parent of Raphael, and whose ideas I thought, if possible, greater".⁴⁸ This Patch did, but Walpole was disappointed with the result.⁴⁹ The last volume published by Patch was after the frescoes in the Manetti chapel, also in the church of the Carmine, which were then ascribed to Giotto.⁵⁰ (Fig. 2) He clearly did not think much of them, for he had praised the Brancacci chapel frescoes for being so different from "the disagreeable stiffness in the horrible spectres of the School of Giotto".⁵¹ The value of the Manetti chapel frescoes was strictly historical. They might give some pleasure to those willing "to reflect on the different stages of painting".⁵²

48. Letter, 20 January, 1771. Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Sir Thomas Mann, ed. W.S. Lewis, Warren Huntington Smith and George L. Lam (New Haven, 1967), vol. vii, p. 267 (vol. xxiii of The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, ed. W.S. Lewis).

49. Letter, 28 December, 1771, ibid., p. 362.

50. This chapel was destroyed by fire in 1771. The frescoes were apparently not much damaged by the fire itself -- Patch sawed off some fragments -- and were presumably destroyed in the re-construction of the church.

51. The Life of Masaccio (Firenze, 1770), p. II.

52. Introduction, Life and Works of Giotto (Firenze, 1772).

Walpole had been very keen for Sir Joshua Reynolds to see the Brancacci chapel engravings.⁵³ But Reynolds had seen the originals when in Italy between 1749 and 1752. He wrote appreciative notes on them, and had done studies from Mantegna's frescoes in the Eremitani at Padua.⁵⁴ He met Hugford in Florence⁵⁵ and almost certainly knew Patch.⁵⁶ Although in one of his discourses Reynolds drew a line between the curious and admirable in painting through the mid-career of Raphael,⁵⁷ in another he praised Masaccio.⁵⁸

Another centre of English interest was Venice, the most fashionable of the Italian cities among foreigners, after Rome. Peter Edwards from 1778 owned a small collection of pictures illustrating the revival of painting, and when the Venetian Accademia was established in 1810 used his influence to see that some earlier masters were included.⁵⁹ The most important of the English collectors at Venice was John Strange, British Resident there from 1773.⁶⁰ He

53. Letter, 20 January, 1771. Correspondence, op.cit., p.267.

54. Tancred Borenius, "The Rediscovery of the Primitives", op.cit., pp.259-260.

55. Ibid., p.260.

56. Watson, op.cit., p.16.

57. Discourses, op.cit., p.20.

58. Ibid., pp.191-2. Reynolds owned two earlier works, Bellini's Agony in the Garden, now in the National Gallery, which was then attributed to Mantegna, and a painting attributed to Perugino. See the catalogue of his deacease sale (Christie's, 14 March, 1795).

59. Niels von Holst, Creators, Collectors and Connoisseurs (London, 1967), p.370, n.186.

60. For Strange, see especially Michael Compton, "William Roscoe and Early Collectors of Italian Primitives", The Liverpool Bulletin (Walker Art Gallery Number), vol.12 (1960-1), pp.40-42.

was well known among students of early art in Italy for his collection.⁶¹ This included "Greek" pictures, a panel dated 1412, and paintings attributed to Giotto, Mantegna, Antonello da Messina, Gentile Bellini, Crivelli, Squarcione, and Cima da Conegliano.

A close friend of Strange's was the eccentric Frederick Augustus Hervey, Bishop of Derry and Earl of Bristol, who was a frequent visitor to Italy. He owned works of "Cimabue, Giotto, Guido da Sienna, Marco da Sienna, and all that old pedantry of painting which served to show the progress of the art at its resurrection".⁶²

Among the collectors of early Italian pictures it is interesting to find people whose first interest was classical art, illustrating the link between the taste for Primitives and Neo-classicism. Charles Towneley and Henry Blundell both formed important collections of classical sculpture. The former apparently owned a fresco fragment from the Manetti chapel,⁶³ while the latter bought a painting attributed to Pintoricchio in Florence in 1789.⁶⁴ Sir William Hamilton, one of the first Englishmen to collect Greek vases, imported from Naples in 1801 a gold ground Giottesque picture.⁶⁵

We find also an interest in early Italians among British

61. Previtali, *op.cit.*, p.226.

62. Letter, 6 January, 1798. Quo. Brian Fothergill, *The Mitred Earl. An Eighteenth-Century Eccentric* (London, 1974), p.220.

63. See below p.35.

64. *An Account of the statues, busts, bass-relieves, cinerary-urns, and other ancient marbles, and paintings, at once. Collected by H.E. (Liverpool, 1805)*, p.218.

65. Gerald Reitlinger, *The Economics of Taste. The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices. 1700-1860* (London, 1961), p.111.

Neo-classical artists who had been in Italy. James Barry, who had lived there from 1766 to 1771, "reverenced" the Rucellai Madonna, then attributed to Cimabue, and praised Masaccio for the amazing variety of his heads and the natural attitudes of many of his figures, some of which he thought equal to Raphael.⁶⁶ However he was less sympathetic in his lectures as Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy in 1784.

Barry's successor as Professor of Painting was the Swiss-born Henry Fuseli, who spent eight years in Rome, from 1770 to 1778. His unfinished History of Art was written in 1808, but not published until after his death, in 1831. Fuseli also edited the 1805 edition of Pilkington's popular The gentleman's and connoisseur's dictionary of painters, first published in 1770.

Nearly all of Fuseli's information about the Primitives, and most of his critical comments, are taken straight from Lanzi. In his History he adopts Lanzi's regional classification of Italian paintings. Some of the entries in the Dictionary are unacknowledged translations from Lanzi. This meant however that readers were introduced to a more sympathetic approach to art before Raphael. We find Lanzi's appreciative assessment of Ghirlandaio, whose claim to fame in earlier editions had been as the master of Michelangelo, and his positive evaluation of Pollaiuolo (whose Martyrdom of St Sebastian, now in the National Gallery, he thought one of the greatest works of the fifteenth century). For Francis

66. The Works of James Barry, 2 vols (London, 1809), vol. i, pp. 180-1.

(previously interesting only because of Vasari's story of his death from melancholy over the superiority of Raphael), Signorelli, and Gozzoli (omitted in earlier editions) we have Lanzi's favourable comments. And the same goes for fourteenth-century painters. Not all of Fuseli's opinions were taken from Lanzi, however, and his succinct and perceptive characterization of Masaccio in his second lecture at the Royal Academy seems to be based on his own experience:

Masaccio first conceived that parts are to constitute a whole; that composition ought to have a centre; expressions, truth; and execution, unity.⁶⁷

In some important respects Fuseli differs from Lanzi. He is no friend of the Bolognese. And he believed that after Masaccio art gradually shrank back "to the exility and meagreness of the preceding age".⁶⁸ He condemns the ornamental glitter, the tinsel decoration, the tasteless diligence, and finds numerous remnants of "Gothic alloy". He is particularly critical of the frescoes on the walls of the Sistine chapel, which Lanzi had praised highly. Better artists, like Ghirlandaio and Signorelli were corrupted here by Botticelli's "barbarous taste and dry minuteness", and the whole was a "monument of puerile ostentation".⁶⁹

67. John Knowles, The Life and Writings of Henry Fuseli, 3 vols (London, 1851), vol.ii, p.78. However he did not share Vasari's and Lanzi's enthusiasm for the shivering man in St Peter Baptizing. "Had the apostle immersed the race of a northern clime, a man frost-bitten, ...or impatient of cold, might have been admitted without impropriety, but under an Asiatic sun he is worse than superfluous". (A History of Art in the Schools of Italy, ibid., vol.iii, p.177).

68. Ibid., p.179.

69. Ibid., p.183.

This criticism of late quattrocento painting arose from Fuseli's prejudice in favour of Antique simplicity and grace. What is important, however, is his interest in the Primitives. It is also worth noting that his interpretation of the development of Italian painting after Masaccio is nearer the truth than the commonly accepted theory of continuous progress. Masaccio's innovations were not, on the whole, followed up by his immediate successors.

John Flaxman's interest went deeper, as a book of drawings he made when he was in Italy between 1787 and 1794 shows.⁷⁰ It includes copies after the Roman mosaics of Torriti and Cavallini, the sculptures on the facade of the cathedral at Orvieto, and the frescoes of the Triumph of Death and the Last Judgement in the Campo Santo. He admired Masaccio for his "simple natural characters and expression".⁷¹ The Rucellai Madonna, Giotto, Taddeo Gaddi, Orcagna, Fra Angelico and Perugino are all praised for their "simplicity". Flaxman's friend, George Romney, who was in Italy a little earlier commented on the "simplicity and purity" of Cimabue and the "strength of character and expression" in Masaccio.⁷²

The most ardent of the English students of the Primitives in Italy was William Young Ottley who came to Rome to study painting in the 1790s.⁷³ He worked as a

70. Now in the print room of the Victoria & Albert Museum. Previtali, op.cit., p.178.

71. Quo. David Irwin, English Neoclassical Art. Studies in Inspiration and Taste (London, 1967), p.109.

72. Quo. ibid., p.89.

73. For Ottley, see especially J.A. Gere, "William Young Ottley as a Collector of Drawings", British Museum Quarterly, vol.xviii (1963), pp.44-53.

copyist for Seroux d'Agincourt. Ottley and his friend, the Dutch painter Humbert de Superville, nicknamed "Giottino" because of his passion for mediaeval art, went off together to Orvieto, Perugia, Siena, Florence, Pisa and Assisi, copying the old works they found there. It was during his years in Italy that Ottley formed his remarkable collection of paintings, drawings and manuscripts. Among the pictures he brought with him to England in 1799 were Botticelli's Mystic Nativity and Ercole de' Roberti's The Last Supper, bought as a Masaccio, -- both pictures now in the National Gallery.

Rome, the quarry of the archaeologist, the mecca of the artist, and the goal of the Grand Tourist, was the most important centre for the dissemination of interest in early Italian art in the late eighteenth century. And the focal point seems to have been Seroux d'Agincourt, with his vast knowledge and his collection of mediaeval art.⁷⁴ Goethe was taken to visit him by Angelica Kauffmann. David and Canova both knew him, and made copies of and admired works of the Primitives. David, for example, thought the frescoes at Assisi a "chef-d'oeuvre de noblesse et de naïveté".⁷⁵ Another French painter, friend and pupil of David, Jean-Baptiste Wicar, owned some quattrocento paintings. This interest is found also among German painters in Rome, such as Friedrich Bury and Wilhelm Tischbein. And, as we shall see, this continued into the nineteenth century. But for

74. See Previtali, op.cit., pp.174-5.

75. Quo. Chastel, op.cit., p.XII.

English artists and visitors Italy became dangerous after the French invasion of 1796, and the occupation of Rome in 1798 sent them scuttling back home.

In England itself in the late eighteenth century there was far less interest in the early paintings of faraway Italy than in the native remains of mediaeval art and in early Northern paintings.⁷⁶ The growing interest in Gothic architecture extended, to a limited degree, to Gothic works of art. This interest was chiefly antiquarian. Horace Walpole valued the assorted bric-a-brac and treasures in his villa at Strawberry Hill for their association with the Middle Ages. But with Flaxman and Blake, for example, one finds a real passion for Gothic art. Flaxman saw the mediaeval sculptures he so admired through classical eyes, finding there the simplicity of the Antique. But he was one of the first in England to praise mediaeval art for its religious purpose and universal appeal.⁷⁷ Blake was attracted to the precise outline, the pure colours, and -- again -- the simplicity of an art which seemed opposed to all the artificial styles of his own day. He had never been to Italy. However, he invented a technique which he called fresco, but which was really like tempera.⁷⁸

We find evidence of interest in the remains of early English painting. Thomas Pownall, for example, made a study of the ceiling of Peterborough Cathedral, and saw "strokes

76. According to Gerald Reitlinger, Northern Primitives fetched higher prices than the Italians in the late eighteenth century. Picture Prices, op.cit., p.25.

77. Irwin, op.cit., p.93.

78. Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake (London, 1959), p.65.

English artists and visitors Italy became dangerous after the French invasion of 1796, and the occupation of Rome in 1798 sent them scuttling back home.

In England itself in the late eighteenth century there was far less interest in the early paintings of faraway Italy than in the native remains of mediaeval art and in early Northern paintings.⁷⁶ The growing interest in Gothic architecture extended, to a limited degree, to Gothic works of art. This interest was chiefly antiquarian. Horace Walpole valued the assorted bric-a-brac and treasures in his villa at Strawberry Hill for their association with the Middle Ages. But with Flaxman and Blake, for example, one finds a real passion for Gothic art. Flaxman saw the mediaeval sculptures he so admired through classical eyes, finding there the simplicity of the Antique. But he was one of the first in England to praise mediaeval art for its religious purpose and universal appeal.⁷⁷ Blake was attracted to the precise outline, the pure colours, and -- again -- the simplicity of an art which seemed opposed to all the artificial styles of his own day. He had never been to Italy. However, he invented a technique which he called fresco, but which was really like tempera.⁷⁸

We find evidence of interest in the remains of early English painting. Thomas Pownall, for example, made a study of the ceiling of Peterborough Cathedral, and saw "strokes

76. According to Gerald Reitlinger, Northern Primitives fetched higher prices than the Italians in the late eighteenth century. Picture Prices, op.cit., p.25.

77. Irwin, op.cit., p.93.

78. Anthony Blunt, The Art of William Blake (London, 1959), p.65.

of genius" in the drawing.⁷⁹ The difficulty was that so little had survived. Walpole could muster up only a handful of examples before the reign of Henry VIII in his Anecdotes of Painting in England (1762-71).⁸⁰ In the absence of native paintings the next best thing were Northern pictures, prized for their illustration of the life of the times, their close observation of nature, their meticulous finish, and the details of Gothic architecture and ornament.⁸¹ Reynolds on a tour of Northern Europe in 1781 had admired the truth of the portraiture and the fertility of invention of the early pictures he saw.⁸² Mabuse's Adoration of the Kings, now in the National Gallery, created a small sensation when it was exhibited in London in 1787.⁸³

It was believed that Mabuse, and possibly van Eyck, had worked in England, as well as Holbein. Many early Flemish and German portraits acquired famous English names, and marriage scenes became representations of royal nuptials. Among some collectors there developed a "portrait frenzy",

79. Archaeologia, vol. ix (1789), pp. 141-56.

80. Similarly, the "paintings" illustrated in John Carter's Specimens of ancient Sculpture and Painting, now remaining in this kingdom, etc. (London, 1780-94), are nearly all stained glass windows.

81. For an example of the last see the catalogue raisonné of the collection of "A Man of Fashion" (1806?). The comment on no. 6, a Virgin and Child under a Gothic Canopy, attributed to Mabuse, is: "Had we no remains of ornamental imagery of Gothic architecture, this specimen would be sufficient to give us an idea of its purest and most classical perfection".

82. See his A Journey to Flanders and Holland, in the year 1780, ed. by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 2nd ed., etc. (London, 1797), vol. II, pp. 3-4, 5.

83. Reitlinger, Picture Prices, op. cit., p. 25.

with Horace Walpole the self-styled "head of the sect".⁸⁴ He was especially proud of his "many historical pictures of our ancient and royal family".⁸⁵ Others affected by the frenzy were his friend Thomas Barrett, of Lee Priory, the miniaturist Richard Cosway, Dr Richard Farmer, librarian of Cambridge, and his successor, Thomas Kerrich.⁸⁶

The outbreak of the Napoleonic wars, though slowing down the growth of British interest in the Italian Primitives, did not entirely halt it. London took from Paris the leadership of the art market, and the country was flooded with pictures as a result of the disruptive effects of the wars. According to one authority the country trekked its possessions in works of art during the Napoleonic period.⁸⁷ And though Italian Primitives were only a fraction of the total, nonetheless there were more of their paintings in England than there had ever been before.⁸⁸ Samuel Rogers and William Beckford began buying early Italian paintings at this time. Lord Northwick, one of the great picture

-
84. See G.R. Owst, "Iconomania in Eighteenth-Century Cambridge. Notes on a newly-acquired miniature of Dr Farmer and his interest in historical portraiture", Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society, vol.xiii (January-December, 1948), pp.67-91.
85. A description of the villa of Mr H.W. ... at Strawberry-hill etc. (Strawberry hill, 1764), p.ii.
86. For Farmer and Kerrich, see G.R. Owst, op.cit. For Thomas Barrett, see List of Pictures at the Seat of T.B. Brydges Barrett, Esq., at Lee Priory in the County of Kent (Lee Priory, 1817). For Richard Cosway, see Catalogue of the Pictures of Richard Cosway R.A., Principal Painter to H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (1791).
87. Niels von Holst, op.cit., p.253.
88. Michael Compton examined about a thousand sale catalogues between 1795 and 1815, and found about two hundred pictures with attributions to early Italians (op.cit., p.35).

buyers of the nineteenth century, who had lived in Rome in the 1790s, acquired at least one Primitive. Between 1803 and 1810 Henry Blundell tripled his collection of early pictures, most of them Flemish and German works, but there was also a trecento and a quattrocento painting.⁸⁹ It was even possible to form a collection entirely from English sources, as William Roscoe, the Liverpool banker and chronicler of the Medici, did.

Many of the early pictures for sale had been brought into the country by dealers. Then there was the dispersal of some of the late eighteenth-century collections which included Primitives. John Strange's pictures were sold in the last years of the century. In the sale of Matthew Smith, Governor of the Tower of London, on the 12th May, 1804, were two fifteenth-century predella panels, one of which was acquired for William Roscoe, who also bought Simone Martini's The Finding of Christ in the Temple,⁹⁰ and Botticelli's Portrait of a Young Man, sold to Lord Northwick as a Masaccio self-portrait.⁹¹ There were six earlier Italian pictures in the decease sale of the Hon. Charles Greville, on the 31st March, 1810. They consisted of a fresco fragment of Spinello Aretino, attributed to Masaccio,⁹² and paintings ascribed to Cimabue, Giotto, Ghirlandaio and Perugino. There were also six Primitives in Ottley's sale on the 25th May, 1811. The "Giotto" fresco

89. Ibid., p.38.

90. Roscoe's panel is now in the Walker Art Gallery (2856). The other panel, The Miracle of the Founding of S. Maria Maggiore, is at Folesden Lacey. The Simone Martini is also in the Walker Art Gallery (2787).

91. Now in the National Gallery (626).

92. This is his Two Halved Mourners, in the National Gallery (276).

fragment from the Manetti chapel, which he probably had from Charles Towneley, went to Roscoe.⁹³ Listed in the catalogue of an anonymous sale on the 1st and 2nd May of the following year are some fifteen earlier paintings.⁹⁴

That the taste for the Italian Primitives was still a very limited one is illustrated by the fact that the dealer, William Buchanan, was obliged to ship back to Italy even some reputed early Raphaels.⁹⁵ The prices paid for their paintings were ridiculously low. Bellini's Agony in the Garden was sold for £5 at the Reynolds sale in 1795, the Spinello fragment in the Greville sale went for 10 guineas, while Botticelli's Mystic Nativity was bought in at the Ottley sale for £42. By way of contrast, £12,600 was paid for the Altieri Claudes in 1808, £3,750 for Sebastiano del Piombo's Raising of Lazarus, and £3,150 for Luini's Christ among the Doctors, then thought to be by Leonardo. The point is, however, that people bought early pictures because they were curiosities rather than works of art, and they paid accordingly.

Certainly this was the attitude of William Roscoe, friend of Fuseli and correspondent of Horace Walpole.⁹⁶ In his chapter on the arts in his best-selling Life of Lorenzo de' Medici, called the Magnificent (1795), the interest of the earlier artists is purely historical.

93. Now in the Walker Art Gallery (2752).

94. This and the Greville and Ottley sales are discussed in George Redford, Art Sales. A history of sales of pictures and other works of art, 2 vols (London, 1888).

95. William Buchanan, Memoirs of Painting, etc., 2 vols (London, 1824), vol.ii, p.111.

96. For William Roscoe, see especially Michael Compton's article, op.cit.

Painters are judged purely by their contribution to the progress of art. Roscoe never went to Italy and his knowledge of Italian painting was based on Patch's volumes and Lastri's L'Etruria pittrice. Around the beginning of the nineteenth century he began forming a collection of pictures to illustrate the rise of the arts. He may have got the idea from Seroux d'Agincourt, as he had heard about his work. In the catalogue of his collection, compiled in 1816, Roscoe emphasized the historical value of his pictures, which were "not wholly to be judged of by their positive merits, but by reference to the age in which they were produced".⁹⁷ The catalogue was arranged chronologically, beginning with four pictures of the "Greek" school, then proceeding from Cimabue, Giotto, and Simone Martini to the masters of the fifteenth century -- Masaccio, Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi, Andrea del Castagno, Pollaiuolo, Antonello da Messina, Perugino, Baldovinetti and Ghirlandaio. Nearly all of his attributions were incorrect,⁹⁸ which is not surprising when we remember Roscoe's own unfamiliarity with Italian art and that connoisseurship with regard to the Primitives was still in its infancy and very much dependent on Vasari. One natural error was to give as authors of paintings well-known names. Thus Ercole de'Roberti's Pietà was given to Pollaiuolo.⁹⁹ Other errors arose from his failure to distinguish between Italian painters and later Flemish

97. Advertisement, Catalogue of the Genuine and Entire Collection of Drawings and Pictures, the Property of William Roscoe, Esq. (Liverpool, 1816).

98. Of the 45 earlier paintings of Roscoe traced by Michael Compton, only four were correctly attributed, and three of these were signed (op.cit., p.47).

99. This picture is now in the Walker Art Gallery (2775).

imitators, and his tendency to place archaizing fifteenth-century paintings in the fourteenth and even thirteenth centuries. Notwithstanding his ignorance and prejudice Roscoe succeeded in acquiring at least two first-rate works -- the Simone Martini and the Ercole de'Roberti. It had been his dream to make his collection serve "some object of public utility", but the collapse of his fortunes forestalled the fruition of his schemes, and his collection was sold in 1816. But some thirty-five of his pictures were salvaged and deposited with the Liverpool Royal Institution, and are now in the Walker Art Gallery at Liverpool. And it is interesting that about two-thirds of these were thought to be earlier than 1500.

Roscoe was not alone in his idea of a collection illustrating the progress of painting. It had been one of Frederick Hervey's unfulfilled plans,¹⁰⁰ while Greville's Primitives were part of a collection designed "to illustrate the progress of Painting and its Perfection by the Masters of the great Italian and other Schools".¹⁰¹

100. Hervey had intended his old paintings to form a gallery exhibiting "an historical progress of Painting both in Germany and Italy" (letter, 16 July, 1796, quo. Fothergill, *op.cit.*, p.176). The fate of his Primitives is not known. They were not with the bulk of his collection confiscated in Rome by the French, but in Naples. Michael Compton argues that they were disposed of in England before his death in 1803 (*op.cit.*, pp.32-3). However, Brian Fothergill believes that they never reached England and were probably the case of paintings ruined in the hold of a ship (*op.cit.*, p.234).

101. See the introduction to the catalogue of the Greville sale, (Christie's, 31 March, 1810).

But there was not as yet a national collection of pictures -- the National Gallery was not founded until 1824 -- let alone a national collection designed to be historically comprehensive. By contrast, most of the continental public galleries were founded in the Napoleonic era, like the Prado, the Brera, the Rijksmuseum, and the Gallery at Munich. All of them were organized didactically rather than decoratively.¹⁰²

The queen of the galleries was the Louvre, swollen with booty gained through confiscations and the terms of treaties, and re-named the Musée Napoléon in 1803.¹⁰³ From the time of its foundation as a public museum earlier Italian, Flemish and German paintings were added to the collection, but incidentally rather than the result of deliberate policy. It was with the appointment of Baron Vivant-Denon as Director that the principle of a comprehensive collection was established. Vivant-Denon went to Tuscany in 1811-12 and came back with pictures such as Cimabue's Madonna, Giotto's St Francis, Fra Angelico's Coronation of the Virgin, and Ghirlandaio's Visitation. A temporary exhibition of the Italian Primitives and some early Northern pictures was arranged in the Salon Carré in 1814. Vivant-Denon's catalogue was as remarkable as the

102. Even earlier we find a "Gabinetto dei antichi quadri" was opened in the Uffizi in 1770, while the Imperial Gallery at Vienna, on its re-opening in 1783, was apparently arranged as a visual history of art.

103. For the Musée Napoléon, see especially Cecil Gould, Trophy of Conquest. The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre (London, 1967). See also, Paul Wescher, "Vivant Denon and the Musée Napoléon", Apollo, vol. lxxx (September, 1964), pp. 178-80.

exhibition. It contained short biographies of the artists, and of the works also. Realizing that "the austerity of the primitives will have but slight appeal",¹⁰⁴ he recommends the historical approach. By this time however the Allies were in Paris and the Musée Napoléon survived only another year. But the early pictures from Tuscany stayed in the Louvre, for the Tuscan officials were more interested in the restoration of some pietre dure tables taken in 1799.

The fabulous collection in the Musée Napoléon was a magnet for art-lovers. A few English visitors managed to see it during the brief peace of 1802, among them Samuel Rogers, Walter Savage Landor, Turner, and Fuseli. Fuseli was particularly impressed with Mantegna's Madonna della Vittoria, which he described with great feeling in Pilkington's Dictionary.

After the Restoration of 1814 the English flocked to Paris. There were Sir Walter Scott, Samuel Rogers and William Beckford. Among the artists were Sir Thomas Lawrence, Francis Chantrey, Thomas Stothard, Benjamin Haydon, David Wilkie, and Charles Eastlake. They were there to see the chefs-d'oeuvre, such as the Apollo Belvedere and Raphael's Transfiguration, but it was inevitable that they should also see the room with the Primitives. Beckford, who was taken around by Vivant-Denon himself, was not impressed. He thought most of them "miseries, re-gilded and re-painted, without value and without apparent

104. Quot. Gould, op.cit., p.113.

authenticity".¹⁰⁵ But Thomas Stothard confessed himself

well-instructed by viewing some Gothic pictures of no name, although their characteristic was excessive hardness, with the most violent opposition of splendid colours; a thing, to my thinking, they had in common with Raphael's 'Transfiguration'.¹⁰⁶

And Benjamin Haydon when he went to see the fresco in the Painted Chamber at Westminster Palace in 1819 was reminded of the Cimabue he had seen in the Louvre.¹⁰⁷ And many years afterwards he was to praise some "exquisite heads of angels, full of beauty and expression", attributed to Guido da Siena, which he had also seen there.¹⁰⁸

Another museological innovation of the Napoleonic era was Alexandre Lenoir's Musée des Monuments Français.¹⁰⁹ Lenoir was a painter who, distressed at the effects of the Revolution on the national heritage, salvaged treasures from suppressed abbeys and churches. Over the years the emphasis of his collection fell on the Middle Ages, and in the former monastery of the Petits Augustins which

105. Letter, 31 October, 1814, Life at Fonthill, 1807-1822. With Interludes in Paris and London. from the Correspondence of William Beckford, trans. and ed. Boyd Alexander (London, 1957), p.161. Further evidence of the re-painting of these pictures comes from Benjamin Haydon. He describes how he "saw a Frenchman solidly repainting a large picture of Cimabue in the private rooms of the Louvre, where he was admitted by Denon, asked the Frenchman who it was by: 'Monsieur,' said he, 'je ne suis pas peintre, je suis restaurateur.'" B.R. Haydon and William Hazlitt, Painting and the Fine Arts, etc. (Edinburgh, 1838), p.135 n.1.

106. Quo. Anna Eliza Bray, Life of Thomas Stothard (London, 1851), p.72.

107. Diary entry, 29 September, 1819. Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, ed. Willard B. Pope, 5 vols (Harvard, 1960-2), vol.ii, p.235.

108. B.R. Haydon and William Hazlitt, op.cit., p.132.

109. For the Musée des Monuments Français, see Niels von Holst, op.cit., pp.336-40, and Reiflinger, Objets d'Art, op.cit., pp.90-92.

housed his museum could be seen mediaeval sculptures, architectural fragments and stain glass. The museum did not survive the Restoration, but it was the forerunner of the Cluny Museum. The only comparable collection in England was Walpole's. Despite the growth of interest in the nation's antiquities there was no thought of a public museum. Pugin in the 1840s was probably the first to recommend this. But then France had seen the dramatic destruction of its national monuments and treasures, whereas what had been left in England after the Reformation crumbled quietly away.

The continued French interest in the Primitives in the early nineteenth century is seen in the acquisition of their works by private collectors. Vivant-Denon's own collection included a number of Primitives, as did those of other French officials -- François Cacault, minister to the Vatican, Napoleon's uncle, Cardinal Fesch, and Artaud de Montor. By 1808 Artaud de Montor had over hundred Primitives, which is considerably more than one finds in English collections. The painter Ingres also owned a few Primitives, and was very much moved by the earlier painters he saw when he went to Italy in 1806. The profound regard he had for their art remained with him all his life. Another sign of French interest were the histories of mediaeval art by disciples of Seroux d'Agincourt: Artaud de Montor's Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie dans les quatre siècles que ont précédé celui de Raphaël (1808), T.B. Eméric-David's Histoire de la peinture au Moyen Age (1813) and Paillot de Montabert's Dissertation (1812) and Traité complet de la peinture (1829). With Paillot de Montabert we find the most

dogmatic expression of the Neo-classical taste for mediaeval art. He argued that mediaeval artists were the true conservers of Antique principles, which had been corrupted and abandoned (not restored) in the sixteenth century. He distinguished between the elevated thoughts and the rough execution of the old artists and maintained that the sixteenth century lost in dignity, naivete and beauty what it had gained in imitative and executive skill. The attack on the sixteenth century, the distinction between thought and execution -- these are ideas which became commonplace in the nineteenth century. But they appear in the context of Romantic, not Neo-classical criticism, which did not survive long into the century.

It so happened that at the time when Fuseli was regretting the retarding effects on art of Christianity which "made nudity the exclusive property of emaciated hermits or decrepit age",¹¹⁰ and dismissing Fra Angelico as "a name dearer to sanctity than to art",¹¹¹ there was developing in Germany a love for mediaeval art because it was Christian and for Fra Angelico as one of its supreme exponents. Under the influence of the ideas of Herder, Novalis and the French writer Chateaubriand, the Middle Ages came to be extolled as the Age of Faith, and mediaeval religion (i.e. Catholicism) to be adored for its beauty, fervour and simplicity. The society of the Middle Ages was idealized for its order and organic unity, the members bound together in mutual love and responsibility. There was a good deal of nationalist

110. Knowles, op.cit., vol.ii, p.76.

111. Ibid., vol.iii, p.179.

sentiment in this nostalgia. Modern Germany was weak and divided, but in the Middle Ages the nation was united and strong, and the Holy Roman Empire was a living reality.

The Romantic view of mediaeval art was first expressed by Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder in Herzensergiessungen eines kunstliebenden Klosterbruders (Effusions of an Art-loving Monk) which was published in 1797, a year before his death at the age of twenty-five. Wackenroder's ideals were the Raphael of the Madonnas and Durer. He insisted that art must be the hand-maid of religion and that what mattered were the feelings expressed and aroused by the artist, not his technical skill. With simplicity and sincerity the mediaeval artist had spoken to all. Modern rationalism had stifled individuality and destroyed religion. Art had become the slave of fashion and luxury.

But the moderns seem not to desire in fact that one should take part seriously in what they represent; they work for rich lords, who do not wish to be moved and spiritually ennobled by art, but at the most astonished and tickled.¹¹²

Wackenroder's ideas were taken up by Friedrich Schlegel, who knew far more about art and whose writing reached a larger audience. Schlegel went to Paris in 1802 and the articles he wrote from there for his magazine Europa show how his classical taste gave way to a love for the Christian art of the Middle Ages. Not long after his arrival in Paris Schlegel was converted to Catholicism. The qualities he admired in the earlier schools were the simplicity of

¹¹². Quot. Lionello Venturi, History of Art Criticism, trans. Charles Marriott (N.Y., 1954), p.174.

composition, the pure masses of colour unspoiled by gloomy chiaroscuro effects, the simple unsophisticated drapery, and the expressiveness and individuality of the faces. Above all he praised the all-pervading "childlike tenderness and simplicity" which he considered the "original characteristic of the human race".¹¹³ At the same time Schlegel has prejudices against the earliest of the old masters. He advocates the emulation of their truth and beauty, but hastens to add that the artist ought not to seek

the perfect antique by adopting the Egyptian style -- the almost image-like position of the feet, the scanty draperies, and long narrow half-shut eyes, any more than by copying bad designs and actual errors or defects.¹¹⁴

The beauty of early Christian art was not in its externals, but in its tranquil, pious spirit.

Schlegel became more critical of the painting of the sixteenth century. He contrasted the "devout, pious deeply significant" style of the old school with the "florid pomp" of the new.¹¹⁵ With the attainment of perfection of execution the original spiritual inspiration of art was clouded and then lost, painters being ambitious to display their consummate skill and charm the senses. The Age of Raphael formed the dividing line between early Christian art and the modern period, seduced by enthusiasm for pagan Antiquity. Schlegel

113. The Aesthetic and Miscellaneous Works of Frederick von Schlegel, trans. E.J. Millington (London, 1849), p.6. This passage is quoted in Keith Andrews, The Nazarenes. A Brotherhood of German Painters in Rome (Oxford, 1904), pp.17-18. I am indebted to this work and to C. von Klenze, op.cit., for my account of the German interest in mediaeval art.

114. F. von Schlegel, op.cit., p.148.

115. Ibid., p.49.

was one of the first to criticize Raphael's Transfiguration, which was later to become a sign of his "fall". He felt that the treatment of the subject was superficial and lightly felt.¹¹⁶ At the heart of Schlegel's art criticism was his belief that art, and indeed life and philosophy, were subdivided into "the letter and the spirit -- words and ideas".¹¹⁷ Ideas were dominant in old art, words in modern.

This idealization of the Middle Ages in German Romantic thought was associated with a belief in the limitations of Antique civilization, which, in the words of A.W. Schlegel, never went beyond "a refined and ennobled sensuality".¹¹⁸ The Mediaeval revival in Germany was far more anti-classical than in other countries. In England, as we have seen, classical and mediaeval interests co-existed without any conflict. The limitations of classical art were also pointed out. Sculpture, which was concerned only with material beauty, was dominant in Antiquity; painting, whose province was spiritual expression was dominant in the Christian age. A.W. Schlegel, in his notes on the line engravings after Fra Angelico's Coronation of the Virgin in the Louvre, published in 1817, maintained that the art of the Ancients and that of the Moderns were entirely opposed in essence. The former developed bodily beauty before expression, while the old Christian painters, although representing the body very imperfectly, succeeded in painting the beauty of the

116. Ibid., p.45.

117. Ibid., p.68.

118. From a lecture given in 1808. A Course of Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature, by AUGUSTUS WILLIAM SCHLEGEL, trans. JOHN BLACK (London, 18-9), p.24.

soul.¹¹⁹

Friedrich Schlegel in his articles in Europa had drawn attention to the paintings of the early Germans and Flemish, which he interpreted nationalistically as the expression of the German spirit. His friends Sulpiz and Melchior Boisserée formed a collection of over two hundred northern Primitives, which they called a "Sanctum Corpus", and which are now in the Munich Gallery. Other collectors of northern Primitives were Ferdinand Wallraf, Lyversberg and Hüpsch.

One of the most remarkable collectors of Primitives in Germany was an English timber merchant resident in Berlin, Edward Solly.¹²⁰ From about 1810 he began spending a great part of his fortune on paintings, a considerable number of which were of the early German, Flemish and Italian schools. Among these were pictures of outstanding quality, the chef-d'oeuvre of the collection probably being the six side panels from the van Eyck altarpiece at Ghent. Solly succeeded in selling this collection to the Prussian government, and it became the nucleus of the Berlin Gallery, founded in 1821.

The Mediaeval revival in Germany and the interest in the Primitives inspired a movement to reform German painting. The artists involved became known as the Nazarenes.¹²¹ In 1809 a group of young students at the Vienna Academy, frustrated with the principles and practices of academic teaching, which,

119. Le Couronnement de la Sainte Vierge, etc. (Paris, 1817), pp.25-6.

120. For Edward Solly, see Frank Herrmann, "Who was Edward Solly?", Connoisseur, vol.clxiv (April, 1967), pp.229-34; vol.clxv (May and July, 1967), pp.12-18 and 153-61; vol.clxvi (September, 1967), pp.10-16.

121. For the Nazarenes, see Keith Andrews. op.cit.

they felt stifled all self-expression through its dogmatic principles and teaching methods, formed themselves into the Brotherhood of St Luke. The leaders were Friedrich Overbeck, a deeply religious youth who became a Catholic, and Franz Pforr, who died in 1812 two years after the Brotherhood's removal to Rome. Others joined the group, the most important of whom was Peter Cornelius. There were also Friedrich Schlegel's stepsons, Johann and Philipp Veit, Wilhelm Schadow, and Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

St Luke had been the patron saint of artists in the Middle Ages. The Brotherhood wished to emulate what they thought to be the selflessness of the mediaeval artist and his craftsmanship, in contrast with the superficial mechanics of the Academy. They hoped to create an art that was truly religious and national in spirit, and that would be as sincere and unaffected as it was in the Middle Ages. Fra Angelico, the painter-monk, was their ideal, but the artists who most influenced them were Durer and Raphael, the latter especially. Quattrocento artists were studied carefully, though not apparently those of an earlier period. Their pictures are filled with borrowings from the quattrocento, but stylistically they bear little resemblance to earlier art. Their subject matter may have been Christian and mediaeval, but their style is close to Neo-classicism. Where the earlier Italians were influential was in the successful revival of fresco painting by the Nazarenes.

The adulation of the Middle Ages and mediaeval art by the German Romantics and the Nazarenes was not unopposed.

Goethe, who had long renounced his youthful Gothic enthusiasm, fought these threats to classical principles, which he thought the only universal ones. His Swiss friend, Heinrich Meyer, censured, not the admiration for the earlier masters which he shared to a great extent, but the religious criticism of art.¹²² Nonetheless the ideals of Wackenroder and the Schlegels were to be important in German cultural life until the 1830s. They influenced two great historians of Italian art, Johann David Passavant, the biographer of Raphael, and Baron Freiherr von Rumohr, both of whom were intimately connected with the Nazarenes. Among foreign writers, Leopoldo Cicognara, though he considered his history of sculpture a continuation of Winckelmann, stressed the value of religious inspiration in art.

Pietro Selvatico's debt to the Germans was very extensive, as was that of two Frenchmen, Montalembert and Alexis-François Rio. The Nazarenes, their ideals, and their frescoes in the Casa Bartholdy and the Casino Massimo, were a significant force in Roman artistic life in the 1820s. Disciples flocked from Germany, and Nazarene influence spread to foreign painters.

But the influence of German Romanticism and its image of the Middle Ages was destined to be most powerful in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s. Ideas originally formed in reaction against classicism, rationalism and the principles of the French Revolution were to find a congenial home with Tractarians and critics of industrialism, materialism and

122. C. von Klenze, op.cit., pp.231-5.

Goethe, who had long renounced his youthful Gothic enthusiasm, fought these threats to classical principles, which he thought the only universal ones. His Swiss friend, Heinrich Meyer, censured, not the admiration for the earlier masters which he shared to a great extent, but the religious criticism of art.¹²² Nonetheless the ideals of Wackenroder and the Schlegels were to be important in German cultural life until the 1830s. They influenced two great historians of Italian art, Johann David Passavant, the biographer of Raphael, and Baron Freiherr von Rumohr, both of whom were intimately connected with the Nazarenes. Among foreign writers, Leopoldo Cicognara, though he considered his history of sculpture a continuation of Winckelmann, stressed the value of religious inspiration in art.

Pietro Selvatico's debt to the Germans was very extensive, as was that of two Frenchmen, Montalembert and Alexis-François Rio. The Nazarenes, their ideals, and their frescoes in the Casa Bartholdy and the Casino Massimo, were a significant force in Roman artistic life in the 1820s. Disciples flocked from Germany, and Nazarene influence spread to foreign painters.

But the influence of German Romanticism and its image of the Middle Ages was destined to be most powerful in Britain in the 1840s and 1850s. Ideas originally formed in reaction against classicism, rationalism and the principles of the French Revolution were to find a congenial home with Tractarians and critics of industrialism, materialism and

122. C. von Klenze, op.cit., pp.231-5.

utilitarianism. But there is no evidence that in early nineteenth-century England, isolated as the country was from the Continent, there was any awareness either of the Nazarenes or of the adulation of the Primitives as Christian painters par excellence. The appeal of the Primitives was almost purely historical, which is illustrated by the popularity of "Cimabues", "Giotto's", and "Masaccios" in collections. One other reason for Giotto's appeal was for his supposed friendship with Dante, for the late eighteenth century saw a growth of interest in Italian literature.¹²³ William Roscoe even had twin portraits of Dante and Beatrice by Giotto in his collection!¹²⁴ Last Judgements, especially that attributed to Orcagna in the Campo Santo, were interesting as they were thought to be illustrations of the Inferno. Simone Martini was collected because of his friendship with Petrarch.

Prejudices against the paintings of the Primitives were still overwhelming. "Gothic" in the old pejorative sense, signifying a dry, hard, awkward and minute style, was commonly applied even to paintings at the very end of the fifteenth century. Indeed the word was to be used in this way until well into the middle of the nineteenth century. But at the same time there had developed a certain sympathy for early art, for its modesty, simplicity and lack of affectation. In the years following the re-opening of the Continent this interest and sympathy will spread, but it was twenty years before it became more general.

123. See, C.P. Brand, Italy and the English Romantics (Cambridge, 1956).

124. Nos. 24 and 25, A Catalogue of ... William Roscoe, op.cit.

CHAPTER II

British Interest in the Primitives, 1815-1835

The fashion for the Primitives in Britain did not begin developing until the late 1830s. Before then, in the years following the re-opening of the Continent, interest in their paintings was still confined to a few individuals -- collectors, antiquaries and artists -- most of them known to each other, and it is found principally among those who had travelled and lived in Italy.

In the 1830s British art collections were inspected by two German visitors, the painter and historian Johann David Passavant who came to England in 1831 to do research for his biography of Raphael, and four years later, Dr Gustav Waagen, the first Director of the Berlin Gallery.

Passavant's Tour of a German Artist in England (1836) and Waagen's Works of Art and Artists in England (1838) reveal how little the Primitives counted in English collections. Waagen found that they were still generally despised or forgotten.¹

Collections mentioned by Passavant and Waagen which did include earlier works were those of Samuel Woodburn the art dealer;² William Beckford, the litterateur and social outcast, who had sold his Gothic fantasy, Fonthill Abbey,

1. Works of Art and Artists in England, 3 vols (London, 1838), vol.ii, p.127. On Waagen, see Frank Herrmann, "Collecting Classics. I: Dr Waagen's works on art and artists in England", Connoisseur, vol.clxix (March, 1966), pp.173-7.

2. J.D. Passavant, Tour of a German Artist in England. With notices of private collections and paintings in the state of art, 2 vols (London, 1836), vol.i, p.230.

in 1823 (which fell down two years later) and was living in Bath;³ Samuel Rogers, the ex-banker, as famous for his acerbic wit and breakfasts as for his poetry and exquisite taste;⁴ Karl Aders, a German merchant living in London;⁵ and William Young Ottley, who was Keeper of Prints and Drawings at the British Museum from 1833 until his death in 1836.⁶ There was also the Roscoe collection in the Liverpool Royal Institution.⁷ Unusually, additions to the collection included a number of Primitives, mostly presented by or purchased through the Liverpool dealer Thomas Winstanley who had been Roscoe's principal adviser.⁸

In each case interest in the Primitives had been manifest before 1815. Samuel Rogers had two pictures from the Greville collection.⁹ Some of Beckford's Primitives came from John Strange's collection.¹⁰ By 1814 he owned Giovanni Bellini's

-
3. Ibid., pp.314-18; Waagen, Works, op.cit., vol.iii, pp. 114 et seq.
 4. Ibid., vol.ii, pp.132 et seq.
 5. Ibid., vol.iii, pp.20 et seq.; Passavant, op.cit., vol.i, pp.201-19.
 6. Waagen, Works, op.cit., vol.ii, pp.121 et seq.
 7. Passavant, op.cit., vol.ii, pp.12-19; Waagen, Works, op.cit., vol.iii, pp.180 et seq.
 8. They include paintings now attributed to Bicci di Lorenzo or his studio (Walker Art Gallery, 2759, 2760, 2761), a late fourteenth-century Crucifixion, Adoration of the Magi, and Annunciation, then attributed to Cimabue (2857), a Virgin and Child, then Botticelli or Filippo Lippi, now Gianfrancesco da Rimini (2781), and a Signorelli studio piece (2810).
 9. The Spinello Aretino fragment in the National Gallery, and a "Cimabue" (Greville sale, Christie's, March 31, 1810), lot 74. See catalogue of Rogers deacease sale (Christie's, 28 April, 1856 and the eighteen following days), 5th day, lot 597 and 6th day, lot 721.
 10. These included Cima da Conegliano's St Jerome in a Landscape, now in the National Gallery, and Bellini's Virgin in a Landscape, now in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. For Beckford's collections, see especially Albert Ten Eyck Gardiner, "Beckford's Gothic Wasts", Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, vol.xiii

Doge Loredano, now in the National Gallery, and Gentile Bellini's Doge Vendramin, in the Frick Collection, New York.¹¹ Samuel Woodburn was dealing in, if not buying, earlier pictures before 1815. And Ottley's collection was largely formed before his return to England in 1799. According to one of his acquaintances all his Primitives had been bought in Italy.¹² This is not strictly true as we have evidence that he acquired some in England.¹³ But he could not have added very much. It would have been extremely difficult to form a collection of its size -- there were about eighty pictures in all -- and quality in England, especially after 1815. Between 1815 and 1835 there was hardly a sale with more than two or three earlier works, the largest being the Exeter Hall exhibition and sale of paintings "in Illustration of Sacred History" in 1832 and 1833, which had sixteen Primitives, three of them Flemish.¹⁴ The situation improved a little in the latter part of the 1830s.¹⁵

The number of Primitives in collections at this time seem to have been very small, although Lord Northwick had

(October, 1954), pp.41-9; Boyd Alexander, "William Beckford: Man of Taste", History Today, vol.x (October, 1960), pp.686-94; and Boyd Alexander, England's Wealthiest Son: a study of William Beckford (London, 1962), pp.296-7.

11. Boyd Alexander, Life at Fonthill, op.cit., p.143 and n.1.

12. Gere, op.cit., p.51.

13. Ottley sale catalogue (Christie's, 25 May, 1811). Lot 28, the Manetti chapel fresco fragment now in the Walker Art Gallery, had been presented to him by Charles Towneley, who had brought it into England. Lot 30, attributed to Masaccio, was from the collection of Charles Greville.

14. There were two sales, most of the earlier pictures appearing in that of 1832 re-appearing in the sale of 1833. See the Gentleman's Magazine (April, 1832), p. 350 and (April, 1833), p.3-5.

15. There were the sales of the collection of Charles Aders in 1835 and 1839, the sales of two Florentine residents, Prince Poniatowski and the Rev. John Sanford in 1839, and the Lucca sale in 1840.

more than the "Masaccio" mentioned by Waagen.¹⁶ Samuel Rogers did not have above half a dozen, including paintings attributed to Lorenzo di Credi and Fra Angelico, bought in Rome,¹⁷ a second "Cimabue" from the Ottley Sale of 1837,¹⁸ and paintings from the Aders collection thought to be by van Eyck and Memling.¹⁹ There were about a dozen Primitives in the Fonthill sales catalogues of 1822 and 1823.²⁰ Beckford, after all the preparations for a public sale had been completed, sold Fonthill Abbey privately. He kept a lot, including most of his earlier pictures, which he added to.²¹

One new collection of Primitives, formed in England after 1815 and not mentioned by either Passavant or Waagen, was that of the antiquary Francis Douce.²² Douce was a shy,

-
16. See the Northwick sale catalogue (Christie's, 24 May, 1838, and the two following days). This included works attributed to Hubert and Jan van Eyck, "Master William or Stephan of Cologne", Mantegna, Perugino and Giovanni Bellini. This sale was a rather curious affair, since Lord Northwick withdrew or bought in most of the pictures. (*Athenaeum*, 2 June, 1838, p.392).
 17. Rogers sale catalogue, *op.cit.*, 5th day, lot 610 and 6th day, lot 615.
 18. Ottley sale catalogue (Sotheby's, 4 March, 1837), lot 60 and Rogers sale catalogue, *op.cit.*, 5th day, lot 611.
 19. *Ibid.*, lots 585 and 599. "The Memling" is Portrait of a Man by Dieric Bouts, now in the National Gallery (943).
 20. Apart from the paintings already mentioned, they included Bellini's Agony in the Garden, a Virgin and Child by Perugino and a Crucifixion in the style of Orcagna. All three are now in the National Gallery, the numbers of the last two are 181 and 1468.
 21. His new acquisitions included a Pesellino Madonna and Child, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, which he gave to Fra Angelico, and an Adoration of the Magi, then a Botticelli or Filippo Lippi, now in the National Gallery, as a follower of Filippino Lippi (1124).
 22. For Douce I have consulted the Douce MSS in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. For his purchases I have used the typescript of The Diary of Antiquarian Purchases, etc. by Francis Douce, 1730-1834, in the Bodleian. See also "Francis Douce, 1730-1834", The Bodleian Quarterly Record, vol.viii (1932-4), pp.359-82.

ugly, touchy man, feared by strangers and loved by his intimates. He was one of those people with a passion for collecting. On his death he left to the Bodleian Library at Oxford some very valuable illuminated manuscripts, along with prints, drawings, coins and medals. He had the sort of mind that loved delving into curiosities, and its favourite hunting ground was the Middle Ages.

Douce bought most of his early pictures in the late 1820s and early 1830s, this latest interest being cut short by his death in 1834. Some of them he bought through English dealers, like Samuel Woodburn. Others were given to him by friends, such as a "van Eyck" from the bibliophile Thomas Dibdin. In 1830 there arrived from Pisa some Italian Primitives collected for him by Carlo Lasinio, Conservatore of the Campo Santo. On his death Douce's pictures, along with some other objects, went to his devoted friend Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, renowned for his collection of armour. Meyrick set aside two rooms in his Gothic-revival mansion, Goodrich Castle, as a Doucean Museum. There are twenty-nine paintings listed in the catalogue which he prepared. About half of these appear to be Northern pictures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The rest are Italian works, all except one, which is obviously a cassone panel, assigned to painters of the fourteenth century and earlier. Lasinio's contributions, endorsed on the back with his seal and signature, were three Giotto's, a Taddeo di Bartolo, a Taddeo and an Agnolo Gaddi, a Stefano Fiorentino and a Pietro Lorenzetti. Meyrick thought that these old paintings were "not only valuable in a historical point of view, but worthy

of the study of artists who aim at proficiency in their profession".²³

It would seem that Douce was not the only English collector to benefit from Lasinio's assistance. A friend of Douce's was Dawson Turner of Yarmouth, a banker, botanist, bibliophile and author of Architectural Antiquities of Normandy (1822). We know that by 1834 he had a "Jan Bellini".²⁴ He also owned ten "specimens of Ancient Art" from ruined monasteries near Pisa, named on the authority of Lasinio, and as with Douce's pictures, with his seal and autograph fixed on the back. These were attributed to the "Greek school", Cimabue, Giotto, Giotto, Taddeo di Bartolo, Starnina, Orcagna, and Gozzoli.²⁵ Turner's interest in the Primitives was shared by his son-in-law, Sir Francis Palgrave, who wrote the Murray Hand-Book for Travellers in

23. The Doucean Museum (n.d.), p.2. This Catalogue was first published in a series of articles in the Gentleman's Magazine in 1835. Meyrick's property after his death in 1848 went to his second cousin, Col. Augustus Meyrick. The Douce pictures were still in his possession in 1857 because he lent some to the Manchester Exhibition. In 1869 Col. Meyrick sold Goodrich Court. The armoury and other art treasures he sold to Frederick Spitzer, the great collector of mediaeval and Renaissance objets d'art. But there are no paintings in the Spitzer sale catalogue of 1895 that can be identified with Douce's. I have not been able to discover whether Meyrick disposed of these paintings separately or whether Spitzer had them, but sold them before 1895.

24. A. Paul Oppé, "Art", in Early Victorian England 1830-1865, ed. G.M. Young, 2 vols (London, 1934), vol.ii, p.151. The painter John Sell Cotman, a friend of Dawson Turner's, resolved to copy this painting in 1834.

25. These pictures are listed in the Dawson Turner sale catalogue (Christie's, 14 May, 1852), lots 1-10. We do not know when he acquired these pictures, but if he got them directly from Lasinio it must have been before 1839, the year of Lasinio's death.

Northern Italy (1842) which was the first Italian guide to direct the attention of tourists to the earlier masters.

The value attached to the Primitives was still principally historical, and the taste for their works antiquarian rather than artistic. It is worth noting that many of those interested in earlier painters belonged to the Society of Antiquaries. This is not to suggest that the Society as a whole, whose chief purpose was the promotion of the study of British mediaeval history and antiquities, fostered such an interest. However the fact that Ottley, Rogers, Lord Northwick, Francis Douce, Sir Samuel Rush Meyrick, Dawson Turner, and Sir Francis Palgrave were all Fellows of the Society does indicate that interest in the Primitives was often associated with an interest in mediaeval antiquities generally. These men continue the tradition begun by John Talman at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and carried on by Horace Walpole and Charles Greville. Beckford's taste was similarly based. The catalogue of his library at Fonthill shows his interest in the Middle Ages to have been quite serious, and his collection included stained glass windows, illuminated manuscripts, drawings from mediaeval tombs and Limoges enamels.

But there is a clear distinction between the bulk-buying of Primitives by Francis Douce and the careful selecting by Samuel Rogers, noted for both the exquisite sensibility and the catholicity of his taste. In the words of a visitor to his house in St James's in the early 1840s, his ancient pictures "like all the others, have been selected

for their beauty and sentiment, not as mere curiosities".²⁶ The antiquarian element predominates in Douce, the artistic in Rogers.

The two seem to be nicely balanced in the case of Ottley. In 1808 he began publishing in parts The Italian Schools of Design, facsimile engravings of some of the drawings in his vast collection. The series came to a premature end in 1823 through lack of support. It was followed by A Series of Plates engraved after the most Eminent Masters of the Early Florentine School: intended to illustrate the history of the restoration of the arts of design in Italy (1826). These were line engravings after drawings made by Ottley, or under his direction, when he was in Italy. (Figs. 3-7). The title of this publication indicates the historical value he attached to the earlier painters. His own pictures he had hanging together in one room, like a little museum.

Ottley's interpretation of the history of Italian painting is progressive, based on the writings of Vasari, Lanzi, and his former employer, Seroux d'Agincourt. His bias is Florentine, and he emphasizes the importance of Antique influence on the revival, transmitted by the "Greeks" and the Pisani sculptors. Although pictures and sculptures before the thirteenth century had "no better pretensions to be termed works of fine art, than the paltry figures on a Chinese tray",²⁷ many of the creations of the revival possessed

26. Anna Jameson, Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London (London, 1844), p.190.

27. The Italian Schools of Design, etc. (London, 1823), p.1.

some intrinsic and peculiar excellence; whether of novelty, ingenuity, or propriety, in the invention, the composition, or the expression of the story represented, or of elegance in particular groups or figures.²⁸

The qualities he admired in the earlier masters reflect the preferences of his own taste: simplicity, grandeur, dignity, elegance, grace. He thought Cimabue's draperies purer and less meagre than those of Giotto and his successors.²⁹ Giotto, whose frescoes at Assisi he had studied very closely, was "one of the greatest geniuses that ever lived".³⁰ Ottley's appreciation comprehended Giotto's art -- his colouring, his empirical perspective -- as well as his conceptions. He was less appreciative of Masaccio. This was because Masaccio was given most of Filippino Lippi's work in the Brancacci chapel. Ottley disliked the inclusion of portraits of Florentine dignitaries in historical scenes.³¹ Like his friend Fuseli, Ottley felt that painting declined somewhat after Masaccio, when artists exchanged his "simple and dignified style" for one "distinguished by flutter, complexedness, and meretricious ornament".³² The principal fault of the early masters, dryness, which arose from the desire for the greatest possible correctness of imitation, was most pronounced on the eve of the glorious era of Raphael

28. Introduction, A Series of Plates, etc. (London, 1826).

29. The Italian Schools of Design, op.cit., p.9.

30. Introduction, A Series of Plates, op.cit.

31. e.g. Filippino Lippi's Raising of the Son of Theophilus.
The Italian Schools of Design, op.cit., p.14.

32. Ibid.

and Michelangelo.³³

When Waagen visited Ottley's collection he was particularly impressed with the quality of his early Italians -- an opinion which any visitor to the National Gallery who has seen the Ugolino and Pesellino altarpieces, the Ercole de'Roberti Last Supper, and the Botticelli Mystic Nativity would agree with. The beautiful Madonna and Child with Angels, by Gentile da Fabriano, in the Royal Collection was also his.³⁴ An unusual feature of the Ottley collection was the large number of fourteenth-century paintings.

Waagen was also impressed with Ottley himself. He thought him to have "a more general and profound knowledge of art than any other man in England".³⁵ Ottley for his part was grateful to Waagen for his interest in his old paintings. He complained that no one had paid much attention to them since his return to England.³⁶ Yet his collection seems to have been well-known in antiquarian and artistic circles. His reputation among his acquaintances was formidable. Rogers paid tribute to his connoisseurship,³⁷

33. Introduction, A Series of Plates, op.cit.

34. In addition to these pictures there are the Spinello Aretino and a manuscript illumination by Don Silvestro Camaldolese in the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; a diptych by Francesco di Vanucci in Girton College, Oxford, and a St Peter, an Orcagna studio piece, now in the Gambier Parry Collection at the Courtauld Institute Galleries. For these last two pictures, see the catalogue of Italian Art and Britain, Royal Academy Winter Exhibition (1960), nos 310 and 267.

35. Works, op.cit., vol.i, p.120.

36. Ibid., vol.ii, p.126.

37. Recollections of the Table Talk of Samuel Rogers (New York, 1830), p.130.

Thomas Dibdin to his profound knowledge of ancient paintings.³⁸ Ottley must have had some influence in fostering an interest in the early Italians. Francis Douce, a close friend, was probably inspired by his example. Ottley also had many contacts with artists. He was friendly with Fuseli and Flaxman -- his Series of Plates was dedicated to the latter. With Sir Thomas Lawrence he was especially intimate, the two men having a common passion for collecting drawings. Lawrence bought the early Raphael Vision of a Christian Knight, now in the National Gallery, from Ottley.³⁹ Other artists who knew him were Constable,⁴⁰ Turner,⁴¹ Benjamin Haydon and David Wilkie.⁴²

The only collection in London at this time which rivalled Ottley's was that of Karl Aders.⁴³ His house in

38. He wished he had Ottley beside him when he was looking at the old pictures in the Gallery at Munich, which he visited in about 1820. A Bibliographical, Antiquarian and Picturesque Tour in France and Germany, 3 vols (London, 1821), vol.ii, p.250.

39. According to Samuel Rogers, Lawrence also had pictures of the early Italian school. See Table Talk, *op.cit.*, pp.184-5. Here he tells how he and Lord Dudley went round to Lawrence's house to look at some pictures Lawrence wished to sell to get out of one of the financial crises which chronically beset him. Most of the pictures, Rogers comments, "were early pictures of the Italian school, and, though valuable, not pleasing perhaps to any except artists".

40. Constable met Ottley in 1824. See C.R. Leslie, Memoirs of the Life of John Constable, composed chiefly of his letters (1843), ed. Jonathan Mayne (London, 1951), pp. 126-7.

41. Turner refers to Ottley in a letter from Rome in 1828. See A.J. Finberg, The Life of J.M.W. Turner, R.A. (Oxford, 2nd ed. 1961), p.310.

42. See diary entry, 3 October, 1819. Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, *op.cit.*, vol.ii, p. 236.

43. For Karl Aders, see especially M.K. Joseph, "Charles Aders. A biographical note, together with some unpublished letters addressed to him by S.T. Coleridge and others, and now in the Grey Collection, Auckland City Library", Auckland University College Bulletin (1953).

Duston Square was filled with paintings, mostly of the early Italian, Flemish and German schools, the last two predominating. This collection was almost certainly formed in Germany. Whereas Ottley's pictures were bought under the influence of the Neo-classical taste for the Primitives which had been a feature of Roman life in the 1790s, the Aders collection was a product of that religious and nationalist worship of "Early Christian" art which had grown up in Germany. Aders knew the Schlegels, and may have been inspired by them.

Through his friendship with Henry Crabb Robinson, Aders met many of the leading literary and artistic figures of the day, and with some of them he became quite intimate. It was generally curiosity about his pictures which brought them to his house. There were Coleridge, Charles and Mary Lamb, Wordsworth, and Samuel Rogers. Another visitor was Joseph Henry Green, Coleridge's friend and disciple. Among the artists who saw the collection were Sir Thomas Lawrence, Thomas Stothard, James Ward, John Linnell, Samuel Palmer and William Blake. Aders organized an exhibition of his pictures at the Gallery of British Artists in 1832. Bessavant's hopes that the collection would be returned to Germany were not realized, and with the collapse of Aders' fortunes his pictures were dispersed in sales in 1835 and 1836.⁴⁴

44. For Rogers' acquisitions from the Aders collection, see above, p. 53. Lord Northwick got a Lorenzo di Credi (now in the National Gallery, 648). Henry Crabb Robinson bought a number of his pictures, including works attributed to van der Weyden, Memling, Perugino and Francia. He gave the van der Weyden to Wordsworth. Another purchaser was Joseph Henry Green. The paintings he acquired formed the nucleus of a small collection of German and Flemish Primitives. Twelve pictures, which were originally in the Aders collection, were bequeathed by his wife to the National Gallery in 1883 (1078-1088).

Aders' house was a meeting-place for those interested in German literature and philosophy -- Crabb Robinson, Coleridge and Green, Wordsworth, Lamb. It is not surprising that the religious and mystical view of early painting should find an airing here. This was expressed in a poem by Charles Lamb, published in 1831, "To C. Aders, Esq. On his German Masters". He begins by saying that he never enters "this sacred Room" without being struck with "a religious fear". There follows a catalogue of the "imagery from Heav'n" which clothe the walls: "Spare saints", "Martyrs old in meek procession", weeping Magdalens, angels, "palm-bearing Virgins", and Madonnas of "chaste design". And he concludes:

Whoever enter'st here, no more presume
To name a Parlour, or a Drawing Room;
But, bending lowly to each holy Story,
Make this thy Chapel, and thine Oratory.

It is doubtful whether Aders had much direct influence on the religious taste for the Primitives which grew up in the late 1830s and in the 1840s. The sources of this movement lie elsewhere, as we shall see. There was one painter on whom his pictures had a profound influence, and that was Samuel Palmer.⁴⁵ As a child he had copied Lasinio's Campo Santo engravings, and a little later John Linnell, his future father-in-law, had made him study engravings by Durer and van Leyden. But his first sight of original Primitives was at Aders' house. They re-awoke in him that "strong and

⁴⁵. See especially Geoffrey Grigson, Samuel Palmer. The Visionary Years (London, 1947).

pure" feeling he had had for nature when he was very young and which he had lost by becoming a victim of conventional modernity. During his years in Shoreham he sought to express in his own pictures the religious intensity of vision he had found in the Primitives.⁴⁶

It is to Italy we must go, however, to follow the development of British interest in the Primitives up till the middle 1830s. In the autumn of 1826 Thomas Uwins, an English painter living in Naples, toured northern Italy. Afterwards he wrote:

There is one class of masters whose works have interested me amazingly, but whose names are seldom heard of. They are to be found, not in galleries or palaces, but in churches and convents, sometimes in obscure towns and paltry villages. I mean that race which immediately preceded the age of Raphael and his contemporaries, Giotto, Cimabue, and a number of others whose names are scarcely known to fame.⁴⁷

Although the earlier painters were ignored or despised by the vast majority of travellers, there were a few, principally artists and residents, who found them worth noticing. They left the beaten track to explore seldom visited towns, like Perugia, Assisi, Orvieto, Cortona.

There was one place in particular which was becoming known to the cognoscenti, and that was the Arena chapel in

46. Samuel Palmer was in Italy from 1837-39, but by this time he had lost his mystical fervour. The significant discoveries of his Italian visit were the Venetians and Claude, and these were the influences which shaped his later work. See Edward Malins, Samuel Palmer's Italian Honeymoon (London, 1968).

47. Letter, 24 December, 1826. Mrs Uwins, A Memoir of Thomas Uwins, R.A., 2 vols (London, 1851), vol. I, p. 121.

Padua, covered with the frescoes of Giotto.⁴⁸ David Wilkie saw them in 1826, and as a result modified that view of Giotto as a mild sort of genius which Lanzi seems to have spread. There was grandeur as well as gentleness in his art.⁴⁹ The following year the chapel was visited by the successful landscapist Augustus Callcott and his wife, accompanied by a young painter, Peter Powell. All three were much impressed.

The Callcotts were on their honeymoon, but their continental tour was no mere pleasure trip.⁵⁰ Their principal object was the study of works of art, with the apparent intention of writing a joint history of painting. The scheme was probably Maria Callcott's. She was a woman of remarkable intelligence and learning, whose fame was to rest chiefly on her Little Arthur's History of England (1835). As a child she had been a frequent visitor to Strawberry Hill, and had especially loved Walpole's ancient portraits. She spent a year in Rome in 1819 with her first husband, Captain Graham, and had come into contact with its artistic community through their friendship with Charles Eastlake.⁵¹

48. According to Maria Callcott, the chapel had fallen into a very dilapidated state during the Napoleonic wars. A French officer supervising its demolition recognized the frescoes as Giotto's and reported his discovery to Napoleon who ordered the preservation of the chapel. Description of the Chapel of the Annunziata dell' Arena: or, Giotto's Chapel in Padua (London, 1835), p.1.

49. Letter, 6 November, 1826. Quo. Allan Cunningham, The Life of Sir David Wilkie, etc, 3 vols (London, 1843), vol. ii, p.369.

50. For the Callcotts, see especially R.B. Gatch, Maria, Lady Callcott (London, 1937).

51. Eastlake provided some illustrations for her Three Months Passed in the Mountains East of Rome (1827).

One outcome of the Roman visit was a life of Poussin (1820). The results of the researches of 1827 were Maria's unfinished Essays towards the History of Painting and a volume on the Arena chapel frescoes, with illustrations after drawings by Callcott, which was privately printed in 1835 and published a decade later. (Figs. 8-9).

The Callcotts had a small collection of Italian Primitives, with attributions to Giunta Pisano, Giotto, Fra Angelico, Gozzoli and Filippino Lippi.⁵² Waagen visited them in 1835, by which time Maria was a bed-ridden invalid. She presented him with a copy of the book on the Arena chapel. He commented on her deep regard for the early masters.⁵³

When the Callcotts were in Florence they bought a small "Botticelli" head. One of their companions on their visits to galleries and churches was the Hon. W.T.H. Fox-Strangways, Secretary to the Legation at Florence from 1825 to 1828.⁵⁴ Fox-Strangways was one of a little band of English Florentine residents captivated by the earlier painters. In 1828 and 1834 he gave to his old Oxford college, Christ Church, some thirty-six pictures, most of them Italian Primitives. Nearly a third of these were thought to be of the fourteenth century

52. There were sixteen Primitives in the Sir Augustus Callcott decessa sale (Christie's, 8 May¹⁸³⁵ and the three following days). The pictures were sold on the 10th May. There is a fifteenth-century Florentine school work from Callcott's collection (not in the sale) in the National Gallery (2508).

53. Works, op.cit., vol.i, p.155.

54. For Fox-Strangways, see J. Ryam Shaw, Paintings by Old Masters at Christ Church, Oxford. Catalogue (London, 1907), pp. 5-10.

or earlier,⁵⁵ with attributions to Cimabue, Giotto, Buffalmacco, etc. Florentines predominated also, understandably enough, amongst the fifteenth-century works. The Fox-Strangways collection included paintings of very high quality, such as the lovely School of Duccio Triptych, a charming small Triptych from the studio of Fra Angelico, and a beautiful Virgin and Child with Angels of the School of Piero della Francesca.⁵⁶ Another English collector of Primitives in Florence was the Rev. John Sanford. He began collecting pictures in Italy in about 1815, but the greater part of his collection was formed during a residence in Florence in the early 1830s.⁵⁷ There are about thirty Primitives listed in the three catalogues he compiled of his paintings.⁵⁸ These were mostly of the late fifteenth century, but there were also paintings of Gentile da Fabriano and Fra Angelico, and some earlier pictures, attributed to Duccio, Cimabue, Giotto, Simone Martini and Orcagna.

One of the best known of the Florentine residents was

-
55. Two were in fact later works: a sixteenth-century imitation of a thirteenth-century Florentine school painting, and an early work of Sano di Pietro which Fox-Strangways attributed to Duccio. See J. Byam Shaw, op.cit., nos 1 and 31.
56. Nos 3, 20, 33. In 1850 Fox-Strangways gave some pictures to the Ashmolean Museum, which included Uccello's A Hunt in a Forest (442).
57. On Sanford, see especially Benedict Nicolson, "The Sanford Collection", Burlington Magazine, vol. xcvi (July, 1955), pp. 207-14.
58. These were: Catalogue of Paintings, belonging to the Rev. J. Sanford (London, 1838); Sanford Sale catalogue (Christie's, 9 March, 1839); and Catalogue Raisonné of Pictures, etc., the property of the Rev. John Sanford (London, 1847).

the poet and essayist Walter Savage Landor, who fled from his creditors across the Channel in 1814 and settled in Florence in 1821. His first residence there lasted until 1835, except for a brief visit to England in 1832. During this time he became famous among the local inhabitants for his violent temper and eccentric habits. His circumstances were straitened, and his only indulgence according to the equally eccentric painter and Dante scholar, Seymour Kirkup, was buying "a number of very ancient pictures".⁵⁹ It seems that he was much imposed upon by the Italian dealers.

During his visit to England in 1832 Landor saw the exhibition of Karl Aders' paintings, and with characteristic fervour declared some of them "finer than Raphael".⁶⁰ He travelled back to Italy with Archdeacon Julius Hare, who shared his enthusiasm for the older masters. Hare thought Giotto the greatest genius in painting, with perhaps the single exception of Raphael.⁶¹ Perugino was "divine", and the Fra Angelicos in the convent of S. Marco were "exquisitely beautiful".⁶² The two men spent a morning in Venice buying pictures. Landor got a Schiavone and a Giovanni da Udine, Hare a Perugino or an early Raphael -- Landor inclining to the latter attribution.⁶³ Julius Hare was a German scholar of distinction -- with Connop Thirlwall

⁵⁹. Quo. Malcolm Elwin, Landor: a replevin (London, 1958), p.218.

⁶⁰. Quo. M.K. Joseph, op.cit., p.26.

⁶¹. Letter, 15 November, 1832. Augustus J.C. Hare, Memorials of a Quiet Life, 2 vols (London, 1872), vol.i, p.459.

⁶². Letter, 11 December, 1832. Quo. ibid.

⁶³. Letter, 15 November, 1832. Quo. Hare, Memorials, op.cit.

he translated Niebuhr's History of Rome -- and his German studies may have drawn him to the earlier Italians. It was through Hare, who had been his tutor at Cambridge, that Richard Monckton Milnes (later Lord Houghton) met Landor. He stayed at his villa in Fiesole in 1833 while recovering from a bout of malaria, and wrote a poem about his Primitives in which he attributed the calm gravity of Landor's son to the influence of the old pictures.⁶⁴

Landor's wife was more concerned about the pictures falling off the wall and killing her children, and threw them all into a closet. Landor wrote to his brother, lamenting this brutal treatment of his paintings, and offered him a hundred pictures "from the restoration of painting in Italy down to 1500".⁶⁵

We can get some idea of his collection from the pictures presented to Christ Church by his nieces in 1897. On the whole they are inferior to those of Fox-Strangways. Landor's taste was less discriminating, and it is clear that he often bought paintings for their subject matter -- like the Scenes from the Lives of the Hermits,⁶⁶ or for some peculiarity of costume, etc. But there is real value in, for example, the Giovanni di Paolo Calvary.⁶⁷

A playmate of Landor's children was Austen Henry Layard,

64. See Lord Houghton, Monographs, Personal and Social (London, 1873), pp.129-131.

65. Quo. Malcolm Elwin, op.cit.

66. Landor owned ten of these. Nine of them are at Christ Church, and the tenth, which he sold to William Bell Scott is now in the Scottish National Gallery (1513).

67. As well as the paintings in Christ Church, Landor owned St Francis receiving the Stigmata by Cima da Conegliano, now in the Lord Art Gallery (100).

who spent part of his boyhood in Italy. Layard's fame rests on his exploration and excavations in Asia Minor, but he also formed a very large collection of Primitives, and through his work for the Arundel Society did much to popularize the earlier painters. His interest must first have been aroused when, as a child, he visited the Florentine churches and galleries with his father, and spent hours in the dusty, book-filled studio of Seymour Kirkup, learning from him about the history, literature and art of Florence.⁶⁸ It was Kirkup who, with the Italian Aubrey Bezzi, uncovered a fresco in the Bargello in 1840, which was thought to be Giotto's portrait of Dante, and which created a great stir at the time.

Kirkup was not the only English artist living in Florence with an interest in the earlier painters. There were also William Blundell Spence and the sculptor Alfred Stevens, fellow-students for a time.⁶⁹ Spence, who was married to an Italian woman, was a permanent resident. Wordsworth went with him on a walk to Bellosguardo when he was in Florence in 1837.⁷⁰ In the 1850s Spence's advice was to be sought with regard to the acquisition of Primitives by the National Gallery, which now contains two pictures from his collection.⁷¹ Alfred Stevens had arrived in Naples with

68. See Hon. William N. Bruce, Sir A. Henry Layard, C.C.B., D.C.L. Autobiography and Letters from his childhood until his appointment as H.M. Ambassador at Madrid, 2 vols (London, 1905), vol. I, pp. 20-22. The Layard family had an apartment in the Rucellai Palace, the walls of which were covered with pictures. Over Austen's bed hung the Filippino Lippi altarpiece now in the National Gallery (293).

69. Kenneth Townrow, Alfred Stevens, Architectural Sculptor, Painter and Designer (London, 1937), p. 45.

70. Letter, 4 June, 1837. Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth. The Later Years, ed. Ernest de Selincourt, 3 vols (Oxford, 1939), vol. II, p. 286.

71. Perugino (1441) and Filippino Lippi (4904/5).

£60 in his pocket, knowing no one. He had been advised to study Salvator Rosa and the later Bolognese, but found himself drawn to the fourteenth-century frescoes in the church of the Incoronata and Santa Chiara. It was their monumental quality which apparently appealed to him.

Stevens settled in Florence where he spent a number of years before returning to England.⁷² In the British Museum Print Room are a series of drawings by Stevens after early Italian frescoes in Florence, mostly of the fourteenth century. These indicate that he is interested mostly in overall composition, the action of figures, and the disposition of drapery. Only occasionally does he study facial expression in detail.

It was in Florence that David Wilkie's interest in the Primitives became serious. Wilkie had left England in 1825 in search of peace of mind and health after the shock of the sudden deaths of his mother and brother. He travelled down to Italy. He already knew about the earlier painters -- perhaps through his acquaintance with Ottley -- and in Milan enquired after their works. The later frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa he liked, but thought the earlier ones so rude "as to resemble the drawings of the Hindoos and Chinese".⁷³

⁷². For Alfred Stevens' years in Italy, see Kenneth Towndrow, *op.cit.*; Walter Armstrong, Alfred Stevens. A Biographical Study (Paris and London, 1881); and Hugh Stannus, Alfred Stevens and His Work (London, 1891). No letters survive from these years, and the date of his arrival and the length of his residence is uncertain. On his own evidence he was nearly ten years in Italy, eight of them in Florence. See Quentin Bell, The Schools of Design (London, 1963), p.190 n.

⁷³. The comparison of the art of the early Italians with oriental art was not uncommon. At the crudest level, as here, the resemblance lay in the strangeness and the "incorrect" drawing. But the comparison could be more subtle. C.R. Leslie remarked how Flaxman found that early

In Florence he met up with his friend Thomas Phillips, a portrait painter, recently appointed Professor of Painting at the Royal Academy, who was gathering material for his lectures. Phillips was travelling with the history painter, William Hilton. They had already seen the frescoes in the Arena chapel in Padua, which, wrote Hilton, "for simplicity of conception, for character and expressions are very extraordinary".⁷⁴ It was probably because of their interest that Wilkie inspected the frescoes in the following year. In the month that they were in Florence, Wilkie, Phillips and Hilton became diligent students of the earlier masters.

Sometimes it was not until Rome that the visitor began to take notice of the early Italians. We do not find evidence of any interest in the letters of the young painter Charles West Cope until after a winter in Rome. Then, in the spring of 1834, he set out on a tour of Umbria, examining the frescoes of the older masters at Orvieto, Perugia and Assisi. Later on he went to cities like Siena, Padua and Pisa, and spent some months in Florence. He did sketches from Ghirlandaio in Sta Trinità and from Gozzoli in the Medici-Riccardi chapel, "the former beautiful for sentiment, the latter for costume, and a wonderful collection of characteristic old heads".⁷⁵

Italian art had much in common with Chinese painting. "I remember seeing Chinese pictures hanging on the walls of his parlour, which he admired for their grace and simplicity as well as for the beauty of their colour". A Hand-Book for Young Painters (London, 1855), p.15.

74. Letter, 22 October, 1825. Quo. Marcia Pointon, "The Italian Tour of William Hilton R.A. in 1825", J.W.C.I., vol. xxxv (1972), p.346.

75. Entry in note-book, 27 April, 1835. Quo. Charles Henry Cope, Reminiscences of Charles West Cope (London, 1891), p.97.

It was impossible that anyone in Rome for any length of time and with any contact with its cosmopolitan artistic community not to discover that the older masters were worth looking at. The dominant artists in Roman life were the Nazarenes, unmistakable with their long flowing hair and picturesque dress. The frescoes in the Casa Bartholdy (1816-1817) and in the Casino Massimo, which were begun in 1819, created a sensation. Cornelius went to Munich in 1819, but frequently returned to Rome. Overbeck remained there, joined by numerous disciples. Here was a circle for the study and collection of Primitives.⁷⁶

The Nazarenes inspired a movement in Italian painting known as "Il Purismo". Its leader was the painter Tommaso Minardi, who declared that there were more sublime conceptions in Giotto than in Raphael. A pupil of Minardi's, Antonio Bianchini, wrote a manifesto of the movement in 1843.⁷⁷ French artists were also affected. Horace Vernet, Director of the French Academy in Rome, wrote in 1834 that students there were following the fashionable tendency to return to the primitive taste of Giotto and Fra Angelico.⁷⁸ The Danish sculptor Thorvaldsen was a warm admirer of the

76. Among the collectors of Primitives associated with the Nazarenes in Rome were Johann Anton Ramboux, Johann Baese, and Count Raczynski. See von Holst, *op.cit.*, p.250. Passavant was in Rome from 1817 to 1824. Von Rumohr, who was in Italy in 1815 and 1823, doing research for his Italienische Forschungen, was much impressed with the paintings of Overbeck and his fellow artists.

77. See Lionello Venturi, Il gusto dei primitivi, *op.cit.*, pp.168-72, and Keith Andrews, *op.cit.*, pp.71-2.

78. Lionello Venturi, Il gusto dei primitivi, *op.cit.*, p.173.

Nazarenes, and had a small collection of Primitives.⁷⁹

British interest in the Nazarenes is evident from the first years after the re-opening of the Continent. Collectors bought up their works,⁸⁰ and although we know very little about the influence of the Germans and the taste for the earlier painters on British art at this time, published letters and memoirs reveal the interest the Nazarenes aroused.

The reaction was more critical than sympathetic. The Germans were criticized for imitating the defects of the early masters and ignoring the subsequent progress of art, for being unoriginal, for reviving the forms of art of an age whose spirit was long dead, and for being too exclusive and narrow in their attachments. Their colouring was generally thought to be unattractive and muddy. Little reference is made to the religious inspiration of their art. However, the Scottish historical painter David Scott, who was in Italy in 1832, remarked that Overbeck "thinks of art only in connection with religious sentiment, and the old church: thus lives in one corner of art".⁸¹

Yet there were aspects of the Nazarenes which were admired. Wilkie considers that their system, with all its

79. They are now in the Thorwaldsen Museum, Copenhagen.

80. Schnorr von Carolsfeld's *The Marriage at Cana* (1819) was commissioned by the Scottish collector, William Cathcart. Schnorr told his father in a letter of 1825 that British collectors literally snatched his drawings out of his hands, especially those he was making for his Picture Bible. Overbeck's cartoon of *The Seven Lean Years*, one of the frescoes in the Casa Bartholomae, came to England in 1819, and was later in the collection of Sir Thomas Lawrence. Keith Andrews, *op.cit.*, pp.48,69.

81. Quot. William Bell Scott, *Memoir of David Scott, R.S.A., containing his Journal in Italy, notes on art and other matters* (Edinburgh, 1890), p.111.

drawbacks, has "so much of expression, and discards so much that is meretricious, that I wish their feeling were infused a little into ourselves".⁸² Wilkie was also very impressed with the revival of fresco painting, and wrote to his friends in England about the possibility of its introduction there.⁸³ The adoption of fresco painting was also recommended in an article in the Edinburgh Review in 1828.⁸⁴

One painter whose contacts with the Nazarenes were fairly close was Joseph Severn. He had been taken up by the Germans after the death of his friend Keats in 1821 -- like everyone else they had been moved by the story of his devoted nursing of the dying poet. They were great admirers of his art and gave him a public dinner.⁸⁵ Severn painted an altarpiece for Cardinal Weld as a present to the Pope. According to Severn, the clergy were fascinated by its rich colouring and "its attempt to revive the fine old art".⁸⁶

Another was the Scottish painter, William Dyce. He was in Italy in 1825, 1827 and 1832.⁸⁷ On his second visit he was introduced to the Nazarenes by Joseph Severn, and the friendship formed with Overbeck continued after his return to

82. Letter, 10 January, 1826. Quo. Allan Cunningham, op.cit., vol.ii, p.223.

83. He wrote to William Collins, Sir Robert Peel and Thomas Bigge (ibid., pp.199,238,411). He also wrote to Benjamin Haydon on the subject. See B.P. Haydon, Lectures on Painting and Design, 2 vols (London, 1844-5), vol.ii, p.190.

84. Vol. xlviii (September, 1826), pp.72-3.

85. William Sharp, The Life and Letters of Joseph Severn (London, 1892), p.275.

86. Ibid., pp.168,300.

87. Keith Andrews, op.cit., pp.81-2. As Andrews says, our knowledge of this period of Dyce's life is extremely limited.

England. The Germans greatly admired his Madonna and Child, a painting which has disappeared, along with other works of his Roman period. Dyce was a devout High Churchman, deeply interested in church music and ritual. He was one of the first British to adopt the Christian interpretation of art before Raphael.

Dr, afterwards Cardinal, Wiseman was one of Dyce's Roman acquaintances. He was a student, and then from 1828 until 1840 Rector, at the English College in Rome. He knew both Overbeck and Cornelius, and admired the art of the Primitives. Perugino was apparently his favourite painter.⁸⁸ To see "one who dares to admire and longs to imitate the old, symbolic, christian and truly chaste manner of the ancients" was like "listening to a strain of Palestrina after a boisterous modern finale", he wrote to Dyce in 1834.⁸⁹ He also mentioned another painter who seems to have come under the influence of the Nazarenes. This was William Davies, a student at the college and another of Dyce's Roman acquaintances, who was painting a Madonna in "the old manner", to be presented to the Pope. This was much admired by Overbeck.

88. Wilfrid Ward, The Life and Times of Cardinal Wiseman, 2 vols (London, 1897), vol.ii, p.259.

89. Letter, 1 September, 1834. Quo. James Stirling Dyce, Life, Correspondence, and Writings of William Dyce, R.A., Painter, Musician, and Scholar, Typescript in the Aberdeen Art Gallery, p.105. (Hereafter referred to as the Dyce Papers).

One English painter who showed great insight into the art of the Nazarenes was Charles Eastlake, who lived in Rome from 1816 to 1830. He was probably introduced to them by Dr Bunsen, secretary to the Prussian Legation, whom he had met on the journey to Rome. Bunsen married a Welsh girl, and the couple were very friendly with the Nazarenes, Overbeck especially. They were an important link between the English and German communities in Rome.⁹⁰ In 1820 Eastlake published an article on Roman artistic life in the London Magazine, which contained the earliest (indeed for a long time the only) and best account of the Nazarenes in an English journal. He emphasized the nationalist and religious inspiration of the school, and its concern with subject rather than technique.⁹¹

Eastlake was among the most highly esteemed of the British artists in Rome. Thomas Uwins in 1856 recalled:

He was admired by all the German students in art, being, as he was, a finished German scholar. He was intimate with French students as well as professors, and he was an object of interest likewise to the Italian students.⁹²

90. See Augustus J.C. Hare, The Life and Letters of Frances, Baroness Bunsen, 2 vols (London, 1879). Frances Bunsen's interest in the Primitives is expressed in a letter she wrote from Florence in 1838. "I have seen at Siena and here, wonders of ancient art that deserve more days than I have had minutes to give them". She was delighted with the early paintings she saw at Pisa, Lucca, Pistoia, and Prato. At the Bologna gallery it was the older artists who interested her, not the later Bolognese, whom she thought "tame and lifeless". And at Venice she was "astonished" at the early Venetians. Ibid., vol 1, pp. 478-9.

91. London Magazine (January, 1820), p.48.

92. Memoir of Thomas Uwins, op.cit., vol ii, p.291.

With his knowledge of German, his familiarity with the ideals of the Nazarenes, and his scholarly habits, it is not surprising that Eastlake's ideas about art and his view of its history should reflect the influence of German philosophy and aesthetics.⁹³ For example, we find expressed in his letters and papers the notion of an antithesis between Christian and classical art. At first his taste was for the Antique, a taste which had been fostered in England by Benjamin Haydon, his teacher for a time. In 1818 he went to Greece to study the antiquities so adored by Haydon. Three years later he confesses to his patron Jeremiah Harman his decidedly "heathen bent", seeing more to allure "in the beauty and simplicity of a classical dream than in the less plastic and less picturesque materials of my own faith -- the very excellence of which is that it does not appeal to the senses".⁹⁴ All the machinery of art has little to do with Christianity, the purity of which is best expressed by the early Italians and the modern Germans. In other words he found a conflict between Christianity and beauty in art.⁹⁵ By 1828 however he had grown more critical of classical art. The Greeks mastered the means of art, but it was not therefore more

-
93. "His own mind in matters of philosophy and thought was of a somewhat German cast", Edinburgh Review, vol.cxxxi (April, 1870), p.416.
94. 6 August, 1821. Quo. Charles Eastlake, Second Series. Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts. with a memoir compiled by Lady Eastlake (London, 1877), p.99.
95. In 1825 he wrote that every work of art "which exhibits beauty in any form is at once heathen", no matter what the subject matter. Quo. 1812., pp.109-10.

perfect. They could not address man's "soul-felt trust, his peace, his faith, his humility, his contrition" because they did not know them.⁹⁶

A brief account of the history of the revival of painting in an unfinished paper, "How to Observe" (1835), shows that Eastlake has accepted a religious interpretation of its development.⁹⁷ The expression of "soul-felt" piety was the ruling aim of artists, and the devotional feelings of the age were expressed by their spiritual effusions. However as imitation approached the highest perfection painters came to delight in art for its own sake. The spirit of the age changed and the character of its art. The principles of Christian art were abandoned, the process being hastened by the re-discovery of classical antiquity and by the perfection of art itself. In Raphael, however, the moral aim of the older painters was never abandoned. Eastlake was not one of those who believed in Raphael's "fall". It is worth noting that Eastlake is in no way critical of art's "perfection". Sixteenth-century painting was intellectually as well as technically in advance of that which preceded it. Although, like Friedrich Schlegel and the Nazarenes, he emphasized the importance of religion in

96. This is from a fragment, "Means and End of Art", written in 1826. It appears at the end of Materials for a History of Oil Painting, 2 vols. (London, 1847-63), vol. II, p. 422. Cf., in another unfinished paper, "The Philosophy of the Fine Arts" (1829), where he argues that beauty is most complete when it bears the impress of mind and soul. Greek art could not express the highest beauty, because it did not bear the impress of soul. Charles Eastlake, Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts (London, 1840), p. 506.

97. Contributions. Second Series, op. cit., pp. 230-3.

the art of the Middle Ages, this is for historical, not ideological reasons. The context of his discussion is the importance of associations to the enjoyment and understanding of the amateur, particularly with regard to works which were otherwise unappealing. Were it not for their religious associations these early paintings might be "passed over without a second glance".⁹⁸

Eastlake realized very clearly that associative knowledge and critical discrimination were two very different things. This distinction was to become blurred in art criticism in Britain in the mid nineteenth century.

It is difficult to make generalizations about British attitudes to the Primitives between 1815 and the mid 1830s. This is partly because of the lack of evidence -- one has to rely for the most part on isolated comments, fragmentary remarks. More people are affected by the new taste, but their reactions are influenced by their own particular interests. An antiquary like Francis Douce does not look for the same things as an artist does. But an artist's reaction is influenced by his own bias: William Dyce is, or wants to be, a religious painter; David Scott aspires to history painting; Constable is a landscapist. The first finds Christian art, the second the embryo of the Grand Style, the third the beginnings of nature painting.

In most ways the appeal of the early painters remained unchanged. They were interesting historically. They were

98. Contributions. Second Series, op.cit., pp.230-1.

refreshing in their simplicity and lack of affectation.

In 1819 the sculptor Francis Chantrey said of Fra Angelico's Descent from the Cross in the convent of S. Marco:

The figures are grand and unaffected, the drapery simple, the actions natural; free from all academic rules, but full of simplicity and truth.⁹⁹

Generally speaking "natural" and "unaffected" were more or less synonymous. But one finds a new element injected into the idea of the "naturalness" of the early masters. Constable (who never travelled abroad, and who knew the Primitives through works in English collections and reproductions) remarked in 1822 that in the early ages the arts were more affecting and sublime because the artist had recourse to nature alone.¹⁰⁰ Samuel Palmer, as we have seen, expressed a similar point of view. The idea that the Primitives saw nature directly and not through the medium of other pictures was to be influential in the 1850s when it was popularized by Ruskin and the Pre-Raphaelites.

What distinguished the post-war period however was the particular emphasis given to the expressive and narrative powers of painting before Raphael. Maria Callcott thought Giotto's designs in the Arena chapel "full of feeling, grace and expression -- not an ignoble or common thought to be seen -- all is pure and sweet and noble".¹⁰¹ "Sweetness"

99. Quo. George Jones, Sir Francis Chantrey, R.A. Recollections of his life, practice, and opinions (London, 1849), p. 57.

100. Quo. Leslie, Life of Constable, op.cit., p. 95.

101. Quo. R.B. Gough, op.cit., pp. 262-3.

in fact is a word that is more common later, when Francia and Fra Angelico were the most popular of the earlier painters. Dignity, grandeur, sublimity are the qualities understood by the terms "sentiment" and "thought". Whereas later enthusiasts were "touched" by the Primitives, their predecessors were rather "moved". In the case of Thomas Phillips and David Scott the appeal of the grandeur of the earlier masters can be related to their tremendous admiration for Michelangelo.

In Charles Cope's notebook we find the following comment on the frescoes of Fra Angelico and Signorelli in the Cathedral at Orvieto:

Each figure has a soul, and acts from a feeling different from his neighbour ... It is a fine school indeed for sentiment and expression. Nothing that I have seen in Italy has given more pleasure, few things so much.¹⁰²

The characters peopling the paintings of the early masters were not types, but individuals, a feature which was frequently commented on. David Scott felt that this endowed the works of Ghirlandaio with strength and dramatic power.¹⁰³ At the same time there was some criticism when this individuality appeared the result of direct imitation of the model. David Scott, a perceptive observer, also found "great abstractedness and symbolic remoteness".¹⁰⁴ This of course referred more to the artists of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. While most commonly thought to

¹⁰². Charles Cope, op.cit., p.56.

¹⁰³. Quo. William Bell Scott, Memoir of David Scott, op.cit., p.413.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid., p.87.

indicate a slavish adherence to traditional and conventional types there were a few who like Scott felt that art "lost much in symbolic elevation as technic ability advanced".¹⁰⁵

The thoughts of the Primitives might have been noble and grand, but they presented them like very bad artists. Given the idea that the principal value of the early painters were their thoughts, and the prevalence of the belief in the divisibility of the mechanical and intellectual portions of art, it is not surprising to find that Augustus Callcott's Arena chapel drawings attempt to "improve" the originals. They were "recollections" rather than "fac-similes" (Figs 8-9).

The rigid Critics in Art will, no doubt, object to such renderings, from the absence of those peculiarities and even defects belonging to the age in which the works were executed; but the features which make an artist's strength and originality, and which constitute the beauty of his work, are essentially distinct from those which arise out of the accidents of the time in which he lived.¹⁰⁶

The Athenaeum in 1845 was to compliment Callcott on his discrimination. The truth of his remarks

will be admitted by all who look for higher qualities in Art than those of execution ... Sir Augustus Callcott may have got rid of the gothic features of Giotto's drawing, but these outlines make us feel he has preserved those infinitely higher qualities of Giotto's devotional sentiment.¹⁰⁷

One dissident voice was a contributor to the Edinburgh

105. Ibid., p.384.

106. Postscript, Mrs Callcott, Giotto's Chapel in Padua, op.cit.

107. Athenaeum (2 August, 1845), p.770.

Review in 1828. This article, a review of the English translation of Lanzi, was the first to deal with the earlier painters seriously and at length.¹⁰⁸ Its author declared:

... let shame and punishment await the wretch who would introduce alterations ... under the name of 'judicious improvements'. Let the artist, on the contrary, be especially instructed to copy, with more than usual care, whatever may appear to him to be faulty; for unless he is intimately persuaded that the faults of Giotto and his compeers are infinitely more valuable than the most brilliant of his own conceptions, he is utterly unfit for the important task.¹⁰⁹

Another result of the concentration on the Primitives as painters of thought and feeling was the idea, already found in Wackenroder, that mediaeval art was a people's art. Wilkie felt this very strongly. The popular appeal of earlier painting he thought to be due partly to the sentiment, something which, he wrote to Thomas Phillips, "does not demand an acquired taste, but is felt by all capacities",¹¹⁰ and partly to the utilitarian function as a bible of the unlearned.¹¹¹ Constable too in the first of

108. According to the Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, this article is probably by Thomas Jefferson Hogg, barrister, humourist and friend and biographer of Shelley. Hogg's journal of his continental tour, Two Hundred and Nine Days, 2 vols (London, 1827), supports this attribution. It reveals an unusual degree of interest in early art, as well as a lot of ignorance about it. Hogg visits the Accademia in Florence, mentions some early works at Perugia, and praises the paintings on the walls of the Sistine chapel. He thinks the landscape backgrounds in the Campo Santo frescoes excellent and much admires Perugino, as does the author of this article.

109. Edinburgh Review, vol. xlviii (September, 1828), p. 66. The reviewer is advocating that copies should be made of the Campo Santo frescoes.

110. Letter, 6 November, 1826. Allan Cunningham, op. cit., vol. ii, p. 370.

111. See his Remarks on Painting, ibid., vol. iii, pp. 180-3.

his lectures on landscape painting emphasized the popular appeal of early painting:

The artists, very justly, considered themselves engaged in works of piety, and they employed all their powers to tell their stories with the greatest perspicuity. In the first simple ages of painting there was no display of the technicalities of art; they were indeed unknown. The holy truths of Christianity were told with sincerity, in pictures filled with natural expression and purity of sentiment. The works of Cimabue, Giotto, etc., were carried in procession to the churches, there to remain, to enlighten the ignorant and to add to the fervours of the devout.¹¹²

The study of the Primitives frequently revealed that the masters of the sixteenth century were deeply indebted to their predecessors, whose art contained the germ, the embryo of the grand style. This was Wilkie's discovery. He wrote to his friend, the painter William Collins, that he, Phillips and Hilton agreed

that the only Art pure and unsophisticated, and that is worth study and consideration by an artist, or that has the true object of Art in view, is to be found in the works of those masters who revived and improved the art, and those who ultimately brought it to perfection. From Giotto to Michael Angelo expression and sentiment seem the first things thought of, whilst those who followed him seem to have allowed technicalities get the better of them, until, simplicity giving way to intricacy, they seem to have painted more for the artist and the connoisseur than for the untutored apprehensions of ordinary men.¹¹³

¹¹². Quo. Leslie, *Life of Constable*, *op.cit.*, p.291. Constable gave a series of six lectures between 1833 and 1836, at the Hampstead Assembly Rooms, the Royal Institution, and at Worcester.

¹¹³. 3 December, 1825. Allan Cunningham, *op.cit.*, vol ii, p.197. Cf. letter, 2 April, 1826, "From Giotto to Raphael, while art was looking upwards, it seems only used as a vehicle for story and expression; but in its decline, from the Carracci to Mengs, the display of art in all its intricacies seems to take the lead of every other sentiment". *Ibid.*, p.276.

The early painters were thus not valuable just for their contribution to painting in a technical sense. What mattered was the new power over the mind and feelings of man expressed in their art.

This was Thomas Phillips' theme in his account of the revival of Italian painting. His lectures were delivered between 1827 and 1832. The first two were on the history of the Florentine school. His Preface shows how England's isolation during the Napoleonic wars retarded the development of interest in the Primitives. Phillips relates how he studied the principles and history of painting before the re-opening of the Continent, but he had not been prepared for two important discoveries which he made in Italy. One of these was the emotional and intellectual power of Michelangelo. The other was "the propriety, indeed, I may say the perfection of feeling and understanding mingled with the imperfection to be found in the works of the early painters".¹¹⁴ And he found this same feeling, combined with the beauties of finished painting, in the works of Raphael and Michelangelo. The style of Cimabue and Giotto was not, as commonly thought in England, meagre and dry.

It is the true, the genuine source of historical painting; that which controlled the Florentine school to the days of Raffaele; who but completed it, or brought it to perfection. And if to portray a history with feeling and with clearness, to convey sentiment, and thus attract and engage the mind, employing imitation with breadth and simplicity, be the true object of art; then the praise which belongs to him who aims at effecting this end is Giotto's.¹¹⁵

114. Lectures on the History and Principles of Painting (London, 1833), p.xi.

115. Ibid., pp. 36-7.

In Phillips' interpretation there is no question of there being a conflict between sentiment and the Antique. He emphasizes the importance of classical influences on the initial revival, while the abandonment of mere imitation for "ideal excellence of form and character"¹¹⁶ he ascribed to Antique discoveries. The concentration on the Florentines was not simply because their contribution to the technical progress of art was greatest. It was also because their aim was highest, the "display of the mind of man through the medium of his bodily form",¹¹⁷ and because they were strong where the English school was weak, that is, in design. Like Fuseli and Ottley, Phillips had no time for the gilding, the picturesque details, later to be found so charming. There is no trace of mediaevalism in his taste. Art declined between Giotto and Masaccio, when painters added ornament to the destitution of sentiment, while the painters who came between Masaccio and Ghirlandaio, like Fra Angelico, Filippo Lippi or Gentile da Fabriano are simply "ingenious artists".¹¹⁸ Phillips was less enthusiastic about Ghirlandaio than was usual -- he thought him a little deficient in breadth and imagination, but he praised Perugino and Signorelli.

David Scott was another who found in the earlier painters the source of the historical style. The older masters were venerable, stern, and true: from them Buonarrotti arose,

116. *Ibid.*, p.61.

117. *Ibid.*, p.85.

118. *Ibid.*, p.50.

having, as is the case with the great masters of all the schools, received materials of art at their hands".¹¹⁹

And Constable felt that because landscape painting was cradled in the lap of history painting at the time when its simplicity, grandeur and powers of expression were at their greatest perfection, it attained a dignity never wholly lost.¹²⁰

Peter Powell had found that the Giotto in the Arena chapel had "made an entire revolution" in his ideas concerning High Art.¹²¹ And the attitudes we have been describing reveal, if not a revolution, at least a change in ideas. The Grand Style was not to be defined or its works judged in terms simply of surface characteristics or subject matter. The important thing was the extent to which style and subject were expressive of the mind of the artist. Feeling, sentiment were the essential qualities of High Art, indeed of all art. Deficiency of expression and pre-occupation with technique became the principal grounds of criticism not only of those schools which did not generally satisfy academic canons -- the sixteenth-century Venetians, the seventeenth-century Dutch, -- but also of the leading academic painters themselves.

¹¹⁹. Quo. William Bell Scott, *Memoir of David Scott*, *op.cit.*, p.87. David Scott was puzzled by the fact that people in trecento paintings were disproportionately large in relation to their setting. He wondered whether it was because the artist was blind to size and perspective, "or was it understood as a portion of the essential principle in all high art, namely, the subordinating of the lesser to the greater?" Quo. *ibid.*, p.405.

¹²⁰. Leslie, *Life of Constable*, *op.cit.*, p.292.

¹²¹. Letter to C.R. Leslie, November, 1827. Quo. *Autobiographical Recollections by the Late Charles Robert Leslie, R.A.*, ed. Tom Taylor, 2 vols (London, 1839), vol. II, p.127.

The attack on the Bolognese was spreading. Thomas Uwins, for example, felt that the school depended more "on academic prowess than on correct thinking and feeling".¹²² Even more repellent were the later Italian academic painters. Landor declared: "I like Pietro Perugino a thousand-fold better than Carlo Maratta, and Giotto a thousand-fold better than Carlo Dolce".¹²³

But we find also the beginnings of a more critical attitude towards the later Raphael himself. David Scott found in the finest of Perugino's frescoes in the Sala del Cambio in Perugia an attention and degree of labour "which Raphael renounced only when he gave symptoms of deterioration".¹²⁴ Neither Landor nor Wiseman cared for the Transfiguration.¹²⁵ Criticism of Raphael was to be an element in the view which saw in the sixteenth century a dereliction of earlier moral and spiritual principles. An early instance of this view we find in a letter from Wordsworth to Haydon. Haydon, as we have seen from his comments on the early pictures in the Louvre, was not

122. Quo. Memoir of Thomas Uwins, op.cit., vol.i, p.360. Cf. letter, 24 December, 1826, where he says that "the cold, heartless compositions of Guido, and the sprawling, unmeaning, tasteless assemblages of Domenichino, are not the things for my money". Ibid., p.179.

123. Imaginary Conversations, 6 vols (London, 1801), vol.iii, p.251.

124. Quo. William Bell Scott, Memoir of David Scott, op.cit., p.419.

125. For Landor, see Diaries. Reminiscences. and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson, ed. Thomas Sadler, 2 vols (London, 3rd ed., 1872), vol.ii, p.102. For Wiseman, see Wilfrid Ward, Cardinal Wiseman, op.cit.

unsympathetic.¹²⁶ He praised a number of the older masters in his account of the revival of painting for the seventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica in 1837. Had Haydon been to Italy he might have found in the Primitives the germs of Raphael and Michelangelo. But instead, there is a gulf separating Raphael from the older painters. The full flowering of his genius came only when he broke from Perugino, a great man in his way, but "something of a Goth".¹²⁷ This inspired a protest from Wordsworth, who wrote to Haydon, that for all his defects Perugino, in simplicity and depth of expression,

deserved to be looked up to by Raphael to the last of his days. The Transfiguration would have been a much finer picture than it is if Raphael had not at that period of his life lost sight of Perugino and others of his predecessors more than he ought to have done.¹²⁸

In the growing interest in the Primitives we find the beginnings of the belief that they might be of relevance to British art and taste. Thomas Uwins felt that the "thoughts" of Cimabue, Giotto and others of their age "would be sufficient to inoculate any country with good taste, provided they were fairly published and circulated".¹²⁹ Wilkie wanted copies made of the Arena chapel frescoes for

¹²⁶. In 1810 he had compared a head of Giotto's with the Elgin marbles. 21 June, 1810, Diary of Benjamin Robert Haydon, op.cit., vol.i, p.166. The "Giotto" was probably the Spinello Aretino fresco fragment, now in the National Gallery.

¹²⁷. B.R. Haydon and William Hazlitt, Painting and The Fine Arts, op.cit., p.159.

¹²⁸. Letter, 28 July, 1838. Letters, op.cit., p.955.

¹²⁹. Letter, 11 April, 1826. Quo. Memoir of Thomas Uwins, op.cit., vol.ii, p.330. Cf. vol.i, p.101.

the students at the Royal Academy.¹³⁰ It was felt that the study of the older masters would encourage painters to concentrate on the intellectual side of art, rather than be content with the display of mechanical dexterities. Of course they were not to imitate their defects, as the modern Germans had done.

One British painter who seems to have made a study of the technique of the Primitives is Turner. He was in Italy in 1819, and again in 1828-29, when he shared a studio with Eastlake in Rome. What seems to have especially interested him was their colour system, and the pale, brilliant colours of his paintings after 1829 owe something to these studies.¹³¹ The only painter at this time to be consistently likened to the Primitives was Thomas Stothard. Back in 1807 his Procession of Chaucer's Pilgrims had been thought like a work of Chaucer's time, because of its simplicity and lack of affectation.¹³² Turner called him the "Giotto of England",¹³³ and Maria Callcott compared him with Botticelli as well as with Giotto.¹³⁴ The comparison seems rather odd, especially since Stothard was never in Italy. But the resemblance was thought to be one of spirit rather than style. Stothard was a man universally loved

130. Allan Cunningham, op.cit., vol.ii, p.369.

131. See John Gage, Colour in Turner: poetry and truth (London, 1969), pp.95-6.

132. Thomas Hoppner in The Artist (6 June, 1807), p.14.

133. Leslie, Autobiographical Recollections, op.cit., vol.i, p.150.

134. For the comparison with Botticelli, see R.E. Gotch, op.cit., p.264. For the comparison with Giotto, see Giotto's Chancel in Padua, op.cit., p.2.

for his gentleness and simplicity.

In 1820 Eastlake observed:

The style of Raffaele in his first works, of his master Perugino, of Massaccio, and others, is a union of the Italian and Gothic: it is the style of the middle ages: it is romantic and not classical.¹³⁵

In a similar vein Maria Callcott wrote, after seeing the Boisserée collection in Munich:

I half suspect a revolution in Art, and that we shall be in danger of too great a revolution from the classical to the romantic, in Painting as well as in Poetry.¹³⁶

Eastlake and Maria Callcott have labelled the art of the Primitives, and the taste for it, as "romantic", and opposed this to the "classical". The Primitives were sometimes compared to the English "romantic" poets. Leigh Hunt found a Chaucerian quality in the Campo Santo frescoes -- there was "the same bookish, romantic, and retired character".¹³⁷ And Keats, after looking at Lasinio's engravings of the same frescoes at Haydon's house, did not think he "ever had a greater treat out of Shakspeare -- full of Romance and the most tender feeling".¹³⁸ "Romantic" is probably the best single word to describe the growing

-
135. London Magazine (January, 1820), p.48.
 136. Letter, 20 September, 1827. Quo. R.B. Gotch, op.cit., p.260.
 137. The Autobiography of Leigh Hunt: with reminiscences of friends and contemporaries, 3 vols (London, 1850), vol.iii, p.42.
 138. Letter, 31 December, 1818. The Letters of John Keats, 1814-1821, ed. Hyder Edward Rollins, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 1930), vol.ii, p.19.

taste for the Primitives. It covers their appeal as products of the Middle Ages, as works free from academic conventions, natural and unaffected, and lastly, as works which were expressive, truthful and sincere. What we do not in general find at this time is a taste for their works as an expression of religious feeling. With the exception of a few people religion is mentioned only as a source of patronage and subject matter. This is the principal distinction between attitudes until the mid-1830s and thereafter.

Although we are principally concerned with the early Italians, something should be said about attitudes towards the northern Primitives. Here too we find that interest is growing, but still confined to individuals. There is continued prejudice because of their failure to reach the higher regions of art through their ignorance of the Antique. Conscious deformity, and the unselective imitation of the minutiae of nature were other faults. On the other hand, their art was praised for its "truth of form, fidelity of character, and beauty of colour".¹³⁹ One painter who was becoming known at this time was Memling (or "Hemmelinck", as he was called then). In 1823 a painting attributed to him was exhibited for sale in Leicester Square, and created no little interest.¹⁴⁰ Visitors to Bruges went

139. Rev. John Thomas James, The Flemish, Dutch and German Schools of Painting (London, 1822), p.73.

140. Two fragments from this altarpiece are now in the National Gallery (1302/3), attributed to "Simon Marmion". The altarpiece, from the ruined abbey of St Bertin near St Omer, was offered to the Royal Academy by its owner, Louis Francis, but the offer was declined. See William T. Whitley, Art in England, 1821-1837 (Cambridge, 1930), p.34. Francis Douce saw this painting, and was evidently much interested, as he wrote to a friend in Antwerp for information about Memling. Douce MSS, op.cit., c.24, f. 174 r.

into raptures over his paintings in the Hospital of
 St John.¹⁴¹

In this concluding section we shall see that the interest in the Primitives was neither scholarly, nor general. The two best informed were probably Ottley and Eastlake, and the literary output of both was extremely limited. The English contribution to the literature of art was very scanty, if we except the researches into Gothic architecture which were both extensive and thorough. There is virtually nothing being published on painting, apart from dictionaries and lectures. The arts only occasionally appear in journal articles.

By way of contrast we can list among the continental publications: Stendhals's Histoire de la peinture en Italie (1817), Count Cicognara's Storia della scultura (1813-1818), J.D. Fiorillo's Geschichte der zeichnenden Künste in Deutschland und den Vereinigten Niederlanden (1815-20), Waagen's Über Hubert und Johann van Eyck (1822), von Rumohr's Italienische Forschungen (1827-31), K. Schnaase's Niederländische Briefe (1834), A.M. Didron's Iconographie chrétienne (1835), Alexis-François Rio's De la poésie chrétienne (1836), Pietro Selvatico's volume on the Arena chapel, published in the same year, and Franz Kugler's Handbuch der Geschichte der Malerei (1837) -- and the list is in no way exhausted.

141. See, e.g., Mrs Charles Stothard, Memoirs, including Original Journals, Letters, Papers and Antiquarian Tracts of the late Charles Alfred Stothard F.R.S. (London, 1825), pp. 595-60.

What do we have in England? Publications that considered the history of the revival of art can be counted on one hand. First, there was the Reverend John Thomas James's The Italian Schools of Painting (1820), followed by The Flemish, Dutch and German Schools of Painting (1822). They are principally catalogues of the different schools, with a brief history of each attached. The Italian history is little more than a reduction of Lanzi, but the Rev. James does at least show some sympathy with the earlier painters. Then we have Thomas Phillips' Lectures and Haydon's essay, and to these may be added Ottley's notes to his reproductions and Fuseli's unfinished history which was published with his biography in 1831. The principal sources for these works are Vasari, Sercoux d'Agincourt, and the late eighteenth-century Italian historians, Lanzi especially. An English translation of his Storia pittorica, by Thomas Roscoe, the son of William Roscoe, was published in 1828. Another, much shortened, version by the Rev. G.W.D. Evans appeared in 1831. He gave only such parts "as might seem most likely to interest the English reader",¹⁴² so the early history of the different schools was cut drastically, with the exception of the Florentine school.

These few efforts were hardly sufficient to stimulate a more general interest in the Primitives. The opportunities

142. Lanzi's History of Painting in Upper and Lower Italy 2 vols (London, 1831), vol.1, p.111. This version appeared also in his The Classic and Connoisseur in Italy and Sicily, 3 vols (London, 1837).

for the ordinary educated person, even if he were interested in art, were extremely limited. There was little for him to read. Reproductions were very expensive -- this was one reason why Ottley's publications were unsuccessful.¹⁴³ He had few opportunities of seeing original works in England, unless he happened to know a collector. At the spring exhibition of Old Masters at the British Institution the occasional Primitive was shown. Outside London, there was the collection in the Liverpool Royal Institution and at Christ Church, though this was hung in a dark library. There was certainly no thought of including earlier works in the National Gallery collection, which conformed to the prevailing taste for the seventeenth century. There were a few who criticized this omission. Thomas Dibdin thought that Ottley's pictures should be bought for the nation¹⁴⁴ and Samuel Rush Meyrick felt that it was a disgrace that there was no national collection on the lines of Ottley's and Francis Douce's, such as could be found in continental galleries.¹⁴⁵

The hundreds of people who flocked abroad with the re-opening of the Continent had opportunities for seeing Primitives. But they were not interested. Despite the fact that the more well-to-do of the middle classes were beginning to enjoy the delights of foreign travel, the pattern of the eighteenth-century Grand Tour remained

143. Ottley told Constable that he had lost a great deal by his publications. Diary entry, 3 July, 1824. Quo. Leslie, *Life of Constable*, *op.cit.*, pp.126-7.

144. Thomas Dibdin, *Reminiscences of a Literary Life*, 2 vols (London, 1836), vol.ii, p.115.

145. *The Doucean Museum*, *op.cit.*, p.2.

unchanged, and the taste and prejudices of the tourist were those of his aristocratic predecessors. Raphael, Correggio, Titian, the Bolognese, Salvator Rosa, Claude, Poussin, Carlo Dolci and Carlo Maratta were the painters most admired. In one respect however these travellers were different. What they looked for in pictures was sentiment, and they examined themselves for the effects on their own sensibilities. This was of course mostly posturing. It reflects the influence of Romantic criticism, but it was also indicative of a sense of insecurity before works of art. If one was rather ignorant, it was much easier to respond than to analyse, especially if one knew in advance what to respond to.

The ordinary traveller did not respond to the Primitives. The common attitude was expressed by Lady Morgan, who remarked how the paintings in the gallery at Bologna illustrated how art developed

from the attenuated forms, stiff joints, and sad countenances of the Cimabues, the Giotto's, and the Masaccios -- to the full-blown beauty, the moral animation, and magnificent stature of the Raphaels, Carracci, and Domenichinos.¹⁴⁶

And she marvelled how genius broke through and triumphed over the "unripened judgement, the bad taste, the profound ignorance, of the early painters in Italy".¹⁴⁷ Raphael's immediate precursors and even his contemporaries were contemptuously dismissed. John Bell, for example, thought Fra Bartolommeo's figures "as stiff and mechanical as those

146. *Italy*, 2 vols (London, 1821), vol. i, p. 294.

147. *Ibid.*, p. 295.

of Giotto".¹⁴⁸ Anna Jameson, who was to be very influential in the 1840s in directing attention to the earlier painters, conformed absolutely to conventional taste when she wrote her Diary of an Ennuyée (1826). She assumes that the frescoes by Luini and "others of his age" in the Brera were there as "curiosities, and specimens of the progress of the arts, for they possess no other merit -- none at least I could discover".¹⁴⁹

The traveller could not be blamed for his neglect. Paintings in churches were dirty, frescoes faded and peeling. They were hidden in chapels, unlit or seen only through flickering candlelight. Thomas Jefferson Hogg did something unusual when he went to look at the Assisi frescoes. He thought he was looking at "Pietro Perugino, Raphael and other great men",¹⁵⁰ but then the frescoes were "much defaced as to be hardly visible".¹⁵¹ Nor did the guide books do anything to direct the visitor's attention to the earlier painters. They did not encourage him to venture off the beaten track, and in view of the poor state of roads, the slowness of travel, and the fear of bandits, it was only the hardiest who undertook any speculative journey. Wiseman drew attention to this neglect of the Primitives in a review of two of the most popular guides, Mariana Starke's

148. Observations from Italy (London, 1825), p.239.

149. Diary of an Ennuyée (London, 1826), p.48.

150. Two Hundred and Nine Days, op.cit., vol.i, p.336.

151. Ibid.

Travels (1833)¹⁵² and William Brockedon's Road Book from London to Naples (1835).¹⁵³

The only exception to this general indifference was the Campo Santo at Pisa, which became as standard a sight in the Italian tour as the Colosseum in Rome. On the walls were frescoes of (as it was believed) Giotto, Buffalmacco, Simone Martini, Pietro Lorenzetti, Orcagna, Antonio Veneziano, Spinello Aretino, and Gozzoli. The whole series illustrated the revival and early progress of painting, which was its principal attraction. The frescoes themselves were for the most part thought to be grotesque and fantastical. Those whose interest went deeper were attracted in particular to the frescoes ascribed to Giotto, and to the Triumph of Death and Last Judgement of "Orcagna" -- the last was especially interesting for its Dantesque associations. The frescoes of Gozzoli, technically the most "advanced", were praised for the vividness of the narrative, the picturesque costumes, and the landscape and architectural backgrounds. The appeal of these paintings was enhanced by their romantic setting, adorning the walls of a graveyard, with the exotic buildings of the cathedral, baptistery, and Leaning Tower nearby. The Campo Santo was sufficiently well known for a diorama of it, showing the

152. This was first published as Letters from Italy (1800). An enlarged, revised edition re-titled Travels on the Continent appeared in 1820, which went through eight editions. A new edition, with another new title, was published in 1833.

153. This review, "Italian Guides and Tourists", was first published in the Dublin Review, vol. vi (January, 1839). It was re-printed in Wiseeman's Essays on Various Subjects, 3 vols (London, 1853)

frescoes and ancient monuments, to be exhibited at Regent's Park in the summer of 1832.¹⁵⁴ The popularity of the Campo Santo must to a great extent be attributed to Carlo Lasinio, who preserved and restored the frescoes, and made them known through his engravings. We have already noticed how he supplied Primitives to English collectors. George Scharf, writing in 1857, remarked how "in the capacity of cicerone to the English visitors who always flocked to the Campo Santo, he contributed in no slight degree to the prevalence of the taste which is now so general amongst us".¹⁵⁵

Lasinio's activity is an example of what was needed to make the interest in the Primitives more general. They lacked publicity and exposure: their works needed to be exhibited and reproduced, travellers had to be encouraged to go and look at old frescoes, information had to be provided in books and articles. But all this was in itself not enough, for the Primitives suffered serious drawbacks. There was little in the way of surface beauty to please the eye -- or so it seemed. The subject matter -- miracles and martyrdoms of unknown saints -- was unfamiliar. And paintings embodying image worship, superstition and Mariolatry were repugnant to the Protestant mind. It was through their associations that they could be made interesting, religious (not Catholic), historical, and literary associations. This is what the owner of a Portrait of Joan of Arc by Giotto,

154. See the Gentleman's Magazine (July, 1832), pp. 63-4.

155. George Scharf, A Handbook to the Paintings of Ancient Masters in the Art Treasures Exhibition, etc. (London, 1857), p. 4.

which appeared in an anonymous sale of 1831 tried to do.¹⁵⁶ Lastly, the modern relevance of the early masters had to be shown. From the late 1830s interest in the Primitives did become more general, and this reached fashionable proportions in the 1840s and 1850s. This was due in part to the tremendous growth of popular interest in the arts which was allied to increasing anxiety about the state of art and design in the country, and in part to a German vogue and the Anglican and Catholic revivals. Out of this rather curious combination of circumstances was created the taste for the Primitives of the mid-nineteenth century.

¹⁵⁶. Sale catalogue (Edward Foster, 30 June, 1831), lot 58.

CHAPTER IIIThe Beginnings of the Fashion for the Primitives

The painter Solomon Hart recorded a little anecdote which provides a useful introduction to the change in the pattern of British interest in the Italian Primitives in the third and fourth decades of the nineteenth century. In the early 1840s Hart paid a visit to Rome. While taking leave of John Gibson, the famous English sculptor resident there, an Italian professor appeared in his studio with a portfolio of drawings, poor imitations of Perugino (so thinks Hart). However:

Gibson observed, that if the professor wished him to persuade English visitors to buy them, 'Know that my countrymen are too ignorant of the fine arts, to justly estimate works of so great excellence as these'.¹

Not so, Hart comments. Gibson had been too long in Italy, and was thus ignorant of the improvement in public art taste in England. The fact was -- as Hart here points out -- that interest in the Primitives was beginning to spread. No longer was the taste confined to a tiny minority of art lovers. More and more of the reading and reasonably educated public were discovering that the Primitives were artists one ought to know something about, that at the very least their paintings were "interesting", and that indeed in the eyes of some enthusiasts a just appreciation of their merits would be beneficial to British

1. The Reminiscences of Solomon Alex. Hart, R.A., ed. Alexander Noble (London, 1887), p.119.

art, taste and morals. In a word, the Primitives were becoming fashionable. What is distinctive about the fashion is the tendency to view them within the context of an idealized Middle Ages and to extol them as Christian painters. This is by no means the only way in which they were seen, but it predominates in the sense that other views expressed tend to be modifications of, or reactions against, this image. Certainly, the Primitives and those most enthusiastic about their art were commonly referred to as "Early Christians" or "Purists".

The fashion for the Primitives coincided with a rise of interest in modern German culture and thought. The conjunction was not fortuitous. The British reading public was becoming aware of German scholarship in the fields of philosophy, history, theology and art; was discovering the works of German creative writers; was learning of the existence of a school of modern German art that commanded European-wide respect. The 1830s and 1840s saw a significant increase in articles on German literature in English magazines, and in the translation of German works into English.² More and more travellers visited Germany, which began to rival Italy as the mecca for tourists.

Publications, like Mrs Jameson's Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad (1834), helped to popularize Germany and German things. The reputation of German scholars attracted

2. See German Literature in British Magazines, 1750-1860, ed. Bayard Quincy Morgan and A.R. Hodfield (Madison, Wisconsin, 1949) and Bayard Quincy Morgan, A Bibliography of German Literature in English Translation, University of Wisconsin Studies in Language and Literature, no. 10 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1922).

students there. Young Richard Monckton Milnes in 1830 was following the example of a number of his Cambridge friends, when he decided his father's suggestion that he should go to Paris to improve his French accent was frivolous, and chose instead to study in Germany at the University of Bonn for three months.³

It was also a sign of the times that the publisher John Murray, in rejecting Ruskin's Modern Painters - the public cared little about Turner, he said - strongly urged his "writing on the German School, which the public was calling for works on".⁴ One reviewer in 1838 had confessed ignorance of the German painters,⁵ but this was a situation rapidly changing, partly because of the fresco experiment in the new Houses of Parliament and the interest in modern German frescoes. The Art-Union in its first year of publication in 1839 contained a number of articles on the modern Germans, and over the next twenty years or so kept the public informed about their work. This journal also published reproductions of German paintings and engravings. Although some original pictures came into the country, it was principally through reproductions and book illustrations that their work became known.

-
3. James Pope-Hennessy, Monckton Milnes: The Years of Promise 1809-1851 (London, 1949), pp. 25-6.
 4. Letter from John Ruskin senior to W.H. Harrison, 31 March, 1847. Quo. The Works of John Ruskin, ed. E.T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn, 39 vols (London, 1903-12), vol. iii, p. xxxii (Hereafter referred to as Ruskin, Works).
 5. Francis Egerton in the Quarterly Review, vol. lxii (July, 1858), p. 155.
 6. This journal was called the Art-Union Journal until 1849. Thereafter it was known as the Art Journal.

The fashion for the Primitives was linked to this interest in Germany. In this connection the role of Prince Albert should be mentioned. His marriage to Queen Victoria in 1840 no doubt influenced the German vogue in Britain. He himself was interested in the Primitives and collected their works. Through his involvement in the arts he was in a position to influence taste.

Another German who played a part in British art politics and activities was Dr Waagen. On his first visit in 1835 he gave evidence before the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture, when, among other things, he recommended the purchase of Primitives for the National Gallery. He returned to England in 1850 at the invitation of Eastlake (whom he had met in Berlin in 1828 and became friendly with on his first visit to London). On this and subsequent visits in 1851, 1854, 1856 and 1857 he stayed with the Eastlakes. The purpose of these visits was to revise and extend his work on art treasures in Britain. But he also contributed articles to the Art Journal, was a juror for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and helped in the selection of works for the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition, for which he wrote a guide. Dr Waagen was always to advocate an extension of appreciation of the earlier masters in England, although he dissociated himself from the more extreme manifestations of the taste.

That the interest in modern German painters helped to stimulate interest in those painters to whom they had returned for inspiration is clear. Thus we find the Art-Union commenting in 1844 that since "the rise of the modern

German school of art, attention has been more directly drawn to the works of the early masters".⁷ Furthermore, familiarity with the ideals of the Germans made people aware of the Christian image of early painting. To understand the taste of the Germans, writes the Art-Union in 1839,

we must seek to evoke that calm and majestic form of art which belongs to early times, and first issued from the quiet sanctuary of monastic retirement. There is in it the solemnity which springs from a deep religious feeling, half materializing the objects of its worship, and the simplicity natural to those who live detached from the world, and debarred from all part in its varied interests and pursuits. We must follow the solitary to his cell, and see him undisturbed by the distractions that occupy and interest other men, giving his whole soul to realize the one class of ideas with which his mind is filled -- imbued himself with solemn religious fervour, it is stamped on his works.⁸

The German contribution to the fashion for the Primitives was in some instances quite direct. In the early 1830s German agents were filling Oxford with tinted lithographs of mediaeval paintings.⁹

The influence of German writers and scholars was also recognized. The historian and collector, James Dennistoun, for example, refers to the "revival of feeling for religious art, of late commenced by the Germans, and their persevering zeal in illustrating its neglected monuments...".¹⁰

7. Art-Union (September, 1844), p.267.

8. Ibid. (November, 1839), p.168.

9. T. Mozley, Reminiscences Chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement, 2 vols (London, 1862), vol.1, p.32.

10. James Dennistoun, Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino, illustrating the arms, arts, and literature of Italy, from 1440 to 1570. 3 vols (London, 1851), vol.11, p.173.

E.J. Millington in the preface to his translation of Friedrich von Schlegel writes of how his descriptions of the paintings of the old masters unfolds all the simplicity and purity of Christian art.¹¹ German appreciation of the recondite beauties of the old masters was indicative of their profound thinking and elevated view of art in general. Although there was the suspicion that their intelligence was too theoretical and abstract, and that they were rather too given to vague wafflings, it was also felt that English art lovers could learn much from the Germans. A.H. Layard summarized the contribution of German writers to the study of art in 1861:

They were, however, the first to point out the importance of art to the philosophical study of the history of the human mind, and, consequently, of human civilization. They first treated the fine arts as outward manifestations of the various phases of man's development and of the condition of society at any given period, showing how they followed the course of this development, and did not in any way promote it. Thus the study of the arts became invested with a double interest. Whilst affording exquisite pleasure to the cultivated taste and delightful and pure enjoyment to all, they furnish, at the same time, important illustrations of the history of our race.¹²

It was to both German writers and the early Italian painters that Layard, three years earlier, had attributed an advance in British art appreciation since the 1830s. A juster appreciation of the true principles and ends of the art, partly derived from a more intimate acquaintance

11. Works of Frederick von Schlegel, op.cit., p.v.

12. Quarterly Review, vol.cix (April, 1861), p.465.

with the great works of the early Italian painters, and partly from the influence of German writers, began to prevail".¹³

Early evidence of such influence at a fairly popular level is to be found in articles contributed to the Art-Union at the beginning of the 1840s by "S.R.H.". In 1843 he declared that "matter is not beautiful in itself, but derives this character from being made the expression of MIND".¹⁴ Literature and art reflect the character of a nation; they are the symbolical expression of national thought. A year earlier he wrote that "words, the statue, the temple, or the canvass are but signs" communicating the spirit of art unto man.¹⁵ This was in a review of the English translation of the first edition of Franz Kugler's handbook to the Italian schools of painting, published in 1837. The translation appeared in 1842. It was followed in 1846 by a translation of his handbook to the German, Flemish and Dutch schools.¹⁶ These were the first of many English editions of Kugler's handbooks which retained their popularity for more than half a century.¹⁷

13. Ibid., vol. civ (October, 1858), p.318.

14. Art-Union (March, 1843), p.55.

15. Ibid. (April, 1842), p.75.

16. A Hand-Book of the History of Painting from the age of Constantine the Great to the present time ... Part I. The Italian Schools of Painting, ed. with notes by G.D. Eastlake (London, 1842). A Hand-Book of the History of Painting by Dr Franz Kugler. Part II. The German, Flemish, and Dutch Schools of Painting, ed. with notes by Sir E. Head (London, 1846).

17. Bayard Quincy Morgan lists six editions of the handbook to the Italian schools between 1842 and 1902. See a Bibliography of German Literature, op.cit., pp.315-c.

The editor of the Italian Schools of Painting, Charles Eastlake, was a mediator between German art historical writing and the English reading public at this time. In 1840 he had reviewed Passavant's Rafael von Urbino for the Quarterly Review. The most valuable and original portion of the work Eastlake claimed was that relating to the early Raphael. He shows how Raphael was influenced by the social, political and artistic milieu of Urbino. Eastlake is also conscious that he is introducing his readers to a school of painting, the Umbrian, and an interpretation of the history of Italian painting as yet scarcely known. This divided the history of Italian art into two distinct strands. The first strand, religious in inspiration, was dominant in the fourteenth century especially in Siena, although the more progressive strand had its origins then with Giotto. This second strand became dominant in the fifteenth century, but the first survived in central Italy and in particular artists, notably Fra Angelico, the best representative of "the Christian painters who underrated the physical elements of art".¹⁸ The two tendencies, expressive of spirit and form, of inward and outward life, were fused in Raphael.

This was the interpretation of the history of Italian painting basically followed by Kugler, although his approach was even more philosophical. The book contained the most detailed account of the early Italians in English since the translation of Lanzi in 1828. It introduced readers to the

18. Quarterly Review, vol. lxxvi (June, 1840), p. 13. The article was re-printed in Contributions to the Literature of the Fine Arts, 28. cit.

researches of French, Italian and German scholars over the thirty years from when Lanzi had first appeared.¹⁹

The story of the revival of painting is still one of progress. Unlike the Italian historians Kugler made some attempt to relate developments in Italy with what was happening north of the Alps. For example, he mentioned that Giotto's style coincided with Gothic architecture.²⁰ Progress towards perfection was not simply the result of successive triumphs in the mastery of the means of imitation through the study of nature and the Antique, but also of advances in the expression of the mind and feelings of the individual artist. The latter predominated in the fourteenth century. Because of the spirit of the age the feelings and thoughts expressed were necessarily religious. This he labelled the "subjective principle". The former came to the fore in the fifteenth century. This was the "objective principle".²¹ The beginning of the sixteenth century saw the fusion of these two principles, and in "the

19. Eastlake in his preface comments that the most recent of the important literary sources referred to by Kugler were still little known in England (*The Italian Schools*, op.cit., p.ix). Examples of this research are Kugler's own work on the frescoes in S. Maria Incoronata, Naples, and E. Förster's studies of the frescoes in the Cappella S. Giorgio in Padua.

20. *Ibid.*, p.56.

21. English readers would have been unfamiliar with the use of "subjective" and "objective" in this particular sense. Eastlake in a long foot-note explains what these terms mean in German thought (*ibid.*, pp.41-2 n). Other words and phrases would also have had unfamiliar meanings in an art context, e.g., "motif", "lyrical", "plastic" vs. "pictorial". All these terms were absorbed into the vocabulary of English art criticism, not without opposition. George Darley, for example, in a review in the *Athenaeum* (12 March, 1842), took very strong exception to his "charlatan epithets" (p.220).

master-works of this new period we find the most elevated subjects, represented in the noblest form, with a depth of feeling never since equalled".²² Thereafter painting declined. What would still have been fairly new to English readers was the negative evaluation of the Bolognese and seventeenth-century painters. So we find Eastlake providing an explanatory note to Kugler's remark that one rarely found Bolognese works bearing the stamp of really satisfactory feeling.²³ Kugler had even ventured a "passing censure" at Raphael's Transfiguration. The work "pleases the eye, the understanding, but does not entirely satisfy the soul: in this respect the picture already marks the transition to the later periods of art".²⁴

In distinguishing the Sienese school for its devotional sentiment Kugler was also breaking new ground for English readers. Lanzi had made no mention of this. It was the lively school of a lively people, noted for its gaiety of style. Also new was his account of the Umbrian school, which had only recently been classified.²⁵ Formerly central Italian painters had been split between the Florentine and Roman schools. The religiosity of this school is stressed.

Kugler's criticism of earlier painters is generally positive -- he tends not to dwell on the "defects". Eastlake indeed warned readers that Kugler was sometimes too indulgent

22. The Italian Schools, op.cit., p.173.

23. Ibid., p.393 and n.

24. Ibid., p.305.

25. By von Ranzohr in his Italienische Forschungen (1827).

with the early Italians.²⁶ His analysis of Duccio is so enthusiastic as to call forth a protest from Eastlake.²⁷

Kugler's emphasis on originality and self-expression reflects the influence of German Romanticism, as does his interpretation of fourteenth-century painting and the Umbrian school. The subjective tendency so prevalent in the fourteenth century

stood in closest relation to all the tendencies of the period, when the so-named romantic principle had attained its highest development: art and poetry, monastic life and chivalry, the homage to saints and the homage to beauty, all the forms of life, bore the same stamp, and constituted in their harmony a wondrous and peculiar whole.²⁸

However between the first and second editions of The Italian Schools Kugler underwent a change of heart. The English translation of this second edition was published in 1851. In his introduction Kugler commented that the original handbook had appeared at the end of a period begun by Wackenroder, and that it was now apparent that the romantic conception was too limited in its view. One effect of this reaction was the omission of the passage just quoted. Another was a more critical appraisal of the Umbrian painters now chastised for their too exclusive attachment to spiritual and devotional sentiment. Where previously Kugler had been moved by their deep feeling he now declared that the expression of "semi-wofull ecstasy" of Perugino's saints soon

26. The Italian Schools, op.cit., p.ix.

27. Ibid., pp.27-8 and p.38 n.

28. Ibid., p.44.

palled on the spectator.²⁹ In Germany there had indeed been a reaction against an exclusive attachment to the Primitives.³⁰

However in England it is towards the end of the 1830s that ideas and tastes originally formulated in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century become influential. According to the Edinburgh Review in 1838 painting in its early days was "something of a priesthood as well as a profession".³¹ Because art was the handmaid of religion, artists painted from the most elevated motives, and their art was invested with a lofty character. The publication most influential in disseminating a Romantic-mediaeval-religious interpretation of the history of early Italian painting was Alexis-François Rio's De la poésie Chrétienne (1836). But firstly the reasons for the appeal of such an interpretation must be explored.

One response to the rapid and far-reaching transformation which English society was undergoing in the 1830s was a nostalgic turning back to the past for spiritual, moral and social values and for relief from the pressures and ugliness of the modern world. Symptomatic of this state of mind was the Oxford Movement, which sought to reform and revitalize

²⁹ Kugler's Handbook of Painting. The schools of painting in Italy, 2 vols. (London, 1851), vol.1, p.255.

³⁰ According to Count Raczynski, Prussian diplomat and author of a history of modern German art, the real passion for old pictures affected Germany only from 1815 to 1825 (von Holst, op.cit., p.250).

³¹ Edinburgh Review, vol.lxxvii (July, 1838), p.389.

the Anglican church by a revival of the pure, incorrupt doctrines of the primitive Church. Its political counterpart was the far less influential Young England movement, with its idealization of a chivalrous, ordered and benevolent feudal age.

It was in the Middle Ages that ideals of harmony, peace, piety and beauty were realized. In the words of one ardent mediaevalist, Kenelm Digby, they were

ages of highest grace to men; ages of faith ...
ages of sanctity ... ages of vast and beneficent
intelligence ... ages of the highest civil
virtue ... ages of the noblest art ... ages of
poetry ... ages of more than mortal heroism
... ages of majesty.³²

Love of the Middle Ages was accompanied, not surprisingly, by deepening sympathy for its art. Pugin began a new phase of the Gothic revival in his efforts to understand Gothic principles of construction and to produce buildings which were archaeologically correct. The Mediaeval revival in the arts was not confined to architecture, but is to be found also in the new impulse given to stained glass, manuscript illumination, embroidery of church vestments, and other mediaeval crafts.³³ This interest gave further stimulus to

³² *Mores Catholici: or, Ages of Faith*, 3 vols. (London, 1845-7), vol. 1, pp. 1-2. This was originally published in eleven volumes, between 1831 and 1842.

³³ "Arts which had slept for centuries have been rediscovered during the last few years; antiquarian investigation has placed before the public examples of the industrious talent of our ancestors, and modern science has originated means for producing similar works with unheard of facility. The light which has recently been thrown on the fabrication of stained glass, of enamel, of niello, of embossed leather, and many other Arts of mediaeval birth, has proved successful in furnishing a variety of vehicles for the infusion of the beautiful, and a large field for the efforts both of designer and manufacturer". *Art Journal* (January, 1849), p. 31.

articles and books on the arts of the Middle Ages, and to the formation of public and private collections of mediaeval artefacts.³⁴ We find also much greater concern over the preservation and restoration of monuments and relics from the Middle Ages. Intimately involved with questions of restoration and revival was the Cambridge Camden Society (later known as the Ecclesiological Society) founded in 1839. The Society exercised considerable influence over Anglican church building, decoration, and renovation through the activities of its members and the pronouncements of its journal, the Ecclesiologist.³⁵ To some extent interest extended to include British mediaeval painting, but, as I have said in an earlier chapter, remains

34. Although there were a few private collectors of mediaeval art works from the mid 18th century on, it was not until a century later that their appeal began to spread. Important buyers around the middle of the nineteenth century were Hollingworth Magniac, John Charles Robinson, and George Salting. Lord Ashburnham formed an outstanding collection of illuminated manuscripts. The sale of the Ralph Bernal collection in 1855 brought important works onto the market, though the prices fetched were still quite low. An interesting sidelight on this interest was the enormous collection formed by the architect Lewis Cottingham, containing a mixture of original examples, plaster casts and other copies of mediaeval and Tudor workmanship. It was sold in 1851, some of the plaster casts ending up in the Victoria and Albert Museum. In the public sphere, England was very slow in following the French example of a collection of national monuments. The British Museum had very few examples of mediaeval art works, and it was not until the establishment of the South Kensington Museum that the British Government began buying in this area. On the subject generally, see Gerald Reitlinger, Objets d'Art Prices, op.cit. On illuminated manuscripts, see A.N.L. Munby, Connoisseurs and Mediaeval Miniatures 1750-1850 (Oxford, 1972).

35. On the Ecclesiological Society, see James F. White, The Cambridge Movement. The Ecclesiologists and the Gothic Revival (Cambridge, 1962).

were too few to be of any significance.³⁶ And continental works -- the paintings of the Flemish, German and Italian Primitives -- were the best surviving examples of the mediaeval spirit in that particular field.

Although there is nothing particularly new in the appeal of the Primitives as mediaeval artists, this interest is now much further extended. The Art Journal in 1861 was to note how in recent years there had

grown up an ardent love for mediaeval works, a profounder study of olden times, a fuller and finer appreciation of those ancient pictures which once repelled by their rudeness, but now win through their simple, unsophisticated beauty.³⁷

More significant was the shift in the nature of the appeal of the Middle Ages and mediaeval art. Where mediaeval art had once appealed because it was other-worldly, its attraction was now as an expression of a particular kind of society and mentality. Thus concepts developed originally in Germany in the late eighteenth century in reaction to French cultural and political domination now found a congenial home in the very different social and intellectual milieu of mid

36. Evidence of interest in British mediaeval painting can be found in the Gentleman's Magazine, and the activities and publications of the Ecclesiologists, the Society of Antiquaries, and the British Archaeological Society. The interest sometimes found its way into less specialized publications. M.D. Wyatt contributed an article on thirteenth- and fourteenth-century painting to the Athenaeum (20 November, 1847), pp.1200-1, and Mrs Merrifield wrote an article on mural painting for the Art Journal (January, 1850), pp.2-4. The popular view was that the achievements of British mediaeval painters were comparable with those of their continental brethren, but that most of the evidence had been destroyed in the Reformation.

37. Art Journal (July, 1861), p.207.

nineteenth-century Britain.³⁸

Alexis-François Rio³⁹ belongs to the Romantic mediaevalism and Christian revivalism prevalent in French life and culture in the 1830s.⁴⁰ He was a friend of the comte de Montalembert, one of the leaders of the national campaign for the restoration of mediaeval monuments, and of Lamennais, priest and liberal reformer. Rio himself was, in the words of an English friend, an "Ultra-Royalist, an Ultra-Catholic".⁴¹ He had studied German philosophy in Paris, and continued his education in Munich, centre of a school of philosophy influenced by mysticism. Travels in Italy had drawn him to the Primitives, and he resolved to write a history of Italian art. De la poésie Chrétienne was published in 1836. The most important single influence on this book was von Rumohr's Italienische Forschungen.

38. On this point see René Wellek, Confrontations. Studies in the intellectual and literary relations between Germany, England, and the United States during the nineteenth century (Princeton, 1965), p. 50.

39. On Rio, see especially Sister Mary Camille Bowe, François Rio. Sa place dans le renouveau catholique en Europe. 1797-1874 (Paris, 1933).

40. Gautier ridiculed this movement in Mademoiselle de Maupin (1835). "But it is the fashion now to be virtuous and Christian; people have taken a turn for it. They affect Saint Jerome as formerly they affected Don Juan; they are pale and emaciated, they wear their hair apostle-wise, they walk with clasped hands and eyes fixed on the ground; ...

"Then they are Christians, and speak of the sacredness of art, the lofty mission of the artist, the poetry of Catholicism, Monsieur de Lamennais, the painters of the Angelic school ...", Mademoiselle de Maupin, trans. Alvan C. Bessie (London, 1930), p. 591.

41. Frances Bunsen, quo. in Life and Letters of Frances Bunsen, op.cit., vol. I, p. 572.

Rio indeed saw himself as a disciple of the German scholar.⁴² But he was much more rabidly "Purist" in bias than von Rumohr, who though deeply sympathetic to mediaeval religious art, certainly did not identify artistic merit with Christian feeling. Rio is both less scholarly and more propagandist than von Rumohr, and he belongs to the Wackenroder-Schlegel tradition.

De la poésie Chrétienne was the first volume of a much longer study which Rio projected.⁴³ It dealt only with painting in Florence, central Italy, and Venice. In terms of research Rio's most important contribution was in the area of Venetian art, which von Rumohr had not considered, and we find full discussion of the Vivarini, the Bellini, Carpaccio, Cima da Conegliano, Basaiti, etc. He also gave much more space to other non-Florentine artists than had been usual.

Two fundamental principles determined Rio's approach to his subject. The first was that since

the changes which the fine arts undergo are the surest index of those which are effected at the same time in the popular imagination, the study of them may lead to the most instructive results, and thus become susceptible of the highest interest, even in a philosophical point of view.⁴⁴

42. Epilogue à l'Art chrétien, 2 vols. (Paris, 1870), vol.ii, p.120.

43. A second volume, dealing with northern Italy appeared in 1855, entitled De l'Art chrétien. Between 1861 and 1867 an enlarged four volume edition of these two works appeared. The tone of this edition is much more tempered and balanced. However, since it is De la poésie Chrétienne which was influential in England, I have concentrated exclusively on that particular work.

44. The Poetry of Christian Art (London, 1854), p.399. I have used the English translation, which I have checked against De la poésie Chrétienne (Paris, 1836).

The second was that to be truly great art must be Christian in inspiration, and that Christian art was superior to the Antique because it rose beyond the material to the spiritual.

The flowering of Christian art began when Giotto threw off the Byzantine shackles. Lanzi, Seroux d'Agincourt, Kugler and von Rumohr had all emphasized the importance of the contribution of artists before Giotto to the revival, and the value of Byzantine art as the unconscious repository of the classical tradition. But Rio had nothing but contempt for the Byzantines, a race of heretics and degenerates in his view. Cimabue and others of his age were given brusque treatment on account of their servile dependence on Byzantine models. The revolution in Italian art is thus attributed solely to Giotto, and Rio re-asserts his essential originality. The fact that Giotto's revolution was in the direction of that naturalism which, in Rio's interpretation, was to bring about the downfall of Christian art, was not something for which that master was to be held responsible.⁴⁵ Giotto inaugurated the great era of Christian art, during which artists devoted themselves to "the poetic expression of the profound affections of the Soul",⁴⁶ their studios transformed as it were "into an oratory" amid these "pious

45. Von Rumohr is more consistent here since he rightly argues that Giotto's human bias did give Italian art a more profane direction. The fact is that the mystical art which Rio so extols owes much to the formal, solemn, hieratic images of Byzantine art, transmitted through Chinese painting into Umbrian art. See Marieluise Jengaro, "Della polemica Rio-Rumohr sul valore dell'arte cristiana", *L'Arte* (July, 1931), pp.351-4.

46. *The Poetry of Christian Art*, *op.cit.*, p.55.

preoccupations".⁴⁷ The ethereal beauty of their forms, the naive feeling, the innocence, the romantic passion effaced for Rio the technical imperfections of these old masters. Again, we find Orcagna listed as the principal of Giotto's successors.

But alas this idyllic age was not to last. Coincident with the technical progress of the arts in the fifteenth century was a decline in their religious inspiration, under the twin influence of naturalism and revived paganism. These were pursued as ends in themselves, instead of being made subservient to religion. The decay began with Masaccio, whose qualities therefore were "not of the highest order",⁴⁸ and continued in Uccello, Filippo Lippi (the seducer of nuns), Andrea Castagno (the murderer), Pesellino, Baldovinetti, Pollaiuolo and Filippino Lippi. Ghirlandaio is singled out as one of the few who turned naturalism to good account by making it serve a religious end. Corruption was hastened by Lorenzo dei Medici, until now extolled as a patron, but reviled by Rio as a villain. He commissioned profane subjects, and encouraged Antique studies and licentious behaviour.

In opposition to these developments there arose a mystical school of painting which sought to maintain the old Purist tradition. In Florence itself, the centre of worldliness and corruption, worked Fra Angelico, safe within the walls of his convent. Another Florentine, Gozzoli, in his earlier years revealed mystical inspiration, though this was lost somewhat after the death of Fra Angelico.⁴⁹

47. *Ibid.*, p.70.

48. *Ibid.*, p.64.

49. However the Campo Santo frescoes showed the right feeling. Rio supposed that Gozzoli could not have been too popular with the Medici (despite the Medici-Riccardi chapel frescoes in Florence) because his works were too

But it was chiefly outside of Florence, in Siena, Bologna, Venice, and the cities and towns of Umbria that Christian art still flourished. Sienese painters sowed the seed of excellence of the Umbrian school.⁵⁰ The founder of this school, said Rio, was Gentile da Fabriano, "who, next to Giotto has probably exercised the greatest influence on art",⁵¹ and its head was Perugino, "the prince of Christian art".⁵² Perugino's missionary influence spread to Bologna, where Francia created his celestial types, and to Venice. The holy influence Venice received from Umbria was reinforced by the influence of Northern artists, for the ultramontane schools had no classical monuments to lead them astray. Nearby Padua however succumbed to the Antique spirit, and the fact that Mantegna left no followers was additional proof of the fatal influence of paganism.

Meanwhile in Florence itself at the end of the century there was a desperate attempt at reform, under the leadership of Savonarola. And truly Christian were the paintings of Botticelli, Lorenzo di Credi, Fra Bartolommeo, and Raphael who, while he remained faithful to his Umbrian heritage "appears to have fixed the limits, beyond which Christian art, properly so called, has never since been able to advance".⁵³ It was too late, and in the sixteenth century paganism and naturalism came to dominate art.

exclusively Christian for them. (The Poetry of Christian Art, op.cit., p.154).

50. Rio did not accept the usual belief that Sienese painting declined in the fifteenth century. (Ibid., p.132).

51. Ibid., p.153.

52. Ibid., p.172.

53. Ibid., p.225.

Thus in Rio we find grafted onto the more conventional narrative of art's progress towards perfection a drama involving the forces of religion on the one hand and of paganism and naturalism on the other. Religious and moral, not artistic, criteria were the basis of his judgement of the worth of particular artists. A painter was worthy in Rio's eyes for the purity of his moral life and the sincerity of his religious feeling. Moreover, mystical painting, rising beyond the comprehension of ordinary connoisseurship, could be understood and appreciated only by those with a profound sympathy for the faith which inspired the artist.⁵⁴

Needless to say there is a good deal of inconsistency in Rio's thought, especially on the question of technical progress and Christian feeling. Sometimes he seems to suggest that technical accomplishment is incompatible with spiritual elevation. Fra Angelico's "imperfections" were "much less owing to any feebleness of execution in the artist, than to his indifference for everything which was foreign to the transcendental aim with which his pious imagination was pre-occupied."⁵⁵ The antagonism between religion, and naturalism and paganism is sometimes thought necessary. But Rio also suggests that the technical perfection attained in the sixteenth century need not have been accompanied by the abandonment of Christian feeling.

54. On this last point see The Poetry of Christian Art, ibid., p.123.

55. ibid., p.147.

Rio had great hopes for the success of his book, but in France it was a complete failure,⁵⁶ and only twelve copies were sold in five months. Nor did its publication awake much interest in Germany.⁵⁷ It was in England that De la poésie Chrétienne was to be most popular and influential. Although not translated into English until 1854 it was well known to English art lovers.

Rio's influence was in part due to his many contacts and friendships in England. His English connections were first formed when he was staying in Rome. There he became friendly with Dr Wiseman and Frances Bunsen, and through her he met Richard Monckton Milnes. Milnes, a rather eccentric and quixotic figure was to make his career in politics, but at this time he was living abroad, writing, and cultivating distinguished acquaintances. He was obviously receptive to Rio's theories of Christian art. His stay in Germany could well have introduced him to these ideas. Rio praised Monckton Milnes for giving his love to Christian, not classical Italy. The verses inspired by Walter Savage Landor's collection of Primitives which Monckton Milnes saw in Florence are full of Christian sentiment.⁵⁸

56. Sister Bowe suggests that this failure was due to the badly chosen title, and to the influence of classicism in France. (op.cit., pp.110-114). Montalembert published a long and enthusiastic review of Rio in his De Vandalisme et du Catholicisme dans l'Art (Paris, 1839). But this did not help.

57. See Sister Bowe, op.cit.

58. These were written for Landor's nine year old son. He attributes the boy's calm gravity to the influence of the art surrounding him, and we find lines such as:
 Is not each chamber of thy dwelling rife
 With miracles of purest painters old, --
 The Saints and Patriarchs of Art, -- who knew
 How best to make the Beautiful the True?

In 1832 Rio paid his first visit to England, where he met his wife to be. After his marriage he lived there from 1836 until 1841. Monckton Milnes introduced him into his wide circle of political and literary acquaintances.⁵⁹ Earlier, in 1835, he had busied himself in arranging the sale of De la poésie Chrétienne in England. He was successful in persuading two of his friends, Dr Wiseman and George Darley, to review the book.

In Catholic circles Rio most impressed mediaevalists like Kenelm Digby, Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, and Pugin. The first two men, who had met at Cambridge,⁶⁰ and who like Pugin were converts of the 1820s, knew both Rio and Montalembert, Kenelm Digby being especially intimate with

Thou hast them all for teachers; -- He is there,
The limner cowed, who never moved his hand
Till he had steeped his inmost soul in prayer:
[i.e., Fra Angelico]

Lord Houghton, Monographs, Personal and Social, op.cit., p.130.

59. Among these were Samuel Rogers, Lord Macaulay, Carlyle, Pennyson, Wordsworth, W.S. Lander, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Manning. One of Rio's closest friends was Charlotte Williams Wynn, a cousin of Monckton Milnes. She was an accomplished German scholar. According to Rio she knew German much better than he, and was versed in the most abstract works of the German philosophers. (Sister Bowe, op.cit., p.189). For her part, Charlotte Williams Wynn was deeply impressed with the strong devotional feeling expressed by Rio, whom she met in 1841. "His conversation was to me like some church bell -- it always produced a feeling of devotion in my mind". (Memorials of Charlotte Williams Wynn, ed. by her sister, London, 1877), p.10). She liked his De la poésie Chrétienne, "although I do not quite agree with him" (ibid., p.11).

60. For Kenelm Digby, see Bernard Holland, Memoir of Kenelm Henry Digby (London, 1919); for Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, see E.S. Purcell and Edwin de Lisle, Life and Letters of Ambrose Phillipps de Lisle, 2 vols (London, 1900).

the Catholic revivalists in Paris.⁶¹ In his Mores Catholici his vast compendium of mediaeval virtues, Digby refers to Rio's "charming book" on Christian art and his remarks that "truly during the middle ages, amongst painters the mystic clean of heart appeared conspicuous".⁶² And we find him declaring that in the Middle Ages the passion for the arts was "constantly allied with Christian fervour and the idea of salvation", and he continues:

Art has felt deeply the loss of this profound religious sentiment, and has been reduced to a mere mechanical display of skilful execution, indicating often the most offensive affectation, rather a mockery or a caricature than a just expression of the desire of the human soul.⁶³

Pugin acknowledged Rio's influence on the evolution of his thought. After reading De la poésie Chrétienne he made some important changes in the second edition of Contrasts.⁶⁴ Whereas in 1836 he had attributed the destruction of the Gothic style simply to Protestantism,

61. The lawyer and journalist Henry Reeve, met Rio at Benjamin Digby's house in Paris in 1835. He was much impressed with "the Catholic and untainted few who cherish, in their learned leisure, the traditions of aristocracy, monarchy, and Christianity". John Knox Laughton, Memoirs of the Life and Correspondence of Henry Reeve, 2 vols (London, 1898), vol.i, p.45.

62. Mores Catholici, op.cit., vol.ii, p.550.

63. Ibid., vol.i, p.305.

64. In his preface to the second edition of Contrasts, Pugin wrote: "When this work was first brought out, the very name of Christian art was almost unknown, nor had the admirable works of Montalembert and Rio appeared on the subject". Contrasts, reprint of 1841 text, intro. by H.R. Hitchcock, (Leicester University Press, 1969), p.iii.

in 1841 he decided it was the result of the decayed state of faith in Europe, of which Protestantism was one symptom and paganism another. And in foot-notes to the text we find comments such as:

Italy was the very focus of Christian painting during the Middle Ages, and produced a most illustrious race of Catholic artists, amongst whom are to be reckoned a Giotto, an Andrea Orcagna, a Fra Angelico, a Perugino, and a Raffaele.⁶⁵

Wiseman's position vis-à-vis Rio and the worship of the Middle Ages as the Christian age par excellence is more complex. We have seen how when living in Rome he came into contact with Purist ideas, and was sympathetic to them. The review of Rio, which he collaborated on for his journal, the Dublin Review, is full of praise.⁶⁶ Rio's elevated standpoint and vision of the high mission of art is commended, his account of the rise and fall of Christian art summarized without dissenting comment, and his view that the most purely Christian art is that in which the inferior elements of form and colour were subordinated to the religious idea agreed with. However Wiseman seems to have modified his thoughts on the subject over the next few years, because in another article in 1847 there is more about the technical deficiencies of mediaeval painting than its spiritual beauty, and this is within the context of a general criticism of the too exclusive attachment to the art of the

65. Contrasts, op.cit., p.12n.

66. Dublin Review, vol.1 (July, 1836), pp.435-60.

Middle Ages which had grown up.⁶⁷ This shift in sympathy relates to the bitter controversy which had developed in Catholic circles over the Gothic revival. On the one side were Pugin and his friends for whom the only Christian art and architecture was mediaeval; on the other hand were the later wave of converts, from the Oxford Movement, led by Newman and Manning, whose tastes were "Roman" and "pagan". And it was with this latter group that Wiseman identified himself, much to the disappointment of the mediaevalists.⁶⁸ Just as Pugin's ideas about Gothic architecture found a more sympathetic home in Anglican circles, so did the vision of mediaeval painting promulgated by Rio.

The leaders of the Oxford Movement who were fundamentally uninterested in art might not have had inclinations which would have predisposed them towards the Primitives.⁶⁹

67. Ibid., vol. xxii (June, 1847), pp. 486-515. Reprinted in Essays on Various Subjects, op.cit., vol. iii, pp. 355-392.

68. On Wiseman and the mediaevalists, see Denis Gwynn, Cardinal Wiseman (London, 1929), pp. 91-6. Newman pokes fun at the Gothic revivalists in his novel, Loss and Gain: The Story of a Convert (1848). One of the young Oxford undergraduates, Bateman, plans to attach a little cemetery to an ancient church he has just restored, and to have copies of the Campo Santo frescoes and sculpture around the burial-place.

69. James White, op.cit., pp. 20-24. The one exception was John Rouse Bloxam, whose innermost room at Magdalen College "bore a striking resemblance to an oratory", with a corona designed by Pugin hanging down from the ceiling, a triptych richly gilt on one side of the room, and religious pictures on the walls. (H. D. Middleton, Magdalen Studies (London, 1936), p. 51). He did not know whether his interest extended to include mediaeval paintings, although paintings attributed to Masaccio and Perugino were sold to a "Bloxam" at the Thomas Blayde sale of 1849. (Ms. notes against lots 101 and 196 of the Thomas Blayde sale catalogue (Christie's, 23-24 March, 1849).

But this taste was often associated with Tractarianism, and it is certainly true that those most interested in "Early Christian" art were very often High Church in their sympathies. Take for example William Gladstone, a High Churchman and at this time a Conservative. Gladstone and Rio were close friends,⁷⁰ and he read De la poésie Chrétienne in preparation for his tour of Germany and Italy of 1838-9. On an earlier tour in 1832 Gladstone's taste had been pretty conventional, but this time he looked at paintings in the light of Rio's principles and opinions. He wrote to Rio in November 1838 that he had found them very useful at Florence and elsewhere, and he hoped to learn more from them.⁷¹ The painters he now admired were Perugino, Fra Angelico and Lorenzo di Credi. The later Bolognese, Sassoferrato and Carlo Dolci, he thought insufficiently spiritual. Thus he was distressed to see in the Borghese Gallery in Rome a copyist at work on a Madonna and Child by Carlo Dolci, "when close by it were one by Francia, and a smaller one by Perugino, both very beautiful, the latter exquisite".⁷²

Of course Rio posed one problem for his Protestant sympathizers, and that was that they could not very well accept his argument that mediaeval art was great because it was Roman Catholic, and that only Roman Catholics could fully appreciate it. But this problem was not so difficult

70. Sister Mary Bowe, op.cit., pp.153-4.

71. Quo. ibid., p.158.

72. Diary entry, 9 January, 1839. The Gladstone Diaries. Volume II, 1833-39, ed. M.R. Foot (Oxford, 1968), p.555.

to resolve. As Francis Palgrave wrote in his article on "The Fine Arts in Florence" in the Quarterly Review, in September 1840, one did not have to believe that the excellence of the early painters was due to Roman Catholicism to agree that art had lost its truest support by the loss of religious feeling.⁷³ Still De la poésie Chrétienne was an "excellent work",⁷⁴ and Palgrave, a very religious High Churchman, was in sympathy with many of Rio's ideas.

There is no dissenting from the opinion that the deterioration and ultimate destruction of the mediaeval religious feeling, by the bigotry of modern classical taste, deprived the plastic and graphic arts of all their higher attributes and feelings. The talent became profane, inoperative, and unconstructive, often tending to direct evil.⁷⁵

Palgrave's anti-classicism is moral as well as religious in its basis. He was much offended by the "debasement of sensuality" of Antique and Antique-influenced art.⁷⁶ His Handbook to Northern Italy is characterized by fervent partisanship of the earlier masters and a puritanical anti-classicism. However in his evaluation of individual artists Palgrave does depart from Rio in some instances. For example, Palgrave, an historian, is more appreciative of Gozzoli, because of the way in which he recorded the people and customs of his time.⁷⁷

73. Quarterly Review, volume lxxvi (September, 1840), p. 351.

74. Ibid., p. 350n.

75. Ibid., p. 349.

76. Ibid., p. 350.

77. Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, etc. (London, 1844), p. 429.

Another travel book of the early 1840s which reveals an awareness of and sympathy with Rio (though not full acceptance) is Mary Shelley's Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842 and 1843. She remarks that "M. Rio satisfactorily proves that the modern art of painting resulted from the piety of the age in which it had birth".⁷⁸ She praises the spirituality, sincerity and truth of the earlier works she studies in churches and galleries. And at one point she decides that she prefers the earlier Raphael to the later. The Transfiguration does not afford her great pleasure, for "no face is inspired by holy and absorbing passion", and comparing this work with an early example in the gallery at Berlin she declares: "It is not the art of the painter I admire; it is his pure, exalted soul, which he incarnated in these lovely forms".⁷⁹

Another early example of Rio's influence is seen in Henry Drummond's Letter to Thomas Phillips, Esq. R.A. on the Connection between the Fine Arts and Religion, and the Means of their Revival, which was published in 1840.⁸⁰ He maintained that the true source of greatness in the arts

78. Rambles in Germany and Italy, in 1840, 1842, and 1843, 2 vols. (London, 1844), vol.ii, pp.140-41.

79. Ibid., vol.i, p.223. However she is not consistent. For somewhat later she remarks that she is not disposed to regret the alteration in Raphael's style, and that in both his Christian and Pagan styles he is superior to every other painter. (Ibid., vol.ii, pp.222-3.

80. Henry Drummond was a wealthy banker, who was connected with and partly financed the Irvingite sect. The Irvingites believed that the Apocalypse was at hand, and developed a High Anglican ritual. They often remained worshippers within the Church of England. (Owen Chadwick, The Victorian Church Part I (London, 1966), p.36.

in any period has been religion, and that the only sincere and devout Christian can create great religious art. He summarizes Rio's account of the rise and fall of Christian art, in which he appears in full agreement:

As the knowledge of the mechanical parts of the art of painting advanced, still religion was the great principle which guided it, so that the artist, who had the consciousness of his high vocation, looked upon himself as the ally of the preacher; and in the continual struggle which mankind has to sustain against their evil inclinations he always took the side of virtue.⁸¹

But since their decline the effect of the arts in Italy has been, instead of "making holy men and women, santi e sante", to "habituate the eye and taste to scenes of indecency, which is one of the causes of the open dissoluteness of Italian society".⁸²

A further instance is The Ecclesiologist, which reviewed De la poésie Chrétienne in 1844. This review made up for its tardiness by its sympathetic analysis of the book.⁸³ Although there is not very much on painting in the pages of The Ecclesiologist, the journal followed a consistently Purist or Early Christian line.⁸⁴ And in 1844, it seems that an invitation to Rio to become an honorary member of the Society was considered. J.M. Neale,

81. Letter to Thomas Phillips, Esq. R.A. on the Connection between the Fine Arts and Religion, and the Means of their Revival (London, 1840), p.v.

82. Ibid., p.26.

83. Ecclesiologist, vol.iii (September, 1844), pp.181-4.

84. The Ecclesiologists were also interested in mediaeval paintings from an ecclesiological point of view, for the information they provided about Church vestments and fittings in the Middle Ages.

one of the founders, had met Montalembert in 1843, and probably through his influence the Count had been made an honorary member.⁸⁵ Montalembert wanted Rio to be asked to join too. Neale was not opposed to this, but it appears that other members of the Committee were, for on the 26th February we find Neale writing, "Wherein is Rio more objectionable than Montalembert?"⁸⁶ Probably it was felt that one Roman Catholic in the Society was one too many, and that there certainly should not be two. The Society was very sensitive to criticisms of popish sympathies, because many of its members were enthusiastic Tractarians. Again, as in the case of Dyce, Gladstone, Sir Francis Palgrave, and Henry Drummond we find an association of the Early Christian interpretation of mediaeval painting with High Church sympathies. Although most of the Ecclesiologists were interested principally in architecture, two of the Society's most active members, the Rev. J. Fuller Russell and Thomas Gambier Parry, formed important collections of Primitives. Ruskin, a staunch Evangelical, is very much the odd man out in the Purist camp.

So far our discussion of Rio's early influence in England has been limited to individuals or publications which, with the exception of the Murray Handbook to Northern Italy, were specialist in appeal and restricted in circulation. I want to turn now to the Athenaeum and George Darley's contributions, for these were of vital importance in creating a more general interest in the Primitives. Although Darley's

85. James White, op.cit., p.132.

86. Quo. Letters of John Mason Neale D.D., selected and edited by his daughter (London, 1910), p.72.

approach to their art is much less restricted than Rio's, nonetheless Rio's influence was very important.

In 1866 a correspondent to the Athenaeum wrote, in response to the remark that Mrs Jameson was the first to draw attention to the riches of the older Italian school:

Such is hardly the case. Thirty years ago ... there appeared in your own journal a continuous series of travelling letters, and detailed criticisms, written by that singular and unequal man of genius, George Darley, in which the attention of all thoughtful and true lovers of Art was called to the long and then too much neglected line of Raphael's predecessors. To these, myself, and it is only fair to assume, many besides me, were indebted for the direction of curiosity and study towards Giotto, Orcagna, Fra Beato, Francia, Perugino, and others of the memorable men whose pictures have since then become the fashion.⁸⁷

George Darley was indeed, as the correspondent says, a singular figure.⁸⁸ An Irishman, he was a poet, author of mathematical textbooks, and expert on Elizabethan literature. His eccentricity was well-known, H.F. Chorley describing him as "one of the most original human beings whom I have ever known".⁸⁹ He was also very shy and reserved, a dreadful stammer not making communication any easier for him, and he suffered from bouts of depression.

Darley went abroad in 1831, and travelled in France, Italy and Germany. From 1834 his letters began appearing in the Athenaeum, the first being from Rome in January, and

87. Athenaeum (5 January, 1866), p.22.

88. On Darley, see especially C. Collier Abbott, The Life and Letters of George Darley, Poet and Critic (London, 1926).

89. Henry Bathurstill Chorley, Autobiography, Memoirs and Letters, compiled by Henry A. Hewlett, 2 vols. (London, 1873), vol.1, p.111.

until his death in 1846 he was art critic for this journal.

His interest in the Primitives may well have been aroused before he left England, since he seems to have been familiar with Karl Aders' collection.⁹⁰ In any case by October 1834 he was an admirer of their work for in that month he wrote to Richard Monckton Milnes of some "consolatory Hemlings or Emmelincks" at Brussels, "two Peruginos ditto ... and a beautiful Leonardo".⁹¹ But it was not until the late 1830s, after he had read Rio, that Darley began what it is not an exaggeration to call a campaign on behalf of the Primitives in the pages of the Athenaeum. In article after article he berated his fellow-countrymen for their ignorance of these painters.

The first lengthy discussion of the Primitives was the review of Rio in April and May 1837, written at the request of Richard Monckton Milnes. Darley was conscious of introducing to the British public not only painters quite unfamiliar to them, but also an approach to art criticism and art history which was equally unfamiliar, namely one that was mystical and idealist. When he was reading Rio he wrote to Monckton Milnes that he liked the book "extremely",⁹² but his acceptance of Rio's theories was qualified in three ways. One could admire Catholic art without being converted. The mystical style, which Darley defined as "that which seeks to affect us ... through the

90. See Athenaeum (28 October, 1837), p.801.

91. Quo. C. Collier Abbott, op.cit., p.116.

92. Ibid., p.193.

medium of our sympathies and believed relations with another world"⁹³ was not restricted to the early Christian painters, being evident also in the Elgin marbles (Darley was no anti-classicist) and Michelangelo (whose spiritual powers he rightly considered Rio to have under-estimated). However the religious art of Bronzino, Rubens, Rembrandt or any other later painters was not mystical. And the only mystical school was that which Rio described. Thirdly, Darley believed that the progress of mystical painting from the thirteenth to the early sixteenth centuries was dependent on the progress of artistic power, and the meagreness of the forms of the earlier mystical painters was the result not of choice (as Rio suggested) but incapacity. The overpowering of mystic beauty by artistic power was "reasonable and right, however some may regret it, because art should have for its end its own perfection".⁹⁴ In other words, while accepting Rio's conception of the mystical school of painting, Darley still adhered to the Vasarian notion of progress towards artistic perfection in the sixteenth century. All the same he generally values the content and spirit of the works of the old masters as important in their own right. The question of their contribution to the progress of painting comes second.⁹⁵ Ideological considerations have more significance

93. Athenaeum (22 April, 1837), p.275.

94. Ibid. (13 May, 1837), p.340.

95. Although he is not entirely consistent here. In his review of Kugler he criticizes the early Italians for not mastering anatomy first, as the early Greeks had done. "Groups, legends, entire scriptural stories, were attempted, ere it had learned how to delineate a single figure -- a single feature -- well!" (Ibid., 19 March, 1842, p.246).

than historical ones. The secret of the appeal of the Primitives he described in 1838. At first we are revolted at "the jejeune treatment" and we pity the "weakling efforts". But after a while we find ourselves drawn to the old master by our affections. The mighty hold of sympathy is laid upon us,

and, wrestle as we will, we come like children all love and reverence, and begging pardon for our stubbornness, to his feet at last. This is the secret, if you will know it, of that fascination which these antique painters exert over their admirers: their imperfections are merely technical, their perfections spiritual, moral, intellectual, often artistic too; wherefore the balance preponderates to their side, except with those judges who maintain the lesser qualities preferable to the greater.⁹⁶

Again and again Darley reverts to this theme: the appeal of the Primitives is to our affections, they touch us, move us, ennoble us. Darley's own taste is, on the one hand, for the stern, the "awful conceptions" of patriarchs like Cimabue and Giotto, and, on the other (and this is the taste which is to become popular), for the sweet and holy angels, saints and Madonnas of Fra Angelico, Francia, Bellini and Perugino. Also interesting is his attraction to a number of painters of the Golden Age, painters hitherto ignored in England or lumped in with the "antique masters", for example, Luini, Lorenzo Costa, Garofalo and Gaudenzio Ferrari.

The study of artists such as these was morally and spiritually uplifting:

96. Athenaeum (3 December, 1838), p. 575.

... a picture by Fra Beato, seen with a fervent spirit of admiration, makes the observer inevitably a better man: it raises and purifies his mind, at least during the moment, soothes his temper, quiets his passions, showing him the bliss of goodness in those sweet paradisiacal faces, and, what Plato had dreamed of before, how beautiful Virtue would be thought were she corporeally visible.⁹⁷

And this relates to his general conviction that the merits in "supreme Art must be poetical and ethical -- must be those of sentiment, imagination, feeling, exhibition of the passions and emotions, above everything that effluence of inborn grace diffused over beautiful forms" which purifies and elevates the observer's soul.⁹⁸

It becomes apparent that the fervour with which Darley espoused the cause of the early Italians was inspired not just by his concern to have justice done to a misunderstood and neglected school of art, but also by a desire to elevate taste. This becomes clearer when we set alongside the hymns in praise of the older masters the diatribes against the preferred painters of British taste -- the Bolognese and seventeenth-century Italians, Rubens, Rembrandt, and the Dutch masters. The gawky Magdalen of a fifteenth-century Flemish Deposition "offends against decorum far less than Rubens's slipshod luscious hussies that give a loose at once to their tears and their stay-laces at the foot of the cross".⁹⁹ Memling stands in relation to Gerard Dou "as an Alpine

97. Ibid. (25 November, 1837), p.863.

98. Ibid. (8 December, 1836), p.875.

99. Ibid. (25 November, 1837), p.864.

promontory to a dirt-pie".¹⁰⁰ He chastises the English art lover for his admiration for the vapid and simpering Madonnas of Carlo Maratta, for the pale washed-out beauties of Guido, with their "Niobe faces, turgid with a perpetual dropsy of tears",¹⁰¹ for the beings who teem like reptiles out of the "black and blue" messes of Guercino, who "wallows like a beaver in floods of mud".¹⁰² And thus with all this invective, all this spite, Darley hopes to make his readers ashamed of their attachment to artists whose attractions are superficial and material, and direct their chastened gaze towards masters whose paintings, though poor in physical appeal, are rich in thought and spirit.

By preaching to the public the spiritual beauty to be found hidden beneath an awkward exterior Darley hoped to refine and raise their taste, and that of artists also. And we find Darley repeating those criticisms made by English artists who had travelled in Italy in the 1820s: that English art was weak in design, that artists had let themselves be seduced by colour, and that a study of the older masters would act as a corrective, exalting and chastening what was now degraded and meretricious.¹⁰³ Not that artists were to imitate the earlier painters, with all their technical defects. Like so many other of his countrymen

100. *Ibid.*, p.865.

101. *Ibid.* (8 December, 1838), p.874.

102. *Ibid.*

103. e.g., *ibid.* (25 May, 1839), p.395.

Darley was critical of the modern Germans for what was thought to be an attempt to revive the style as opposed to the spirit of the old painters,¹⁰⁴ and for their lack of originality.¹⁰⁵

By now it will be obvious that in Darley we have a missionary. His vocation is to bring the strayed flock of British artists and art lovers back to the path of true taste. In March and April, 1846, not long before he died, Darley published two articles which were in effect his confession of faith as an art critic. Their title was "The Mission of the Amateur". They are a remarkable document, giving us as they do an insight into the very complex and muddled area of mid nineteenth-century Victorian thought concerning the function of the arts and the duties of those involved in them. We find Darley reacting not only against eighteenth-century taste, but also against eighteenth-century connoisseurship (as he understood it), and in this he was far from being alone. Art had languished too long under the pernicious influence of the connoisseur, who had let "mechanism and condition outweigh the noblest merits of a work".¹⁰⁶ The connoisseur was indifferent to the poetic conception of a work of art, to its soul-elevating qualities. His place was to be taken by the amateur, a gentleman of scholar-like temper and with an "aesthetical education" that has kept the "greater ends of Art" before

104. *Ibid.* (13 December, 1834), p.905.

105. Overbeck is "alternately Raffael, Leonardo, Luini, Masaccio, or sometimes all together -- never himself -- he has no personal identity". (*Ibid.*, 19 July, 1834, p.538).

106. *Ibid.* (28 March, 1846), p.327.

his mind.¹⁰⁷ What is the mission of the Amateur? A high one indeed: "the purification and elevation of Public Taste, the education and enlightenment of ignorant, purblind Public Opinion".¹⁰⁸ The mission of the Amateur rises to even loftier heights, for ultimately it is his duty to "refine and chasten the moral sense of a people, to enlarge and illumine and elevate its rational soul".¹⁰⁹

Art has been hitherto studied for the sake of art, but the beautiful colours, forms, etc. are simply a means to a higher end. Art addresses both the senses and soul of man and is thus a vehicle for leading us from earthly to heavenly aspirations. What is curious and interesting in Darley's thinking is the way in which German idealism (which is the source of this view of art) has been transposed from a metaphysical and transcendental plane to a moral and social one.¹¹⁰ To inspire men with a love of the philosophical and spiritual qualities of art is to give them an insight into the working of Humanity through history, to contribute to the moral amelioration of society, and to provide a valuable counter-action to the materialist spirit which has possessed Britain, the "worship of the Bellygod".¹¹¹ Darley is concerned not only with the elevation of taste but also with its diffusion among all ranks of society.

107. *Ibid.* (25 April, 1846), p.431.

108. *Ibid.* (23 March, 1846), p.326.

109. *Ibid.*, p.327.

110. Darley describes his theory of art (if it can be called that) a "transcendentalism in aesthetics most rational, most utilitarian". (*Ibid.*, p.328).

111. *Ibid.*, p.327.

We seem to have gone a long way from the fashion for the Italian Primitives. But what I want to make clear is the way in which Darley's interest becomes bound up with his desire to spread the love of art in England and to improve British taste. And this in turn must be seen within the context of a remarkable upsurge of interest in the arts at the time, and of a generally expressed desire that knowledge and taste be disseminated among the community.

At its most basic level this interest in art education and popularization was inspired by the hope that the poor quality of the design of English manufactures might be improved by raising the general level of public taste. It had also much to do with a conviction that art was not merely a leisure-time diversion (as the utilitarians argued), but could also be an instrument of civilization, social progress and moral advancement. Patriotic motives were also important. England was the wealthiest and most powerful nation on earth, and her fame would be incomplete if the arts did not flourish to the same extent as industry and commerce. And the flourishing of the arts would be aided by a tasteful and knowledgeable populace. The idea that the arts were a sign of a nation's moral and spiritual health and that its character was reflected in its art, was also gaining acceptance at this time. Indeed, in the 1830s we find, as Raymond Williams so justly observes, the emergence of a decisive emphasis on art in organic relationship to society.¹¹² Lastly, there was a growing

112. Raymond Williams, Culture and Society, 1780-1960 (London, 1958), p.130.

conviction of the importance of art for the preservation of imaginative truths and moral and spiritual values in danger of annihilation by the materialistic and utilitarian spirit of the age.

Whether or not it was agreed that popularization and democratization would indeed benefit art or national taste, no one would have disputed the fact that public interest in art had greatly increased. The evidence was too overwhelming. The number of visitors to the British Museum and the National Gallery increased dramatically. For example, annual attendances at the National Gallery between 1831 and 1841 rose from 71,978 to 538,355. The market for prints expanded rapidly, the art-loving public rushing at new publications "like gudgeons at a bait".¹¹³ In 1839 the Art-Union journal was established, and became the first journal devoted entirely to the arts to survive beyond a few years. In other journals we find increasing importance being attached to the subject. Books appeared with titles like Painting Popularly Explained, and art lectures became a popular form of entertainment. From the time of the Select Committee on Arts and Manufacture of 1835-6 the government became involved in the arts to an unprecedented degree. It entered the field of art education with the establishment of the Schools of Design, and became a patron of the arts with the project for the decoration of the new Houses of Parliament.

The career of Charles Eastlake after his return to England is instructive from this point of view. He

113. Athenaeum (2 May. 1857), p.564.

contributed articles on the arts to the Penny Cyclopaedia and was for a short time on the Council of the Schools of Design. He gave evidence before the Select Committee on the Fine Arts in 1841. About this time he came to the notice of the Prime Minister, Sir Robert Peel, who appointed him Secretary to the Fine Arts Commission, responsible for the decoration of the Houses of Parliament. He was Keeper of the National Gallery from 1843-7, President of the Royal Academy from 1850 (and received the customary knighthood), on the Commission for the Great Exhibition of 1851, and first Director of the National Gallery in 1855.

This extension of popular interest and public involvement in the arts is relevant for our understanding of the fashion for the Primitives in three ways. In the first place, it is against this background that the various manifestations of the fashion are to be seen, such as the frescoes for the new Palace of Westminster, the acquisition of earlier works for the National Gallery, the exhibition of Primitives from private collections at the Manchester Art Treasures Exhibition of 1857.

Secondly, because of this interest in the arts in their social relation, one finds lessons being drawn from the history of the arts in the context of society. The conclusion most commonly reached was that the arts had flourished only when they were useful and popular, when they were intimately connected with the life and aspirations of a people. These conditions had been present in the age of the revival of the arts. The Edinburgh Review in 1838

argued that art could attain the highest development only when it awoke the enthusiasm of the mass, not the critical admiration of the few.

Make it the rude yet important medium of popular instruction; render it a source of elevated emotion accessible to all, connect it with religion, the life of man's life, and it soars to a corresponding elevation in its conceptions, and excellence in their execution.¹¹⁴

Such was the case in early Catholic art.¹¹⁵ Two years later we find similar arguments being put forward by Edward Edwards, a librarian at the British Museum and a forceful advocate of popular education. The revival of art in Italy was not the result of the activities of a few private patrons. It was because artists entered "heart and soul into the prevalent feeling -- the onward aspiration -- which characterized their time".¹¹⁶ Artists were addressing themselves "to feelings which all shared, and were not merely ministering to the capricious luxury of opulence or rank".¹¹⁷ It was when art ceased to address itself to the many that its decline set in. The relevance of all this to English society in the mid nineteenth century was debatable. As the Edinburgh Review remarked, "Penny Magazines banish pictures".¹¹⁸ On the other hand such an

114. Edinburgh Review, vol. lxvii (July, 1838), p. 388.

115. The author of the article also refers to ancient Greece, but he has much more to say about Italy.

116. Edward Edwards, The Fine Arts in England: their state and prospects considered relatively to national education, Part I. - the administrative account of the Fine Arts (London, 1840), p. 29.

117. Ibid., p. 31.

118. Edinburgh Review, op.cit., p. 390.

analysis of the social history of art strengthened the arguments of those who maintained that art was too important to be left in the hands of private patrons and that patronage must be public.

Thirdly, this concern with art education and popularization explains one of the most distinctive features of the mid nineteenth-century taste for the Primitives, which we have already seen with George Darley. This was the desire of those interested in the earlier painters that, at the very least, knowledge of their aims and work, and hopefully also sympathy and understanding, reach as wide a section of the public as possible. This is true whether the bias is primarily historical and the purpose purely educational; or whether intentions were overtly propagandistic, and the Primitives seen as a means to the revival of religious art and religious feeling, as representatives of an age in which art was in organic relationship with society, or as painters who represented the highest moral and aesthetic principles in their work.

In the dissemination of knowledge the role played by art literature was crucially important. This was partly because, in the early stages at least, opportunities for seeing examples of the Primitives were still limited, and many people had read quite a lot about them before they had actually seen anything. But it was also because paintings, whose subject matter was unfamiliar and which were so unattractive to eyes used only to later art, needed to be explained if they were to have any general appeal. Writing of the arts in general the Christian Remembrancer in 1857 remarked that the improved tone of public feeling with respect

to painting was the result of the labours of littérateurs. For the hundreds with opportunities of seeing actual pictures there were thousands who read about them, and therefore the literature of art was more influential than the actual handiwork of the painter.¹¹⁹ For this reason I shall begin the detailed study of the fashion for the Primitives with an analysis of what was written about them.

119. Christian Remembrancer, vol. xxxiv (October, 1857), pp. 279-80.

CHAPTER IV

The Literature of Art

Although in the 1840s there were still complaints about the dearth of literature on art in Britain,¹ observers in the 1850s were struck by the rapid increase in publications on the subject. Mrs Jameson, in the introduction to the 1859 edition of her Memoirs of Early Italian Painters commented on the many works which had appeared, "some beautifully illustrated", in the fourteen years since the first publication of her book, and on the "unnumbered reviews, and essays and guidebooks, from the pens of accomplished critics and artists, all facilitating the study of art".² "Literature of art" is rather a grand term for describing the kind of writing we shall be dealing with: popular histories, technical manuals, dictionaries, catalogues, published lectures, and reviews and essays in journals and newspapers. On the subject of the Primitives there is very little really scholarly work, apart from Lord Lindsay's Sketches of the History of Christian Art. The interpretation of the history of early Italian art is derived from Vasari, fully translated into English for the

-
1. e.g., James Dennistoun wrote: "Indeed, no literature of a refined people is so wanting as our own in artistic works, original or translated" (Foreign Quarterly Review, vol.xxxv, April 1845, p.31).
 2. Mrs Jameson, Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, and of the progress of painting in Italy. Cinabue to Bassano (London, 3rd ed., 1859), p.ix.

first time in 1850,³ and from continental works, especially those published in translation -- Seroux d'Agincourt, Lanzi, Kugler and Rio. The criticism of the paintings of the Primitives is, aside from Ruskin and one or two others, pedestrian and repetitive, the product of reading rather than observation. One tires of the language of this criticism, the endless references to "pure thoughts", "devotional sentiments", "earnest feelings", which reveals full well the literary basis of the fashion.

Yet at the time this kind of vocabulary was taken as one sign of a decided improvement in the criticism of art, of a shift away from a preoccupation with the technicalities of painting in favour of content and association. This was part of a critique of academic principles of taste and criticism. The general view was indeed that the age was remarkable for its reaction from "preceding barbarism in matters of taste".⁴ Taste had risen from that "depth of debasement" to which it had sunk in the "Georgian era".⁵ In particular the "connoisseur" came to be reviled, as we have already seen in George Darley's articles. The connoisseur was defined as one whose sole concern was the recognition of the different manners of a handful of approved masters. His appreciation was limited to that which covered the surface of a canvas, and his praise heaped on artists skilled in technicalities. He had accustomed art lovers to view works of

-
3. Giorgio Vasari, Lives of the most Eminent Painters, Sculptors & Architects, trans. Mrs Foster, 5 vols. (London, 1857).
 4. Rev. H. Wellesley, Quarterly Review, vol. lxxiv (October, 1844), p. 447.
 5. Christian Fawcett, vol. lxxiv (October, 1857), p. 265.

art as mere mechanical dexterities. The subject of a painting, its effect for good or for evil, he ignored.

What was advocated in place of this debased approach was a criticism which concentrated more on the non-material aspects of art, the moral, sentimental, intellectual and spiritual qualities, an approach which paid more attention to the aims of the artist, to the content and context of a painting, the story told, the feelings expressed, the ideas and thoughts communicated. Pictures, according to "Cultor" in the Art-Union in 1843

must be not only beautiful, but suggestive, not of mere material qualities, but of moral character and intellectual vigour, which are by no means necessarily inherent in productions of mere technical excellence.⁶

The words and phrases used to describe the technical side of painting reflect its lowered status: "merely material", "merely technical", "merely manual", "merely mechanical". It was simply a vehicle, a means to an end.

One result of the academic absorption with the merely technical had been the over-estimation of painters interested only in superficialities, particularly the Bolognese and seventeenth-century Italians, and the neglect of the earlier masters, painters strong in content but weak in technique. Even Lanzi, proof that the eighteenth century was not unappreciative of the merits of Primitives, was chastised for the narrowness of his principles and his enthusiasm for the decadent painters of the seventeenth century.⁷ His description

6. Art-Union (July, 1843), p.205.

7. See George Darley, Athenaeum (17 May, 1854), p.375; (12 March, 1842), pp.219-20.

of Fra Angelico as the "Guido of his age" was thought to be peculiarly inappropriate.⁸

Not only had the content of a painting been disregarded, but also its associations, an important source of interest and enjoyment in a picture. The man of education, wrote A.H. Layard in 1859, can always find an interest in a picture "which fairly and truthfully represents the thoughts, sentiments, or knowledge of the age in which it was executed", an interest quite different from that experienced by the artist and connoisseur, and which requires no profound knowledge of the "mere technical merits" of painting.⁹ Any painting could be rendered interesting by its associations.

It is in the context of this associationism that one finds ideas of "relative beauty" and "relative merit" being put forward. "Relativity" meant more now than it had for Vasari, when, by the yardstick of the perfection of the sixteenth century, he had judged an artist "good for his time". To view a work of art relatively was to consider it in the light of the artist's aims and the context of his time. It was this "relative judgement" which rendered even imperfect works interesting wrote Anna Jameson.¹⁰ According to Ralph Wormun, the author of a popular general history of painting,

8. Ibid. (3 January, 1863), p.23.

9. Quarterly Review, vol.cv (April, 1859), p.354.

10. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters (1859), op.cit.

there

is no such thing as an absolutely good, or an absolutely bad, picture, all is relative: there are many qualities which may render a picture valuable or interesting, and of which good colouring or good drawing might be the lowest.¹¹

In other words, paintings could carry values, other than pictorial, which rendered them interesting. However this did not mean that there were no absolute standards of beauty and excellence. A visitor to a gallery might judge the works of the infancy of painting as crude and the purely technical paintings of the Bolognese as charmless.

Considering these specimens as absolute works of art, irrespective of all other considerations, he may be right But considered in relation to human progress, or the development of human ingenuity, each illustrates an important phasis of the social mind, and of the development of a great art.¹²

Similarly "Cultor" in the Art-Union in 1848 observed that "there is, however, no style without its individual beauties, although its chief service in the cause of Art may be mere indication of its progress, as a link in a chain conducting towards its final perfection".¹³ The idea of relativity cannot shift the idea of perfection. Different styles might have their characteristic qualities, their individual beauties, but that did not mean that all had the same validity as art.

11. Art Journal (February, 1851), p.39.

12. Biographical Catalogue of the Principal Italian Painters. With a table of the contemporary schools of Italy. Issuing as a new-book to the picture gallery. By a lady (Maria Sarcouary), ed. Ralph Hornum (London, 1855), p.x.

13. Art-Union (July, 1848), p.206.

The merit of the Primitives had always to be relative because their art was immature. The Vasarian interpretation of the history of early Italian art in terms of progress towards visual truth retained its validity. Accounts of this advance might be more sophisticated. Ralph Wornum, for example, in his Epochs of Painting argued that it depended not only on the mastery of the means of imitation, but also on the desire and ability to see nature correctly.¹⁴ The reasons for this progress might be pondered over in greater depth, and found to lie as much in the history of the age as in the zeal of the individual artist. A more conservative strand might be isolated, with the artists of the Sienese and Umbrian schools. Thus we have developments and modifications of the Vasarian account. But even those who attempted to re-write the story as the triumph and fall of Christian art did not deny the fact of art's progress between the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The work of the early painters was thus technically imperfect. This did not mean that they were ignorant of their materials. They were in fact recognized as masters of their craft. Their paintings had survived where many later works, not least the bitumen-loaded efforts of the nineteenth century, had perished. What was meant by "technical imperfections" was the inability to imitate nature "correctly", that is, according to those conventions established by the early sixteenth century, and (although to a more limited degree) the failure to attain the true Ideal, founded on the

14. Ralph Wornum, The Epochs of Painting Characterized. A Sketch of the Progress of European Painting from its Earliest to its Present State (London, 1807), p. 162.

study of nature corrected by reference to the Antique, as realized in the work of Raphael and his contemporaries.

On the question of technical imperfection there was little advance beyond earlier thinking, despite the adoption of ideas, such as an expressive theory of the arts, which were to undermine and ultimately destroy representational theories. One could quote endlessly the references to the infant stammering, the stuttering, babbling, lisping of the old masters. Even Mrs Jameson, a well known partisan of the Primitives, believed that the

early painters had no other excellences except those of thought and expression They drew incorrectly, coloured ineffectively, and were ignorant of perspective.¹⁵

The usual response of sympathizers to this particular difficulty was that it was not because of their defects that the Primitives were to be admired, but in spite of them. Their deficiencies were compensated, and in the eyes of the more committed, fully atoned, by the profound thoughts and devotional sentiments. Only rarely does one find positive merit being discovered in the so-called technical deficiencies.

In sum the literature of art as regards the Primitives is devoted to content and context, and this is a fair reflection of the state of criticism in the arts generally. Much of this literature was inspired by aspects of the fashion for the early masters which are to be considered separately,

15. Mrs Jameson, A commonplace Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies. Original and selected. (1871) - Revised and enlarged. Part II. Literature and Art (London, 1884), p.317.

and is more appropriately treated in the relevant context. This chapter will consider the attitudes of the two writers then thought to have made the most significant native contribution to the literature on the Primitives, Anna Jameson and Lord Lindsay. This literature might be more accurately described as the literature of Christian art, and the spread of and reaction to the image of the earlier painters as Christian artists first and foremost will also be discussed. Ruskin will be treated separately. This is a little awkward, since his attitudes towards the Primitives had so much in common with those of Rio, Mrs Jameson and Lord Lindsay. But they were also given peculiar slants and twists by the bias of his own upbringing, personality and tastes, and are therefore best left to be discussed on their own.

In 1857, three years before her death, Mrs Jameson was in Rome collecting material for the last volume of her series, Sacred and Legendary Art. To see her there, wrote one who knew her, "kindle into enthusiasm amidst the gorgeous natural beauty, the antique memorials, and the sacred Christian relics of Italy, is a sight which once witnessed one will never forget".¹⁶ Mrs Jameson had an enormous capacity for enthusiasm, and although her friends sometimes found it overwhelming, it was this enthusiasm and the ability to communicate it which helps to explain her popularity.

16. Bessie Reynor Parkes, quo. Gerardine Macpherson, Memoirs of the Life of Anna Jameson (London, 1878), p.227.

Her warmth and energy considered, it is rather ironical that she should have made her literary debut in the then fashionably romantic guise of an ennuvée. But in fact the lovelorn and languid young lady of the semi-fictitious Diary of an Ennuvée, based on Anna's European tour of 1821, managed a great deal more sight-seeing than her condition would warrant. Her ignorance and unformed taste were freely admitted at the outset. Her likes and dislikes were, as has been said in an earlier chapter, absolutely conventional.

The next important step in her career was her visit to Germany in 1833 where, through the rapidly formed and long-lasting friendship with Goethe's daughter-in-law, Ottilie, Anna was introduced into the world of contemporary German thought. Her German experiences and impressions were described in Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad, published in 1834 on her return to England. Her knowledge of art had expanded considerably since 1826. She was now better informed about the earlier Italians, although they were still only interesting historically.¹⁷ The enthusiasm of the Germans for their early masters she dismissed as cant.¹⁸

Anna Jameson was now a well-known figure in literary circles. She turned her hand to writing on literature, drama, travel, morals, and somewhat later, on social issues. From the 1840s she began concentrating her talents and energy on art. She wrote an introduction to the translation of

17. Mrs Jameson, Visits and Sketches at Home and Abroad, 4 vols. (London, 1834), vol. ii, p. 112.

18. Ibid., vol. i, p. 25.

Dr Waagen's monograph on Rubens in 1840, in which she praised "that many-sided and elevated spirit in criticism with which Germans have long been familiar".¹⁹ Her friendship with Waagen and with Charles Eastlake would have helped in the enlargement of her knowledge and understanding of art. Next came her handbooks to public and private galleries in the London area, in 1842 and 1844 respectively.²⁰ These were much less full of connoisseurship and for that reason more accessible to general readers than the accounts of both Waagen and Passavant. In 1846 she wrote a preface to Ludwig Gruner's The Decorations of the Garden-Pavilion in the Grounds of Buckingham Palace which contained engravings of the frescoes commissioned by Prince Albert at the time of the scheme for fresco decorations in the Palace of Westminster.

Her two most important and popular contributions to the literature of art were Memoirs of Early Italian Painters (1845) and the Sacred and Legendary Art series. The first was originally a series of articles published in 1841 in the Penny Magazine. They were very successful and increased the journal's circulation. The book had the same purpose as the articles, namely popular instruction in art, and it cost only a shilling. On both counts it was commended by the Athenaeum in August 1845.²¹ A second edition appeared in 1858, and further editions followed.

19. Preface, Dr Waagen, Peter Paul Rubens. His Life and Genius, ed. Mrs Jameson (London, 1840), p.vi.

20. A Handbook to the Public Galleries of Art in and near London (London, 1842); Companion to the Most Celebrated Private Galleries of Art in London (London, 1844).

21. Athenaeum (16 August, 1845), p.817.

The full title of the work was Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, and of the progress of painting in Italy. Cimabue to Bassano. It consisted of a series of short biographies of artists, which were heavily dependent on Vasari except where he had been shown to be in error. These little lives are simple and straightforward (the book was principally addressed to the younger reader), with brief notes on an artist's career and character, a summary of the characteristics of his style and his contribution to the progress of painting, and descriptions of the more interesting or accessible examples of his works. These descriptions are confined to subject matter, while discussion seldom goes beyond the appropriateness of the representation, particularly as regards expression and resemblance to nature.

The morals of a painter were taken into account in the assessment of the value of his work. Filippo Lippi, the dissolute monk, was "sometimes fantastic and sometimes vulgar" in his representations of sacred incidents, and "he was the first who desecrated such subjects by introducing portraits of women who happened to be the objects of his preference at the moment".²² She found it very difficult to get rid of "the associations of disgust and horror" connected with the character of Andrea del Castagno, still condemned as the murderer of Domenico Veneziano. His pictures were "hard, almost cruel, in character" and he seemed to have preferred penitential subjects.²³

22. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, and of the progress of painting in Italy. Cimabue to Bassano 2 vols. (London, 1845), vol. i, p. 114.

23. Ibid., p. 137.

Mrs Jameson attempted to lift her subject above the anecdotal with general paragraphs attached to the beginning or end of some of the biographies. From these one can piece together an interpretation of the history of Italian painting which accords with that view which had become accepted on the continent and which was now becoming known in England. After the initial revival of painting in the thirteenth century progress was made principally through the efforts of Giotto and the spread of his influence. At the end of the fourteenth century much still remained to be accomplished, yet

in the midst of this ignorance, this imperfect execution, and limited range of power, how exquisitely beautiful are some of the remains of this early time! affording in their simple, genuine grace, and lofty, earnest, and devout feeling, examples of excellence which our modern painters are beginning to feel and to understand, and which the great Raphael himself did not disdain to study, and even to copy.²⁴

In the fifteenth century there occurred

the great schism in modern art, though the seeds of this diversity of feeling and purpose were sown in the preceding century. We now find, on the one side, a race of painters who cultivated with astonishing success all the mental and mechanical aids that could be brought to bear on their profession; profoundly versed in the knowledge of the human form, and intent on studying and imitating the various effects of nature in colour and in light and shade, without any other aspiration than the representation of beauty for its own sake, and the pleasure and the triumph of difficulties overcome. On the other hand, we find a race of painters to whom the cultivation of art was a sacred vocation — the representation of beauty a means, not an end; by whom Nature in her various aspects was studied and deeply studied, but only for the purpose of embodying whatever we can conceive or reverence as highest, holiest, purest in heaven and earth, in such forms as should best connect them with our intelligence and with our sympathies.

24. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, op.cit., p.77.

The two classes of painters who devoted their genius to these very diverse aims have long been distinguished in German and Italian criticism as the Naturalists and the Idealists or Mystics, and these denominations are now becoming familiarized in our own language.... Painting, however, during this century was still almost wholly devoted to ecclesiastical purposes; it deviated into the classical and secular in only two places, Florence and Padua.²⁵

There is no hint that this deviation into the classical and secular had any damaging effect on art. Lorenzo dei Medici was responsible for the introduction of the pagan taste in Florence which led to a general laxity of morals and disregard of sacred things. The classical revival certainly corrupted "the simple and pious taste which had hitherto prevailed on art", but on the other hand imparted "to it a more universal direction, and a finer feeling for beauty and sublimity in the abstract".²⁶ There is no mention of the triumph of art being the death-blow of Christian art, and Mrs Jameson devoted one half of her book to the masters of art's perfection. However there followed a decline and these men of original genius and individuality of character were succeeded towards the close of the century by "a race of mannerists and imitators", at which point she closed her history of the earlier painters of Italy.

However, to return to her account of the actual revival of painting, the memoir of Cimabue which began the story seems to depend most on Lanzi. She mentioned the contribution of other artists, notably Giunta Pisano and Guido da Siena, and emphasized the importance of Nicola Pisano. It was he

25. Ibid., pp.110-111.

26. Ibid., p.222.

indeed, rather than Cimabue, who set art on the right path since he was the first "to leave the stiff monotony of traditional forms for the study of nature and the antique".²⁷ Giotto, the instrument of a total change in the direction and character of painting, went to the same sources. His great achievement was "the expression of natural character and emotion, in order to render intelligible his newly invented scenes of action and his religious allegories".²⁸ Her analysis of Giotto's character and style is in fact a combination of Kugler and Eastlake's notes in Kugler. Mrs Jameson devoted over twenty-two pages to Giotto. Duccio, on the other hand, rated only eleven lines. She had obviously been untouched by Kugler's high regard for him. However there was more on Duccio in the 1859 edition, reflecting her deepened sympathy for sacred art, and she made the usual distinction between the Florentine and Sienese schools.

The frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa had not lost their significance. She prefaced her description of these with a highly romantic evocation of the place at the close of day, "when the figures on the pictured walls look dim and spectral through the gloom, and the cypresses assume a blacker hue, and all the associations connected with its sacred purpose and its history rise upon the fancy".²⁹ It had "in its silence and solitude, and religious destination, something inexpressibly strange, dreamy, solemn, almost

27. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, op.cit., p.22.

28. Ibid., p.50.

29. Ibid., p.67.

awful".³⁰ Needless to say the works attributed to Orcagna were the most important of the earlier frescoes there and these are described in detail. The Triumph of Death is "full of poetry, and abounding in ideas then new in pictorial art".³¹

Mrs Jameson began her account of fifteenth-century art with Ghiberti, who stood in the same relationship to his age as Nicola Pisano to his. The mystical and naturalistic strands of painting were represented by Fra Angelico and Fra Filippo Lippi. Fra Angelico is revered for his earnest and pious humility; he is an artist whose works "are not addressed to the taste of connoisseurs, but to the faith of worshippers".³² Of the other Florentines she treated, it is clear that her favourites were Gozzoli and Ghirlandaio. Gozzoli she delighted in for his lively and inventive delineation of the beauty and variety of the external world and the life of his time. Ghirlandaio she lauded as "one of the greatest and most memorable artists of his time".³³ Mrs Jameson was not critical of the inclusion of portraits of contemporaries in his history paintings, unlike Sir Joshua Reynolds, Ottley, and Thomas Phillips. They had all criticized individualized portraits because they conflicted with the lofty ideality which history painting should aspire to. Rio had also been critical of the introduction of portraits into Florentine fresco cycles, although for different reasons.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid., pp.68-9.

32. Ibid., p.120.

33. Ibid., p.141.

It was a sign of the encroachment of naturalism on Christian art. Mrs Jameson however argued that there was nothing shocking in the introduction of real personages since they were only ever attendants and spectators "in events which may be conceived to belong to all time, and to have no especial locality". Moreover,

they have so much dignity in their aspects, the costumes are so picturesque, and the grouping is so fine and imaginative, that only the coldest and most pedantic critic could wish them absent.³⁴

In adopting this attitude Mrs Jameson reflected a point of view that was becoming popular, although one also finds continued opposition to portraiture on academic and religious grounds. However interest in history and a taste for naturalism in art created a more sympathetic response.

Other Florentine painters of the late fifteenth century were dealt with fairly cursorily. Botticelli, for example, was little more than an artist who displayed a "fanciful, capricious style".³⁵ The growth in popularity of Florentine painters of this period is, however, reflected in the 1859 edition. There was much more on Botticelli, Filippino Lippi, and Signorelli, Verrocchio and Pollaiuolo have appeared for the first time (the latter on account of his Martyrdom of St Sebastian recently purchased for the National Gallery). These artists are valued more highly. In her characterization of Botticelli's style, "allegorical" has been substituted for "capricious".³⁶ Filippino Lippi she now extolled as one of

34. Ibid., p.144.

35. Ibid., p.140.

36. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters (1859), op.cit., p.88.

the greatest artists of the time, uniting irreproachable morals to his excellence as an artist.³⁷

Painting outside Florence was treated much more briefly. There is no mention at all of Lombard or Ferrarese painters. Mantegna is the representative of the Paduan school, important for his studies of Antique art, but too hard and dry for Mrs Jameson's taste. Then there are Giovanni Bellini, Perugino and Francia, as representatives of the early Venetian, Umbrian and Bolognese schools respectively. The last two were distinguished for their fervent piety. Perugino, and Francia, together with Fra Bartolommeo, were the painters who brought to a close the first period of Italian painting.

Although Mrs Jameson had stressed the importance of viewing artists within the context of their age, it is only in isolated paragraphs that she wrote about the "spirit of the age". However these isolated fragments reveal that she viewed the advance of painting from the fifteenth century as part of a great advance of the human mind.³⁸ The causes of the surpassing excellence of sixteenth-century painting were to be sought not merely in the history of art but in the history of human culture.

The fermenting activity of the fifteenth century found its results in the extraordinary development of human intelligence in the commencement of the sixteenth century. We often hear in these days of "the spirit of the age;" but in that wonderful age three mighty spirits were stirring society to its depths:- the spirit of bold investigation into truths of all kinds, which led to the Reformation;

37. Ibid., pp.83-4.

38. Memoirs of Early Italian Painters (1845), op.cit., p.81.

the spirit of daring adventure, which led men in search of new worlds beyond the eastern and the western oceans; and the spirit of art, through which men soared even to the "seventh heaven of invention."³⁹

There is no evidence here of nostalgia for a romanticized Middle Ages. Instead there is an enthusiastic response to the material and intellectual advance of humanity which was soon to be called the "Renaissance". In the middle of the nineteenth century the quattrocento tended to hover uneasily between these two systems of classification.

Memoirs of Early Italian Painters was based on what Mrs Jameson had read rather than what she had seen. She had not been to Italy since 1821, when she had known nothing about the earlier painters and had not liked what she had seen. Her various sources - principally Vasari, Lanzi, Kugler - are not well assimilated. One writer whose influence is suprisingly muted is Rio. It has been suggested that her interest in earlier painters had been aroused by her meeting with Rio in Paris in 1841. She declared herself "enchanted" with De la poésie Chrétienne⁴⁰ and proclaimed the meeting the "great event" of her life.⁴¹ Rio's importance has however probably been exaggerated. Her German contacts would be sufficient to explain the growth of her interest in the Primitives. In any case he did not have much effect on Memoirs of Early Italian Painters. Indeed, the review in the

39. Ibid., vol.ii, pp.6-7.

40. Letter, 15 October, 1841. Letters of Anna Jameson to Ottilie von Goethe, ed. G.H. Keedler (Oxford, 1939), p.132.

41. Quo. Gerardine Macpherson, op.cit., p.176.

Ecclesiologist remarked that she seemed totally ignorant of Rio's book.⁴²

The same cannot be said of her Sacred and Legendary Art series, which in its theme and tone owes a lot to Rio. Like Memoirs of Early Italian Painters, Sacred and Legendary Art first saw the light of day in a journal, this time the Athenaeum. In 1848 it was published in two volumes, copiously illustrated with woodcuts from drawings after paintings which Anna herself had prepared. It was followed by Legends of the Monastic Orders in 1850, a work which Anna found far more difficult and less enjoyable, the monkish personages lacking the grace and appeal of the angels, saints and martyrs of the first book. The third in the series was Legends of the Madonna, published in 1852. The History of Our Lord, the last in the series, did not appear until 1864, four years after her death. It was completed by Lady Eastlake, wife of Sir Charles Eastlake.

From one point of view the Sacred and Legendary Art series can be classified as a study in the iconography of Christian art. Christian iconography had received a new impulse in the nineteenth century, principally through the efforts of French scholars, notably Raoul-Rochette, A.N. Didron, and A. Crosnier.⁴³ Mrs Jameson was not, however, a scholar, although she was extraordinarily conscientious and

42. Ecclesiologist, vol.v (March, 1846), p.146.

43. D. Raoul-Rochette, Discours sur l'origine, le développement et le caractère des types imitatifs qui constituent l'art du Christianisme (1834); A.N. Didron, Iconographie Chrétienne: Histoire de Dieu (1843); A. Crosnier, Iconographie Chrétienne (1848).

hard-working. The publication of Sacred and Legendary Art, which she had begun working on in 1842, was delayed at her own expense, while she made incessant additions and checked the proofs over and over again, in her anxiety to give her best to the public.⁴⁴ She was essentially a popularizer, and a very good one at that.

Sacred and Legendary Art was intended for the general reader. Its purpose was to assist the understanding and appreciation of earlier religious painting through an explanation of its symbols and imagery. The "general ignorance with regard to the subjects of Mediaeval Art" she found curious because it had become "a reigning fashion among us".⁴⁵ Yet these subjects were once full of associations, addressing themselves to the sympathies of the spectators. They gave expression to the inner life of the people of the time.

The neglect of the subjects of religious painting by previous English writers and critics was simply proof of the low level of art criticism and scholarship. In her Companion to private galleries Mrs Jameson had ridiculed the lack of elevated taste and knowledge in the eighteenth century.⁴⁶ She now criticized the failure to "inquire into the true spirit and significance of Art, as connected with the history of Religion and Civilization".⁴⁷ Connoisseurs of that time were interested only in the genuineness of the

44. Gerardine Macpherson, on.cit., p.250.

45. Mrs Jameson, Sacred and Legendary Art, 2 vols. (London, 1848), vol.i, p.xxii.

46. Companion to Private Galleries, on.cit., p.xxvi.

47. Sacred and Legendary Art, on.cit., p.xxi.

paintings of a few approved artists.

The spirit of the work -- whether that was genuine; how far it was influenced by the faith and the condition of the age which produced it; whether the conception was properly characteristic, and of what it was characteristic -- of the subject? or of the school? or of the time? -- whether the treatment corresponded to the idea within our own souls, or was modified by the individuality of the artist, or by received conventionalisms of all kinds -- these were questions which had not then occurred to any one; and I am not sure that we are much wiser even now.⁴⁸

Yet, she continued, leaving aside all higher considerations,

how can we do common justice to the artist, unless we can bring his work to the test of truth? and how can we do this, unless we know what to look for, what was intended as to incident, expression, character? One result of our ignorance has been the admiration wasted on the flimsy mannerists of the later ages of Art; men who apparently had no definite intention in anything they did, except a dashing outline, or a delicate finish, or a striking and attractive management of colour.⁴⁹

I think that it is clear that Mrs Jameson, in her way, is as much a missionary as George Darley. Her aim was not simply to provide information and increase enjoyment, although that was part of it. A thousand-fold pleasure was theirs who combined "with delicacy of perception, and technical knowledge, more elevated sources of pleasure, more variety of association, habits of more excursive thought".⁵⁰ But she wanted to introduce her readers to a more elevated and philosophical criticism, which would not only enlarge their understanding of earlier ages of art but also confer benefits on their taste, morals and souls. Mrs Jameson habitually

⁴⁸. Ibid., p.xxii.

⁴⁹. Ibid.

⁵⁰. Ibid., p.xlvi.

"spiritualized" the vocabulary of art criticism, so that "style" became "the soul of the man made sensible to the reflecting and philosophical observer in the product of his hand",⁵¹ and "character" the subtle quality emanating from the soul of the artist and pervading the whole representation.⁵²

It is not enough then to look for mere technicalities. To see in a weeping Magdalen or a martyred St Sebastian only "flowing lines and correct drawing and gorgeous colour" is to "seal up a fountain of the richest poetry, and to shut out a thousand ennobling and inspiring thoughts".⁵³ She argued similarly in the preface to Legends of the Monastic Orders. Her purpose was

to show that, while we have been satisfied to regard sacred pictures merely as decorations, valued more for the names appended to them than for their own sakes, we have not sufficiently considered them as books -- as poems -- as having a vitality of their own for good and for evil, and that thus we have shut out a vast source of delight and improvement, which lay in the way of many, even the most uninstructed in the technicalities of art.⁵⁴

Protestant prejudices against Catholic art had, however, to be allayed if sacred pictures were to be seen without fear and contempt. In the Introduction to Sacred and Legendary Art Mrs Jameson reminded her readers that it was Christianity which kept the light of civilization flickering during the

51. Preface to Rubens, op.cit., p.viii.

52. Handbook to Public Galleries, op.cit., p.xviii.

53. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., p.xxiv.

54. Mrs Jameson, Legends of The Monastic Orders as represented in the fine arts (London, 1870), p.xiii.

Dark Ages.⁵⁵ She also reminded them of the sad effects of Protestant bigotry in the past. "Our puritanical ancestors chopped off the heads of Madonnas and saints, and paid vagabonds to smash the storied windows of our cathedrals".⁵⁶ Nor did she think that reverence for mediaeval art would lead to a succumbing to the beliefs which inspired it, unlike the Rev. Seymour, whose Pilgrimage to Rome was published in the same year as Sacred and Legendary Art. He felt himself drawn to the contemplative religion embodied in the works of Giotto, the Beato Angelico, Perugino and others of their ilk, and consequently felt himself "all the less fitted for the active and stirring benevolence, which is an essential of a living christianity".⁵⁷ He became aware then of the temptation of mediaeval religion, so closely allied to the Church of Rome. Mrs Jameson, on the other hand, was confident that her readers would be in no danger of falling into the superstitious reverence of the olden times. Can anyone believe, she asked later on in the book, "there is any danger that any rational being should fall back into a second childhood of credulity?"⁵⁸ There was no threat to the present time in the poetic and superstitious utterances of a bygone age. Therefore they should no more be dismissed contemptuously as repudiated idols than regarded simply as pretty pictures. They should

-
55. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., pp.xviii-xix.
Cf. Mrs Kerrifield's introduction to her translation of Cennino Cennini's A Practical Treatise on Painting in Fresco, Oil and Distemper (London, 1844), p.vi.
56. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., p.xx.
57. Rev.K. Hobart Seymour, A Pilgrimage to Rome: containing some account of the high ceremonies -- the monastic institutions -- the religious services -- the sacred relics -- the miraculous works -- and the general state of religion in that city (London, 1844), p.128.
58. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., vol.ii, p.77.

be considered

as lovely allegories to which the world listened in its dreamy childhood, and which, like the ballad or the fairy tale which kept sleep from our eyes and our breath suspended in infancy, have still a charm for our latest years.⁵⁹

What is revealed here is the Romantic appeal of the sacred legendary art of the Middle Ages as part of that interest in folk stories and popular mythology generally, as reflective of humanity in a more primitive and innocent state.

Despite the emphasis on the Middle Ages in her Introduction Mrs Jameson does not confine herself to the art of this period in her descriptions of the different representations of the biblical, historical and legendary sacred stories and personages. Artists of her own time, or near to her own time, are also included, such as Reynolds, Blake, Canova, Overbeck and Delaroche. Only about half her references, if that, are to artists of the fifteenth century and earlier. Individual works and artists of later periods are often given the highest praise for their conceptions. Murillo is a great favourite with her. Rembrandt can rise to true poetical and spiritual expression. For example, his angels "are at least as unearthly and as poetical as any of the angelic phantasms in Dante".⁶⁰ The Bolognese painters she retains a soft spot for, Domenichino especially. Still, she is more critical of them now. In Diary of an Ennuyée she had praised Guido's Magdalen in the Soliarra Palace in Rome for her heavenly countenance and

^{59.} Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit.

^{60.} Ibid., vol.i, p.47.

ecstatic, devout contemplation.⁶¹ She now considered this same painting poor, mannered and vapid. Guido's Magdalens though charming as art were quite unsatisfactory as religious representations.⁶² The most offensive specimens of sacred art were to be found in later ages. Bernini's Ecstasy of St Teresa, for example, she considered to be vile. "The least destructive, the least prudish in matters of art, would here willingly throw the first stone".⁶³

In general the holiest and truest representations were to be found in earlier ages. Increasing naturalism, the taste for picturesque and dramatic groupings, and the absence of ideal or elevated sentiment meant the loss of spirituality and solemnity. Take for example what she had to say about the representation of the Annunciation. In early representations

it is treated as a religious mystery, and with a solemn simplicity and purity of feeling, which is very striking and graceful in itself, as well as in harmony with the peculiar manner of the divine revelation.⁶⁴

However, in the representations of the sixteenth century,

we find neither the solemnity of the early Italian nor the naïveté of the early German school; and this divine subject becomes more and more materialised and familiarised, until losing its spiritual character, it strikes us as shockingly prosaic.⁶⁵

61. Diary of an Ennuyée, op.cit., p.154.

62. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., p.351.

63. Legends of the Monastic Orders, op.cit., p.441.

64. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., p.85.

65. Ibid., pp.90-91.

Occasionally there are very beautiful Annunciations in the Venetian and Bolognese schools, but in general "the half-draped fluttering angels and the girlish-looking Virgins are nothing less than offensive".⁶⁶

Mrs Jameson's account of the image of the Madonna in Italian painting parallels faithfully the prevailing view of the history of Italian painting generally. The contemplative enthusiasm that arose in the thirteenth century which helped to emancipate art from the rigid formalism of the degenerate Greeks infused some life into the Madonnas. In the fourteenth century an awakened observation of nature united to poetic mysticism (Dante's influence) resulted in a conception of the Madonna which

has never, as a religious and poetical conception, been surpassed by later artists, in spite of all the appliances of colour, and mastery of light and shade, and marvellous efficiency of hand since attained.⁶⁷

However, towards the end of the fifteenth century, there came the classical revival. Its influence on representations of the Virgin, as far as it was external, was good. However it was accompanied by a pagan taste which demoralized Christian art in the sixteenth century. Raphael attained the perfect embodiment of the Madonna. But other artists failed, and by the seventeenth century her representation was human rather than divine.

Mrs Jameson's philosophical and elevated criticism meant almost an entire neglect of pictorial or formal qualities.

⁶⁶. Ibid., p.91.

⁶⁷. Anna Jameson, Legends of the Madonna, as represented in the fine arts (London, 1862), p.xxviii.

Her criticism consisted of a description of the subject of a work of art and an assessment of its appropriateness in terms of morality (there should be nothing sensuous or lascivious), taste (the crude, unpleasant, or ugly should be avoided), poetry (the conception should be affecting or ennobling), plus her own views as to how a sacred personage or story should be presented. In Rubens' Crucifixion at Antwerp, for example, the image of the Magdalen with her arms around the cross might be striking, "but the attention of the penitent ought to be fixed on the dying Saviour to the exclusion of every other thought or object".⁶⁸ Mrs Jameson was also on the alert for subjects which might be of use to modern artists -- subjects which had not been depicted in the past, or which had not been depicted successfully. Cuo Vadis?, a "most beautiful, picturesque, and, to my fancy, sublime legend", was one subject earnestly recommended to the consideration of the modern painter.⁶⁹

All the reviews of Sacred and Legendary Art were complimentary. Mrs Jameson showed how a Protestant could react to Catholic art, sympathizing with what was sincere and heartfelt without condoning the errors and superstition.⁷⁰ She also showed that an appreciation of Christian art was not corrupting.⁷¹ She was praised for the high tone of her criticism, for the way she approached "the soul of a picture",⁷² and for bringing to life paintings otherwise not

68. Sacred and Legendary Art, op.cit., p.358.

69. Ibid., p.181.

70. Art-Union (December, 1848), p.365.

71. Fraser's Magazine, vol.xxxix (March, 1849), pp.283-5.

72. Christian Remembrancer, vol.xvii (January, 1849), p.246.

understood. In general the interpretation of the history of Christian art which she adopted was accepted, although the Rev. Eagles, the art critic for Blackwood's, thought she was too high in her estimation of Murillo.⁷³ Fraser's Magazine, on the other hand, praised her for her freedom from the modern bigotry which talked "as if Christian painting had expired with Perugino".⁷⁴ Reviews of later publications in the series were equally warm.

Sacred and Legendary Art was extraordinarily popular. Six hundred copies were sold in the first few months after its publication which was not bad considering the book cost two guineas.⁷⁵ A second edition appeared in 1850, and a third in 1857. Altogether there were nine editions of Sacred and Legendary Art. The other works in the series, although not quite as successful as the first, all sold very well and further editions were published. Mrs Jameson was delighted to see copies of Legends of the Madonna on sale at the bookstall on Birmingham Railway Station in 1852,⁷⁶ a sure sign of popularity. Mrs Jameson's popularity is not difficult to explain. She wrote with simplicity, charm and enthusiasm on a subject which united three current interests, namely, art, religion and the Middle Ages. And she did not make the mistake of setting herself too far

-
1. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol.lxv (February, 1849), p.104.
 2. Fraser's Magazine, on.cit., p.293.
 3. Clara Thomas, Love and Work Enough. The Life of Anna Jameson (London, 1907), p.191.
 4. Letter, 21 December, 1852. Letters to Ottilie von Goethe, on.cit., pp.188-9.

above her readers. Modestly disclaiming any mastery in her chosen field she appears as one wishing to share her discoveries, and not as one deigning to impart superior wisdom and knowledge. Her readers, anxious to acquire culture and gentility, would have found the role she adopted comforting and encouraging.

The last in the series, The History of Our Lord in Art, must be treated separately as it bears the impress of Elizabeth Eastlake's very different personality. She was a woman quite as energetic as Mrs Jameson, but with a more forceful character and intellect. Her interest in the Primitives had developed in the 1850s after her marriage to Eastlake.⁷⁷ Most of The History of Our Lord in Art was in fact written by Lady Eastlake. She writes with vigour, confidence, precision and wit. She is careful to give dates and locations of works, which Mrs Jameson did not always do. She does not gush about sacred poetry, and there is none of that naive enthusiasm one finds in Mrs Jameson.

Her introduction contains one of the clearest statements of the problem posed by the Purist interpretation of the history of painting, the "strange paradox" that "the excellence means has become apparently fatal to the sacredness of art".⁷⁸ It was certainly true that

the clumsy and ignorant efforts of mediaeval Art convey a far deeper spirituality and reverence of feeling than is shown in any chef d'oeuvre of the 16th century. But this proves only a fact, not a

⁷⁷ See below, pp. 426-8.

⁷⁸ The History of Our Lord as exemplified in works of art. Compiled by Mrs Jameson, completed by Lady Eastlake (London, 1844), vol. i, p. 2.

law. It would be indeed distressing to believe that earnestness of intention could only be combined with infant Art, and the reverse with Art full-grown; and all common sense protests against such a conclusion.⁷⁹

The causes of this paradox must, she believes, lie in external circumstances. Nonetheless it was curious that art should have evolved from the moral to the physical.

Lady Eastlake appears to have been less susceptible to the spiritual appeal of the earlier masters than Mrs Jameson (although she is more intolerant of later artists). In her own review of The History of Our Lord in Art (in which she praised herself for her rare fidelity and judgement) she wrote of the inhibiting effects of mediaeval religion on the arts.⁸⁰ In an earlier article she had argued that the spiritual purity of fifteenth-century paintings was due more to the prescribed types and subjects and to "the reserve and frugality in the means of Art herself, which rendered her disciples powerless for evil" than to the actual feelings of the artist.⁸¹ Nonetheless the effect is of voluntary abstinence rather than involuntary restraint, and the "childlike helplessness" now appeared as a divinity.⁸²

In 1847 Lord Lindsay's Sketches of the History of Christian Art was published. Mrs Jameson, busily engaged

-
- 1. Ibid.
 - 2. Quarterly Review, vol.cxvi (July, 1864), p.175.
 - 3. Ibid., vol.xciv (March, 1854), p.482.
 - 4. Ibid., p.483.

with her book on Christian art, was "frightened" by its publication until she found that he had approached the subject from a different point of view.⁸³ Later she was to acknowledge her debt to his "beautiful work".⁸⁴ Lord Lindsay, for his part, praised Mrs Jameson's efforts to familiarize her countrymen "with the noble works of early Italian art".⁸⁵

Lord Lindsay's contribution to the subject of Christian art bore a modest title. In fact the work, as envisaged by its author, was the most ambitious attempt at art history yet undertaken in Britain. It was to be a history of European art -- architecture, sculpture and painting -- from the early Christian period to his own time. But that was not all. For Lord Lindsay also planned that his history should be the exposition of his theories about the laws of human progress and development. As it happened there was to be no sequel to those first three volumes which appeared in 1847. Even so, these humbly-named beginnings were rightly considered one "of the most laborious and erudite pieces of research on the subject of the Fine Arts that has appeared in the English language".⁸⁶

The book begins with a brief summary of his theories, which had been expounded at length in an earlier publication,

-
- 83. Letter, March 1847. Quo. Gerardine Macpherson, op.cit., pp.238-9.
 - 84. Legends of the Monastic Orders, op.cit., p.xvi.
 - 85. Sketches of the History of Christian Art, 3 vols (London, 1847), vol.1, p.xviii. He was referring to her articles in the Athenaeum.
 - 86. Athenaeum (15 March, 1847), p.289.

Progression by Antagonism (1846). They are the theories of a man deeply religious and firmly Protestant, who is familiar with German transcendental and idealist philosophy. This is followed by a table of symbols used in Christian art, and an account of some of the more popular legends of the Church, the materials of Christian art during the Middle Ages. Next comes a "General Classification of Schools and Artists, etc.". This is important, because the plan of the whole work is here set out.⁸⁷ Lord Lindsay's history of Christian art follows more or less the course charted by Rio. A long period of preparation precedes its establishment in the thirteenth century, and early flowering in the fourteenth. A struggle between Christian and pagan elements ensues which reaches a culminating point in the sixteenth century. Thereafter there is a decline, and art sinks into sensuality and triviality. However Lord Lindsay sees in his own century the dawn of a new revival in the arts.

The detailed history which completes the first three volumes stops at the end of Period I, around the middle of the fifteenth century. It is a most scholarly achievement. Lord Lindsay had read all the relevant published material on the subject, Italian, French and German. He was up-to-date with the most recent research. However, all his reading was at second-hand. He did not himself go searching for documentary evidence in archives. His was the work of a cultured, enthusiastic and conscientious amateur, not a professional.

87. For a summary of this section, see J. Steegman, "Lord Lindsay's History of Christian Art", J.W.O.I., vol. x (1947), pp. 124-6.

As well as being extremely well-informed Lord Lindsay had studied at first hand most of the art works he treated in his text. At a time when research into the period was still in its infancy there was a great deal of uncertainty over names, dates, attributions. Where there was contention Lord Lindsay was always careful to present the arguments, to weigh the evidence carefully, before giving his own opinion. Thus, for example, we find him (rightly) querying the attribution of the S. Ranieri frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa to Simone Martini, and (wrongly) accepting the frescoes in the Spanish chapel in S. Maria Novella as his. In neither case, however, were his conclusions haphazardly reached.⁸⁸ On occasion Lord Lindsay made a new attribution on his own account. On the basis of an engraving in Rosini (Plate 25), he ascribed to the little known Sassetta the Mystic Marriage of St Francis (then in the Demidoff collection, now in the Musée Condé), which Rosini had tentatively attributed to Agnolo Gaddi.⁸⁹ On the other hand, we find him on the very next page making Domenico di Bartolo (a painter he much over-estimates) the unlikely contender for Fra Angelico's Cortona altarpiece.⁹⁰ But again, in each of these examples, he brought forward supporting evidence for his conclusions.

Sometimes, but fortunately not too often, his theories

-
88. In the case of the Campo Santo frescoes he disputed the traditional attribution on the grounds of style, quality, and subject matter. It was unlikely that the frescoes would have been begun before 1356, the year of a plague in Pisa supposedly brought to an end through the intercession of S. Ranieri. Simone Martini died in 1344. (Lindsay, op.cit., vol.iii, pp.23-30).
89. Ibid., pp.57-58 n. Giovanni Rosini, Storia della pittura italiana raccolta coi monumenti (Pisa, 1859-1871).
90. Ibid., p.96.

intruded into his narrative and affected his historical interpretations and critical assessments. These theories are the least satisfactory feature of the book, although for Lord Lindsay the most crucial. His reviewers had little patience with his "German theorizing spirit".⁹¹ A detailed analysis of his ideas would be of little value, while a brief summary is difficult because they are so involved.⁹² Two points are however worth making.

Firstly, like Wackenroder, the Schlegels and Rio, Lord Lindsay's starting point was the inherent superiority of Christian art to that of Antiquity. The "artists of Greece never rose above the religious and moral sentiments of the age The highest element of truth and beauty, the Spiritual, was beyond the soar of Phidias and Praxiteles".⁹³ The Christian starts from a loftier platform, because he is Christian. We "are raised by communion with God to a purer atmosphere, in which we see things in the light of Eternity, not simply as they are, but with their ulterior meanings, as

91. Wiseman, Dublin Review, vol.xxii (June, 1847), p.513.

92. Lindsay argued that the destiny of mankind was the re-union of the three fundamental elements of his nature, Spirit, Sense, and Intellect, which had been thrown into disharmony as a result of the Fall. In history each of these three elements had a period of distinct development: Sense, with the Egyptians, Intellect, with the Greeks, and Spirit in Christian times. Progress towards re-union is through the conflict of the three elements in which the superior (Spirit) is victorious. A brief moment of perfection was attained in the art of the sixteenth century. Connected with this theory of "progression by antagonism" are a series of analogies linking man, his history, God, and art. Sense, Intellect and Spirit = Egypt, Greece, and Christian Europe = Father, Son and Holy Ghost = Architecture, Sculpture and Painting = Colour, Form and Spirit.

93. Lindsay, op.cit., vol.i, pp.xiv-xv.

shadows of deeper truths".⁹⁴ And where in particular the advantage lies with the Christian artist is "the depth, intensity, grandeur, and sweetness of the emotions" at his command, as compared with those "elicited by the ancients".⁹⁵

Secondly, we find complications arising from the application of this principle to the history of the revival of Art in the Middle Ages. Again we find an uneasy acceptance of the idea that art contained the most spiritual beauty in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries while not attaining full perfection, as art, until the sixteenth. Yet Lord Lindsay appears less anti-classical and anti-Renaissance in his sympathies than either Rio or his famous English contemporary, Ruskin. He asserted the importance of the Antique influence on the initial revival of painting, transmitted by Nicola Pisano.⁹⁶ And although his attitudes towards the sixteenth century are not entirely clear (after all the history was never completed), he did seem to suggest that the triumphs of Leonardo, Raphael and Michelangelo were Christian triumphs. Protestant prejudice against mysticism, combined with the very British view that asceticism and monasticism were unhealthy and anti-progressive,⁹⁷ tempered his enthusiasm for the artists of the Middle Ages. Even Fra Angelico, who was coming to be thought of as beyond the reaches of earthly criticism, he thought to have been unduly extolled. Fra Angelico could

94. Lindsay, *op.cit.*, p.xv.

95. *Ibid.*

96. *Ibid.*, vol.ii, pp.82-3.

97. For celibacy ("which brands our wives and mothers with a slur"), see *ibid.*, pp.225-6; for asceticism, see *ibid.*, vol.iii, p.66.

not attain perfection because he neglected Sense and Intellect.⁹⁸ His art was therefore less progressive than that of, say, Giotto.

Turning now to consider in a little more detail Lord Lindsay's narrative, probably his most original contribution was his positive evaluation of the aesthetic merit and historical significance of Byzantine art, still generally decried as decadent in spirit and hideous to behold. He re-asserted the substance of Vasari's claims about the role of the "Greeks" in the Italian revival, claims which had been disputed by later scholars such as Lanzi and Cicognara. Among other things, he pointed to a revival in Byzantine art in the twelfth century. His descriptions of the mosaics he has studied in Italy reflect his sympathy and appreciation. Of the Virgin at Murano he writes:

her hands are held forth appealingly towards the spectator, two large tear-drops hang on her cheek, settled sorrow dwells in every feature; the very spirit of the "Stabat Mater" breathes through this affecting portraiture - the silent searching look for sympathy is irresistible. The face is not beautiful, but impressive and dignified; there is a feeling of elegance in the attitude, and the workmanship is finished with care and evidently by one of the best artists of the time.⁹⁹

The contribution of the Teutonic races to the revival of painting in Italy was as important as that of the Byzantines, although more difficult to establish precisely. The chapter on architecture is out of place in this book, but Lord

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp.189-90.

⁹⁹ Ibid., vol.1, p.128.

Lindsay demonstrated to his own satisfaction at least that the introduction of Gothic architecture into Italy necessarily preceded the revival of sculpture and painting.

The history of Italian art from the time of its revival is divided into two streams. There is the "dramatic" school descending from Nicola Pisano and Giotto, and the "contemplative" school, with a tendency "to the abstractive, symbolical, allegorical and lyrical, rather than the dramatic".¹⁰⁰ This second school owed more to the Byzantine tradition. The first originated in Florence, the second in Siena. Yet Lindsay's organization of artists and schools is not strictly along geographical lines. He himself observes that the principle he has adopted "is that of influence as opposed to locality".¹⁰¹ Thus he finds "contemplative" as well as "dramatic" tendencies present in Florentine art. The dramatic school is the more progressive and contributed most to the final brief perfection of the sixteenth century. Yet it is not the less spiritual for this. All the works of this first period were created in a spirit of reverent piety.

There is nothing out of the ordinary in Lord Lindsay's account of Giotto, who maintained his position as the father of Italian painting. However he does manage to make Giotto appear more like a typical nineteenth-century self-made man. He set out on his career conscious of what needed to be done to advance painting, and progressed steadily along his predetermined path through "continuous unwearied study".¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰. *Ibid.*, vol.iii, p.4.

¹⁰¹. *Ibid.*, vol.i, p.ccix n.

¹⁰². *Ibid.*, vol.ii, p.262.

His faith was "practical, manly and healthy".¹⁰³

If anything, Lindsay over-estimated Giotto's influence on the fourteenth century, and it may be a surprise to find Gentile da Fabriano appearing as the "pride and glory" of the Giotteschi of Umbria.¹⁰⁴ In contrast with, for example, Lanzi or Rio, he denied that the Black Death had any injurious effect on painting in the second half of the fourteenth century.¹⁰⁵ In general Lord Lindsay ignored historical, social or economic factors. Change is in obedience to those laws of progression by antagonism which he believed he had discovered.

The length of the chapter on Sienese painting is evidence of the importance now attached to this school. Duccio, Simone Martini, the Lorenzetti, Taddeo di Bartolo and the painters of the fifteenth century are all discussed in detail. The two most important painters of the First Period, after Giotto, were however, Orcagna and Fra Angelico.

As for Lord Lindsay's account of painting north of the Alps, what is of interest is his awareness of the influence of Northern art on the Italians.

Colouring, therefore -- Landscape, as founded on the laws of aerial perspective -- Individuality and the Domestic Sentiment ... and the art of painting in Oils, sum up the contributions of the North to the common treasury of European Christian Art.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³. *Ibid.*, p.264.

¹⁰⁴. *Ibid.*, p.352.

¹⁰⁵. *Ibid.*, pp.284-5.

¹⁰⁶. *Ibid.*, vol.iii, p.411.

However he was less responsive to Northern painting because it did not aspire to the ideal. Flemish and German painters imitated "the wrinkles, warts and unseemly peculiarities" of Nature.¹⁰⁷ Van Eyck's triumph was "the triumph of the prosaic".¹⁰⁸

Lord Lindsay's love of the earlier painters was formed during boyhood sojourns abroad.¹⁰⁹ Their appeal to him was largely for religious reasons. In addition, like so many of the enthusiasts of his time, he found in them a touching, child-like innocence:

There is in truth a holy purity, an innocent naiveté, a child-like grace and simplicity, a freshness, a fearlessness, an utter freedom from affectation, a yearning after all things truthful, lovely and of good report, in the productions of this early time, which invest them with a charm peculiar in its kind, and which few even of the most perfect works of the maturer era can boast of, -- and hence the risk and danger (which I thus warn you of at the outset) of becoming too passionately attached to them, of losing the power of discrimination, of admiring and imitating their defects as well as their beauties ...¹¹⁰

But despite the warning about the defects which Lindsay makes here it is very seldom in fact that he draws attention to these. Only rarely do we find him making apologies for some technical demerit. More often we find comments like these: "I can scarcely praise him too highly" (of Duccio).¹¹¹ "The frescoes representing the history of S. Sylvester, I am almost afraid of speaking too highly" (of the frescoes by

¹⁰⁷. *Ibid.*, p.307.

¹⁰⁸. *Ibid.*, p.302.

¹⁰⁹. The Angelico's *Coronation of the Virgin* in the Louvre he never thought of "without a glow of delight, from the remembrance of the interest it excited in me for early Italian art when resident as a boy in Paris" (*Ibid.*, p.260).

¹¹⁰. *Ibid.*, vol.ii, pp.162-3.

¹¹¹. *Ibid.*, vol.iii, p.15.

Maso di Banco in the Bardi chapel in S. Croce).¹¹² "I cannot express the pleasure these frescoes of S. Giorgio gave me, and which is still so vivid that I would fain caution you against expecting too much from my description" (of the frescoes by Altichiero in the Oratory of S. Giorgio in Padua).¹¹³

Lord Lindsay's actual descriptions of the works he so admired are mostly confined to the subjects treated. It was important that the viewer be able to "read" correctly the old frescoes and altarpieces. His criticism relates to the effectiveness with which the story is told, and the variety, truth, grace and dignity of gesture and expression.

Sketches of the History of Christian Art ends with a plea on behalf of the old masters, who knew how to touch the heart. In a passage, reminiscent of George Darley's piece quoted in the previous chapter, Lord Lindsay wrote:

like children, they are shy with us -- like strangers, they bear an uncouth mien and aspect -- like ghosts from the other world, they have an awkward habit of shocking our conventionalities with home truths. But with the dead as with the living all depends on the frankness with which we greet them, the sincerity with which we credit their kindly qualities; sympathy is the key to truth -- we must love in order to appreciate.¹¹⁴

Was Lord Lindsay successful in inspiring love and sympathy for these early masters? His reviewers were unanimous in praising his scholarship and erudition. Those

¹¹². Ibid., vol.ii, p.283.

¹¹³. Ibid., p.347.

¹¹⁴. Ibid., vol.iii, p.420.

most in sympathy with his ideals - Ruskin in the Quarterly Review, and the reviewers in the North British Review and The Christian Remembrancer - praised his earnest Christian approach to the subject. The Christian Remembrancer described him as one of the earliest of those writers who may be classed as a "Christian critic".¹¹⁵ But none had any patience with his theories. And perhaps, as Ruskin maintained, these theories could not but impair the effectiveness of a work "whose purpose is assuredly as much to win to the truth as to demonstrate it".¹¹⁶ Whereas Mrs Jameson could reach the general reading public, Lord Lindsay's contribution was too specialized and in places too obscure to reach beyond the initiated few.

Four years after Sketches of the History of Christian Art James Dennistoun's Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino was published, dedicated to his fellow-Scot, Lord Lindsay. Dennistoun, trained for the Bar but much more interested in antiquarian pursuits, had spent many years abroad, principally in Germany and Italy. The Memoirs, he writes in his dedication,

were commenced some years ago, while residing in Italy, from a wish to introduce to my countrymen the early progress of reviving art, particularly of religious painting; and to render accessible some details of the political and social condition of that bright land, in its golden age, hitherto unpublished or scattered in volumes rarely met with.¹¹⁷

115. Christian Remembrancer vol.xvi (October, 1846), p.314.

116. Works, op.cit., vol.xii, p.175. The review was originally published in the Quarterly Review, vol.lxxi (June, 1847), pp.1-57.

117. Dennistoun, op.cit., vol.i p.iii.

The section on art and literature is inserted, in a fairly unconnected way, into the narrative which is mostly biographical and political. One of his few comments on the relationship between art and the political scene shows that Dennistoun dissented from the popular view that art could flourish only in a free society:

From an impartial review of Italian mediaeval history it appears that democratic institutions were by no means indispensable to the expansion of genius, since the progress of letters and arts were upon the whole nearly equal in the republic and seigneuries, under the tyranny of a condottiere or the domination of a faction.¹¹⁸

His account begins with a brief analysis of the history and principles of Christian art. He then proceeds to consider the painters of the Umbrian school and artists working in Urbino. Dennistoun saw himself as following humbly in the track opened by Lord Lindsay, who had "enriched our literature with the best history of Christian art as yet produced".¹¹⁹ He quoted Schlegel on the destructive effects of revived Paganism in Italy.¹²⁰ He praised German scholars for their discovery of the existence of an Umbrian school of painting.¹²¹ And he quoted Rio on the devotional character of this school.¹²²

In view of these influences it is not surprising to find Dennistoun's interpretation of the history of the revival of painting conforming to the pattern followed by Rio. The solemn and traditional forms of fourteenth-century art

¹¹⁸. *Ibid.*, vol.ii, p.93.

¹¹⁹. *Ibid.*, p.165.

¹²⁰. *Ibid.*, p.160.

¹²¹. *Ibid.*, p.175.

¹²². *Ibid.*, p.170.

had a grandeur of sentiment, and a majesty of expression, altogether wanting in more matured productions, wherein truth to nature is manifested through unimportant accessories, or combined with trivial details.¹²³

The two principles antagonistic to devotional sentiment were naturalism and paganism.¹²⁴ Florence became a hot-bed of naturalism and paganism, but devotional art survived in Umbria, influenced by the artists of Siena and by Fra Angelico, via Gentile da Fabriano. Dennistoun followed Rio in making Gentile da Fabriano a pupil of the Blessed Angelico and a key figure in the Umbrian school. The Umbrian school culminated in Perugino, who maintained the integrity of Christian sentiment against innovation, and Raphael, who however lent himself unwittingly to the degradation of Christian art.

Dennistoun noted that the numbers of people who appreciated the earlier painters were increasing, although there remained impediments, namely religious prejudice and the application of academic principles of judgement to works addressed to those who came to worship, not criticize. It was hardly fair to apply a standard, derived from art's security, to works "already old ere it had been adopted".¹²⁵

¹²³ . *Ibid.*, pp.155-6.

¹²⁴ . However Dennistoun makes a distinction between paganism, by which he means the study of classical philosophy, literature and mythology, and classicism, by which he means the study of Antique art. By the former "a blighting poison was infused through the spirit of art". But the latter "has often ennobled the work and enriched its details, without injury to its sentiment" (*Ibid.*, p.160).

¹²⁵ . *Ibid.*, p.162.

Connoisseurs, being more alive "to the naturalism and technical merits of painting, than to subtleties of feeling and expression" are "neither conscious of the aims nor aware of the principles of purist art. They look for perfection where only pathos should be sought".¹²⁶ Yet the very imperfections of the old masters could have positive value. Their ignorance of anatomy, for example, led them to concentrate on the expression of their heads. Yet we still find in Dennistoun that ambivalence over the technical defects of the Primitives. Since they were defects he was opposed to any revival of the archaic style of the Middle Ages. And despite what he said about not judging artists by standards which did not apply, we find his judgement being affected by these same standards. Thus at one point he remarked that those who criticized Perugino's work as stiff, timid, and monotonous when compared with the work of the following generation, would reach a juster conclusion if they compared him with his predecessors.¹²⁷ Here, in a nutshell, is the Vasarian story of technical progress.

Another inconsistency in Dennistoun arises from a conflict between the romantic vision of the Middle Ages and the idea of a great revival of civilization in Italy in the fifteenth century. For the period covered by his history, which ends at the sixteenth century, Dennistoun decided to use the word "mediaeval", since the zenith of Italy's glory was "attained under military and civil

¹²⁶. *Ibid.*, p.163.

¹²⁷. *Ibid.*, p.190.

institutions, and was rendered permanent by studies and artistic creations, derived from the middle ages and breathing their spirit".¹²⁸ Yet, writing of the revival of the arts in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, he can describe how the human mind was "aroused from its long and leaden slumbers".¹²⁹

There can be no doubt that many of the ideas associated with the "Christian criticism" of art won widespread acceptance in the 1840s and 1850s. It was generally agreed that the earlier painters were Christian artists par excellence, and that later religious art was in the main superficial and insincere.¹³⁰ It was also agreed that painting declined in the latter half of the sixteenth century because artists and their patrons were interested only in the acquisition and display of mere mechanical skill. That Christian art was superior to classical art because it operated on a higher plane was an assumption commonly accepted. Lastly there was the appeal of the idea that art could flourish only when inspired by religion.

On the other hand, the more uncompromising principles put forward by Rio were less popular, and we must go to the

1. Ibid., vol.i, p.xv.

2. Ibid., vol.ii, p.94.

3. Thus the Rev. T.H. White was very much out of line when he wrote: "Of a truth, in those days, Painting was a most Sacred Art. I would say with utmost reverence, that the Holy Spirit Himself must have inspired such artists as Guercino da Cento, Spagnoletto, Carlo Maratta, and Guido Reni, to paint the blessed Saviour as they have done! In their hands, Painting becomes an humble, earnest, affectionate Handmaid to Scripture" (Practicals of Italy and the Rhineland (London, 1841, p.112). His words are right, but they have been applied to the wrong artists.

Dublin Review (at least until the later 1840s), the Ecclesiologist, and the Christian Remembrancer (a journal with High Church sympathies) to find echoes of these. Here we find the more extreme anti-classical statements which actually condemn the physical beauty of pagan art, set up principles of asceticism in art, and extol the proportions of mediaeval figures as being in harmony with a life of mortification and penance.¹³¹ In 1841 the Christian Remembrancer published two articles on church music by William Dyce. Dyce also made some references to Christian painting, and he dramatized the contrast between pagan and Christian art in a comparison of the Apollo Belvedere and Perugino's depiction of St Sebastian. In the first "we find every quality that is captivating to the sense and flattering to our nature". As for the second:

Instead of perfect form, we have one of ordinary everyday occurrence; --instead of manly vigour, we have feminine tenderness; -- instead of lusty health, we have the pallid hue of suffering; -- instead of the disdainful downward glance of the eye, the proud and distended nostril, the beautiful though contemptuous curve of the lip, we have a countenance, whose every line betokens meekness, patience, gentleness; and if it is joyful, it is illumined only by a joy that shines through an external of suffering.¹³²

The expression in art of the Christian ideal required the sacrifice of qualities that merely gratified the senses, just as Christianity itself required the subduing of the flesh by the spirit. Religious art could not be judged by the ordinary rules of taste, for then "the very best works

¹³¹. Dublin Review, vol.xiii (February, 1842), pp.69-70.

¹³². Christian Remembrancer, vol.i (April, 1841), p.288.

of sacred art must appear cold, lifeless, and unattractive".¹³³
 The spiritual beauties of the Primitives could be appreciated only by those whose tastes had been cultivated in the school of Christianity. Dyce had been appointed Professor of the Theory of Fine Art at King's College, London, and in his introductory lecture in 1844 gave the outline of a proposed course on Christian art. The period during which Christian art reached its highest point of excellence he called "Ascetic" and it went from the beginning of the revival of the arts in the thirteenth century until the revival of pagan taste at the end of the fifteenth century.¹³⁴

The Christian Remembrancer's review of Lord Lindsay's Sketches of the History of Christian Art is an excellent example of the influence of Christian art criticism and history in England. It grieves over the fatal effects of the progress of art on Christian art.

Unhappily the opening buds of art contained the sure elements of decay. At the very beginning of the development we, for our part, must begin to qualify our admiration of it. The multitude of critics and connoisseurs, as is notorious, still regard the whole progress of art as a continued series of emancipations from fetters, and victories over obstacles. It is impossible for us to share their congratulations. We too, indeed, hail with joy the gradual perfection of the mechanical appliances of the painter; we greet every newly-won grace, and welcome every success of mind over matter; but only because by means of these the ideal of truth and beauty, which it is the end of art to reveal to us, can be made more life-like and impressive. For we have learnt by experience, that the true aim of art may be forgotten in the

133. Ibid.

134. William Dyce, Theory of the Fine Arts. A lecture (London, 1844).

perfection of the means; that form, or colour, or the like, may be unworthily followed for their own sakes, or even sinfully prostituted in the cause of evil.¹³⁵

A Christian criticism of art does not judge the merit of a work or an artist simply by technical criteria. The questions to be asked are: "How is my heart affected by this subject and treatment? Does the artist instruct me, or move me to deeper faith and love? ... In short, is the aim of this artist right, and his effort successful?"¹³⁶ By these criteria Raphael's change from his first to his second manner "was not a transition, but a fall".¹³⁷ A Christian critic recognizes art's capacity to exert a moral influence for good and for evil, and many a picture or statue should be destroyed. In response to the objection that by these principles a Byzantine daub would be preferred to a Venus by Titian it is argued that one admires the first as a Christian work, not an artistic work.

We neither ask you to deny the beautiful painting of the one, nor to affirm it untrue of the other. Allow us to use our test of the spirit of the painter, and the test of mechanical excellence shall be conceded to you.¹³⁸

These principles would have been too radical even for some of those who admired the earlier painters for their religious content. Neither George Darley, nor Anne Jameson, nor Lord Lindsay deplored the progress of painting. As for the extolling of "ascetic" principles of beauty, the ideals

135. *Christian Remembrancer*, vol.xvi (October, 1848), p.264.

136. *Ibid.*, pp.265-6.

137. *Ibid.*, p.264.

138. *Ibid.*, pp.266-7.

of beauty of Antiquity and the Renaissance were far too influential to allow the acceptance of an alternative, which would seem to argue the beauty of ugliness and deformity.

In the 1840s there were warnings against excesses of this kind, by Wiseman in his review of Lord Lindsay in the Dublin Review in 1847, by Fraser's Magazine in its review of Mrs Jameson in 1849. The latter criticized Rio's adulation of the asceticism of the earlier painters. After all, their spiritual expression was "only the expression of the passive spiritual faculties, of innocence, devotion, meekness, resignation; all good, but not the whole of humanity".¹³⁹ One also finds arguments in favour of greater tolerance. Sir Edmund Head, for example, wrote in his introduction to the Kugler Handbook to the Northern schools:

The naiveté of the early German and Italian painters, the earnest simplicity with which they conceived and expressed the devotional subjects treated by them and the moral beauty of those subjects themselves, may excite our admiration, without disqualifying us for duly admiring the brilliant breadth of light and shadow of Rembrandt, or the genuine truth and humour of Wilkie.¹⁴⁰

With the spread of the fashion for the Primitives and of the ideas and principles associated with their art, in the 1850s, one finds also evidence of a reaction against these ideas and principles which often extended to the older masters also. The reviews of Rio in the 1850s are interesting

139. Fraser's Magazine, vol. xxxix (March, 1849), p. 295.

140. Kugler, The German, Flemish, and Dutch Schools of Painting, 2nd ed., p. 222.

as indications of this shift in attitudes.¹⁴¹ Almost all the reviewers commented on the great changes which had taken place in English taste and criticism in the twenty years or since De la poésie Chrétienne had first been published. Rio's second volume "finds a larger and more acquiescent public ready than the comparatively few sympathizers to whom the first was addressed", wrote the Athenaeum in 1856 in its review of De l'art Chrétien.¹⁴² In the mean-time there had been "a wholesale deposition of the Domenichinos, and Dolces, and Guidos in favour of the Angelicos, Giottos, Gozzolis, Orcagnas, belonging to the severer and more spiritual school of Art".¹⁴³ In this article and in the review of the English translation of the first volume, The Poetry of Christian Art, the Athenaeum rightly claimed credit as the first pioneer "in this now triumphant cause".¹⁴⁴ However things had gone too far, and the reaction in favour the early masters had become too violent, fanatical and intolerant.

This was the general tenor of other reviews. The Saturday Review praised Rio for being one of the first to direct the public's attention away from the superficial, material facets of art. No one would deny

that it was high time, in the then condition of

141. Reviews, that is, of the English translation of the first volume, published as The Poetry of Christian Art (1854), and of the second volume, De l'art chrétien, (1855).

142. Athenaeum (11 October, 1856), p.1242.

143. Ibid.

144. Ibid. (10 February, 1855), p.171.

art, for some stand to be made in behalf of its spiritual element against the debased traditions of the academies. And our thanks are due to all those who proved to us that the aim and sentiment of art, especially Christian art, are of at least equal importance with excellence of technical design or manipulative skill.¹⁴⁵

But Rio's sympathies were much too narrow. There was no reason why one should not love the mystic inspiration of the Umbrian painters or Fra Angelico "without being insensible to the different merits of the more Naturalistic schools".¹⁴⁶ Even the Christian Remembrancer, although still firmly believing that art should be the handmaid of religion, felt that Rio was now rather behind the age.

The movement has already advanced beyond the negative re-action from the tame eclecticism of the academies. We demand something more positive, and had we now a painter who rivalled the B. Angelico himself in fervour and purity of sentiment, we should still expect from him an accurate anatomy and the most perfect mastery of his brush. Twenty years ago technical skill would have been unduly postponed to motive. Hence it is, perhaps, that R. Rio's new matter seems wanting in vigour and breadth of vision.¹⁴⁷

This reaction against Purism could be much sharper. For example, the Quarterly Review in 1858 attacked the obscurantism of modern criticism, and its effects on the novice in art.

Without knowing anything of the merits of a picture, he is called on to establish some fanciful harmony between them and the imaginary feelings and the moral qualities of the artist, of which he knows, if possible, less; and when he has observed nature so carelessly as not to

145. Saturday Review, vol.iii (31 January, 1857), p.109.

146. Ibid.

147. Christian Remembrancer, vol.xxiv (October, 1857), p.281.

perceive whether the shadow is correct and the colour true, and whether the outline has more than a general resemblance to the anatomy of the human figure, he is required to pronounce on the "earnestness" of the work, its "purity", and other qualities, of which he can form no distinct notion, and further to decide whether its relation is to "sense", to "intellect", or to "spirit".¹⁴⁸

We find also in the 1850s a return to a more negative view of the earlier painters as religious artists and of the effects on art of religion. Dyce in 1841 had condemned as "shallow and superficial" the belief that religion in the Middle Ages had been a hindrance to the true progress of art.¹⁴⁹ But this kind of attitude, which never completely died away, returned with new life and vigour in the 1850s. A very good instance of this is Ralph Wornum's Epochs of Painting, first published in 1847. This contained two sections on the revival of painting, taken mostly from Vasari and Lanzi. It is simply a tale of progressive improvements. He had little sympathy with painting before Masaccio, but had a fair appreciation of late fifteenth-century painters. Still his critical vocabulary is peppered with words like "Gothic", "hard", "dry", "meagre". On the question of the relation between art and religion he had very little to say, in contrast with the second edition which appeared in 1859, where this is a good deal on the subject.

Wornum, however, adopted a very different line to those who argued that the glory of mediaeval art was the result of the faith which inspired it. It was Wornum's contention that the weight of ecclesiastical tradition became an inhibiting

148. R.H. Cheyney, Quarterly Review, vol.ciii (April, 1868), p.362.

149. Christian Remembrancer, vol.i (April, 1841), p.287.

influence on the progress of art. What he now stressed in this and the 1864 edition of Epochs of Painting was the slow pace of the advance of art, not through any incapacity of painters, but because of the force of religious precedent and conventional practice. Tradition, he wrote, is "essentially antagonistic to all progress".¹⁵⁰ Free scope was denied to artists, obliged to submit themselves to ecclesiastical patronage and the cravings of popular superstition. Even at the very end of the fifteenth century art was still not completely purified "from the pernicious alloy of ecclesiastical tradition".¹⁵¹

As for the much vaunted religious sentiment of the early masters, this gets short shrift from Wornum. It was conventional, and limited in its range to pious resignation, asceticism, pity and despair. It could be appreciated only by those familiar with the sentiments of the age in which it was produced. In other words it lacked the comprehensiveness and universality of expression to be found in the sixteenth century.

These general remarks about early Italian painting had been inserted into the narrative, and added as a conclusion. It is an indication of the growth of interest in the Primitives that a conclusion to a general history of painting from its beginnings to the present should be concerned solely with their art and the fashion for it.

150. Ralph Wornum, The Epochs of Painting. A biographical and critical essay on painting and painters of all times and every place (London, 1864), p.101.

151. Ibid., p.156.

Another example of the more critical attitude towards religion as an influence on the art of the Middle Ages are a series of articles on the earlier Italians, published in the Art Journal in 1858 and 1859. These in fact show a curious ambivalence towards the spirituality of the old masters. On the one hand, the author of these articles could write that "some of the purest and most sacred emotions of the soul they could draw, in their happiest moments, profoundly and quite marvellously".¹⁵² On the other hand, he rails against the unhealthy and maudlin sentiment, the monkish asceticism, meagre inanity, and so on. In particular he is critical of fourteenth-century painting and of the way in which Rio "in that unctuous, incense-perfumed style, which may perhaps do some little for Rome, but will neither now, nor henceforth do any thing for Art but emasculate" celebrated it "as the pure age of religious painting".¹⁵³ Orcagna, the "so-styled Michael Angelo of the fourteenth century", had recently been far too much exalted.¹⁵⁴ Fifteenth-century painters do not escape his strictures either, Fra Angelico especially. His art is described as "insipid" and "inane". His figures have "doll-like faces", of "common-place prettiness".¹⁵⁵ His clerical sanctities reveal a dash of slyness behind their conscious piety. His representations of grief are

"fretful whimpering, the piety is that of persons suited for nothing but to be on their knees, and

152. Art Journal (March, 1858), p.65. These articles are anonymous, but the internal evidence points to a common authorship.

153. Ibid. (December, 1858), p.350.

154. Ibid. (October, 1858), p.291.

155. Ibid. (December, 1858), p.350.

turn up the white of their eyes all the days
of their lives in some profitless cloister or
desert.¹⁵⁶

The other master of Christian art, Perugino, came from the
"very Holy Land of Monkery", the chief charm of his paintings
is their "dreamy lackadaisicality".¹⁵⁷ The artists who
fared best were those representative of the naturalistic
tradition, Masaccio, Gozzoli, Signorelli and Ghirlandaio.¹⁵⁸

This more critical reaction to the Primitives as
religious painters must of course be set alongside the
continued adulation of them as Christian painters par
excellence. For example, we find a contributor to the
Athenaeum in 1862 still looking forward to the time when
the popular mind "seeing through the technical incompetence
of the great early painters, own that with them dwelt the
real, solemn spirit of religious Art, the practice of which
was truly a pious office".¹⁵⁹ Criticism of monkish
asceticism and ignorant superstition reflected the influence
of anti-Catholicism particularly strong in the 1850s, what
with the defections from the Oxford Movement to Rome and
the re-establishment of the Hierarchy in 1850. It was
also inspired by what were considered to be the excesses of
some of the enthusiasts of the earlier masters, notably Rio,
Lord Lindsay and Ruskin. But there was more to the reaction
than this.

156. Ibid., p.352.

157. Ibid. (May, 1859), pp.129 and 130.

158. See ibid. (February, 1859), pp.53-6.

159. Athenaeum (22 March, 1862), p.400.

Wornum's attacks on the debilitating effects of mediaeval religion on the arts in 1859 and 1864 repeated and expanded material first published in the Art Journal in 1850. In this article he had put the Primitives fairly and squarely in their place. "It is literally true that every defect or deficiency of the quattrocento is supplied in the cinquecento", he asserted.¹⁶⁰ His attitude may be contrasted with that of Dyce, for example, who maintained that the technical imperfections tended to develop qualities peculiar to the early masters and absent in later art, such as innocence, simplicity and truthfulness.¹⁶¹ The title of Wornum's article was "Modern Moves in Art", and it was an attack on the whole mediaeval revival in painting and architecture and on the ideas on which it was founded (such as the subordination of art to religion, of the material to the spiritual). In particular Wornum was critical of revivalism in painting, which had originated in Germany and had transplanted "the most morbid asceticism of the cell to the hitherto glowing face of art",¹⁶² and which was now infecting British art. Wornum concluded his article with an attack on the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, whose works revealed the "miserable asceticism of the darkest middle ages".¹⁶³ This then was one of the reasons for the more critical attitude towards Purism and the Primitives in the

160. Art Journal (September, 1850), p.270.

161. William Dyce, The National Gallery. Its formation and management, considered in a letter addressed, by permission, to R.A.M. and Prince Albert (London, 1853), p.12.

162. Art Journal, op.cit.

163. Ibid., p.271.

1850s. It was an expression of fears that English art had been infected with a retrograding mania, as a result of the excessive zeal of enthusiasts in crying up the virtues of the old masters.

Yet the situation was more complicated than this. Rather paradoxically, the Pre-Raphaelites were to be partly responsible for the dissemination of another image of the early painters, which saw them as the honest and scrupulous transcribers of facts rather than the interpreters of religious feeling. One of the reasons of the appeal of the earlier masters from the beginning of the nineteenth century had been the sincerity and unaffectedness of their depiction of people, things, and nature. This kind of interest focussed on painters of the fifteenth century, particularly Gozzoli, Masaccio and the other artists who had worked in the Brancacci chapel, and Ghirlandaio. Paralleling the Realist movement in contemporary art one finds in the 1850s a tendency to regard these quattrocento masters as realists, coming in between the conventionalism of the trecento and the academicism of the cinquecento. This was the view adopted by Ruskin in his defence of the Pre-Raphaelites and his analysis of their relationship with their namesakes.

This interest in fifteenth-century painters as realists and naturalists was connected also with the growing awareness of the Renaissance as an historical period located between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of modern times. The artist's interest in studying and recording the appearances of nature was indicative of the development of a new phase

of human life and the spread of "material civilization".¹⁶⁴
 As yet there was no single word to describe this transitional period. The term "Renaissance" reached England in the 1840s, but was used strictly in an art historical context, referring mainly to the art of the first half of the sixteenth century. It was in the 1860s that "Renaissance" became the label for the period between the end of the mediaeval and the beginning of the modern worlds.¹⁶⁵

Around the middle of the nineteenth century the Age of the Revival co-habited uneasily with the Age of Faith. If the Middle Ages appealed for its piety, stability, and simplicity, the dawn of that modern progress of which England was at the forefront had its attractions also. And since this revival was also seen as a liberation from the bonds of feudalism and the Church, we find that the hostile image of the Middle Ages, as ages of superstition and ignorance, retained its hold.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, therefore, we find the co-existence of Purist ideas with attitudes critical of or contradictory to these ideas. Hostility was often, although not always, accompanied by a more critical response to the artists who were the principal objects of Purist devotion, the Italian Primitives. It is a measure of the general confusion and ambivalence that both Purist

164. A.H. Layard, Domenico Ghirlandaio and his Fresco of the Death of St Francis (London, 1860), p.6.

165. On this point, see Wallace K. Ferguson, The Renaissance in Historical Thought. Five Centuries of Interpretation (Cambridge, Mass., 1948), p.144, and Hale, op.cit., pp.149-51.

and anti-Purist attitudes can be found in the one person. J.B. Atkinson was art critic for Blackwood's through the 1850s and 1860s. He also contributed to the Art Journal. It is not fair perhaps to expect consistency of a journalist, since what he says is very much influenced by the particular subject he is writing on. Like other writers on art at this time Atkinson was not very interested in the "material attributes" of art.¹⁶⁶ His theories of art are remarkable for their incoherence, and are a mixture of the idealist, the religious, the moral, the utilitarian and the scientific. In other words they reflect fairly faithfully the general confusion in thinking on the subject at this time. We find him defining art variously as the material expression of the idea, as the means of fusing the spiritual with the physical, as an instrument of education and social advancement, as a method of investigating natural phenomena, taking its place in the ranks of progressive knowledge.

His attitudes towards the Primitives are equally confused and confusing. On the one hand, he will claim that it is now universally recognized that the early Italians were endowed with special spiritual gifts, and will praise them for their piety, purity, earnestness, artlessness, etc.¹⁶⁷ On the other hand, one finds him criticizing their spiritual expression as "the egotistical outpouring of overwrought emotion"¹⁶⁸ and chastising them

166. Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine, vol.lxxx (September, 1860), pp.322-3.

167. See ibid., vol.lxxviii (October, 1860), pp.466-7.

168. Op.cit., vol.lxxx (September, 1860), p.356.

for their failure to render art an efficient instrument for progress.¹⁶⁹ On the one hand, he can write that the decline of art in the sixteenth century was the result of its secularization. The "service which was not of God proved to be no service".¹⁷⁰ On the other hand, he can also argue that the secularization of art in the fifteenth century and its liberation from priestly shackles was a necessary expression of the enfranchisement of the intellect of Italy.¹⁷¹ It was the anti-mediaeval, anti-religious image of the early Italians that was to win out in the 1860s.

169. *Ibid.*, p.357.

170. *Ibid.*, vol.lxxxix (June, 1857), p.768.

171. *Ibid.*, vol.lxxx (September, 1856), pp.363-4.

CHAPTER V

Ruskin and the Primitives

Ruskin discovered the Italian Primitives between the publication of the first and second volumes of Modern Painters, that is, between 1843 and 1846. During these years he became seriously interested in art and decided on his vocation as its preacher and interpreter to his generation.

The great love of Ruskin's youth and early manhood was not art, but nature.¹ A scientific interest in geology, mineralogy and botany was joined to an intense and joyful response to the wonder and beauty of the material world. His feeling for nature was deeply religious, for there he saw the manifestation of God. The art which most interested him was landscape and the painter he admired most passionately was Turner, because he was most like nature. The feelings he had before Turner were nearest those aroused in him by nature herself.²

Ruskin's interest in the Old Masters was, by contrast, dilettantish and his tastes were conventional. Both the practice and study of painting he considered to be

-
1. His first published writing, in 1834 when he was fifteen, was an article in the Magazine of Natural History.
 2. In the first volume of Modern Painters, Ruskin regarded admiration of Turner as an "absolute and unfailing" test of our acquaintance with nature. Works, op.cit., vol.iii, p.610.

"recreations".³ His taste, formed on what he had seen on family inspections of the great country houses in England and Wales, and on visits to the Dulwich, National and a few continental galleries, was for the seventeenth century. The extended Italian tour of 1840-41 did little to alter this. Ruskin, a semi-invalid, nursing an infected lung and a broken heart, was in no mood to be receptive to new stimuli. The few references to paintings are for the most part disparaging. Michelangelo was the one artist he felt enthusiasm for. His reaction to Raphael is ambiguous -- the Vatican Stanze were a "dead letter"⁴ to him, but he spent an engrossed hour before the St Cecilia in the Academy at Bologna. In the same gallery he admired paintings by Guido and Annibale Carracci.⁵

The change in Ruskin's attitudes towards many of the painters he first liked was the result of his experiences of nature, confirmed by his study of Turner. In the first volume of Modern Painters he set out to confound Turner's critics by proving his superiority to all landscapists of the past by the criterion of "truth to nature". Claude and Gaspar Poussin had insulted nature by presuming to "improve" what was immeasurably superior to them. The

3. See his "Essay on the Relative Dignity of the Studies of Painting and Music and the Advantages to be Derived from Their Pursuit" (1838) (*Ibid.*, vol.1, p.267).

4. Diary entry, 17 December, 1840. The Diaries of John Ruskin, ed. Jean Evans and John Howard Whitehouse, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1956-59), vol.1, p.126.

5. Diary entry, 3 May 1841. *Ibid.*, p.182. It is worth noting that Ruskin's taste in architecture at this time was as old-fashioned as it was in painting. He was much impressed with the interior of Palladio's church of St Justina at Padua (Diary entry, 17 May, 1841. *Ibid.*, p.189).

seventeenth-century Dutch painters had on the other hand trivialized nature by imitating only her superficial appearances, ignoring her majesty and her mystery. All of them had painted not to express their love for their subject but to display their own powers.

It had been Ruskin's original intention that the second volume of Modern Painters should continue the examination of "ideas of truth", and so he went on with his nature studies in England and in Switzerland. But he was also uncomfortably conscious of his own ignorance of art, and began to educate himself. The painters he concentrated on were the Italian Primitives.

In one respect Ruskin's ignorance of the early Italians seems a little surprising. He had been at Oxford at a time when interest in their art was spreading, and at Christ Church which had the Fox-Strangways collection. But Ruskin, with his mother lodging nearby to make sure he did not stray from Evangelicalism, had little contact with the High Church groups where this taste was developing, while the Primitives in Christ Church were apparently so dirty and so badly hung as to be influential on none but the converted.⁶ Still, two of his Oxford friends, Henry Liddell and Henry Acland, together with the painter, George Richmond, whom Ruskin had met in Rome, were to be principally responsible for directing his attention to the Primitives.⁷

Probably one of these three friends told him about Rio,

6. See below, p. 470.

7. Letter to Henry Liddell, October, 1844. Works, op.cit., vol.iii, p.663.

whom he was reading in the autumn of 1843. He also read Waagen's Works of Art and Artists in England. Ruskin, always contemptuous of connoisseurs, thought Waagen a "most double dyed ass",⁸ a good authority only in matters of tradition. Rio, however, was enormously influential. He was the principal source of the Purist interpretation of the Primitives, which Ruskin adopted.⁹ Another work he was reading at this time or a little later was Kugler's Hand-Book. Ruskin also mentions his reading Lord Lindsay during these years,¹⁰ but since Sketches of the History of Christian Art was not published until 1847, he antedates its influence.

Ruskin was also looking at early Italian paintings. He visited Samuel Woodburn's collection,¹¹ and studied the early Raphael Ansidei Madonna at Blenheim (now in the National Gallery). He went to the Louvre in August 1844, on the way home from Switzerland, and studied closely the Venetians and the early Italians, finding himself unable to look at anything but Titian, Perugino, and Bellini.¹² He resolved that before he wrote another word of Modern Painters, he must go to Italy. But even before the memorable tour of 1845 Ruskin had decided that his new work would relate "not more to

8. Diary entry, 21 November, 1843. Ibid., p.249.

9. For Ruskin's debt to Rio, see Francis G. Townsend, Ruskin and the Landscape Feeling (Urbana, Ill., 1951), Chapter 4, pp.26-36. Rio was probably not Ruskin's only source for Purist ideas, which were becoming generally diffused in the early 1840s.

10. e.g., Works, op.cit., vol.xxii, p.155 and vol.xxxv, p.340.

11. He found there a "good Francia" and a "genuine early Raffaele, of the highest value". Diary entry, 27 May, 1843. Diaries, op.cit., p.248.

12. Diary entry, 17 August, 1844. Ibid., p.311.

Turner than to that pure old art" which he had at last learnt to love.¹³

It seems odd that Ruskin, who at this time was a bigoted Evangelical and a rabid anti-Catholic, should have become so interested in Catholic painting. Yet the explanation appears to relate to his Evangelicalism. Ruskin's intense love of art and nature was in conflict with his religion, which had taught him to regard the things of this world as sunk in sin and corruption. He justified his love for nature by seeing it as God's second Bible, while the landscape painter was sanctified as the recorder and interpreter of the divine handiwork. It was more difficult to justify figural art. However from Rio and the Purists Ruskin learned that religion "must be, and always has been, the ground and moving spirit of all great art".¹⁴ All art is thus justified insofar as it is an expression of faith, an act of worship. Ruskin also learned that the most Christian painting was that which preceded Raphael. What mattered, he decided, was not the Catholicism of the early Italians, but their Christianity. Later on, following Lord Lindsay and Mrs Jameson, he will praise the simplicity and sincerity of their "unreasoning" faith.¹⁵ It may have been corrupt, but the people who believed in it knew no other. It was not a question of true and false Christianity. What mattered was that they believed in it, and lived and died by it.¹⁶ Only occasionally do we find Ruskin giving vent to

13. Letter to Henry Liddell, October, 1844. Works, op.cit., vol.iii, p.668.

14. Ibid., p.670.

15. Ibid., vol.xii, p.174.

16. Ibid., p.140.

his anti-Catholicism in his writing about the Primitives.¹⁷

He is far more bigoted when he is dealing with Gothic architecture. But this is because architecture is more intimately connected with forms of worship than painting, and because Ruskin felt compelled to detach the Gothic revival, which he was championing, from the Catholic revival.

It is also rather odd that Ruskin, having just devoted three hundred pages to arguing that truth to nature was the foundation of art, should now so ardently embrace painters whose art, by common consent, bore little resemblance to nature. I shall discuss later on the ways in which he tried to resolve this problem. What I want to consider at the moment is whether there are any links connecting the first volume of Modern Painters with the Primitives. One finds there are two: the attack on academic art, and the belief in the subordination of execution to expression.

Like Ruskin, Rio is a stern critic of academic painting, although where Ruskin used the test of nature, Rio used that of religious feeling. Both writers express the romantic dislike of artificiality, and the desire that art should be "sincere". Ruskin now had a new weapon to attack the seventeenth century with. The root of the sins of Claude, Salvator, etc., was irreligion, as he argued in the preface¹⁸ to the second edition of Modern Painters I in 1844. The

-
17. e.g., in the second volume of Modern Painters, where he condemns the morbid tendency in Romanism towards the contemplation of bodily pain, which finds expression in its painting (Works, op.cit., vol. iv, pp. 201-2).
18. e.g., "That which ought to have been a witness to the omnipotence of God, has become an exhibition of the dexterity of man; and that which would have lifted our thoughts to the throne of the Deity, has encumbered them with the inventions of His creatures" (Ibid., vol. iii, p. 22).

loss of religion, and the consequent decline of art, he found, had occurred during the Renaissance. The painters working before Raphael had none of the faults of later art. They were without "the sophistications of theories and the proprieties of composition";¹⁹ Fra Angelico was no "system-taught painter".²⁰ In their innocence and ignorance the Primitives were free from that self-conscious, self-glorifying picture-making which the genius of Turner rejected.

The second element in Ruskin's thought which pre-disposed him towards the Primitives and the Purist image of their art was his belief that the language of art is inferior to the thought. In the second chapter of Modern Painters I he wrote (showing also that he was not absolutely ignorant of the Primitives at that time):

Most pictures of the Dutch school ... are ostentatious exhibitions of the artist's power of speech, the clear and vigorous elocution of useless and senseless words; while the early efforts of Cimabue and Giotto are the burning messages of prophecy, delivered by the stammering lips of infants The picture which has the nobler and more numerous ideas, however awkwardly expressed, is a greater and better picture than that which has the less noble and less numerous ideas, however beautifully expressed. No weight, nor mass nor beauty of execution, can outweigh one grain or fragment of thought.²¹

In arguing thus Ruskin is expressing a point of view which was becoming common, a point of view which was particularly useful in providing a means of proclaiming the value of the art of the earlier painters.

19. Ibid., vol. iv, p. 100.

20. Ibid., p. 212.

21. Ibid., vol. iii, pp. 90-91.

Before Ruskin went to Italy in 1845 he was well-prepared for his "discoveries". But this in no way diminished the dramatic impact of actually seeing the frescoes and altar-pieces of the early Italians. Ruskin's visual sense was extraordinarily developed -- trained from his earliest childhood, when, toyless and solitary, he amused himself by gazing at the bricks of the wall of the neighbouring house or at the patterns on his carpet. All his life Ruskin exhorted people to see. The sense of sight was the holiest of senses; perception a sacred act. "To see clearly is poetry, prophecy, and religion, -- all in one".²² Thus when Ruskin "discovered" painters, he did not simply recognize what he had prepared himself for, but underwent a very complex experience that was at once sensual, emotional, moral and religious.

His first memorable stop was at Lucca. From there he went to Pisa and passed a happy fortnight sketching from the frescoes in the Campo Santo. After Pisa, came Florence, where he spent a month. Then to Venice, via Bologna where he studied, not the later Bolognese this time, but Francia. At Venice Ruskin made a discovery rather more unexpected than the Primitives -- Tintoretto. Here was a painter whose power and wild energy seemed the very antithesis of the spiritual calm of the early Italians. He found it impossible to reconcile these two loves, as we shall see. From Venice he went to Padua, but he fell ill, and two of his four days there were spent in bed. Thus he was unable to study the Arena chapel very thoroughly.

22. *Ibid.*, vol.v, p.333.

Although this journey was not quite as idyllic as Ruskin described it in Praeterita, the decayed condition of the paintings being especially distressful, nonetheless it was tremendously exciting. "I am more confirmed than ever ... but that I have got into such a glorious new world of religious art that I do not know where to turn", he wrote to George Richmond from Florence.²³ He was overwhelmed by the vividness, grandeur and reality of the conceptions of the sacred stories, especially the Old Testament stories in the Campo Santo.

Abraham & Adam, & Cain, Rachel & Rebekah, all are there, the very people, real, visible, created, substantial, such as they were, as they must have been -- one cannot look at them without being certain that they have lived --²⁴

And this despite "every violation of the common confounded, rules of art, of anachronisms & fancies the boldest & wildest".²⁵ He loved the pure spiritual beauty of the visions of Fra Angelico, Francia and Bellini. Ruskin was always to have a weakness for that youthful, sexless beauty one finds in early Italian art; Jacopo della Quercia's Ilaria del Caretto, Fra Angelico's and Gozzoli's angels, and many years later Carpaccio's St Ursula and Botticelli's Zipporah in the Moses fresco in the Sistine chapel. He loved too the graceful lines of the Primitives, their simple, symmetrical compositions, the clarity and evenness of their light, and above all their glowing, pure colours.

23. 28 June, 1845. Ibid., vol.xxxvi, p.51.

24. Letter to his father, 18 May, 1845. Ruskin in Italy. Letters to his parents, 1845, ed. Harold I. Shapiro (Oxford, 1972), p.67.

25. Ibid.

In the well-known list he sent his father from Parma in July,²⁶ Ruskin classified painters into four categories, the highest being "Pure Religious Art. The School of Love". This was headed by Fra Angelico, forming a class by himself; "he is not an artist properly so-called, but an inspired saint". It included Perugino, Pintoricchio, Francia and the early Raphael. In the next class, "The School of Intellect", which was "accompanied by more or less religious feeling", we find Michelangelo, Giotto, Orcagna, Gozzoli, Leonardo, Ghirlandaio and Masaccio. The third class, "The School of Painting as Such", included the Venetians, while at the bottom in the "School of Errors and Vices" were the later Raphael, Carlo Dolci, Correggio, Murillo, Caravaggio and his "usual group of landscapists".

All Ruskin's descriptions of the Primitives for the next quarter century were based on the notes he took and the drawings he made in 1845. The tour of 1846 went over the same ground, as he wanted to show his parents (who had not been with him in 1845) his discoveries. The next two Italian visits, in 1849-50 and 1851-52, were devoted to Venetian Gothic architecture. It was not until 1870 that Ruskin was in Florence again. For the period we are considering then, he had not been to Assisi, Perugia, Siena, Orvieto or Cortona; he had not seen the Fra Angelicos and Pintoricchios in Rome, nor taken any notice of the walls of the Sistine Chapel. Even within the region he had explored Ruskin had been very selective, not only in the painters but also in the paintings he studied. The Primitives he most admired were Fra Angelico, Giotto, Orcagna (that is, taking into account

26. Works, op.cit., vol.iv, pp.xxxiv-xxxv.

the Campo Santo frescoes then attributed to him), Gozzoli, Masaccio, Francia, Bellini and Ghirlandaio. For Perugino his admiration was qualified, for he detected a certain coldness and artificiality.²⁷ In Ruskin's works we find the same few painters, the same few paintings appearing again and again.

Ruskin's knowledge of painters tended to be intense but limited. It was based on a close, painstaking study not just of particular paintings, but sometimes just of a portion of a painting. He would spend hours, days even, copying a detail. He would look and look at a picture until what he saw became part of him. In 1852 when working on The Stones of Venice he wrote to his father:

But there is a strong instinct in me which I cannot analyse to draw and describe the things I love -- not for reputation, nor for the good of others, nor for my advantage, but a sort of instinct like that of eating and drinking. I should like to draw St Mark's, and all this Verona stone by stone, to eat it all up into my mind, touch by touch.²⁸

The notes he took in 1845 were principally descriptive -- of subject, gesture, expression, colour, costume and landscape background. The particularity of his observation is extraordinary. Take, for example, his description of Fra Angelico's Madonna dei Linaiuoli at Florence. He begins with the Child, then proceeds to the Madonna, noting there a fault in "the hard drawing of the iris and the pupil of the eye, terminated by a strong black line, without any dark to support it".²⁹ Then the angels:

27. Ibid., pp.325-326 n.3.

28. 2 June, 1852. Ibid., vol.x, p.xxvi.

29. Ibid., vol.xii, pp.234-5 n.1.

Of the surrounding angels, the first on the right beating the drum is to be noted for the glorious crimson of the plumes of its wings, graduated down to the extremities darker and richer almost to blackness. It seems enamel over the gold. The face is turned full front, the eyes looking forward; the flame of fire on the head is a triangle with concave sides. It is remarkable how much of the refinement of the face would have been lost had these lines been straight instead of curved. There is a curious white baton in the left hand, with which the drum is touched, apparently to modify the sound. The second is blowing a trumpet upwards; the third, which is almost the finest of all, is beating a tambourine with a quiet, continuous motion, the second rising up from beneath his hand as he floats through heaven: the hair in pale ringlets over the brow, falling lower and lower on the neck to the back of the head. These do not so much as tremble, but the tongue of fire on the forehead waves with his motion. The dress, greenish blue, embroidered with gold; the wings, alternately scarlet and brown, starred with gold. These stars, which are frequently used by the painter, are obtained by a single blow with a gouge through the enamel on the gold, which, being indented, reflects the light, which plays on different parts of the wing according to the position of the spectator. The workmanship of this kind throughout his works, considered as mere jewellery, is of the most exquisite kind, and all other jewellery looks coarse beside it. The fourth angel has a psaltery; the fifth bends forward and down, looking up at the same time while he clashes the cymbals; one sees that the whole stoop is in accordance with a cadence of music, a divine figure.³⁰

In some of his notes we find the first expression of ideas that he later develops, such as the "ideal" landscape of the early religious masters.³¹ Occasionally he analyses the method of a painter. For example, the drawing of some faces by Perugino is "most delicate, all stippled and cross-hatched rapidly and freely, not flat painted".³²

Ruskin relied too much on his eyes, which sometimes misled

30. *Ibid.*, p.235 n.

31. *Ibid.*, vol.iv, p.321 n.1.

32. *Ibid.*, p.326 n.

him. He would "misread" a painting, perhaps because of its poor condition, which happened with Tintoretto's Baptism in the Scuola S. Rocco, described in the second volume of Modern Painters.³³ Sometimes it was because Ruskin did not know the story that was being told, a particular hazard in regard to the early painters before Lord Lindsay and Mrs Jameson had familiarized the legends of the Church. He was quite mistaken in his description of Maso di Banco's Legend of St Sylvester in S. Croce, for example.³⁴ Yet it is this dependence on his eyes that gives life to Ruskin's criticism.

Ruskin's eye was not that of a connoisseur. He had no interest in verifying or querying a master's hand. He accepted the prevailing attributions, and was unhappy if they were contested. He rejected Kugler's correct attribution of the Martyrdom of St Peter, long thought to be by Masaccio, to Filippino Lippi.³⁵ In 1847 he was reluctant to accept that the St Job frescoes in the Campo Santo, which he had so enjoyed in 1845, were not by Giotto.³⁶ He shared with others of his age a contempt for connoisseurship.³⁷ Nor was he interested, at least at this stage, in the historical context of the painters he had come so fervently to admire. They were isolated miracles. Ruskin's eye was that of a passionate amateur. He lacked the science of the connoisseur and the

33. Ibid., pp.268-70.

34. His description of this chapel was published in the third edition of the Murray Hand-Book for Travellers in Northern Italy, op.cit., pp.498-9.

35. Letter, 28 June, 1845. Works, op.cit., vol.xxxvi, pp.51-2.

36. Ibid., vol.xii, pp.213-4.

37. e.g., Ibid., vol.iii, pp.134-5.

scholarship of the historian, and by temperament and training he did not aspire to either.

Ruskin finished the second volume of Modern Painters in the winter of 1845, and the book was published in the following spring. It had a two-fold purpose: to analyse the nature of beauty and "to explain and illustrate the power of two schools of art unknown to the British public, that of Angelico in Florence and Tintoret in Venice".³⁸ Turner is almost forgotten, and where Volume I ends in an exhortation to truth in landscape, the conclusion of Volume II is a hymn of praise to Fra Angelico. Ruskin had intended an "Ideas of Beauty" sequel to the "Ideas of Truth" discussed in the first volume of Modern Painters, but he could not have foreseen its actual form or the material dealt with. However, although his discovery of Tintoretto and the Primitives, with the resultant awakening to his own critical gifts, was principally responsible for the change in direction of his thought, this was only a contributory element in his aesthetics which were a complex amalgam of his own experiences and reading.³⁹ His aesthetic theories were founded on his conviction that ideas of beauty were simultaneously sensory, moral and religious. The Primitives are used to illustrate some of these theories. They dominate a few chapters, not the whole book. They occupy only some fifty pages of the three hundred odd in the Library Edition of his works. It is worth

38. Ibid., vol. xxxv, p. 413.

39. See George P. Landow, The Aesthetic and Critical Theories of John Ruskin (Princeton, 1971), pp. 14-15.

remembering that Ruskin says a good deal less about the early Italians here than is usually imagined.

To give one example of the way he used the Primitives to illustrate his theories: the chapter on the "Vital Beauty of Man". Ruskin's Evangelicalism prevented him from finding in man the most complete beauty. The Fall had destroyed the ideal state of human beauty, which now depended entirely on man's spiritual dimensions. The artist must seek to express "mental beauty" or "soul beauty". This was to be achieved by concentrating on the expression of the face. Ruskin, fusing the romantic insistence on particularity with his religious prejudice,⁴⁰ argues that "no face can be ideal which is not a portrait",⁴¹ since the imagination is incapable of conceiving the effects of spiritual expression on the human face. Thus the habit of the old painters of introducing portraits into their pictures was not an error, but the source of their superiority. The error was that of painters who came after Raphael who tried to create their own ideal type or who sought to combine different features into a beautiful whole.

The artist should also minimize the physical beauty of the human form. In the wearing down of the mortal by the immortal part was expressed "an ideal glory of perhaps a purer and higher range than that of the more perfect material form".⁴² The old religious painters redeemed the nudity they were

40. Landow, *op.cit.*, p.168.

41. *Works*, *op.cit.*, vol.iv, p.187.

42. *Ibid.*, p.182.

compelled to treat by severity of form and hardness of line. The highest beauty of human form was attained by Fra Angelico.

What is reflected here of course is Ruskin's embarrassment about the human body. Although he acknowledged the physical beauty of the Greek treatment, he resorted to the argument that Greek art was inferior to Christian art because it neglected to show the influence of the spirit.⁴³ There is no doubt that one of the reasons for the appeal of the Primitives was that they spared him this embarrassment. C.R. Leslie once asked Ruskin why he admired Francia's pictures. "Ruskin replied that there was nothing sensual in them."⁴⁴

Only one chapter in the second volume of Modern Painters is devoted entirely to the early Italians, and this is the last chapter, which concerns the "Superhuman Ideal", that is the representation of supernatural beings in such a way as to suggest their divine nature. From his study of the paintings of the older masters Ruskin has found the means by which they expressed this ideal. Their landscape is impressed with perfect symmetry and order.

All signs of decay, disturbance, and imperfection are also banished; and in doing this it is evident that some unnaturalness and singularity must result, inasmuch as there are no veritable forms of landscape but express or imply a state of progression

43. Ibid., pp.328-31. He agrees wholeheartedly with Lord Lindsay on the unbridgeable gulf between pagan and Christian art, the difference being one of degree, not condition (Ibid., vol.xii, p.184).

44. F.M. Redgrave, Richard Redgrave, C.B., R.A. A memoir, compiled from his diary (London, 1891), p.55.

or of imperfection. ... All such appearances are banished in the supernatural landscape; the trees grow straight, equally branched on each side, and of such slight and feathery frame as shows them never to have encountered blight, or frost, or tempest. The mountains stand up in fantastic pinnacles; there is on them no trace of torrent, no scathe of lightning; no fallen fragments encumber their foundations, no worn ravines divide their flanks; the seas are always waveless, the skies always calm, crossed only by fair, horizontal, lightly wreathed, white clouds.

In some cases these conditions result partly from feeling, partly from ignorance of the facts of nature, or incapability of representing them, as in the first type of the treatment found in Giotto and his school; in others they are observed on principle, as by Benozzo Gozzoli, Perugino, and Raffaello.⁴⁵

Similarly, the bodily form of the superhuman ideal shows no signs of past suffering, only its sinless nature. And since no herculean form is spiritual, anatomical development should be concealed as far as possible "with severe and linear draperies".⁴⁶ Supernatural character is also realized by an almost shadowless purity of colour, the vividness of its effect being enhanced by the use of gilding, enamel and other jewellery, and by the "quantities of symmetry and repose".⁴⁷

In his analysis of the superhuman ideal Ruskin is careful to stress that its origins are in the things around us.⁴⁸ Yet while the visions of the Primitives had their origins

⁴⁵ Works, *op.cit.*, vol.iv, p.320.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p.327.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p.328.

⁴⁸ "But by certain operations of the imagination upon ideas of beauty received from things around us, it is possible to conceive respecting superhuman creatures ... a beauty in some sort greater than we see" (Ibid., p.209).

in nature, they were still not like nature. Although in the first volume of Modern Painters Ruskin had meant far more by "truth to nature" than just imitation, nonetheless the term presupposed the knowledge of the appearances of nature and the ability to represent these accurately. Furthermore, he had argued that every "alteration of the features of nature has its origin either in powerless indolence or blind audacity".⁴⁹ By inventing the category of the "superhuman ideal", Ruskin tried to avoid the inconsistency in praising artists who altered nature and incorrectly represented her. He is careful to state that their "mannered landscape"⁵⁰ was all right only as the background to some supernatural presence and that it should not be imitated. Its chief virtue "results from the exquisite refinement of those natural details consistent with its character; from the botanical drawing of the flowers, and the clearness and brightness of the sky".⁵¹ But Ruskin cannot escape inconsistency by inventing categories. If unaltered nature is the mirror of God, as he believes, then its qualities are spiritual as well as material. There should be no need to alter nature's appearances for the portrayal of the Virgin, angels, etc., Beings who are less than God.

His remarks on the supernatural landscape are repeated in the history of landscape which he interpolates into the third edition of Modern Painters I in 1846. He gives a number of instances of the faithful depiction of plants and bare, open skies. Particularly fine is his description of

49. Ibid., vol.iii, p.25.

50. Ibid., vol.iv, p.323.

51. Ibid.

Bellini's St Jerome in the church of S. Giovanni Crisostomo,
in Venice:

It is remarkable for the absolute truth of its sky, whose blue, clear as crystal, and, though deep in tone, bright as the open air, is gradated to the horizon with a cautiousness and finish almost inconceivable; and to obtain light at the horizon without contradicting the system of chiaroscuro adopted in the figures, which are lighted from the right hand, it is barred across with glowing white cirri, which in their turn, are opposed by a single dark horizontal line of lower cloud; and to throw the whole further back, there is a wreath of rain cloud of warmer colour floating above the mountains, lighted on its under edge, whose faithfulness to nature, both in hue, and its irregular and shattered form, is altogether exemplary.⁵²

Clearly those aspects of early art which are "true" to nature are a tremendous source of pleasure to Ruskin. And we find him as profoundly disturbed by some of the violations in its landscape. Paintings of the Baptism failed because of the inability of the Primitives to treat foreground water or rock, "the hexagonal and basaltic protuberances of their river shores are, I think, too painful to be endured even by the most acceptant mind".⁵³

This brings us to the question of Ruskin's attitude towards the "technical imperfection" of the earlier painters. As far as the painting of nature went he was more than usually sensitive to the "faults". At the same time, he emphasized the positive merits of the imperfections. They were a reflection of the painters' pre-eminent concern with the expression of feeling, and their disregard for the inferior attractions of art. In his review of Lord Lindsay

52. Ibid., vol.iii, pp.180-1.

53. Ibid., vol.iv, pp.267-8.

in 1847 Ruskin maintains that the "gross errors" to which Fra Angelico, drawing only from feeling, was liable, are often "more beautiful than other men's truths".⁵⁴ Their imperfections were also associated with their child-like innocence, their naïveté and humility. They were a sign of vitality, an idea which he develops fully in his discussion of Gothic ornament in The Stones of Venice. In 1849 he wrote: "The feebleness of childhood is full of promise and of interest, -- the struggle of imperfect knowledge full of energy and continuity".⁵⁵

Ruskin also argued that improved technique would diminish the effectiveness of the art of the Primitives. He noted in 1845 that the stripes on the robe of a figure by Giotto were carried straight across without following the folds. Yet "this very piece of simplicity gives a severity and a character to the figure, which no correct design of drapery could have given".⁵⁶ And in his review of Lord Lindsay he maintained that we should not look at Giotto's genius as struggling with difficulty or repressed by ignorance, since owing to this very ignorance "the simplicity of his thoughts might be uttered with a childlike sweetness, never to be recovered in times of prouder knowledge".⁵⁷ In the same way, disagreeing with Lord Lindsay's criticism of Fra Angelico's colour, he argued that it was "in its sphere and to its

54. Ibid., vol.xii, p.236.

55. Ibid., vol.viii, p.194. Cf., ibid., vol.xxii, p.79.

56. Ruskin is describing one of the musicians in Giotto's Death of St John the Baptist in S.Croce, Florence (Ibid., vol.xii, p.210 n.).

57. Ibid., p.222.

purpose, as perfect as any human work may be".⁵⁸ Ruskin is not arguing the validity of the art of the Primitives in any absolute sense: he is saying that it is perfect in relation to the ends that the old painters were pursuing.

It is interesting that in these years of his greatest enthusiasm for the early painters Ruskin makes only one reference to the "progress" of art, when he regrets the coincidence of the ability to draw architecture well with the introduction of the debased Renaissance styles.⁵⁹ The idea of progress did not appeal to Ruskin because it implied a consciousness of activity on the part of the early painters, whereas Ruskin was keen to convey the idea of the unconsciousness of their art and its purely expressional nature. Thus where Lord Lindsay observes technical improvement in the art of Fra Angelico, Ruskin doubts whether the idea of "progress" has any relevance for a painter who from the first repudiated "dexterous execution".⁶⁰

Ruskin's image of the Primitives conforms in the main to the Purist conception, although he modified and adapted it to fit in with his particular purposes in the second volume of Modern Painters. We find the identification of art and religion, the belief in the superiority of Christian to pagan art and in the decline of art in the Renaissance, the acceptance of "ascetic" principles of beauty for the human form, the adulation of the earlier painters for their

⁵⁸. Ibid., p.240.

⁵⁹. Ibid., vol.iii, p.202.

⁶⁰. Ibid., vol.xii, p.234.

faith, child-like innocence, simplicity, humility, naïveté and purity, and the susceptibility to the charm of their imperfections. In the special place given to Fra Angelico also, Ruskin is following precedent.

Yet Ruskin experienced difficulties which were purely personal, arising from his need to reconcile his love of the Primitives with his love of nature and his attraction to Venetian painting. Wherever he can Ruskin emphasizes the "naturalness" of early Italian art -- in the representation of plants and skies, in the portraiture. The review of Lord Lindsay contains a vivid description of the physiognomy of the beggars in the Triumph of Death in the Campo Santo. But the fact remained that much of the art of the earlier painters did not appear natural. The question of Ruskin, the Primitives and nature is extremely complicated, and becomes even more so in the 1850s. The different ways he approached the "unnaturalness" -- denying it, excusing it, ignoring it, attacking it -- is indicative of his perplexity. In the end it will become one of the grounds for the rejection of the earlier painters.

Just as intractable was the problem of his attraction to Tintoretto. For example, Ruskin clearly found it difficult to reconcile his admiration for the careful, refined finish of the earlier painters on the one hand and the impetuous execution of Tintoretto on the other. He resorts to word juggling when he tries to argue that Tintoretto is the world's most powerful painter, not the most perfect (Fra Angelico being awarded the latter palm).⁶¹ When, comparing Fra Angelico's

61. Ibid., vol.iii, p.182.

treatment of the Annunciation with that of Tintoretto, he writes: "Severe would be the shock and painful the contrast, if we could pass in an instant from that pure vision to the wild thought of Tintoret",⁶² we feel that the pain and the shock are Ruskin's. The conflict in his reactions was openly confessed in a letter to George Richmond at the end of the tour of 1846. "It is an awkward thing to come from Venice to Florence. After the Venetian Academy, Padua and the Campo Santo don't come nice at all; nobody held his own but Masaccio".⁶³ That is to say, the only painter to hold his own was one regarded as a humanist and a naturalist. Rio too had admired the Venetians, but he had justified their art on the grounds that it was still inspired by religious feeling. But this would not do for Ruskin, since it was because of their humanism and worldliness that he was attracted to the Venetian painters. The full acceptance of the Venetians means the rejection of the Primitives.

Lastly, there is Ruskin's extraordinary sensitivity to the art of the early Italians. He is certainly not the only person at this time to appreciate Primitive art, but where he differs from, say, Lindsay, is in his eye for detail, his intense feeling for colour, and above all in his ability to bring to life in glowing word-pictures the mood as well as the subject of a painting. Colour was always sacred for Ruskin. In the last volume of Modern Painters he wrote that it was "the purifying or sanctifying element of material

62. Ibid., vol. iv, p. 264.

63. 30 August, 1846. Ibid., vol. xxxvi, p. 65.

beauty".⁶⁴ And he was as critical of Lindsay's identification of colour with sense, as he was of the connection of nature with matter. Good colour, he declared,

saves, glorifies, and guards from all evil: it is with Titian, as with all great masters of flesh-painting, the redeeming and protecting element; and with the religious painters, it is a baptism with fire, an under-song of holy Litanies.⁶⁵

In the descriptions of other writers the paintings of the Primitives tend to sound rather anaemic and wishy-washy. With Ruskin they are afire with spiritual energy, as when, referring to Fra Angelico's Christ Glorified in the Court of Heaven, then in S. Domenico, Fiesole, he writes of

that whirlwind rush of angels and the redeemed souls around Him at His resurrection, in which we hear the blast of horizontal trumpets mixed with the dying clangour of their ingathered wings.⁶⁶

And yet appreciative as Ruskin was of the art of the Primitives, the fact that he spiritualized it meant that his appreciation was closely linked with his religious attitudes. A change in his religious attitudes would mean a re-appraisal of their art.

Ruskin's interest in the Primitives was most intense and his enthusiasm most uncritical in the years immediately preceding and following the publication of the second volume of Modern Painters, the period we have just been discussing. Despite the inconsistencies his image of the early Italians

64. Ibid., vol.vii, p.417 n.2.

65. Ibid., vol.xii, p.211.

66. Ibid., vol.iv, p.101.

is fairly coherent. The next decade saw the gradual erosion of his sympathy with their art as a result of the weakening of his Evangelicalism, his growing concern about society, and the movement of the centre of his thought from nature to man. But it is not a straightforward process, being complicated by his admiration for Gothic architecture and his defence of the Pre-Raphaelites.

Ruskin's developing interest in man and society is reflected in the shift from painting to architecture in the late 1840s. The Seven Lamps of Architecture (1849) was followed by his great Venetian epic, The Stones of Venice (1851-53). The lesson to be learned from the history of Venice was that a nation's art was an index of its moral and spiritual temper and a reflection of its character. Venetian society was healthy and strong in the Middle Ages, and one of the sources and signs of its greatness was the happiness of its workmen. The Gothic craftsman expressed his thoughts and feelings in his ornament, rude and imperfect as it was. This vital relationship of the worker to his work was destroyed by the Renaissance, with its demand for perfection of finish. The modern machine was the outcome of this obsession with perfection, while the modern worker had been reduced to slavery, deprived of the means of self-expression, deprived of his very humanity.⁶⁷ Ruskin has given a new dimension to his attack on the Renaissance. To the sins of luxury, sensuality, paganism and infidelity he has added the sin of

67. For Ruskin's remarks on the relationship of the worker to his work, see ibid., vol.x, pp.188 ff.

pride, reflected in the demand for perfection (impossible to attain in art or life) and in the love of science, which required the introduction of accurate knowledge into all work.

One paradox Ruskin had to resolve was that architecture declined at the very time when painting was moving to its greatest triumphs. In the works of Masaccio, Ghirlandaio, Perugino, Pintoricchio and Bellini there was a "perfection of execution and fulness of knowledge which cast all previous art into the shade",⁶⁸ while the sixteenth century produced the noblest masters the world ever saw. However he argues that the effect of the Renaissance on architecture was more fatal because the demand for perfection was less consistent with the capabilities of the workmen. Moreover, the executive skill of the great Renaissance painters was united to the old, earnest religious spirit. But in the end Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo were all corrupted by Renaissance science, which turned out to be as fatal to painting and sculpture as it had been to architecture.

Ruskin did not object to the application of empirical science to art, such as the study of the chemistry of colours.⁶⁹ But he was deeply suspicious of "the science of the appearance of things", that is, linear and aerial perspective, chiaroscuro, anatomy. The grand mistake of the Renaissance schools lay "in supposing that science and art were the same things, and that to advance in one was necessarily to perfect the other".⁷⁰

68. *Ibid.*, vol.xi, p.14.

69. *Ibid.*, p.55.

70. *Ibid.*, p.47.

But art was not concerned with knowledge, but with perception and feeling. The knowledge of the Renaissance, often indeed unnecessary and untrustworthy, had come between the artist and what he saw and felt. But this must not be. "Nothing must come between Nature and the artist's sight; nothing between God and the artist's soul".⁷¹

If the science of art was not identifiable with art itself, the logical conclusion would be that the Primitives were not the less artists for their ignorance of that science. And certainly Ruskin comes nearer to recognizing this than anyone else at this time. He criticizes those who reject their art for its lack of science. A junior student in a school of painting knows fifty times as much about art as Giotto did, "but he is not for that reason greater than Giotto; no, nor his work better, nor fitter for our beholding".⁷² He attacks the assumption that Giotto was "a mere infant in his profession" and that Wilkie and Landseer were "accomplished workmen".⁷³

But Ruskin was not so far ahead of his time that he could deny utterly the need for "science" in art or accept the total validity of Giotto's system. He might say that the fact of progress is not the important difference between ancient and modern art, but he does not deny the concept of progress.⁷⁴ He admits the value of science as an aid to

71. Ibid., p.49.

72. Ibid., vol.xi, p.205.

73. Ibid., vol.xii, p.135.

74. Ibid.

art.⁷⁵ Giotto might have been one of the greatest men who ever lived, but he was not "one of the most accomplished painters".⁷⁶ And when he argues that ancient art, by perception, represented nature more faithfully than modern art, by knowledge, he defends his assertion on expressional, not representational grounds. Modern art draws the outside of nature more truly, but ancient art portrays the spirit.⁷⁷

Ruskin's awareness that the power of art was not entirely dependent on imitative skill was also the result of his attraction to Byzantine mosaics, Gothic sculpture, and mediaeval stained glass and manuscript illuminations. The isolated insight that beauty of arrangement and lines in art was independent of the representation of facts⁷⁸ was partly due to this interest. He realized that the decorative purposes of the missal or the mosaic were not served by "science", and that its absence was not therefore to be regarded as an imperfection.⁷⁹ Moreover, these old artists had no desire to represent nature accurately, so it was pointless to criticize them for being unnatural. There was a symbolical as well as an imitative art, and in the third

75. *Ibid.*, vol.xi, pp.56-7.

76. *Ibid.*, vol.xxxiv, p.28.

77. *Ibid.*, vol.xi, pp.60-62.

78. *Ibid.*, vol.x, pp.215-6.

79. See, e.g., his references to illuminations (*ibid.*, vol.x, p.285), and mosaics where he says that "the bright colouring and disregard of chiaroscuro cannot be regarded as imperfections, since they are the only means by which the figures could be rendered clearly intelligible in the distance and darkness of the vaulting. (*Ibid.*, vol.x, p.130).

volume of Modern Painters, the dividing line is placed at the end of the fourteenth century.⁸⁰ Ruskin always felt that representation of some sort was necessary to art -- he had no sympathy for the abstract art of the Middle East -- but he perceived that depth of meaning and power of expression could be achieved without correct imitation.⁸¹

Our discussion of Ruskin's writing on the Primitives in the early 1850s must be a little fragmented, because his thought is fragmented. Although he repeatedly insisted that the great virtue of their art was its subordination of execution to expression, we find him asserting in an appendix to the first volume of The Stones of Venice that even the painting of the Primitives must have merit as paintings. He criticizes the tendency among thoughtful critics of his day to forget "that the business of a painter is to paint, and so altogether to despise those men, Veronese and Rubens for instance, who were painters, par excellence, and in whom the expressional qualities are subordinate".⁸² If the artist's pictorial language is not good and lovely, he may indeed be a just moralist or a great poet, but he will not be a painter. If a man is indeed truly a painter, then his work will be expressional of necessity, while on the other hand a good expressional work will always have high artistic merit. Rubens' view of the world is as legitimate and

80. Ibid., vol.v, p.262.

81. See, e.g., his long analysis of the olive tree in the cupola of St Mark's. (Ibid., vol.xi, pp.205-12).

82. Ibid., vol.ix, p.448.

necessary as Fra Angelico's, while Fra Angelico's painting is as full of the art necessary to his purposes as Rubens' is.

The art of Angelico, both as a colourist and a draughtsman, is consummate; so perfect and beautiful, that his work may be recognised at any distance by the rainbow-play and brilliancy of it.⁸³

It is as easily distinguishable from other works of his school as "so many huge pieces of opal lying among common marbles".⁸⁴

These are about Ruskin's last words of unqualified praise of Fra Angelico. Whereas in the second volume of Modern Painters he had concentrated on early Italian art as the expression of spiritual beauty, with Fra Angelico as the supreme master, he now emphasized the importance of the art as the communication of religious facts. In the early 1850s he tended to see them as Realists and Naturalists. This view of their art was not new to Ruskin.⁸⁵ It was given prominence now because it was a way of finding common ground between the Pre-Raphaelites and their namesakes. The "supernatural ideal" would hardly be suitable, after all.

83. Ibid., p.449.

84. Ruskin on other occasions emphasizes that the artist's business is to paint (e.g., ibid., vol.xi,p.220; ibid., vol.v, p.52; ibid., vol.vi,p.72), and he also refers to the importance of "technical composition" (e.g., ibid., vol.xii, p.387; ibid., vol.vii, p.204). The draft for the third volume of Modern Painters included a chapter on "The Executive Ideal" (ibid., vol.v, p.149 n.1.). But the fact is that the chapter was not included, while Ruskin's other statements are usually isolated, and not integrated into the main body of his thought where it is the pre-eminence of thought which is stressed.

85. He had praised the realism of the conceptions in the Campo Santo in 1845 (see above, p.214). In his review of Lord Lindsay in 1847 he described the purpose of Orcagna's art as the communication of religious facts. (Ibid., vol.xii, p.229).

Thus he wrote:

Giotto was to his contemporaries precisely what Millais is to his contemporaries, -- a daring naturalist, in defiance of tradition, idealism, and formalism.⁸⁶

The older masters, like the Pre-Raphaelites, sought truth before beauty in contrast with painters trained under the Renaissance system who sought beauty before truth, that is, who sought to imagine an impressive or beautiful composition as a means of showing off their knowledge and taste rather than to communicate the fact of the event or scene they were painting. The Primitives painted from nature things as they were or from their imagination things as they must have been, so far as their powers and knowledge went.⁸⁷ In their reliance on their own perceptions and their quest for truth they could be compared with Turner as well as with the Pre-Raphaelites.⁸⁸ But there was one important difference. Their truth was of interpretation rather than representation. They had neither the skill nor care to reach any imitative resemblance to nature. "Their art was conventional and imperfect, but they considered it only as a language wherein to convey the knowledge of certain facts; it was perfect enough for that".⁸⁹

Love of nature, love of truth prevailing over a sense of beauty, respect for fact -- these are features of the Naturalism

86. *Ibid.*, vol. xxxiv, p. 27.

87. *Ibid.*, vol. xii, p. 147.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 385.

89. *Ibid.*, p. 148.

which Ruskin considers one of the essential characteristics of Gothic architecture, which he discusses in his chapter on the Nature of Gothic in the second volume of The Stones of Venice. And it is here we find the first indication of his reaction against the pure religious art of certain of the Primitives. He divides painters into three classes, Purists, Naturalists and Sensualists. They are distinguished on moral grounds, specifically on their attitudes to nature. The first class, which includes Fra Angelico, Perugino, Francia, the early Raphael, and Bellini, perceives and pursues the good in nature, omitting the evil. In the second class we find Michelangelo, Leonardo, Giotto, Orcagna, Tintoretto and Turner, who "render all that they see in nature unhesitatingly",⁹⁰ good and evil. The third class perceives and imitates evil only and here we find Ruskin's usual scape-goats. The classification of "Naturalism" and "Sensualism" enabled Ruskin to distinguish between that representation of nature he considered to be healthy and good, and that which he thought sensual, morbid and wicked.

The Purist omission of evil was a sign of weakness and timidity, a withdrawal into an imagined world of unbroken peace. "The faces of their figures express no evil passions; the skies of their landscapes are without storm; the prevalent character of their colour is brightness, and of their chiaroscuro fulness of light".⁹¹ The forms of their body are concealed beneath deep-folded garments, or represented "under

90. Ibid., vol.x, p.222.

91. Ibid.

severely chastened types".⁹² All these were elements of Primitive art which Ruskin had extolled in the second volume of Modern Painters, as exemplifying spiritual beauty and the superhuman ideal. Now they are proofs of weakness. By contrast Naturalist colour is balanced between "splendour and sadness", chiaroscuro balanced between "light and shade"⁹³ (shadow symbolizes evil for Ruskin as light symbolizes good). All the passions of the human race, good and evil, are represented; and the veil is cast aside from the body. The Naturalist "takes the human being in its wholeness, in its mortal as well as its spiritual strength".⁹⁴ The greatest men in art at all times were the Naturalists, and the greatest Purists were those nearest the Naturalists, such as Perugino and Gozzoli.

When Ruskin wrote about the evil in nature he did not mean to suggest that God had made anything evil, only that to man, lacking full knowledge, some things appear evil.⁹⁵ Nonetheless his attitudes towards nature have become more complex. Nature is no longer simply a glorious symbol of divine beauty and benevolence. The meanings to be read in the universe are no longer clear.

The third and fourth volumes of Modern Painters appeared in 1856, the fifth and last in 1860. Only his father's pressure, his laments that he would be dead before the work

92. Ibid., p.226.

93. Ibid., p.222.

94. Ibid., p.226.

95. Ibid., pp.224-5.

was finished, persuaded Ruskin to bring it to an end. And that was all he could do. "I find that I have only now the power of ending this work ... not of 'concluding' it", he wrote.⁹⁶ How could there be a conclusion to a book whose author faithfully recorded every new piece of information, every shift of opinion, however much at variance with previous information and opinion?

One symptom of the changes in Ruskin's outlook, particularly his awareness of the presence of evil in the world, is in his critical attitude towards what he considered to be the escapist tendencies of his age. Landscape worship and nostalgia for the Middle Ages are the efforts of a society without faith, happiness or beauty to escape from the dullness, the ugliness, the tensions of life.⁹⁷ But this criticism is self-criticism, for Ruskin himself had been guilty of escapism.

Ruskin's attitudes towards the Primitives in the third volume of Modern Painters were even more confused than they had been in the early 1850s. References to their art are of a general nature -- there is no mention of particular paintings, and individual painters are seldom named. The highest range of subject matter is still religious, but he emphasizes that the choice must be sincere. Since religious themes were prescribed in the Middle Ages, subject alone was no indication of the painter's feeling and the treatment must also be considered. Thus Cozzoli with his love of incident,

96. Ibid., vol.vii, p.441.

97. Ibid., vol.v, pp.324-6.

landscape and ornament is less devout than Orcagna.⁹⁸
 Spiritual beauty, with Fra Angelico supreme, is still of a
 higher rank than physical beauty.⁹⁹

But in other contexts Ruskin is much less appreciative. Thus we find him rebuking the fifteenth century for representing the Madonna, not as a simple Jewish girl, but as a queenly lady. Although this was done as an expression of love and reverence, the effect was harmful on the spectator who came to think of the Madonna in this way alone. Fra Angelico was the central master of this school. However, though the painters of the "Angelican ideal" darkened faith, the sixteenth-century masters who succeeded them darkened feeling. The earlier masters erred through love, their academic successors sinned through pride.¹⁰⁰

This discussion occurs in a chapter which reviews the whole history of Christian art, tested by the criterion of truth. And Ruskin concludes that there have been hardly any examples of the "true religious ideal, representing events historically recorded, with solemn effort at a sincere and unartificial conception".¹⁰¹ What Ruskin says in this chapter does not actually contradict his earlier statements about the supernatural ideal or the adherence to religious facts. As an afterthought he writes that the Angelican ideal is legitimate for the portrayal of imaginary beings of another world

98. *Ibid.*, p.51.

99. *Ibid.*, p.56.

100. *Ibid.*, p.78.

101. *Ibid.*, p.85.

and that the reality of the conceptions of Gozzoli, Ghirlandaio and Giotto approaches the true ideal, even of recorded facts.¹⁰² But the point is that they are after-thoughts, not intended by Ruskin to invalidate his general statement that early Italian religious painting is false. It is interesting that we find the seed of his condemnation in his notes on Fra Angelico's Madonna dei Linaiuoli in 1845, who "in her gorgeous draperies approaches more to the character of an idol, and less to that of a Saint than I like to see".¹⁰³ But the thought lay fallow for ten years. That he now chose to generalize from such an impression is a sign of his waning sympathy.

In yet another context Ruskin develops what he said about Naturalism and Purism in The Stones of Venice. The sense of the weakness of Purist art is even more pronounced. Although true insofar as it springs from true feeling, the Purist ideal is in many ways deficient "and always an indication of some degree of the weakness in the mind pursuing it".¹⁰⁴ The desire to deny the presence of pain and evil in the world reveals a certain childishness and "amiable imbecility".¹⁰⁵ Fra Angelico's manner of treating his heavenly beings might be effective,

but the mode in which it is arrived at (being so far mechanical and contradictory of the appearances of nature) necessarily precludes those who practise it from being complete masters of their art. It is always childish, but beautiful in its childishness.¹⁰⁶

102. Ibid., vol.v, p.86.

103. Ibid., vol.xii, p.235 n.

104. Ibid., vol.v, p.108.

105. Ibid., p.106.

106. Ibid., p.105.

We can see how Ruskin has changed. What was "child-like" is now "childish", and unnaturalness is a sign of the weakness of Fra Angelico's art.

It is no surprise then to find him less sympathetic to the supernatural landscape¹⁰⁷ and the clarity and finish¹⁰⁸ of early paintings, although they are still justified by the particular purpose of the artists. With regard to the first he now felt that the true forms of hills and the true thicknesses of trees might be added without diminishing the sacredness.¹⁰⁹

Paralleling Ruskin's uncertainty about the Primitives we find a growing enthusiasm for the Venetians, Veronese especially. This is not so evident in his general statements -- they allow technical excellence to supersede expression, their love of physical beauty comes second to the love of spiritual beauty -- as in his descriptions of their paintings and discussion of their technique.¹¹⁰

As long as Ruskin believed that religion was essential to art he remained in a dilemma over the Primitives and the Venetians. Once this last remaining prop of the early Italians was removed, their art was no longer justified. This happened with Ruskin's unconversion in Turin in 1858. He was studying Veronese and was perplexed that such a magnificent and humane painter must be, according to his Evangelicalism,

107. *Ibid.*, pp.393-6.

108. *Ibid.*, vol.vi, pp.81-3.

109. *Ibid.*, vol.v, pp.395-6.

110. e.g., *ibid.*, pp.59-60; pp.62-3.

a sinner and depraved sensualist. He explained his difficulties to his father. A "strong and frank animality, rejecting all tendency to asceticism, monachism, pietism" seemed to be connected with the strongest intellects. Francia, Angelico and all the purists were poor weak creatures in comparison with great men like Homer, Shakespeare, Tintoretto, Veronese, or Michelangelo.¹¹¹

I don't understand it; one would have thought purity gave strength, but it doesn't. A good, stout, self-commanding, magnificent Animality is the make for poets and artists, it seems to me.¹¹²

One Sunday after attending a service at the Waldensian chapel he was working on Veronese in the gallery. And he asks himself:

Can it be possible that all this power and beauty is adverse to the honour of the Maker of it? ... And is this mighty Paul Veronese ... a servant of the devil; and is the poor little wretch in a tidy black tie, to whom I have been listening this Sunday morning expounding Nothing with a twang -- is he a servant of God?¹¹³

The result of Ruskin's inability to relate these two experiences is his unconversion.¹¹⁴ He lost his Evangelicalism, though not the impress of his Evangelicalism, and for a time seemed in danger of losing his faith altogether. The process had been going on for ten years, and Turin was the climax.

One result of Ruskin's unconversion was that he no longer thought that religion, at least in a conventional

111. *Ibid.*, vol.vii, p.xl.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*, p.xli.

114. The most thorough treatment of Ruskin's religious beliefs is in George Landow. He lists nine factors contributing

sense, was essential to art. His new conviction is

that, positively, to be a first-rate painter -- you mus n't be pious, but rather a little wicked and entirely a man of the world. I had been inclining to this opinion for some years; but I clinched it at Turin.¹¹⁵

Soon after his unconversion he wrote "Notes on a Painter's Profession as Ending Irreligiously", which he intended adding to the second volume of Modern Painters.¹¹⁶ The second important result was that man came to replace nature as the most wonderful piece of God's workmanship. "Man is the sun of the world; more than the real sun".¹¹⁷

Ruskin was now able to accept the Venetians, and the rejection of the Primitives is almost complete. These developments are duly recorded in the beginning of the fifth volume of Modern Painters.¹¹⁸ Since man is now the crowning and ruling work of God, the greatest art is that which tells us something about him, and which expresses his two-fold nature, "nobly animal, nobly spiritual".¹¹⁹ The fatal ruin of man is isolation. The isolation of the soul is asceticism, the isolation of the body is sensualism.

The art which, since the writings of Rie and Lord Lindsay, is specially known as 'Christian', erred by pride in its denial of the animal nature of man; -- and, in connection with all monkish and fanatical forms of religion, by looking always to

-
- to his unconversion, and these, apart from his admiration for artists like Veronese, include his interest in geology and the conflict of geological evidence with the Bible; his experience of Roman Catholic culture and art; and his lack of a personal, felt religious experience (op.cit., Ch.4).
115. Letter, 24 October, 1858. Letters of John Ruskin to Charles Eliot Norton, 2 vols (Boston and New York, 1907), vol.1, p.87.
116. See Works, op.cit., vol.1v, pp.384-9.
117. Ibid., vol.vii, p.262.
118. Ibid., pp.8-9.
119. Ibid., p.264.

another world instead of this. It wasted its strength in visions, and was therefore swept away, notwithstanding all its good and glory, by the strong truth of the naturalist art of the sixteenth century. But the naturalist art erred on the other side; denied at last the spiritual nature of man, and perished in corruption.¹²⁰

The landscape art of the early painters he now considers as decoration rather than an effort to paint nature.¹²¹ It is significant that in the sections on "Beauty of Vegetation" and "Beauty of Sky" not one example is given from early Italian paintings, despite all Ruskin had said in the past about the truth of their representations of plants and clear skies. The principal weakness of their landscape was the false assumption that the natural world could be represented without death. Ruskin does not mean that they did not portray death, but it was considered only as a somewhat unpleasant step before the joys of eternal life, and did not have a depressing influence over their landscape. Because of this weakness no Purist painter ever mastered his art, although Perugino nearly did so because he was more rational, more a man of the world than the rest. But it was not intended that men should cheer themselves up with thoughts of the next world: they must look "stoutly" into this one. The spirit of the highest art is that which has looked at and conquered evil, and risen to a conception of victorious beauty; and this is the spirit of the greatest Greek and Venetian art.¹²²

120. *Ibid.*

121. *Ibid.*, p.265.

122. *Ibid.*, vol.vii, pp.265-71.

It can be seen that Ruskin's new interpretation was neither amoral nor irreligious. But his idea of morality and religion was more open, more tolerant, and this enabled him to see the Venetians as both moral and religious painters, because of their humanity, because of their recognition that sensual passion was a divine fact. But Ruskin did not mean "sexuality" when he said "sensuality". Their naked women, always shown as exercising an attractive influence over fauns and satyrs and not men, never aroused one base thought.¹²³ As for the early Italians, there may have been weakness in their art, but there was not baseness.¹²⁴ The interpretation Ruskin adopts in 1860 is almost a complete reversal of that of the 1840s. Then he had praised the Primitives for their humility, strength and truth; now they are condemned for their pride, weakness and falsity. The art which once, for all its imperfections, was perfect in relation to the end pursued, is now proof of their weakness. Much is left unexplained. There is no attempt to reconcile the views expressed here with what he had said about their realism in the early 1850s, no exception made of "naturalists", like Giotto or Ghirlandaio. All are, by implication, blamed for denying man's animal nature and for fixing their thoughts on the hereafter. Ruskin's re-appraisal was in no way the result of any fresh examination of the Primitives. Just as his initial attraction had been largely for moral and religious reasons, so his reaction was the result of changes in his moral and religious attitudes. It was not so much the Primitives themselves he was rejecting as the purist image of their art which he had accepted in the 1840s. When

123. *Ibid.*, p.297.

124. *Ibid.*, p.371.

Ruskin discovered the earlier masters he was as much delighted with the colour and line, composition, and craftsmanship as with content. Yet his enjoyment of their art was very much dependent on his approval of what he took to be their moral and religious aims. Having decided that these aims revealed weaknesses and deficiencies, he concluded that their art was weak and deficient also. In Ruskin's rejection of the Primitives I do not think it too fanciful to see a rejection of his old self. The Primitives were made scapegoats. Ruskin in his study at Denmark Hill, with his Turners, his missals, his precious stones, and Fra Angelico painting in his cell in the convent S. Marco -- both had shown the same self-indulgence, the same disregard for their suffering fellows, albeit unintentionally.

Ruskin's attitudes towards the Primitives were to change yet again, and although his later ideas do not fall within our period it might be worthwhile to summarize them very briefly. In the late 1860s and in the 1870s he made a series of new discoveries among the early Italians: Carpaccio, Filippo Lippi, Botticelli. He looked at Giotto with renewed enthusiasm, and his feeling for Fra Angelico revived to a great extent. He also solved the problem of the "weakness" of the early masters. At Assisi in 1874 he discovered that his belief that religious masters were weaker than irreligious masters was fallacious. Although religion solemnized and developed Giotto's faculties his work was yet "a human achievement and possession".¹²⁵ This return to the early Italians was accompanied by a recovery

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, vol.xxix, p.91.

of his faith, a faith which was broader than his old Evangelicalism, and which was essentially undoctinal and unquestioning. Both were part of his striving to find peace and rest from the torment in his own mind, a torment he saw reflected in the world around him. The Primitives became, in effect, one of his refuges.

The history of Ruskin's attitudes towards the Primitives, then, is as follows. He became interested in them in the early 1840s, at a time when an interpretation of the revival of Italian art described as Purist or Early Christian was becoming known in England. At this most pious period of his life Ruskin was an eager recipient of the idea that religion was essential to the arts, and despite his Evangelicalism accepted the Primitives as Christian painters par excellence. The Italian journey of 1845 revealed to him the glory of the trecento and quattrocento, whose pure spiritual beauty he extolled in the second volume of Modern Painters. However difficulties were created by his simultaneous attraction to Tintoretto and his need to reconcile the "unnaturalness" of the early landscapes with his dictum that truth to nature was the foundation of art. The 1850s saw the gradual decline of his sympathy for the Primitives as a result of his waning Evangelicalism, his increasing regard for the Venetians and his growing concern about society. He came to believe that Purist art was weak because it sought to escape the evil and sadness of the world. The dethronement of the early painters was completed in 1858, with Ruskin's unconversion, and in the last volume of Modern Painters he more or less renounced everything he had written

in 1846. A second strand in Ruskin's thought in the 1850s, arising principally from his interest in the Pre-Raphaelites, was his praise of the Primitives as Realists. For a time he distinguished between the Purist and Naturalist veins in early painting, but by the end of the decade all "Christian" art seems to have been rejected. Ruskin returned to the Primitives in the 1870s with the revival of his faith. It is interesting that although the reasons for Ruskin's reaction against the Primitives in the 1850s are purely personal, yet his disillusion was part of a more general dissatisfaction with Purist ideas in England.

In conclusion, I want to examine the question of Ruskin's influence on the mid nineteenth-century taste for the Primitives. In later chapters I shall consider his activities in connection with the acquisition of early pictures for the National Gallery and with the Arundel Society's campaign for the preservation of decaying frescoes and altarpieces. What concerns me now is the importance of Ruskin's writing about the Primitives in the context of the general growth of interest and its effect on people's attitudes.

At the outset it can be stated that he did nothing to advance nineteenth-century scholarship in this field, and it must be repeated that he was neither a connoisseur nor an historian. His reading on the subject was limited, the most glaring deficiency being his ignorance of German art history and aesthetics. He was contemptuous of German philosophy but the second Appendix of the fourth volume of Modern Painters shows that he not only did not understand German thought, he did not know it. Had Ruskin been less ignorant

he would have realized the German origin of many of his ideas about the Primitives.

As for the extent of his knowledge, the index of the Library Edition of his works gives the clearest idea of his deficiencies here. Some fifty painters preceding Raphael are listed, and of these about fifteen have references of a third of a column or more. There are hardly any early Flemish or German painters mentioned. With regard to the early Italians most of the references are to Florentines and fifteenth-century Venetians. Painting in the rest of northern Italy was pretty well unknown to him, as were the Sienese and Umbrians, with the exception of Perugino.

Nor was Ruskin particularly original in his general interpretation of the Primitives, a fact which was remarked on at the time. The Athenaeum commented on his debt to Rio.¹²⁶ Contemporary reviewers also liked to remark that Ruskin was not the first either in his defence of Turner, the Gothic revival and the Pre-Raphaelites.¹²⁷

Thus Ruskin's importance is neither that of a scholar nor a pioneer. What about his influence as a propagandist and popularizer? Even here one must hesitate. His pronouncements on Gothic are neatly contained, or more or less neatly contained, within The Seven Lamps of Architecture and The Stones of Venice. His references to the Primitives are scattered over a number of works, and his ideas changed.

126. Athenaeum (10 February, 1855), p.171.

127. S.E., Coventry Patmore in the North British Review, vol.xxi (May, 1854), pp.178-9; Ecce Homo, vol.xiv (December, 1855), p.415; Critic (1 September, 1860), p.258.

And he does not say so very much about them. Only one of the nine reviews of the second volume of Modern Painters, listed by Cook and Wedderburn, comments on Ruskin's enthusiasm for the early Italians.¹²⁸ Nor is much said about his change of heart in the reviews of the fifth volume of Modern Painters.¹²⁹

In the 1850s Ruskin became a figure of some authority, respected, despite his reputation as a perverse and crotchety thinker, for his literary gifts, for the high moral and religious tone of his writing, for his endeavour to raise the standard of taste and art criticism and to demonstrate the relevance of art to life. His books went into several editions; his lectures were popular. A new word was coined -- "Ruskinism". There was a leader about him in The Times.¹³⁰ And Fraser's Magazine declared: "Mr Ruskin is an English institution, like the House of Lords or the National Gallery".¹³¹ Lady Eastlake put her finger on one of the principal reasons for his popularity in her very spiteful article on him: he was a positive and confident thinker on a subject in which there was much interest, but also much consciousness of ignorance.¹³² No doubt then his espousal of the Primitives gave sanction of authority to the taste. Yet one must be careful. Ruskin became famous in the years

-
128. The exception is the Prospective Review. The reviewer says, not without reason: "Indeed, the enthusiastic and impassioned tone in which these criticisms are written, contrasts strangely with the quiet, almost austere, character of the originals" (vol.iii, May, 1847, p.230).
129. These are listed in Works, op.cit., vol.vii, p.lxvi n.
130. Times (28 October, 1856), p.58.
131. Fraser's Magazine, vol.lv (June, 1857), p.619.
132. Quarterly Review, vol.xcviii (March, 1856), p.384.

that his interest in the Primitives was declining. Contemporary writers when considering his influence on taste refer always to the Gothic revival and the Pre-Raphaelites - seldom to the Primitives.

However he does seem to have had some influence on the tendency in the 1850s to look at the realistic side of the early Italians. What G.E. Street said in 1858 was pure Ruskinism:

Before Raphael there was very generally among painters a simple desire to be real and truthful in their work. They painted things as to the best of their belief they did or might have come to pass. They were remarkable, moreover, for a general purity of form and loveliness of colour, which made a great gap between them and succeeding painters.¹³³

This last sentence brings us back to what today would be considered the most important feature of Ruskin's writing about the early Italians -- his appreciation of their art. Did his descriptions of Fra Angelico or Giotto awaken enthusiasm for their paintings then? His word-pictures were highly esteemed.¹³⁴ Charlotte Bronte after she had read the first volume of Modern Painters wrote that the book gave her "new eyes". "I do wish I had pictures within reach by which to test the new sense", she continued. "Who can read these glowing descriptions of Turner's work without longing to see them?"¹³⁵ One wonders how many people were similarly affected

133. Ecclesiologist, vol.xix (June, 1858), p.239.

134. e.g., "His fervid imagination enables him to realize, his abounding style enables him to express, the whole meaning of the painter. Not indeed perfectly, but yet in no small degree, the picture is brought before the reader" (North British Review, vol.xxxvi, February, 1862, p.9).

135. Quot. W.G. Collingwood, The Life and Work of John Ruskin, 2 vols (London, 1893), vol.1, p.140.

by the glowing descriptions of the early Italians in the second volume of Modern Painters. Perhaps Ruskin's criticism was too ahead of his time, in this respect, in the middle of the nineteenth century. For most art-lovers it was probably an achievement to overcome their aversion to the deficiencies of the Primitives sufficiently to appreciate their historical importance and their pure thoughts. Whatever the nature or extent of Ruskin's influence in respect to the Primitives at this time I do not think that Cook and Wedderburn's claim that the second volume of Modern Painters "turned the taste of the age to the primitives"¹³⁶ can be substantiated, anymore than Lionello Venturi's assertion that the revival of the Primitives was principally due to Ruskin.¹³⁷

136. Works, op.cit., vol.iv, p.xliv.

137. Il gusto dei primitivi, op.cit., p.183.

THE BRITISH LIBRARY
BRITISH THESIS SERVICE

COPYRIGHT

Reproduction of this thesis, other than as permitted under the United Kingdom Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under specific agreement with the copyright holder, is prohibited.

This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

REPRODUCTION QUALITY NOTICE

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the original thesis. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction, some pages which contain small or poor printing may not reproduce well.

Previously copyrighted material (journal articles, published texts etc.) is not reproduced.

THIS THESIS HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

D 17836

VOL 1

PT 1