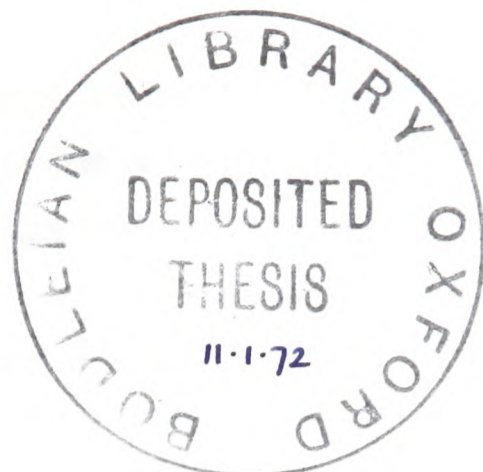


THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD



BALZAC AND THE VISUAL ARTS

D. Adameon

Magdalen College

Trinity Term¹⁹⁷¹
1971

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is simple, yet complex: to provide a systematic analysis of Balzac's references to the visual arts, not only in the Comédie Humaine but in the apprentice novels and miscellaneous writings. In the words of this year's Année Balzacienne, it sets out to be a "bilan d'influences et d'allusions picturales", and as such is the first recent project in this field.

It is a simple project in that it largely confines itself to the presence, in Balzac's work, of identifiable visual references. It is complex in that there are many thousands of such references, sometimes moulding and inspiring the creation of a character or setting, sometimes merely serving as objects in the novels (a painting, a porcelain vase or a buhl sideboard), sometimes—but less often—present in a didactic manner; moreover, the Comédie Humaine itself is in a state of constant evolution, as when (for instance) a Joseph Bridau is substituted for a Delacroix, or a Watteau fan for a pearwood crucifix carved by Girardon; and, to add still further to the complexity, the territory of this exploration includes not only the visual indebtedness but equally Balzac's personal involvement with painting, sculpture, architecture, furnishings and engraving— together with a brief analysis of his fictional artists.

Much has been written already about the theoretical aspects of Balzac's concern with painting, sculpture and engraving. This detailed account of the visual sources will, it is hoped, assist later theoretical discussions. Yet such is the range of the novelist's interest that even this account must be selective.

In the chronological outline of Balzac's interest in the visual arts, it is stressed that even as a youth he had ample opportunity to study many of what were then considered the finest masterpieces in European painting. Until 1816 pictures confiscated from Italy, Spain and the Netherlands were held at the Louvre—in addition to that gallery's "indigenous" collection. There were also his visits to foreign collections: Vienna, Munich, Venice, Florence, Milan, St Petersburg, Berlin, Dresden, The Hague, Amsterdam, Rome. Almost equally important were his actual contacts with painters such as Delacroix and Boulanger, the failed painter Gautier, and the sculptor Théophile Bra.

Despite Balzac's indebtedness to Girodet's "Endymion", Delacroix's colourful Romanticism and treatment of the Faust theme, and his special debts to Sigalon and Delorme, much the greater debt to contemporary French art is to caricature, which influenced him in the choice of certain types of subject-matter. Many of his early serial publications—L'Usurier, for example—are transpositions into words of visual images popularised by Gavarni and Monnier. The same interest in caricature accounts for the part played in the Comédie Humaine—but only in the Parisian novels—by dandies, lorettes, grisettes and the stock figure of the crass bourgeois.

In traditional French painting Balzac appreciated the Rococo style at a time when it had only recently begun to be fashionable again. Amongst Dutch, Flemish and German painters, he disparaged Rubens for his "montagnes de viandes flamandes, saupoudrées de vermillon"; he almost equated Rembrandt with the genre painters in his admiration for "les vieillards que le pinceau de Van Ostade, de Rembrandt, de Miéris, de Gérard Dow a tant caressés"; from Flemish painting he derived both Porbus and a mythical artist, Frenhofer, to whom yet another Flemish artist, Mabuse, supposedly transmitted the ultimate secrets of his art.

In Italian painting Raphael was the outstanding personality, both to Balzac and most of his contemporaries; in the Comédie Humaine he is usually associated with angelic and ethereal virtues; its radiantly pure virgins are modelled upon Raphael's Madonnas, but so too are some of its loveliest courtesans.

Balzac almost certainly saw the "Apollo Belvedere", the "Antinoüs", the "Venus de' Medici" and other masterpieces of Classical sculpture during their confiscation in France; such statues inspire many fictional portraits. The portrait of Camille Maupin reflects a topical interest in Egyptology. Of the sculptors of his own time Balzac found Canova and Thorvaldsen the most congenial, neo-Classicism being more suited to sculpture than to painting. In architecture he undoubtedly failed to respond to much that is great and imaginative. Like Stendhal, he was indifferent to the Baroque style, even the Baroque architecture of Paris. What most elated him in architecture was the vastness of such buildings as Bourges Cathedral.

In Balzac's treatment of furnishings and settings, modern furniture is made into a symbol of parvenu vulgarity. Furnishings and settings of many historical epochs are presented in the novels, from the early fourteenth century to the First Empire. Of all these Balzac infinitely preferred the Louis XV style; again, he was a forerunner in the revival of interest in the eighteenth century.

Engravings are not an aspect of the visual arts in which Balzac appreciated the best. The only great engravers to have exerted any marked influence upon the Comédie Humaine are Callot and Delacroix: Callot in his inspiration of La Fraternelle, and Delacroix in that he helped to popularize the Faust theme.

Painters, sculptors, writers—even natural scientists—are all artists, in Balzac's definition of the term; and the primary loyalty of all is to their own art. Balzac does not share the Romantic notion of the artist's role as Philosopher King. As in the cases of Clás and Poussin, art can give rise to heartrending conflicts of loyalty, but all true artists resolve such conflicts to the advantage of their art. Other qualities of the true artist are spontaneity and ingenuousness, qualities that would debar him from the political mission of a LeMartine or Hugo. Sarrasine, La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote and Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu all emphasize that the artist's dedication and naiveté lead to a discordance with reality—an idea essentially derived from Hoffmann. In the main, Balzac's artists fail to achieve worldly success. Grassou, who does achieve it, is a second-rate dauber. But he pleases the wealthy middle class, whereas Joseph Bridau, the true artist, disgruntles them. Joseph is totally worsted in his conflict with Flore Brazier and Max Gilet; though eventually he becomes wealthy, it is only through an irony of fate. Artistic success in the Comédie Humaine is dearly and bitterly won, but money is a stimulus to creative effort—as is an understanding woman. As Steinbock's career reveals, the greatest danger threatening any artist is failure through sheer lack of application. But hardly less serious a danger is to theorize, rather than experiment brush in hand. Indeed, an artist's indolence often arises from the much greater difficulty of executing works of art than conceiving them. Excessive theorizing leads Frenhofer to the opposite pitfall, a constant process of retouching, an obsessive desire for an impossible perfection. Yet despite his tragic slowness in production Frenhofer may have been the pioneer of abstract art—whose still greater tragedy lay in his own destruction of his work.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish, above all, to record my deep indebtedness to Professor Jean Seznec, who kindly undertook the supervision of this thesis. Ready at all times with encouragement and advice, he suggested many profitable lines of inquiry to me and added titles of invaluable importance to what I knew of the bibliography of art criticism.

M. Xavier Bavière, Mlle Michèle Beaulieu, Madame Sylvie Béguin, Dr T.S.R. Boase, Dr Mario Borracelli, Dr Andrzej Ciechanowiecki (a great-great-nephew of Balzac), Sir Trenchard Cox, M. Pierre Devambaz, M. Jean Ducourneau, Miss M. Edovina, Professor Gilbert Gadoffre, Professor Norman Gash, Senhora Maria Teresa Gomes Ferreira, Miss Rosalie Green, Dr Wilhelm Jung, Dr Wilhelm Köhler, Mr S. Konarski, Madame Geneviève Lacambre, Mrs I.H. Lipschütz, Mr Ian Lowe, Monsignor Luciano Maccherini, M. Roger Pierrot, Prince Kazimierz Poniatowski, Dr Jean Raust, Professor T. Reff, M. P. Robert-Houdin, Dr Ernst Schuselka, Dr Michael Spencer, M. Max Terrier, the Duke of Westminster, Mr Reginald Williams and Mr T.S. Wragg all obliged me with their assistance and information; and M. Jean Pommier and M. Pierre Jossierand, successively Curators of the Collection Spoelberch de Levenjoul, Chantilly, hospitably allowed me access to Balzac's MSS. I also thank Goldsmiths' College, London for a generous grant towards the cost of illustrations.

D.A.

FOREWORD

Three major studies¹ have already been devoted, in whole or in part, to the theme of Balzac and the visual arts. Yet, however painstaking and even brilliant the work of Miss Scott, M. Laubriet and M. Bonard, all give only a partial account of the importance of the visual arts in relation to the Comédie Humaine.

In L'Intelligence de l'art chez Balzac, M. Laubriet deals with the presence, or absence, of a theory of aesthetics in Balzac's work. Any discussion of painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving—particularly their impact upon the imaginative world of the novels—is of secondary concern. Sculpture and architecture, indeed, are hardly touched on—though M. Laubriet has made good this deficiency with an extensive article on "Balzac et la sculpture"². Even painting itself is summarily dealt with in the major thesis. Because M. Laubriet's avowed aim is to synthesize Balzac's views on the nature of art, he does not attempt either to investigate the evolution of Balzac's response to visual stimuli, or to describe Balzac's contacts with the visual arts throughout his life.

In his careful but imaginative study of pictorial influences upon the earlier novels of the Comédie Humaine, M. Bonard stresses the immense indebtedness of the Scènes de la Vie privée to Dutch genre-painting, Girodet and contemporary French caricature. He does not, however, extend his inquiry beyond 1834, nor earlier than 1830; nor does he evaluate the relative importance of all the various schools and visual art-forms for Balzac.

1 M.W. Scott: "Art and Artists in Balzac's Comédie Humaine", an unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Chicago 1936), a 46-page abstract of which is deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. All quotations from it in this thesis are made, however, from the full text at Chicago University, a microfilm of which can be consulted at the Taylor Institution, Oxford.

P. Laubriet: L'Intelligence de l'art chez Balzac. D'Une esthétique balzacienne, Paris 1961. His complementary thesis for the doctorat d'État was: Un Catéchisme esthétique: "le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu" de Balzac, Paris 1961.

O. Bonard: La Peinture dans la création balzacienne. Invention et vision picturales de "La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote" au "Père Goriot", Geneva 1969.

2 Gazette des Beaux-Arts, May-June 1961, pp. 331-353.

Miss Scott's dissertation deals with more or less the same subject as the present thesis, yet there are important differences in our approach. She does not examine Balzac's presentation of the artist and of the problems surrounding artistic creation. Nor has she dealt with sculpture and architecture, except incidentally. And, as she herself admits¹, the biographical aspect--untouched in "Art and Artists in Balzac's Comédie Humaine"--calls for investigation.

This thesis also offers no more than a partial account of the importance of the visual arts in relation to the Comédie Humaine; but concerning an aspect not yet sufficiently attempted.

Dr van der Tuin's works, Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la critique artistique en France de la première moitié du XIXe siècle (Paris 1948) and Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la littérature en France dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle (Paris 1953), valuable as they are in showing the gradual discovery of Dutch and Flemish artists between 1800 and 1850, are, however, vitiated by their failure to resort to MSS. Dr van der Tuin does not reveal at what precise time, in the evolution of a novel, its references to artists occur; nor does he provide a full coverage of the Comédie Humaine. No comparable work has yet been published in respect of Italian or Spanish art, though Professor I.H. Lipschütz's study of Spanish painting in its relation to French Romanticism is eagerly awaited.

1 M.W. Scott: op.cit., p. 2.

I: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In any study of the ninety-four novels of the Comédie Humaine, not to mention Balzac's lesser writings, and in the even vaster field of their ramifications into painting, sculpture, architecture, furnishings and engraving, firm priorities must be established at the outset. This thesis does not primarily approach the subject of "Balzac and the Visual Arts" from a philosophical angle, nor is it even primarily concerned to trace the deep furrows of Balzac's creative imaginations; the presence in his work of certain controlling images. More simply, it aims to explore the wide range of Balzac's contacts with the fine and applied arts. At the same time, his philosophy of art is clearly a subject that demands attention; hence Chapter XIII, dealing with the presentation of the artist—with all the problems which Frenhofer raises concerning the nature of the creative process and the ultimate meaning of art. In the same way, the presence in the Comédie Humaine of such radical images as the Faustian duel ¹ and the androgyne Endymion ² is not a matter that can be ignored; indeed, it must be insisted upon; yet it is still not placed in a central position.

1 Cf. infra, pp. 55-56.

2 Cf. infra, pp. 35-37.

The reason why Balzac's contacts with the fine and applied arts are at the centre of the investigation is that they are a key aspect of his life and work largely overlooked until now, except by the scholars mentioned in the Foreword. So great is the range of Balzac's interest in these subjects that it will be impossible to probe in minute depth each separate involvement with Raphael, Titian, Murillo, Rembrandt, sculpture, architecture, engraving etc. whilst also recording the breadth and quality of Balzac's total response. Nor can all statements in the thesis be argued and illustrated at equal length. Many of its aspects will have to be treated with considerable selectivity, to bring out the salient points in each chapter and the essential bearing of each chapter on the rest. But the many-sidedness of Balzac's involvement with the visual arts is no justification for taking refuge in generalities, when one of the main areas of the Comédie Humaine needing further scrutiny is precisely Balzac's response to the visual arts in all its many sides. The constant endeavour in this thesis is to study the Comédie Humaine from the outside vantage-point of painting, sculpture etc.: treating the novels and the visual arts as interrelated artistic media of equal importance.

This basic aim explains the layout of the thesis. The treatment that will be followed, in serial studies of schools of painting, sculpture, architecture, furniture and engraving, would be over-schematic except that it sets out the differing levels of Balzac's response side by side. The relationship of his taste to that of other connoisseurs of the early nineteenth century can also be brought to light by this method. Nor can the tastes and interests of Balzac the man be overlooked, particularly as the novels so faithfully reflect his own preferences and dislikes. Chapter II, dealing with "Balzac as Connoisseur and Art Collector", follows his art appreciation through from year to year, showing what the sight and feel of beautiful things meant to him, tracing his evolving interest in Italian, Dutch and Spanish art, his acquaintance with artists in real life, his visits to most of the great European galleries, and his growing enthusiasm as a collector.

From this primary biographical chapter everything else radiates. An account of the man illuminates the creative achievement. From Chapter III to the end of the thesis Balzac's connoisseurship is analysed in relation to its creative impact upon the Comédie Humaine. And this impact is usually of two kinds. Whether in the chapter on contemporary French painting, or on Dutch, Flemish and German painting, or those on furnishings and engravings, works of art are present in the

Comédie Humaine both as influences and objects. Houses, paintings, furniture and engravings belong to Balzac's fictional characters; paintings, sculpture and engravings influence the creation of those characters. The question of the French caricaturists' influence will, however, be restricted to its main elements (Chapter IV): much of their work belongs to the no man's land between art and semi-mechanical skill; the subject has already been treated in some depth by Mlle Mespoulet¹, and in any case is so vast as to require a separate study.

Only in Chapter XIII does the relation of Balzac's connoisseurship to the Comédie Humaine take on a different form. His manner of presenting the artist derives partly from material contained in Chapter II, in that (for example) Balzac knew Delacroix and Delacroix influences his portrait of Joseph Bridau; to a larger extent, however, it derives from Balzac's own introspection as a creative artist, and from certain quasi-philosophical notions regarding the nature, meaning and limitations of art.

Thus, the following twelve chapters are tripartite in content. The next sets the biographical background. It is followed by studies of the various aspects of the visual arts in their impact, as influences and objects, upon Balzac's novels. Within the section on each artist or art form a chronological order of exposition is observed wherever possible and appropriate; the apprentice novels are studied in addition to the novels of the Comédie Humaine. In the last of the twelve

1 M. Mespoulet: Images et romans. Parenté des estampes et du roman réaliste de 1815 à 1865, Paris 1939.

chapters, the critical perspective widens to include the fictional artist himself. However wide-ranging and even diverse the chapters may seem, when looked at in the Table of Contents, all have one basic preoccupation: to reveal the depth and complexity of Balzac's indebtedness to the visual arts, both as a man and a writer.

II: BALZAC AS CONNOISSEUR AND ART COLLECTOR

Balzac's earliest contact with the visual arts was doubtless through the engravings which, in his day, were the sine qua non of middle-class respectability. Another early contact may have been one of the two portraits which his father, Bernard-François Balzac, had painted of himself. (The other portrait, by François Gérard's pupil and confidante, Marie-Éléonore Godefroid, dates from much later: around 1822¹.)

But not until his student days in Paris could he really have become aware of the visual arts. He arrived in Paris in 1813 or 1814. By then, the galleries of the Louvre had been open to the public for twenty years², and until 1815 at least were the repository of the finest art collection in the world. Confiscated by Napoleon from the conquered territories of Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, "The Transfiguration"³, "St Cecilia"⁴, "The Madonna of Foligno"⁵, the "Spasimo di Sicilia"⁶, Domenichino's "Last Communion of St Jerome"⁷ (plate 7) and Rubens's "Descent from the Cross"⁸, etc., temporarily enriched the Imperial capital, adding to the lustre of a gallery that already boasted the "Mona Lisa"⁹, Titian's "Young Man with a Glove"¹⁰, Raphael's "Belle Jardinière"¹¹ and "Baldassare Castiglione"¹², and Correggio's "Antiope"¹³. The Louvre catalogue of 1815 contains 132 more entries than that of the succeeding year.

1 J. Adhémar: "Balzac et les images", Arta, 26 January 1951.

2 C.H.M. Gould: Trophy of Conquest. The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre, London 1965, p. 26. H. Tietze: Treasuries of the Great National Galleries, London 1955, p. 41.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,132.

4 Ibid., no. 1,139.

5 Ibid., no. 1,140.

6 C.H.M. Gould: op.cit., p. 100. C. Saunier: Les Conquêtes artistiques de la Révolution et de l'Empire, Paris 1902, p. 71.

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 912.

8 Ibid., no. 591.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 930.

10 Ibid., no. 1,080.

11 Ibid., no. 1,027.

12 Ibid., no. 1,021.

13 Ibid., no. 816.

It is almost certain—though hitherto unsuspected—that Balzac visited the Louvre whilst these expropriated Raphaels, Domenichinos and Rubenses were still there: not only because he was living in Paris in the final year of the Empire, but because references to such paintings as the "Madonna della Sedia", "The Last Communion of St Jerome" and Titian's "Martyrdom of St Lawrence"¹—references made long before he saw those pictures in Italy—suggest a prior acquaintance.

There were also the Salons of 1814, 1817, 1819 and 1822. At the exhibition of 1814 Girodet's "Endymion" (plate 12), "Funérailles d'Atala" and "Une scène de Déluge" (plate 13)² were sensational. Whether Balzac, then barely fifteen, saw them immediately, we do not know³. But if not at the Salon, he must have seen them a little later, at the Luxembourg⁴; and they profoundly impressed him. The Salon of 1817 exhibited at least two works which Balzac would long remember: Guérin's "Didon et Énée" (plate 14)⁵ and "Clytemnestre" (plate 15)⁶. These, too, went to the Luxembourg⁷. "Endymion", "Atala" and "Dido and Aeneas" were, however, the last manifestations of an effete Classicism, unmistakably foreshadowing the future. In 1819 the young Romantic school launched its assault on neo-Classicism. Géricault's "Scène de Naufrage"⁸ (now better known as "Le Bateau de la Méduse") created an artistic furor and a political scandal. As with the Salons of 1814 and 1817, we have no absolute proof that Balzac visited the

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,205. Balzac may also have had Titian's "St Peter Martyr" in mind: cf. infra, pp. 180-181.

2 1814 Salon, nos. 438, 437, 436. Cf. infra, p. 9.

3 Young Joseph Bridau is taken to the Salon of 1812 by his great-aunt Madame Descoings (Pl. III, p. 869). Could Balzac have been taken to one of the early Salons (1810, 1812, 1814) by his mother or some other relation?

4 Luxembourg 1823, nos. 57, 58, 55.

5 1817 Salon, no. 399.

6 Ibid., no. 398.

7 Luxembourg 1823, nos. 63, 64.

8 1819 Salon, no. 510.

1819 exhibition. In a letter to Théodore Dablin, dated 6 September 1819, he asks his friend to store up as many impressions of the Salon as he can: "je veux vous interroger sur le musée" ¹.

We do not know whether Balzac ever visited the Soult collection, though circumstantial evidence suggests ² that he did. In March 1820, however, we find him actually trying to gain admittance to the Sommariva gallery ³; and although, once again, there is no positive proof that Balzac ever went there, to assume that he did is an entirely reasonable conjecture.

The next Salon, in 1822, marks the appearance of Delacroix, whose "Dante et Virgile" ⁴ created a sensation hardly less great than "The Raft of the Medusa", three years previously. (Joseph Bridau, who owes much to Delacroix, likewise exhibits for the first time at the imaginary 1823 Salon ⁵, but the picture with which he makes his name is not of Dante and Virgil crossing the infernal river, but a "Venetian Senator" taken from a "sujet familier" by Xavier Sigalon (plate 25), also exhibited in 1822 ⁶.) Further Salons which Balzac very probably visited were those of 1824 ⁷, 1827 ⁸ and

1 Correspondance I, p. 40.

2 Cf. infra, pp. 208, 213.

3 Correspondance I, p. 79; Edouard Malus to Balzac, 26 March 1820. Cf. infra, p. 250.

4 1822 Salon, no. 309.

5 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 878, 1,099.

6 1822 Salon, no. 1,198; "Une jeune courtisane reçoit d'une main les cadeaux d'un homme entre deux âges, tandis que de l'autre elle prend un billet doux, que lui glisse son amant". The subject of this picture was taken from Otway's Venice Preserved.

7 Delacroix's "Massacre de Scios" (no. 450), Ingres's "Voeu de Louis XIII" (no. 922) and Gérard's "Daphnis et Chloé" (no. 751) were all shown at this Salon; Balzac refers to the latter two, and must have heard of the notoriety of Delacroix's exhibit.

8 On this occasion, the sculptor Denis Foyatier exhibited his "Spartacus brisant ses Chaines" (1827 Salon, no. 1,125), to which Balzac refers, thirteen years later, in Pierratte (Pl. III, pp. 679, 680). But this does not necessarily imply that Balzac had seen it at the Salon. For in the meantime, he must often have noticed it in its place of honour in the Jardins des Tuileries.

1831¹. Later, he visited the exhibitions of 1834², 1835³, 1836⁴, etc., but by then the Salon had lost much of its earlier glamour (Ingres, for instance, refused to exhibit after 1834⁵), and Balzac in any case had other sources of visual nourishment.

quite apart from the Salons, the young law student and hack writer of the apprentice novels also probably visited the Luxembourg. This was a museum of modern French art established by Louis XVIII in 1821 to house the works of such living artists as distinguished themselves at the biennial, or triennial, Salons. Not until a painter had been dead for ten years could any of his works be transferred to a permanent resting-place in the Louvre. Needless to say, such good fortune did not befall all those who had enjoyed immediate acclaim. Any deficiency in Balzac's knowledge of the Salons could, therefore, be easily made good at the Luxembourg.

The years of the eleven or twelve Ouvrages de jeunesse (1822-1825) seem to have elapsed, however, without Balzac ever coming into real contact with the world of artists. This did not mean that his interest in art collecting and bric-à-brac was stagnating. His old friend and mentor Théodore Dablin, the prototype of Claude-Joseph Pillerault⁶, was the most powerful influence in this respect. A well-to-do ironmonger approaching the age of retirement (he sold his business in 1825), Dablin

1 Delacroix's "La Liberté guidant le peuple", twice mentioned in the novels, was shown at this exhibition (no. 511). Cf. infra, p. 57.

2 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 202; 3 April 1834. At this exhibition Balzac greatly admired Delacroix's "Femmes d'Alger" (ibid., pp. 210-211; 28 April 1834). Cf. Correspondance II, p. 492; April 1834.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, pp. 318-319; 30 March 1835.

4 Ibid., p. 399; 23 March 1836.

5 H. Lapauze: Ingres, sa vie et son oeuvre (1780-1867), Paris 1911, pp. 314-320.

6 César Birotteau; Pl. V, pp. 402-406. Pillerault could scarcely be termed a collector, however.

was himself a collector, but of curios rather than pictures. Snuff-boxes, miniatures, ciboriums, cloisonné, rock-crystal drinking-cups with silver-gilt handles were the objects which, at his death in 1861, he bequeathed to the Louvre ¹.

It was through another hack writer, Horace Reisson, whom he may have met as early as 1823 ², that Balzac entered the circle of young painters and writers. Achille Devéria, then equally unknown, was commissioned in 1825 to produce a series of vignettes for the one-volume editions of Molière and La Fontaine which the hack writer turned publisher was bringing out in association with Urbain Canel. At Devéria's home in the Rue Notre-Dame-des-Champs, Balzac now met a still wider circle of artists. And in the summer of 1826, at the home of another writer-cum-publisher, Hyacinthe de Latouche, he met Monnier ³, with whom he soon became firm friends and whose hilarious parties he often attended ⁴. In 1827 or 1828, perhaps on an introduction from the publisher Auguste Sautolet, Balzac met Mérimée, whose Jacquaria and La Famille Carvaial he printed on his own presses in 1828.

Not until 1828 or 1829 was he invited to any of the great literary salons. In Sophie Gay's drawing-room, to which he was introduced by his mistress the Duchesse d'Abrentès, he met the established painters Gros, Gérard and the Vernets ⁵. The budding author of Le Dernier Chouan even frequented Madame Récamier's august afternoon parties at L'Abbaye-aux-Bois, again on an introduction from Madame d'Abrentès ⁶.

1 Anonymous: Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1 May 1861, pp. 190-191.

2 L.-J. Arrigon: Les Débuts littéraires d'Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1924, p. 143.

3 A.-M. Meininger: "Balzac et Henry Monnier", Année Balzacienne, 1966, p. 222.

4 M. Mespoulet: op.cit., p. 24.

5 L.-J. Arrigon: op.cit., p. 263.

6 É.-J. Delécluse: Souvenirs de soixante années, Paris 1862, pp. 284-285.

Yet his critical knowledge of art still lagged behind his undoubted enthusiasm. In Le Dernier Chouan (1828), he can only write—describing Montauran's first sight of Marie de Verneuil: "il étudiait, comme dans un tableau, les oppositions de lumière et d'ombre produites par les caprices de ses cheveux noirs"¹. He does not name any particular painting or painter, as no doubt he would have done in later years.

On 10 July 1829, he was at a reading of Un Duel sous Richelieu (now Marion Delorme) at Victor Hugo's house, also attended by Mérimée², Delacroix³, Musset², the Devérias² and Louis Boulanger². About this time, he was beginning to buy Dürer and Du Cerceau engravings⁴. In 1830 he met Gavarni⁵, when the latter signed a four-year contract to illustrate Émile de Girardin's recently founded weekly, La Mode, to which Balzac was already a contributor. Admiring Gavarni's lithographs long before he met their creator, he had just devoted an enthusiastic article to Gavarni in the issue of La Mode dated 2 October 1830⁶. The same autumn, he began to frequent Nodier's salon at the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal⁷, where the group of young Romantics (Delacroix, Musset, the Devérias, the Johannots and Boulanger—all of whom, however, he already knew) met regularly under the friendly, if somewhat cynical, aegis of the author of Le Peintre de Saltsbourg⁸. Balzac undoubtedly derived much from these assemblies, and it was here that he and Delacroix had their first serious talk⁹.

1 A 13, fol. 30, verso. Cf. Pl. VII, p. 859.

2 A. Hugo: Victor Hugo raconté par un témoin de sa vie, Paris 1863, vol. II, p. 244.

3 Ibid. Cf. R. Escholiers: Delacroix, peintre, graveur, écrivain, vol. I, Paris 1926, p. 192.

4 J. Adhémar: "Balzac et la peinture", Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-June 1953, p. 153.

5 E.-L.-A. and J.-A. de Goncourt: Gavarni, l'homme et l'oeuvre, Paris 1873, p. 86. Balzac may even have met him in 1829, at one of Gérard's parties.

6 Ouvrages complètes, Société des Études Balzaciennes edn., vol. XXVI, Paris 1962, pp. 283-287.

7 P.-G. Castex: "Balzac et Charles Nodier", Année Balzacienne, 1962, p. 198.

8 Cf. H. Salomon: Charles Nodier et le groupe romantique, Paris 1908, pp. 116-224.

9 P.-V.-E. Delacroix: Journal, Paris 1932, vol. I, p. 453; 10 February 1852. Delacroix is writing over twenty years after the event. His recollection of his first meeting with Balzac is vague as to the date, though not as to the impression. He suggests that they first met at the Arsenal (and later in Madame O'Reilly's salon), but as both men were present at the reading of Marion Delorme, they must have met then, even if only momentarily.

But, apart from Hodier's salon, there was another drawing-room of equal, if not greater, importance: the regular Wednesday evening receptions held at 6, Rue Saint Germain-des-Prés by François Gérard, Court painter to Louis XVIII and Charles X, and to whom he had been introduced either by Sophie Gay or Marie-Éléonore Godefroid, Gérard's pupil and the author of one of the two extant portraits of Balzac's father. From 1829 he often attended "cet étonnant salon"¹, mingling with the very élite of Parisian society, intellectual and social alike—Princess Emilie Belgiojoso d'Este², Forbin³, Mérimée⁴, Stendhal⁵, Ingres⁶, Delacroix⁴, Pradier⁶ and David d'Angers⁷. Balzac had the highest respect for Gérard, sending him the four volumes of his études de Meaura and the revised edition of Les Chouans⁸, writing to the Contessa Sanseverino two days after Gérard's death of this "grand peintre, ... l'aimable et bon vieillard que nous avons perdu"⁹, and even attending his funeral. He may also have visited the home of J.-R. Auguste¹⁰, the friend of the young Romantic artists (above all, Géricault¹¹—until his premature death in 1824—and Eugène Delacroix¹²), and a patron who was no mean water-colourist in his own right.

1 Lettres à Madame Hancka I, p. 480; 15 January 1837.

2 Ibid., p. 579; 22 January 1838.

3 M.-L.-V. Ancelot: Les Salons de Paris. Foyers éteints, Paris 1858, p. 61.

4 Ibid., pp. 62, 74.

5 Ibid., pp. 63, 65-69.

6 É.-J. Delécluse: Souvenirs de soixante années, Paris 1862, p. 292.

7 H. Jouin: David d'Angers, sa vie, son œuvre, ses écrits et ses contemporains, Paris 1878, vol. I, pp. 181, 217 n. 2.

8 Correspondance II, pp. 515-516; 8 June 1834.

9 Correspondance III, p. 222; 13 January 1837.

10 Cf. C. Saunier: "Un Artiste romantique oublié: Monsieur Auguste", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, June 1910, pp. 441-460, July 1910, pp. 51-68, September 1910, pp. 229-242.

11 E. Chesneau: Poètes et statuaires romantiques, Paris 1880, p. 71.

12 Ibid., p. 72.

Balzac's first luxury was an engraving (unspecified), bought in 1819 for his attic in the Rue Lesdiguières¹. Later, he decorated the only empty spaces available on his walls with two lithographs². He argued with Victor Ratier, editor of La Silhouette, about the value of the lithographs appearing in his journal.

In 1831 Balzac invited Gavarni to a private reading of La Physiologie du Mariage³, introduced him into the salon of his friend and former mistress Madame d'Abrantès, and entrusted him with the production of a lithograph illustrating La Peste de Chagrin. In the following year, he put him into touch with Achille Ricourt, editor of L'Artiste, in which Gavarni soon became a collaborator. Later in 1832 Balzac published a second and more extensive article on Gavarni in the form of a critique of the Travestissements pour 1832. It seems likely that he intended to write a third article, this time illustrated, on Gavarni and his work, but no trace of it has been found⁴.

Whilst Balzac was more or less editing La Caricature, in 1831 and 1832, Daumier, Decamps, Traviès, Charlet, Grandville and Raffet were his collaborators. He appreciated Bertall, Lemud and Meissonier, and was vividly impressed by Delacroix's "Femme au perroquet"—presumably in 1832, when it could have been seen at the Musée Colbert, a second place of display for recently completed works of art, in addition to the Salons. This picture's influence upon La Fille aux Yeux d'Or (1834-1835) was implicitly acknowledged by Balzac when he dedicated the novel to Delacroix in 1843⁵. With Horace Vernet, Delacroix is a major "prototype" of the Comédie Humaine's most brilliant painter, Joseph Bridau. But, in the formation of Balzac's ideas about painting, especially those in the third edition of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu, Théophile Gautier, whom he met rather later (about 1835⁶), was to play a larger part.

1 L.-J. Arrigon: op.cit., p. 29. Correspondance I, p. 27; Laure Balzac to Balzac, 10 August 1819.

2 Ibid., pp. 462-463; 21 July 1830.

3 E.-L.-A. and J.-A. de Goncourt: op.cit., p. 69.

4 Cf. Lettres à sa Famille, p. 130, n. 1.

5 Pl. V, p. 255. Cf. infra, pp. 52-53.

6 T. Gautier: Portraits contemporains. Littérateurs, peintres, sculpteurs, artistes dramatiques, Paris 1874, p. 45. Gautier was twelve years younger than Balzac. Cf. infra, p. 17.

The extent to which the artistic world and artistic interests had already begun to leave their mark on Balzac can be seen from the early Scènes de la Vie privée, the short stories published around the years 1830-1832, after the epoch-making Les Chouans. Many of these scenes of private life are intimately bound up with the problems of artistic creation, and the Hoffmannesque discordance between the ideal and the real ¹. The very names of many of the characters in these early stories are borrowed from the visual arts: Raphael de Valentin, Artolomeo di Piombo, Luigi Porta--even Sarrasine (alias Jacques Sarazin) and Don Juan Balvidère. Cicognara, in Sarrasine, is also the name of the art critic who wrote a history of modern Italian sculpture and whose name Balzac may have got to know of from Stendhal ².

In 1832 Balzac had the serious intention of writing a novel, to be called La Bataille, about the Battle of Essling. But not having Stendhal's envied ³ gift of military description (Balzac never witnessed a battle, whereas Stendhal did), it became his most illustrious failure, only ten words of it ever being composed. In the first fever of enthusiasm, however, he wrote at once to his

1 Cf. infra, pp. 303-307.

2 Similarly, in later years, the murderer of Michel Taillefer may well derive his name from the Bolognese artist Marcantonio Franceschini (cf. infra, p. 231, n. 4); the title Massimilla Doni is inspired by a Raphael portrait; Emilio Memmi calls to mind one of the outstanding figures of the Siennese trecento; Claude Vignon is the name of a seventeenth-century French artist; Vautrin's Spanish alias is derived from the seventeenth-century Spanish artist, Francisco Herrera; and the artists Mme Bixio, Goupil, Rouget, Vignon, Mme de Watteville, Mlle Bragier and even Cibot, all of whom exhibited in the Salon of 1834, may have given their names to leading characters in the Comédie Humaine. An Husson exhibited at the Salon of 1840.

3 Correspondance III, pp. 583-584; Balzac to Stendhal, March 1839. Revue Parisienne, 25 September 1840 (Études sur M. Revle, Oeuvres complètes, Société des Études Balzaciennes edn., vol. XXVIII, Paris 1963, pp. 197-237).

mother¹ asking her to send him, at Saché where he was staying, "les deux portraits lithographiés de Lannes et de Masséna, les meilleurs surtout". Nor was he merely visualizing battle paintings, such as Gros's "Napoléon visitant le champ de bataille d'Eylau", which M. Bonard suggests may have influenced Balzac in the creation of Hyacinthe Chabert². He must also have had in mind the lithographs of artists like Charlet and Raffet—his colleagues on the staffs of La Silhouette and Le Caricature—picturing the legendary glories of the Napoleonic era.

When, therefore, Balzac writes³:

il faut que dans son feuteuil, un homme froid voie la campagne, les accidents de terrain, les masses d'hommes, les événements stratégiques, le Danube, les ponts, admire les détails et l'ensemble de cette lutte, entende l'artillerie, s'intéresse à ces mouvements d'échiquier, voie tout, sente dans chaque articulation de ce grand corps, Napoléon, que je ne montrerai pas ou que je laisserai voir le soir traversant dans une barque le Danube,

he visualises the scene as distinctly as the history painters and caricaturists, although they were able to make known their visions to the eyes of the public, whereas Balzac's vision remained private.

1 Correspondance II, p. 14; 13 June 1832. Cf. Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 247; 25 August 1834; Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 340; 13 January 1844.

2 O. Bonard: op.cit., pp. 53-54.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, pp. 27-28; January 1833. Cf. Pensées. Sujets. Fragmens, Paris 1910, p. 76, where Balzac's intention is to write a novel about Wagram.

Private, at least, until the publication (in 1833) of Le Médecin de Campagne, with its deservedly famous "Histoire de Napoléon racontée dans une grange par un vieux soldat"¹, Balzac's one outstanding contribution to the hagiography of the Napoleonic wars. Its dithyrambs convey² the same naive, quasi-religious admiration as had informed Bellangé's lithograph, "Tenez, voyez-vous Monsieur l'Curé, Pour moi le v'là l'Père Éternel".

In March 1835 Balzac moved into an apartment in the Rue des Batailles, at Chaillot. Increasingly self-indulgent, he furnished the dining-room of his new home in red, gold and white silk: colours which, only a week or two later, were to dominate the description³ of Pequita Valdès's boudoir, in La Fille aux Yeux d'Or⁴.

Meanwhile, the circle of artistic friends was still increasing. The sculptor Théophile Bra, a cousin of Balzac's friend Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, was introduced to him in October 1833, on Balzac's return from Neuchâtel. A visit to Bra's studio on 17 November following inspired the idea of Séraphita⁵, and this and other visits about this time⁶ deepened the novelist's acquaintance with sculpture and sculptors.

1 Pl. VIII, pp. 453-469.

2 M. Mespoulet: op.cit., p. 28.

3 Pl. V, pp. 301-303.

4 E. Werdet: Souvenirs de la vie littéraire. Portraits intimes, Paris 1879, pp. 99-104.

5 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, pp. 127-128; 20 November 1833.

6 A 312, fol. 357; Bra to S.-H. Berthoud, 27 November 1833: "il faut, mon cher Berthoud, que vous veniez dimanche prochain goûter à ma piquette et à mon pain de ménage, avec Balzac, Marceline Valmore, ma très chère cousine, et son mari s'il est libre".

Théophile Gautier¹, who had begun as a painter, met Balzac a little later, probably around 1835. He taught him something of the basic techniques of painting, and passed on to him many of his own ideas, attitudes and prejudices vis-à-vis art, thus laying the foundation of the third and heavily revised edition of Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu, published in 1837.

Except for a journey to Savoy with Madame de Castries in the summer of 1832, Balzac did not travel abroad until September 1833, when he went to Switzerland to join Madame Hańska at Neuchâtel. Until the start of his foreign journeys, his personal knowledge of the great Masters was, therefore, limited to the Louvre (but a Louvre which, in Napoleon's time, had been vastly enriched by great masterpieces plundered from the conquered territories), the more or less biennial Salons (annual from 1833) and the Luxembourg. In addition, there were, of course, the modern paintings which he might happen to see in his friends' studios.

We do not know whether Balzac visited galleries in Switzerland (the magnificent collection of Holbeins at Basel², for instance) during this second foreign journey. But from his third journey abroad, when he visited Vienna and Munich in 1835, the visits to the great galleries of Europe—partly, perhaps, under Madame Hańska's influence—follow in

1 P. Abraham (Créatures chez Balzac, Paris 1931, p. 299) claims that "Gautier paraît avoir longuement et parfois énergiquement collaboré" in Balzac's aesthetic education. This view is shared by A.-C.-J. de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul (Autour de Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1897, pp. 3-46), but is contradicted by F. Fosca (De Diderot à Valéry, les écrivains et les arts visuels, Paris 1960, pp. 64-67), Miss Scott (op.cit., pp. 245-260) and J. Adhémar ("Balzac et la peinture", Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-June 1953, p. 161). P. Laubriet (Un Catéchisme esthétique. Le "Chef-d'œuvre inconnu" de Balzac, Paris 1961, pp. 99-112) inclines to the view that Gautier, a friend of Delacroix from about 1830, transmitted some—though not all—of Delacroix's aesthetic opinions to Balzac. In view of Delacroix's marked dislike of Balzac (op.cit., p. 453; 10 February 1852) and his aristocratic reserve (M.-L.-V. Ancelot: op.cit., p. 62), it seems most unlikely that a direct interchange of views could have taken place.

2 In the letter to Georges Mnisech dated 29 July 1846, there is a reference to Holbein's "Lais of Corinth", perhaps the greatest of all the Holbeins in the Öffentliche Kunstsammlung, Basel: "mon Holbein, confirmé Holbein, est aussi beau que la "Lais" de Bâle" (Lettres à Madame Hańska, III, p. 314). Balzac seems, therefore, to have visited the Basel gallery, but when? Possibly in April 1837, during his return from the first great Italian journey, with vivid and enthusiastic memories of the major galleries of northern Italy.

quick succession. In the Belvedere Gallery, Vienna ¹, he must have seen very many works of the Venetian school, including perhaps Titian's "Madonna with the Cherries" (then, admittedly, in a rather damaged condition) and his "Danaë", Giorgione's "Three Philosophers" and Veronese's "Judith with the Head of Holofernes", but not until two years later did he come under the spell of Venice. Also in the Imperial collection he may have seen "The Four Continents", by Rubens, Dürer's painting of the Emperor Maximilian I, and many portraits by Velázquez of the Spanish royal family.

But he would also have been able to visit other galleries in Vienna: the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, with its Rubenses and Guardis, Rembrandt's "Young Woman in an Armchair" and De Hooch's "Dutch Family"; the Palais Liechtenstein, with its almost unrivalled collection of great masterpieces, including Leonardo's "Ginevra dei Benci"; the Palais Schwarzenberg; and the Palais Harrach.

And at the Pinakothek in Munich, which he visited on 12 June 1835 ², he could have admired such masterpieces as Rembrandt's "Descent from the Cross", Murillo's "Young Boys eating Cakes" and Rubens's "Meleager and Atalanta". In addition, there were the Arginetan sculptures in the Glyptothek ³, and the fine—though to him unappealing—Baroque architecture of the Bavarian capital. There were also the frescoes of the Nazarenes, Schnorr von Karolsfeld and Cornelius, which Balzac cordially disliked.

The next, and perhaps most important of all milestones is the visit to Italy in 1837, which familiarized him with the glories of Venetian art. At the Scuola della Carità (since Eugène de Beauharnais's viceroyalty, the Accademia), he probably saw Titian's "Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple", Veronese's "Feast in the House of Levi" and many other works by these masters. He must also have seen a number of "Madonnas" by Giovanni Bellini, but was less impressed by them. Nor was he much impressed by Tintoretto's masterpieces in the Scuola di S. Rocco. The Titians, Veroneses and Giorgiones in the great houses of Venice (the Palazzi Galvagna ⁴, Soranzo and Barbarigo) also inspired, and to some extent

1 For the sake of up-to-dateness the reader is referred throughout this thesis to the Kunsthistorisches Museum, this being the place where the pictures in question are now kept.

2 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 336; 12 June 1835.

3 Réatrix Pl. II, p. 375.

4 H. Prior: "Balzac à Venise (1837)", Revue de France, 1 December 1927, p. 391.

sated ¹, him. Incomplete as his appreciation of Venice was, he saw it (unlike Proust ²) with the eager eyes of the traveller who, with little or no foreknowledge of the beauties awaiting him, finds in each picture, each palace façade, each mural a startling novelty.

Later, Florence deepened his understanding of Raphael, revealed the sculpture of Michelangelo ³ and made him aware of the Italian primitives. At the Palazzo Pitti, he was overwhelmed by Raphael's portrait of Maddalena Doni ("ni Titien, ni Rubens, ni Tintoret, ni Vélasquez, nul pinceau ne peut approcher d'une perfection semblable" ⁴). Raphael's "Angelo Doni" and "Madonna del Granduca" must have been further revelations. (Napoleon had allowed the Doni portraits to remain in Florence; the Madonna had been Ferdinando III's personal possession.) "Leo X", the "Madonna della Sedia" and "The Vision of Ezekiel", on the other hand, Balzac was almost certainly seeing for the second time, though with greater maturity of perception. Nothing can shake Raphael's pre-eminence—not even the dazzling richness of the newly discovered Venetians. At the Uffizi, the Botticellis, Gentile da Fabriano and Cimabues are trivial in comparison—though Giotto caught, and held, his attention. Only with the passage of time, and as the blinding effect of "Maddalena Doni" receded into the horizon of distant memories, did he realize the full importance of the Venetians ⁵.

1 Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 266; 19 October 1843: "j'ai vu tant de Titien à Venise que ceux de la Galerie [of Dresden] ont perdu de leur prix à mes yeux".

2 Proust visited Venice in 1900. Cf. J. Chaix-Ruy: "Marcel Proust et l'Italie", Revue de Littérature Comparée, October-December 1949, pp. 507-540. Professor Gilbert Gadoffre once asked a person who had travelled with Proust on that journey what impression he had derived from Venice. The reply was: "Aucune. Il avait tout lu". I am grateful to Professor Gadoffre for this information.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, pp. 491-492; 11 April 1837.

4 Ibid., p. 491; 11 April 1837.

5 Admittedly, Balzac writes to Contessa Clara Maffei on 19 March 1837: "je suis tout étourdi des tableaux que j'ai vus et je suis émerveillé de l'école vénitienne, elle est immense par le coloris mais fautive par le dessin; les compositions sont surtout remarquables par la grandeur des idées; on y retrouve tout ce qui a été fait dans les autres écoles" (Correspondance III, p. 270). But is there an element of flattery in this tribute? The letter to Madame Hańska dated 11 April 1837 is a more candid statement of opinion.

Not only was Balzac's statue sculpted by Alessandro Puttinati in Milan, he also saw yet another Raphael for the first time, the "Sposalizio" recalled almost ten years later in La Cousine Bette¹. And at the Pinacoteca di Bologna there was "St Cecilia"², and—more important still, in its influence upon his taste—the work of Guido Reni, Domenichino and Francesco Albani, idols of his generation.

Returning to Italy in the following year, Balzac continued his explorations. On 24 May 1838, for example, he visited S. Maria dei Miracoli, at Saronno near Milan, to see Bernardino Luini's celebrated frescoes, particularly "The Marriage of the Virgin"³. But the explorations were by no means confined to Italy. Paris, which had revealed something of the splendour of Raphael's art to the callow youth newly arrived from Tours, now revealed to the internationally famous novelist the greatness of Spanish art, hitherto largely unsuspected. Early in 1838 Louis-Philippe placed his collection of 412 Spanish paintings—with its 38 Murillos, 82 Zurbaráns, its Velázquez, Alonso Canos, Goyas and even⁴ El Greco—on permanent exhibition at the Louvre. And, as will be argued in Chapter IX⁵, Balzac may already have visited by this time the magnificent collection of Spanish pictures formed by Soult, commander-in-chief of the French army during the Peninsular Wars.

On a more personal level, Balzac, whose friendship was always closer with the caricaturists than with artists proper, regularly frequented Gavarni's studio from 1837⁶. His portrait—at first admired⁷, years later detested⁸—was painted by Louis Boulanger in

1 Pl. VI, p. 205.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,139. Correspondance III, p. 294; Balzac to Maurice Schlésinger, 29 May 1837.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 604; 24 May 1838.

4 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, nos. 253-260, 450.

5 Cf. infra, p. 213. Cf. supra, p. 8.

6 C. Léger: Eva de Balzac, Paris 1926, p. 46. E.-L.-A. and J.-A. de Goncourt: op. cit., p. 129.

7 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 504; 23 May 1837: "c'est un des plus beaux morceaux de l'école. Les peintres les plus jaloux l'ont admiré".

8 Correspondance V, p. 528; Balzac to Laure Surville, 22 March 1849: "mon portrait par Boulanger est devenu la croûte la plus hideuse qu'il soit possible de voir, les couleurs étaient ou mauvaises ou mal combinées, et c'est noir, c'est affreux".

1836, shown at the Salon of 1837¹, and sent to the Hańskis at Wierchowia. David d'Angers asked to sculpt his statue (or a medallion of him), a privilege to which Balzac eventually consented in 1842². The bust was completed in 1845.

The 1840s brought further visits abroad, during which Balzac saw other galleries. First, in 1843, came the visit to St Petersburg. Balzac must undoubtedly have visited the Hermitage with Madame Hańska (after all, he was in the Russian capital for nearly ten weeks), and there he may have seen Leonardo's "Madonna Litta" and "Madonna Benois", Rembrandt's "Portrait of an Aged Warrior", De Hooch's "Lady with her Servant", numerous works by Watteau, Fragonard, Boucher and Lancret, and other masterpieces.

The return journey from St Petersburg was made overland. At Berlin, such masterpieces as Giovanni Bellini's "Resurrection", Holbein's "Georg Giese", Terborch's "Concert" and numerous other minor Dutch masters awaited him. At the Zwinger, Dresden, to see which he made a special detour, he contemplated "The Sistine Madonna", the only outstanding painting by Raphael (apart from the frescoes) he had not already seen. It disappointed him, however, perhaps for the very reason that it was so eagerly expected. The numerous fine Correggios gave him more pleasure:

"la Nuit" du Corrège, sa "Madelaine", deux "Vierges" de lui, puis les 2 de Raphaël et les tableaux hollandais valent le voyage³.

"Holy Night" and "St Mary Magdalene" are, indeed, works of genius; but, in his sudden taste for Correggio, he is echoing the preferences of the eighteenth century, in common with Stendhal⁴ and C.-P. Landon⁵.

Not until 1845 did he visit Holland. At The Hague and in Amsterdam he could finally regale himself on Rembrandt: three important self-portraits at the Mauritshuis, and "The Night Watch" and "Stealmasters" at the Rijksmuseum--besides, of course, innumerable Terborchs, Ostades, Nicolaes Maes and Doux. But by now it was becoming rather too late for Balzac to add to his already considerable store of artistic knowledge. His admiration for the Dutch school, with its genre-painters and Rembrandtesque alchemists, dates from as early as 1830--if not before.

1 1837 Salon, no. 174.

2 Cf. Lettres à Madame Hańska II, p. 129; 21 November 1842.

3 Ibid., p. 266; 19 October 1843.

4 Cf. infra, p. 205.

5 In Landon's view, Correggio comes next after Raphael and Michelangelo in order of importance (Vies et œuvres des peintres les plus célèbres, vol. XXX, Paris 1813, p. 3).

Visits to the Vatican Museum, the Palazzo Barberini and the Palazzo Doria were amongst the main incidents of March and April 1846¹. Balzac readjusted his view of Raphael, on a more mature re-examination—thirty-one years after he had first seen them—of such paintings as "The Transfiguration" and "The Madonna of Foligno", and in the light of his discovery of the Stanze frescoes. And for the first time, he saw the Belvedere Gallery of the Vatican—though some of its most magnificent sculptures (the "Apollo Belvedere" and the "Antinoüs" (plate 27), for example) he had almost certainly seen before, for he had often referred to these works in time past, even in the apprentice novels. As with his visit to the Mauritshuis, the previous summer, it was now too late in Balzac's career for him to glean much in the way of deeper knowledge or appreciation.

Far more significant, at the end of Balzac's life, was his passion for collecting paintings and bric-à-brac. This passion had a very considerable effect on the last novels, particularly Le Cousin Pons. Balzac was something of a Sylvain Pons, but also something of an Élie Magus. He began with bric-à-brac, and graduated to paintings.

Although he had long been interested in antiques (partly, perhaps, under the influence of The Antiquary), for many years he bought very little. Before the visit to St Petersburg in 1843, he owned few objects of art. Those bought after his Russian holiday were obtained with a view to furnishing a home for Madame Hańska and himself.

Vous oublierez la preuve, un jour, qu'à l'exception de quatre choses (ma pendule en Boule, le cadre de Brustolone et les deux armoires en ébène), je n'ai rien acheté que depuis mon retour de Saint-Petersbourg et, si vous voulez m'écrire de faire la vente de tous les objets d'art qui sont rue Fortunée, ils seront envoyés rue des Jeûneurs et vendus dans le mois,

he wrote to Madame Hańska on 2 July 1847².

J'ai fait maison et mobilier deux ans trop tôt, en croyant à des événements heureux, qui sont retardés, que tant de chances de la vie et de la mort peuvent rendre impossibles!

¹ Balzac had hoped to make a journey to Rome in June 1834 (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 203, 28 April 1834), but nothing had come of this plan.
² lir. IV, p. 309.

The "deux armoires en ébène"—so we read in the "Registre des acquisitions faites depuis 1834"¹—had been bought in 1834; the so-called "cadre de Brustolone" (bequeathed to Balzac's illegitimate daughter, Marie du Fresnay), in 1836, at Turin¹; and the "pendule en Bouille" also in 1836.

Before his first stay in Russia Balzac owned no more than a handful of paintings: Boulanger's "Léda", the same artist's "Portrait" of himself, painted in 1836 and which Balzac later offered to the Hańskis. Meissonier began another portrait of the novelist in 1840, but it remained unfinished and he used the canvas for his "Homme choisissant son épée"².

What Balzac had lacked in reality, he had made up for in imagination. Long before he owned a gallery of pictures, he imagined himself as an important collector. Léon Gozlan recalls³ that

ce qu'il projetait pour les Jardies était infini. Sur le mur nu de chaque pièce, il avait écrit lui-même, au courant du charbon, les richesses mobilières dont il prétendait la doter. Pendant plusieurs années, j'ai lu ces mots charbonnés sur la surface patiente du stuc: Ici un revêtement en marbre de Paros... Ici un plafond peint par Eugène Delacroix; Ici une tapisserie d'Aubusson; etc.

Balzac's first purchases, on his return from Russia, were various articles of bric-à-brac, the most famous, or notorious, being the so-called "meubles florentine" bought from Dufour on 20 December 1843 for the sum of 1,400 francs⁴.

Il s'agit du secrétaire et de la commode faits à Florence pour Marie de Médicis, et qui portent ses armes... Cela mérite d'être placé au Louvre. Quels artistes que ces Médicis!

1 A 326, fol. 1, recto. Cf. *infra*, p. 247.

2 Honoré de Balzac, 1799-1850, exposition organisée pour commémorer le centenaire de sa mort, Paris 1950, exhibit no. 539.

3 Balzac en pantoufles, Paris 1865, pp. 31-32.

4 A 343, fol. 9. Cf. A 326, fol. 3, where Balzac inaccurately states that he had paid 1,300 francs for the two articles always prone to exaggerate his ability at finding bargains!

5 Lettres à Madame Hańska II, p. 312; 21 December 1843.

But, no sooner were these precious items in his possession than he was wishing to sell the sideboard—and later, both sideboard and cabinet (plate 30) ¹—at a handsome profit. He never gave up his belief that both pieces were immensely valuable (from 1,400 francs, their value soared to 4,000 ², 20,000 ³, 50,000 ⁴, even 60,000 ⁵ francs), but try as he might, could not dispose of them either to Louis-Philippe ² or to queen Marie-Amélie ⁴ or the Duke of Sutherland ⁵ or the Duke of Devonshire ⁶, Sir Robert Peel ⁷, the Musée de Cluny ⁸, James de Rothschild ⁹ or William II of the Netherlands ¹⁰. (strangely enough, he does not seem to have thought of contacting Lord Hertford ¹¹.) A notice even appeared in Le Messager ¹², and an article by Balzac's friend Gozlan in Le Musée des Familles ¹³. "L'enchère aura lieu entre les souverains, quand on saura ce que c'est" ¹⁴. Yet nothing whatsoever came of these frantic efforts,

1 Ibid., pp. 401-402; 10 March 1844.

2 Ibid., p. 313; 22 December 1843.

3 Ibid., p. 351; 23 January 1844.

4 Ibid., p. 389; 25 February 1844.

5 Ibid., p. 401; 10 March 1844.

6 Ibid., p. 546; 23 December 1844. There does not appear to be any letter from Balzac to the Duke of Devonshire at Chatsworth.

7 Ibid., p. 401; 10 March 1844. There is no letter from Balzac to Peel amongst the Peel Papers at the British Museum. The then Prime Minister of England had, of course, long been noted as a connoisseur. In his conversations with Eckermann of 7 and 14 April 1829, Goethe remarks that Peel had just paid £4,000 for a Claude (at Lord Gwydyr's sale).

8 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 147; 16 January 1846.

9 Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 524; 21 October 1844.

10 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, pp. 127, 146; 1 and 16 January 1846.

11 The Goncourts relate (Journal. Mémoires de la vie littéraire, vol. IV, Paris 1956, pp. 774-775) that Balzac positively refused to visit Hertford's father, the third Marquis.

12 "Faits Divers", Le Messager, 11 February 1844. This extremely rare periodical can be consulted at the Bibliothèque Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.

13 L. Gozlan; "Secrétaire de Henri IV et commode de Marie de Médicis. Meubles florentins du seizième siècle, retrouvés par M. de Balzac", Musée des Familles, August 1846, pp. 321-324.

14 Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 525; 21 October 1844. In this letter, Balzac optimistically hopes that Gozlan's article will have appeared in Le Musée des Familles by the end of 1844.

and the Florentine furniture is recorded in the Inventory of 1848 and was still at the Avenue Fortunée on the day of his death. Meanwhile, the little house at Passy became full to overflowing.

Before very long, there was a further extension of his collecting activities. Balzac's picture gallery came into being. But the purchase of pictures only dates from 1846; until then, as we have seen, Balzac had merely owned one or two, given or sold him by Louis Boulanger in the 1830s.

There were several reasons for Balzac's frenetic outburst of picture-buying. Firstly, his evident delight in pictures and picture galleries for their own sake. As far as we know, he never failed to visit any public gallery near which he passed during his European journeys. Admittedly, it is possible to doubt his acumen as a collector, and even to laugh outright at his gullibility ("je fouille tous les coins de Paris. De jour en jour, les belles choses doublent de prix"¹; "tout vient à Paris, tout y est meilleur marché qu'ailleurs"²; "après le plaisir d'acheter des tableaux, vient celui de les brocarter, tu sais"³). But the fact remains that he was never for one moment a Vervelle. He enjoyed pictures even when he overrated their provenance.

Secondly, of course, his pictures—like his furniture—were thought of as gilt-edged securities. He was far from setting out to be a dealer in pictures, buying and selling them regularly; but the hoped-for capital appreciation was always at the back of his mind.

The most immediate reason for his sudden spate of picture-buying in 1846 was, however, that he was hoping to furnish a house for himself and Madame Hańska, a town house that befitted its country counterpart, Wierzchownia. The pictures were also something in the nature of status symbols. Madame Hańska, after all, was—Balzac believed—a great-niece

1 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, p. 166; 9 February 1846.

2 Ibid., p. 178; 18 February 1846.

3 Ibid., p. 290; 23 July 1846.

of Maria Leszczyńska¹, and the house to which he welcomed his bride must have an air of royal splendour. Thus, one essential difference between the furniture and the pictures is that the latter were bought with a particular view to furnishing an aristocratic home.

Although his craze for buying pictures dates only from March 1846, there is, as it were, an advance warning of this dominant preoccupation of Balzac's latter years during his tour of Holland—with Madame Hańska and the Mniszechs—in August 1845. At The Hague he obtained a "tableau de bois représentant une vendange"², later bequeathed to Alexandre de Berny³. Fittingly, however, the picture-collecting proper was inaugurated in Rome. Very little has come down to us about this "chasse aux chefs-d'oeuvre"⁴, but we may imagine him hurriedly yet diligently visiting the numerous art shops in the Via dei Coronari and the neighbourhood of the Piazza Navona⁵. The booty consisted⁶ of the famous "Chevalier de Malte en prières", by Sebastiano del Piombo, a Bronzino and a Mierevelt, all of which were despatched by sea from Civitavecchia whilst Balzac returned to Paris overland.

Besides his pictures, Balzac hung a dozen or so engravings⁷ at his new home in the Avenue Fortunée, most of which had been with him for many years. One, of Léopold Robert's sensational "Halte des Moissonneurs

1 This supposition is erroneous. Either Madame Hańska misinformed Balzac about her family connexions, or Balzac jumped to the conclusion that, since both Maria Leszczyńska and Ewelina Hańska were Poles, and aristocrats, they must have been near relations. For this information I am grateful to Mr S. Konarski, Mr B. Klec-Pilewski and Madame Hańska's own great-great-nephew, Dr A.S. Ciechanowiecki.

2 A 326, fol. 3. Cf. H.-J. Bouteron: "Balzac en Hollande", La Presse, 22 November 1927.

3 A 352, fol. 46, verso. Cf. A. Chancerel and R. Pierrot: "Justin Glandaz, exécuteur testamentaire de Balzac", Année Balzacienne, 1962, p. 111.

4 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 555.

5 For a detailed account of Balzac's purchases, cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, pp. 119-126, where the question of the identity of Balzac's collection with the "musée Pons" is discussed at length and it is argued that there is less similarity between them than had been thought.

6 Correspondance V, p. 112; Balzac to Laure Surville, 21 April 1846.

7 J. Adhémar: "Balzac et les images", Arts, 26 January 1951.

dens les Marais Pontins" ¹, a painting which Balzac may have seen at the Salon of 1831 ², was presumably bought about that time. It was a proof before all letters. Another engraving, of Raphael's "Vision of Ezekiel" ³, was perhaps obtained as early as 1819; after all, he had most probably seen the original when still at school. A third engraving was of Dürer's "Hieronymus Holzschuher" ³.

In buying oil-paintings, Balzac was assisted by various advisers. ("Malheureusement je ne me connais pas en tableaux", he confided to the art critic Théophile Thore in a letter dated 13 December 1846 ⁴.) During the early months of 1846, until July ⁵, Paul Chenavard, the philosophical painter whom he had recently satirized in Les Comédiens sans le savoir ⁶, was his guide. Then followed the picture-restorer Moret, "élève de David, de Gros, de Girodet" ⁵, who not only helped to turn Balzac's attention towards the art of the previous century, but also sold him a Greuze portrait: "c'est la tête de madame Greuze" ⁷; "tant que vous n'aurez pas vu cela, vous ne saurez pas ce que c'est que l'école française" ⁸. A collection so laboriously accumulated, and at such cost, must never be dispersed. When it was finally complete, Balzac declared his intention of perhaps bequeathing it to the Louvre ⁹:

quelle destinée ont les tableaux, de toujours voyager! aller, venir. Enfin, de la rue Fortunée ils n'iront plus nulle part, car ils n'en sortiront que pour rester à Paris, au Musée, si nul de nous n'a d'héritiers directs.

1 A 329, fol. 9, verso. Cf. Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 147; 17 January 1846.

2 It had made its first public appearance in Rome during the autumn of 1830 (Stendhal to Adolphe de Maréste, 19 July 1831; Correspondance II, p. 325). Cf. D. Berthoud: Vie du peintre Léonard Robert, Neuchâtel 1934, pp. 225, 227-229. An engraving of the "Moissonneurs" by Paolo Mercuri was shown at the Salon of 1834 (no. 2,222).

3 A 329, fol. 9, recto.

4 Correspondance V, p. 169.

5 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 284; 19 July 1846.

6 Pl. VII, pp. 45-47.

7 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 292; 25 July 1846.

8 Ibid., p. 314; Balzac to Georges Wnischech, 29 July 1846.

9 Correspondance V, p. 676; Balzac to Sophie and Valentine Surville, 29 November 1849.

Moret's influence went into decline, and around 1847 his place was filled by Jules Hédouin and Edmond Buisson, who assisted Balzac with the decoration of the cupolas at the Chartreuse Beaujon and instilled into him an even greater respect than he had formerly had for the "merveilles de la France-Poppadour"¹, and especially for Watteau and Greuze. (In Paris, at the same time, Lord Hertford was collecting neglected masterpieces of the eighteenth century, later to form the nucleus of the Wallace Collection². But in this neither he nor Balzac were in advance of their time. The reawakening of interest in Watteau's "Fêtes galantes" and Boucher's shepherdesses dates from at least 1830³.)

Champfleury may also have exerted some influence upon Balzac's taste at this time, in teaching him about porcelain and pâte tendre, all of which information was fed into the first half of Le Cousin Pons⁴. But such influences came too late to have much repercussion on the novels of the Comédie Humaine, for Balzac's literary career had virtually come to a close, though he was destined to linger on, in gradually deteriorating health, for three more years.

From the point of view of Balzac the man, however, as against Balzac the artist, there was one final and most important aspect of his collecting activities. In September 1848 he set out from Paris on a second and last visit to Madame Hańska's home at Wierzchownia, in the Ukraine, where she lived on a quasi-regal scale with 300 servants⁵ and 40,000 serfs⁶, and where he remained until 24 April 1850⁷, only leaving with Madame Hańska as his bride.

1 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 532. It is not known whether Hédouin and Buisson influenced the writing of Le Cousin Pons as such, but certainly—even in Part I of the novel, probably written in 1846—Balzac was coming round to a truer appreciation of the art of the eighteenth century. In any case, Moret exerted a very powerful influence upon the novel.

2 Cf. F.C. Davis: Victorian Patrons of the Arts. Twelve Famous Collections and their Owners, London 1963, pp. 40-51.

3 Cf. S.O. Simches: Le Romantisme et le goût esthétique du XVIIIe siècle, Paris 1964, pp. 2-4.

4 Cf. especially Pl. VI, pp. 552-553. A. Bertin, owner of Le Journal des Débats from 1841, may also have contributed to Balzac's enthusiasm for antique porcelain (Lettres à Madame Hańska III, pp. 217-218; 17 June 1846).

5 Correspondance V, p. 263; Balzac to Laure Surville, November 1847.

6 Ibid., p. 247; Balzac to Laure Surville, October 1847.

7 J.-J.-M. Pommier: "Ève de Balzac, sa fille, son amant", Année Balzacienne, 1966, p. 248.

During this eighteen months' sojourn at Wierzchownia, virtually our only information about Balzac's life is to be gleaned from his letters to his mother, his sister Laure Surville and Laure's daughters, Sophie and Valentine. In the letters of 21 October 1849¹ and 29 November following², he informed his correspondents that Georges Mniszech, Madame Mańska's son-in-law, had just brought to Wierzchownia twenty or so pictures from his younger brother Andrzej's estate of Wiśniowiec, in Volhynia. They had once been in the collection of Georges's great-great-uncle, Stanisław August Poniatowski, and were now intended as a gift to his mother-in-law and Balzac. Amongst them were two or three Canalettos bought by Stanisław from the family of Clement XIII; a Greuze and two Watteaus allegedly painted for Madame Geoffrin, and which she is said to have sold (!) to the King during her visit to Poland in the summer of 1766—though there is no trace of either a sale or a gift in any of the works³ dealing with Stanisław and his "chère Maman"⁴; a Cranach, a Van Dyck, two van Huysums⁵ and three Rotaris.

1 Correspondance V, pp. 628-632; Balzac to Laure Surville.

2 Ibid., pp. 670-676; Balzac to Sophie and Valentine Surville.

3 C. de Mouy: Correspondance inédite du roi Stanislas-AUGUSTE Poniatowski et de Mme Geoffrin (1764-1777), Paris 1875. S.A. Poniatowski: Mémoires, 2 vols., Leningrad 1914-1924. T. Mańkowski: Galeria Stanisława AUGUSTA, Lwów 1932. L. Réau: Catalogue des oeuvres d'art français de la collection du roi de Pologne Stanislas-AUGUSTA, Paris 1932. J.-P. Pelewski: Stanislas-AUGUSTE Poniatowski, dernier roi de Pologne, Paris 1946. J.-M. Fabre: Stanislas-AUGUSTE Poniatowski et l'Europe des lumières, Paris 1952. J. Aldis: Madame Geoffrin, her Salon and her Times, 1750-1777, London 1905.

4 C. de Mouy: op.cit.; Stanisław to Madame Geoffrin, passim.

5 These are presumably the van Huysums referred to by Stanisław in his letter to Madame Geoffrin dated 7 January 1767 (C. de Mouy: op.cit., p. 264). They may be nos. 6 and 7 in the Inventory of his collection (T. Mańkowski: op.cit.)—or else nos. 1 and 2, bought by Count Mniszech on 28 April 1819.

Until the appearance of M. Jean Pommier's article ¹ on a number of letters written in 1850 by Georges's wife, Anna Mnischech, to her mother and stepfather, it had always been assumed that these pictures remained at Wierzchownia when Balzac and his wife left the Ukraine for Paris. But M. Pommier has conclusively shown that they followed on after the newly-married couple ². Delayed at the very many customs barriers through which they would have had to pass in Germany, they did not reach the Chartreuse Beaujon before 20 May 1850 ³, by which time Balzac, a very sick man for the last eighteen months of his life, was already dying. There is even some doubt whether he ever saw these magnificent works of art, for we know from his last letter to Théophile Gautier dated 20 June 1850 ⁴ that his eyesight had completely gone: "je ne puis ni lire, ni écrire".

Magnificent the pictures from Wisniowiec undoubtedly were—their provenance guaranteed that. Stanisław's collection of no less than 2,289 pictures (not to mention innumerable objects of art) was—with the gallery of Catherine the Great in St Petersburg, the collection of Louis XV at Versailles and the Louvre, and the collections of Maria Theresa and the Prince of Liechtenstein, both in Vienna—one of the most splendid in the world. Stanisław was a patron as well as a collector—and the younger Canaletto (Bernardo Bellotto) was his protégé. We may be reasonably certain that his seven Canalettos ⁵ were by either the uncle or the nephew! ⁶ And it was three of these vedute which, in the summer of 1850, trundled their way from the Ukraine to Balzac's home in Paris.

1 J.-J.-M. Pommier: art.cit.

2 Ibid., pp. 259-260.

3 E. Pierrot: "Vers la rue Fortunée", Année Balzacienne, 1961, p. 67. J.-J.-M. Pommier: art.cit., p. 253.

4 Correspondance V, p. 784. Cf. ibid., p. 617; Balzac to his mother, 14 September 1849.

5 T. Mańkowski: op.cit., nos. 495, 496, 1,651, 1,652, 1,653, 1,754, 1,755.

6 J.-J.-M. Pommier, however, suggests that even these pictures were more dubiously received in Paris than they had been at Wierzchownia (art.cit., p. 260).

It is ironical, and poignant enough to have featured in any of the novels, that, when at long last valuable and fine pictures arrived at the Avenue Fortunée from a royal collection, Balzac was too ill to admire them on his own walls. (He had, of course, already seen them at Wierzchownia.)

What has become of the Canalettos, Van Dycks, Watteaus and Rotaris? Only a fifth of Stanisław's pictures have been traced. One of the royal Canalettos, "The Bacino di S. Marco: Looking North", which was formerly in the collection of Anna's sister-in-law, Countess Andrzej Mniszech, now belongs to the National Trust ¹. Countess Mniszech's sale catalogue does not list this particular picture, however, though it does name three Bellettos ². Could Balzac have owned this Canaletto, which somehow escaped the auction-room in 1910? and could his other "Canaletto" (or "Canalettos") be one (or two) of the three Bellettos auctioned in 1910?

The catalogue of Madame Hańska's own sale at Beauregard, Seine-et-Oise, held on 5 March 1882, just over a month before her death, mentions a painting "attribué à Canaletti": "Une Place animée de nombreux personnages" ³. This may be one of the Canalettos from Wisniowiec. No Canalettos feature in her other sale, held in Paris shortly after her death ⁴. She may, of course, have already sold the Wisniowiec Canalettos during her long widowhood; Anna may not have entered these particular works in the sales; there is even doubt whether the twenty paintings from Wisniowiec were given, or loaned, to Balzac and Madame Hańska ⁵.

1 W.G. Constable: Canaletto. Giovanni Antonio Canal. 1697-1768, Oxford 1962, vol. II, p. 243. It was subsequently purchased by Lord Bearsted, and hangs at Upton House, Banbury.

2 Catalogue des tableaux anciens, portraits du XVIIIe siècle, pastels... objets d'art et d'ameublement... de Madame la Comtesse André Mniszech (9-10 May 1910), nos. 19, 20, 21. Likewise, Balzac's three (or four) Rotaris may include the two in this collection (catalogue nos. 84, 85).

3 Catalogue des objets d'art... appartenant à Mme Veuve Honoré de Balzac au château de Beauregard (5 March 1882), no. 126.

4 Catalogue de la vente de Madame Veuve Honoré de Balzac (17-22 April 1882).

5 A. Chancerel and E. Pierrot: art.cit., p. 104: "il y a beaucoup d'objets d'art qui nous ont été confiés comme dépôt par nos enfants, de précieux émaux et autres objets de curiosité qui sont à ma fille, et une collection de tableaux appartenant à son mari et qu'il nous a confiés pour la faire restaurer à Paris" (Madame Hańska to Glandaz, 11 September 1850).

The views of Venice, by Bellotto, auctioned at Countess Mniszech's sale in 1910, may well include the three (or two?) "Canalettos" that once hung at the Chartreuse Beaujon, for even "The Bacino di S. Marco" may never have been in Balzac's collection. On the other hand, the "vues de Venise", pendants by Bellotto, auctioned at her son's sale eight years previously¹, may fifty-three years earlier have been given, or loaned, to Balzac. Like his Van Dycks, van Huysums, Bronzino, Cranach, Greuze, etc., few of which are traceable in Madame Hańska's sale catalogues, Balzac's views of Venice have presumably found their way into private hands². The question of their whereabouts may, perhaps, be allowed to remain in abeyance, for— intriguing though it is—it has no connexion with Balzac's own interest in the visual arts, when writing the Comédie Humaine, or the uses to which he put his knowledge of painting, sculpture, architecture and engraving.

1 Catalogue de tableaux anciens, portraits... objets d'art et d'ameublement... du Comte Léon Mniszech (9-11 April 1902), no. 17.

2 Apparently, three of Stanisław's Canalettos are in Italy. They may be the three Bellottes auctioned at Countess Andrzej Mniszech's sale in 1910, and they may even have hung at the Chartreuse Beaujon. For this information about the supposed Canalettos I am grateful to Prince Kazimierz Poniatowski, a friend of whose saw them in a private collection in Italy thirty or so years ago.

III: CONTEMPORARY FRENCH PAINTING

Inevitably, Balzac's acquaintance with French painting was larger and much more complex than with other schools of painting—because it was more direct. He knew some, though not all, of the painters of the Romantic generation (Delacroix, Boulanger, Eugène Delacroix), and he was familiar, even as a young man, with the works of the new school which irrupted with such éclat at the Salons of 1819, 1822 and 1824. Nor were the older models of Gérard, Guérin and David unfamiliar to him. His, in fact, was a literary generation deeply immersed in the problems and triumphs of the young school of painters and keenly aware of their immediate forerunners. Balzac saw the young painters' works at the biennial Salons, the Luxembourg, in engravings and perhaps also in their own studios.

Girodet, who with some reason M. Adam¹ claims is the model of the earliest artist to appear in the Comédie Humaine, Théodore de Sommervieux, is, of all the painters who were Balzac's contemporaries, the one whom he most admired and who exercised the deepest influence on him. A great many characters and stereotypes in the early novels (both the apprentice works and the early volumes of the Comédie Humaine) are borrowed from him. Thus, Montauran (in Les Chouans²) springs from a Girodet lithograph³; the dying Wann-Chlore is modelled on Atala; and a number of heroines are inspired by "Les Guerriers français reçus par Ossian".

1 A. Adam: "Balzac au travail", Revue de Paris, July 1961, p. 78.

2 Pl. VII, pp. 794-795.

3 J. Adhémar: "Balzac et les images", Arts, 26 January 1951.

For Balzac, Girodet's greatest creation is his "Sleep of Endymion" (plate 12), triumphantly exhibited at the Salons of 1793¹ and 1814². "Endymion" is closely followed in his esteem by "Atala au Tombeau"³; so far as he is concerned, "The Seasons"—including the "Scène du Déluge" (plate 13)⁴—are rather less important. Though all these works, with the exception of "Endymion"² and the Pagnest replica of "Atala"³, were exhibited long before Balzac arrived in Paris, they nevertheless remained common currency owing to the large number of engravings which were circulating of them; Balzac, like every other cultivated person of his time, must have seen these engravings. He actually owned a book of reproductions of Girodet's "Amours des Dieux" (1827)⁵. In any case, "Endymion" and "Atala", the works which had the greatest appeal for him, were both on display at the Luxembourg⁶. (They are now at the Louvre⁷.) Balzac's passion for Girodet dates from at least 1819.

Girodet even appears once personally in the Comédie Humaine, and was to have appeared twice except that Vien's name was substituted for his in the later editions of Sarrasine. In one of the earliest of Balzac's stories, La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote, a cautionary tale centring on the artist, Sommervieux seeks Girodet's advice as to which pictures he should show in the forthcoming Salon (the Salon of 1808)⁸. "que mettras-tu au

1 1793 Salon, no. 296.

2 1814 Salon, no. 438.

3 1808 Salon, no. 258. A replica, begun by Pagnest and completed by Girodet, was exhibited at the 1814 Salon (no. 437), where Balzac could well have seen it.

4 1806 Salon, no. 223. This picture was exhibited again at the 1814 Salon (no. 436), and later became part of the Luxembourg gallery.

5 J. Adhémar: "Balzac et la peinture", Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-June 1953, p. 151.

6 Luxembourg 1818, nos. 29, 30.

7 G. Brière: Catalogue des peintures. Musée national du Louvre, vol. I, Paris 1924, nos. 361, 362.

8 Pl. I, pp. 31-32. The Salon of 1808 was not fictitious, as are the Salons of 1823 (Pl. III, pp. 903, 1,099) and 1829 (Pl. VI, p. 120).

Salon?" asks Girodet, to which comes the reply:

... un petit tableau de chevalet et un portrait. Après une lente et avide contemplation des deux chefs-d'oeuvre, Girodet saute au cou de son camarade et l'embrasse... --Tu es amoureux? dit Girodet... Je ne te conseille pas de mettre de telles oeuvres au Salon, ajouta le grand peintre. Vois-tu, ces deux tableaux n'y seraient pas sentis. Ces couleurs vraies, ce travail prodigieux, ne peuvent pas encore être appréciés, le public n'est plus accoutumé à tant de profondeur. Les tableaux que nous peignons, mon bon ami, sont des écrans, des paravents...

Much as Girodet's technical proficiency can still be admired today, his deliberate cultivation of sentiment may seem to us mawkish; yet his sentimentality did not seem so to Balzac. Girodet, he appears to be implying in the above passage, was a much deeper artist than he looked. (Entre Savants calls him one of the "illustrations de cette époque" ¹.) But he had no alternative but conform to the prevailing canons of taste. Balzac suggests that the neo-Classical artist who lived long enough after his retirement in 1812 ² to witness the advent of Géricault and Delacroix was fundamentally in sympathy with them, recognizing the jejuneness of his own followers. The chronology of the Comédie Humaine is often subtly suggestive: did Balzac place the above conversation in 1808 so as to foreshadow, and explain, Girodet's retirement? Girodet's comments on contemporary art ring hollow: he gave up painting on coming into a fortune; even more so than Gros, he disliked the excesses of Romanticism. His conversation with Sommervieux represents Balzac's attempt to make Romanticism and neo-Classicism compatible.

In Sarrasine Cardinal Cicognara, who is in love with the hermaphrodite Zambinella, has Sarrasine's own statue of the epicene sculpted in marble. Thirty-three years later Vien is commissioned to paint a portrait of Zambinella, basing it on the marble statue. This painting, says Balzac ³,

1 Pl. X, p. 1,116.

2 Girodet died in 1824.

3 Pl. VI, p. 110.

serves as an inspiration to Girodet when he is creating his own "Endymion". But, in the serialization and first published edition of Sarrasine¹, Girodet—not Vien—had actually copied the statue of Zambinella. Thus, the androgynous nature of Girodet's "Endymion" is clearly indicated. Balzac was aware of, and perhaps even troubled by, its disconcerting fluctuations of sexuality.

That "Endymion" comes to Balzac's mind as he is describing Lucien de Rubempré is, therefore, scarcely surprising. Indeed, "Endymion" no doubt inspires Balzac's portrait, at least partially. Lucien, too, is sexually ambivalent: amant de coeur of the high-class prostitute Coralie, but the passive object of Vautrin's affections. (Lucien differs from Eugène de Rastignac² precisely in his ambivalent sexuality: Eugène is also loved by the escaped convict, but plays on Vautrin's weakness, whereas Lucien, in his weakness, is the plaything of Vautrin. The plan of life finally adopted by Eugène (that of lutte³) will involve the cooperation of women, not men.) "Monsieur est gentil comme une figure de Girodet"⁴, Florine says of Lucien. Girodet's art was evidently appreciated by the courtesans, and the reason for this fact is equally evident. Though we are not told in so many words that Florine, Coralie, Cydalise, Suzanne du Val-Moble, Josépha Mirah and their companions in the demi-monde of high-class prostitution owned paintings, engravings or lithographs by Girodet, Florine—as has been noted from her reference to Lucien—is aware of Girodet's art; and so is the procuress Madame Nourrisson⁵, for whom "les Raphaël étaient tout noirs" whereas the picture given by Montès to Carabine, though supposedly a Raphael, does not look like one at all: "c'est gentil comme un Girodet". No distinction is made by these women between either the commercial or the artistic values of Raphaels and Girodets: their impact upon the emotions is the same. Madame Nourrisson and Florine do not differentiate

1 Revue de Paris, 28 November 1830, p. 251. Romans et Contes philosophiques, Paris 1831, vol. II, pp. 275, 319. Cf. infra, p. 92.

2 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 940, 980, 982.

3 Ibid., p. 1,057.

4 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 710.

5 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 492.

between the maudish and the ethereal; they equate ephesbes with madonnas. The evidence points in one direction: to the courtesans Girodet symbolizes that effeminate weakness in man with which they are in instinctive and sympathetic rapport. Coralie can possess a Girodet, as she can possess Lucien. Montès gives a Girodet to Carabine.

"Endymion" has the same symbolic content in La Vendetta, a novel in which we are concerned not with undercurrents of prostitution but with the outside world. For Ginevra di Piombo, a woman of outstanding courage, energy and self-reliance, the young Corsican colonel Luigi Porta has all the beauty of Girodet's masterpiece. The officer is in hiding in Servin's flat when Ginevra, one of Servin's art students, discovers him asleep in a room adjacent to the studio:

elle quitta l'atelier en emportant gravée dans son souvenir l'image d'une tête d'homme aussi gracieuse que celle de l'Endymion, chef-d'oeuvre de Girodet ¹.

In defiance of both their families Luigi and Ginevra marry, but soon the tragic symbolism of "Endymion" becomes evident. Luigi is unable to withstand the strains of the vendetta between his family and his wife's. Not only does he die, but so do his wife and infant son. By the very fact that they are married, Luigi's and Ginevra's situation is worse than Lucien's, though Coralie too had died and Lucien had sat up over her coffin composing drinking-songs with which to pay for her funeral.

Girodet was not only the author of "Endymion", however; drawing on Chateaubriand, he also painted "The Burial of Atala". And the scene portrayed by Girodet--in which Atala's body is lowered into the grave by Chactas and the hermit ²--is closely imitated by Balzac when he describes the deaths of Wann-Chlore and Horace Landon in an apprentice novel of 1825 ³.

1 Pl. I, p. 875. Cf. A 239, fol. 13. The words "ce chef-d'oeuvre de Girodet" are added to the margin of folio 13.

2 Atala, Paris 1801, pp. 176-178.

3 Wann-Chlore, Paris 1963, vol. IV, pp. 240-244.

The cult of the etiolated virgin, though by no means confined to Girodet (pallor being a feature of Romanticism), is certainly predominant in his art. It even extends, as has been seen, to his portraits of young men. Another early novel, Le Bal de Sceaux, describes Clara de Longueville in terms that recall Wann-Chlore¹:

une jeune personne pâle, et semblable à ces déités écossaises que Girodet a placées dans son immense composition des guerriers français reçus par Ossian.

And, in La Bourse², Adélaïde de Rouville, the future wife of the artist Hippolyte Schinner, "possédait aussi cette poésie que Girodet donnait à ses figures fantastiques". In both these instances, Balzac is alluding to "Les Guerriers français reçus par Ossian", a mural commissioned by Napoleon, who fervently admired Fingal and Temora. Balzac could scarcely have seen the mural itself, which was at the Château de Malmaison, and although a study for the Malmaison ceiling now hangs in the Louvre³, it belonged in Balzac's youth to Prince Eugène de Beauharnais. Hyacinthe Aubry-Lecomte's celebrated engravings, mostly executed in the 1820s, were probably the channel of communication. Wann-Chlore, Le Bal de Sceaux, La Vendetta and La Bourse are all early novels. Girodet's (admittedly great) influence is primarily to be found in the novels preceding Eugénie Grandet and Le Père Goriot. Secondly, both Clara and Adélaïde are strangers ("des inconnues") at the time when they are described in terms of "Ossian". Balzac chooses Girodet to convey the poetry of the unfamiliar.

In later novels, Girodet's influence is more tenuous, and where it arises, it is largely with reference to paintings other than "Endymion", "Atala" and "Ossian". Béatrix de Rochefide has "cette abondante

1 Pl. I, p. 99.

2 Ibid., p. 329.

3 G. Brières: op.cit., p. 117, no. 3,094.

chevelure d'ange que le pinceau de Girodet a tant cultivée, et qui ressemble à des flots de lumière" ¹. Like all jilted women,

elle avait imaginé... de se donner l'air vierge, en rappelant, par beaucoup d'étoffes blanches, les filles en a d'Ossian ².

Lucien recalls Endymion—but equally (as we shall see ³) the "Apollo Belvedere" and the "Indian Bacchus". As a general rule, it is the less obviously Romantic paintings—most of them barely remembered today—on which Balzac draws in his later novels, when he himself is moving away from overt Romanticism. Raoul Nathan, in Une Fille d'Ève (1838),

tient habituellement l'une de ses mains dans son gilet ouvert, dans une pose que le portrait de monsieur de Chateaubriand par Girodet a rendue célèbre ⁴.

"Gardez à la main votre monnaie, comme le vieux du "Déluge" de Girodet" (plate 13), Blondet advises Daniel d'Arthez ⁵, as they discuss how best Daniel can win Diane de Cadignan's heart. (A scene in an early apprentice novel ⁶ is also inspired by the "Déluges" of Girodet and Poussin.) In one of the later sections of La Femme de Trente Ans, Hélène d'Aiglemont's sitting-room aboard her husband's pirate vessel, The Othello, contains a small but choice collection of paintings old and new, amongst which "une Vierge de Raphaël luttait de poésie avec une esquisse de Girodet" ⁷. In Las Marana Captain Montefiore, the seducer of Juana Mancini, and whose handsome face was "l'une des plus belles figures italiennes de laquelle jamais femme ait rêveusement dessiné les proportions délicates", "un de ces visages mélancoliques dont les femmes sont presque toujours les dupes", was—Balzac tells us ⁸—"assez semblable au type qui a fourni le jeune Turc mourant à Girodet dans son tableau de "la Révolte du Caire" ⁹". In Le Cousin Pons

1 Pl. II, p. 396. This transposition is already present in the MS of Réatrix (A 6, fol. 42), perhaps in an even more striking form: "et qui ressemble à de la lumière qui ruisselle".

2 Pl. II, p. 542. "Fingal au Milieu de ses Descendants" is implied; it had been engraved by H. Aubry-Loconte.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 231-232, 310-311.

4 Pl. II, p. 87.

5 Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan; Pl. VI, p. 28.

6 Clotilde de Lucignan ou le beau juif, Paris 1962, vol. I, pp. 260-270.

7 Pl. II, p. 822.

8 Pl. IX, p. 794.

9 1810 Salon, no. 369. Balzac may well have seen this painting at the Luxembourg (Luxembourg 1818, no. 28).

Madame de Marville admits to a knowledge of Girodet¹, but then, as Amélie Thirion she had been a pupil at Servin's studio² along with Ginevra di Piombo, and there would have been taught—in the final years of the Empire—to venerate him as the greatest living exponent of his art.

For her, no doubt, as for Florine, Madame Nourrisson, Hélène d'Aiglemont and Balzac himself, Girodet was a latter-day Raphael; but whereas, even in 1844, she has failed to outgrow the tastes and prejudices of 1815, Balzac overcame his infatuation at the same time as he attained his full stature as a novelist. No important collection contains a Girodet (to our knowledge), particularly not Pons's. If the courtesans' collections do, as is probably the case, Balzac forgets to tell us this fact, so rapidly has his mind moved away from Girodet after the early years.

P.-N. Guérin was also one of Balzac's favourite painters in the early days, and, as with Girodet, Balzac was probably introduced to him by Dablin. Balzac may have seen his "Dido" (plate 14)³ and "Clytemnestra" (plate 15)⁴ at the Salon of 1817; and, if not there, then certainly at the Luxembourg⁵. Adélaïde de Rouville⁶ and the baronne du Guénic⁷ both imitate, without realizing it, the meditative pose adopted by Dido's sister, Anna, as Aeneas tells them and Ascanius of the misfortunes that have befallen Troy. Diane de Cadignan's nonchalant attitude, after her first encounter with Daniel d'Arthes, is that of Dido herself⁸. As for Guérin's "Clytemnestre", La Physiologie du Mariage tells us, in its flippant and licentious way, that Balzac knows of only one person in the world who looks dignified even when asleep. It is Agamemnon, "au moment où Clytemnestre, poussée par Égisthe, s'avance pour l'assassiner"⁹. But

1 Pl. VI, p. 581.

2 Pl. I, p. 867.

3 1817 Salon, no. 399. It was engraved in 1828 by François Forster.

4 Ibid., no. 398.

5 Luxembourg 1818, no. 32. Luxembourg 1823, no. 64.

6 La Bourgeoise; Pl. I, p. 343.

7 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 410. Cf. A 6, fol. 57.

8 Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan; Pl. VI, p. 36.

9 Pl. X, p. 755.

it is primarily as the author of "Dido" that Balzac—and, we may imagine, Madame de Marville¹—remembers Guérin. And the sylphlike figures of Madame de Carigliano², Madame Firmiani³, the Princesse de Cadignan in her younger days (as Duchesse de Meufrigneuse⁴), Madame d'Espard⁵—even the Duchesse de Langeais⁶—owe much to the graceful appearance and melancholy postures of Dido and Anna. "Dido", Baudelaire has written⁷, "annonce presque certaines Parisiennes de Balzac". Although, however, Balzac often recalls the gestures and physical attitudes of the queen of Carthage and her sister (but not Aeneas), he never uses the painting to define a psychological attitude—in the way Guérin clarifies Julien Sorel's relationship towards Madame de Rênal and her cousin Madame Derville, and even theirs towards him⁸.

Gros's fame, much more than Guérin's, has persisted into our time. It is as the author of "Bonaparte visitant les Pestiférés de Jaffa"⁹ and "Napoléon sur le champ de bataille d'Eylau"¹⁰ that he is now principally remembered. These works, besides their extrinsic historical interest, display Gros as an efficient colourist; and it is fitting that Joseph Bridau should be one of his pupils¹¹. Another pupil is Schinner¹², with whom Joseph becomes friendly. As Schinner is a few years older than Joseph, the young man studies in two studios, his master's and his friend's: Schinner, "dont l'âge lui permettait une liaison plus étroite, plus intime qu'avec Gros, leur maître"¹³. Gros is nevertheless the primary influence,

1 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 581.

2 La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote; Pl. I, p. 63.

3 Pl. I, p. 1,036.

4 Le Cabinet des Antiques; Pl. IV, p. 383.

5 L'Interdiction; Pl. III, pp. 42-43. Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, pp. 611-612.

6 Pl. V, p. 167.

7 C.-P. Baudelaire: Ouvrages complètes, Paris 1961, p. 962.

8 Le Rouge et le Noir, Dixième XXIV (1), pp. 92-94.

9 1804 Salon, no. 224. G. Brière: op.cit., p. 122, no. 388.

10 1808 Salon, no. 272. G. Brière: op.cit., p. 123, no. 389.

11 La Bourse; Pl. I, p. 353.

12 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 374. This fact is not mentioned in the MS of the novel (A 198, fol. 22), nor in the extant galley-sheets (A 199, fol. 7).

13 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 1,026. Cf. A 198, fol. 149.

and his help is both practical and theoretical. He even, on one occasion, buys artist's materials for the young student ¹. Later, Joseph copies "un beau cheval" ² from a painting by his master. Soon, he is "tout aussi fort que Gros en fait de couleur" ³, and only goes to see Gros to consult him over particular difficulties. At the (fictitious) Salon of 1823 ⁴ Joseph finally challenges the neo-Classical school of David, Delorme and Ingres with his "Venetian Senator", "pris par Gros lui-même pour un Titien" ⁵. Gros—though basically in sympathy with neo-Classicism—continues to protect and support the young iconoclast, obtaining for him the cross of the Legion of Honour at the Salon of 1827 ⁶.

Gros, like Girodet and Guérin, is one of the few painters remembered ⁷ by the Présidente de Marville in her later years (she has forgotten Watteau—or else not heard of him). Balzac too was introduced to art by these painters, plus David and Gérard, with whom Madame de Marville is also familiar.

François Gérard was not only admired by Balzac as a painter, but (as was noted in Chapter II) as a friend. His work was by no means wholly confined to portraits, but it is as a painter of portraits ("Isabey and his Daughter", "Madame de Staël as Corinna" ⁸, etc.) that he has come down to posterity. A fervent neo-Classicalist, he was also the author of such historical and mythological works as "Belisarius" (an imitation of David ⁹), "Cupid and Psyche" ¹⁰ and "Daphnis and Chloe" ¹¹; living in the shadow of Napoleon, he inevitably did his share of modern history painting. Like Gros, Gérard protects, supports and advises Joseph Bridau, helping him to obtain the Legion of Honour ⁶ and getting him the job of painting two copies of a

1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 879. Cf. A 198, fol. 24.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 922. Cf. A 198, fol. 61.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 878. This comment is not present in the MS (A 198, fol. 23), but is present in the galley-sheets of the novel (A 199, fol. 9).

4 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 903. In the MS of the novel, the Salon is dated 1821 (A 198, fol. 23). Cf. Pl. III, p. 1,099.

5 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 903. Cf. A 198, fol. 42.

6 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 1,100. Cf. A 198, fol. 199.

7 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 581.

8 1822 Salon, no. 569. A second version of this painting, also by Gérard, was shown at the Salon of 1824 (no. 746).

9 1785 Salon, no. 104.

10 Luxembourg 1823, no. 53.

11 1824 Salon, no. 751.

portrait of Louis XVIII (the original is by Gérard himself), when he is in dire need of 1,000 francs ¹. He also obtains a lottery office for Madame Bridau in 1823 ².

Of all Gérard's paintings, "Daphnis and Chloe" is the one Balzac best remembers. It is mentioned by name in Farragus ³, where Balzac, describing the Desmarets' household, and penetrating into some of its intimate secrets, speaks of the necessity of being "aussi hardi que l'a été le pinceau de Gérard". "Corinna", the portrait of Madame de Staël, is also a work of which he was aware. He refers to it twice by name. Madame de Staël, in fact, appears in an incidental character in Louis Lambert as the benefactress of the young hero, by whose generosity he is able to attend the Collège de Vendôme. Lambert's arrival at the school serves as the pretext for a lesson on Madame de Staël, who in the boys' eyes takes on semi-divine proportions. "Depuis", says the narrator ⁴,

j'ai vu le tableau de "Corinne", où Gérard l'a représentée et si grande et si belle;

nevertheless, he is disappointed by the picture, so great had been his schoolmaster's praise of this extraordinary woman. The semi-autobiographical reference to "Corinna" implies, I think, that Balzac knew and admired the painting even as a young man: he could well have seen it at the Salon of 1822, or else at the Luxembourg ⁵. The second reference to it occurs at the opposite extremity of his career, in the fragmentary novel La Femme autour ⁶, where Sommervieux's portrait of the future Madame Malvaux is said to have been painted "en rivalité avec la "Corinne" de Gérard". The presence of

1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 879. In the MS of the novel (A 198, fol. 24), it is Gros, however, not Gérard, who gets him this commission. Gérard's official portrait of Louis XVIII was shown at the Salon of 1814 (no. 425).

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 1,099-1,100.

3 Pl. V, p. 60.

4 Pl. X, p. 364.

5 Luxembourg 1823, no. 54.

6 Pl. XI, p. 118.

"Corinna" was continuous throughout Balzac's life; its unique fusion of neo-Classical and Romantic elements inspired both his and Stendhal's¹ admiration; and we may legitimately suspect that Balzac's gallery of women owes something to the visual impact of what is, perhaps, Gérard's most discerning portrait.

We do not know whether Gérard's "Leda", to which Balzac refers in the preface to Illusions Perdus², along with Girodet's "Bacchante", gave rise to any visual images in the novels, but the context of the reference certainly suggests that Balzac was aware of its licentiousness—and even responsive to its appeal.

Two of Gérard's historical paintings, "The Battle of Austerlitz"³ and "Henri IV's Entry into Paris"⁴, are also referred to in the novels and inspire gestures and appearances. Victor d'Aiglemont recalls⁵ General Rapp in the picture of "Austerlitz"⁶ and M. Miron the merchant provost in the picture of Henri IV⁷. Indeed, the actual presence of Rapp in the opening pages of La Vendetta⁸ may be due to his dominance in the composition of "Austerlitz"—just as the story of Chabert may have been inspired by Gros's "Eylau" painting⁹. Who can tell? In the large but not always clearly defined territory of this thesis, some of the greatest debts may have been unacknowledged—because of their greatness.

Further references are to Gérard the friend and host, rather than the painter. One of the most exalted figures of his age¹⁰, he held open house,

1 Mélanges d'art... Paris 1932, pp. 30-34. In his "Salon de 1824" Stendhal is referring to a replica of the original "Corinne" (1824 Salon, no. 746).

2 Pl. XI, p. 337.

3 1808 Salon, no. 239.

4 1817 Salon, no. 372.

5 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 681.

6 The austere Republican Claude-Joseph Fillereault decorates his hall with an engraving of Gérard's "Battle of Austerlitz" (Pl. V, p. 405; cf. infra, p. 294).

7 Aventures administratives d'une idée heureuse; Pl. X, p. 1,167.

8 Pl. I, p. 861.

9 O. Bonard: op.cit., pp. 53-54. Cf. supra, p. 15.

10 Entre Savants; Pl. X, p. 1,116.

Balzac reminds the Contessa Sanseverino ¹, for "les illustrations européennes de ce quart de siècle". And not only for the leading intellects of Europe: between 1816 and 1822, Madame de Saint-Leu was a frequent guest at his table ². Félicité des Touches, the George Sand of the Comédie Humaine, holds a salon similar to his, "où l'aristocratie se mêlait aux gens illustres, où vint l'élite des Parisiennes" ³.

Jacques-Louis David, Gros's, Girodet's and Gérard's master, led the neo-Classical school. Even as a young man, Balzac must have been aware of his "Oath of the Horatii" ⁴, the manifesto of the new school, and of his "Distribution des Aigles au Champ-de-Mars" ⁵ and "Coronation of Napoleon" ⁶. With his three pupils and Guérin, David made up the small galaxy of artists who principally recorded the Imperial saga. David's austerity and restraint were less congenial to Balzac than the latent, if involuntary, romanticism of his disciples. It is doubtful whether the Comédie Humaine has assimilated much from this source. Sommervieux's hair, with locks flowing down on to his shoulders "à la Caracalla", was in a style

mise à la mode autant par l'école de David que par cet engouement pour les formes grecques et romaines qui marqua les premières années de ce siècle ⁷.

1 Dedication of Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 864.

2 Entre Savants; Pl. X, p. 1,118.

3 Luxembourg Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 378.

4 Luxembourg 1818, no. 18. Painted in 1785, it was shown at the Salons of 1785 and 1791 (nos. 103 and 134).

5 1810 Salon, no. 188.

6 1808 Salon, no. 144. Subsequently, it was hung in the Guard Room of the Tuileries.

7 La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote; Pl. I, p. 19.

But the proposition can be reversed: Balzac's debt to Classicism in general is probably as great as his debt to David in particular ¹. How many Roman senators or Alban patricians are featured in the Comédie Humaine? In Balzac's portrait of Napoleon ², can David's influence be distinguished from that of Gros or Gérard or many other artists? (Balzac may even have seen Napoleon in the flesh.) Certain expressions, features and settings, however, owe something to David. Manuel de Léganès, in El Verdugo ³, has that Roman gravity with which David imprinted his portraits of children in "The Lictors bringing home to Brutus the Bodies of his Sons" ⁴ or "The Sabine Women" (plate 3) ⁵. The young children of Hélène d'Aiglemont and the Capitaine Parisien

ressembloient à ces petits Romains curieux de guerre et de sang que David a peints dans son tableau de "Brutus" .

In both these references to "Brutus", as Miss Scott has rightly observed ⁷, Balzac is guilty of a curious lapse of memory. There are only two children in David's painting--Brutus's grief-stricken daughters, fainting and shielding their eyes as the corpses of Titus and Tiberius are brought into the house. Nor is it likely that Balzac was confusing David's picture with one by Lethière, "Brutus condamnant ses fils à mort" (plate 16) ⁸, a painting originally housed in the Luxembourg ⁹. There are no children in Lethière's painting, or at least certainly not in the foreground. Nevertheless, the lapse of memory is probably due to some confusion of this kind.

1 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 528. Cf. Pl. I, pp. 966-967.

2 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, pp. 623-624.

3 Pl. IX, p. 872.

4 Luxembourg 1818, no. 17. This picture was first shown at the Salon of 1789 (no. 88).

5 Luxembourg 1823, no. 31.

6 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 822.

7 Op. cit., p. 171.

8 1812 Salon, no. 583.

9 Luxembourg 1823, no. 87. This picture, now in the reserve collection of the Louvre, was formerly on display (F. Villot: Notice des tableaux... du Musée impérial du Louvre, vol. III, Paris 1855, no. 321). It was greatly admired by Hebbel (Gedichte und Tagebücher, Hamburg 1963, p. 616).

Tonsard's mother, who at the age of seventy-eight blinds a gamekeeper by stuffing live coals into his eyes and slits the throat of the head gamekeeper's wolfhound Prince, reminds Balzac of

un affreux parchemin noir doué de mouvement, et dont le pareil ne se voit que dans le tableau des "Sabines" de David¹.

She is a direct reminiscence of the old woman kneeling midway between the hostile forces of Romulus and Tatius. Balzac's memories of this picture and of the two "Brutuses" seem to have been derived from the Luxembourg.

Décor, too, are inspired by David, as Balzac himself admits in Illusions Perdus². Chaboisseau, a millionaire banker, "aimait le style grec...

Drapé par une étoffe teinte en pourpre et disposée à la grecque le long de la muraille comme le fond d'un tableau de David, le lit, d'une forme très pure, datait du temps de l'Empire où tout se fabriquait dans ce goût.

Here, the bestowal of an Empire-style bed on Chaboisseau has led Balzac to imagine a décor reminiscent of "Les Amours de Paris et d'Hélène"³ or "Sappho et Phaon".

There are also what might be termed incidental references to David, as to most of the painters with whom Balzac was familiar. Balzac loves asides. "Payrade avait formé Corentin, comme Vien forma David", we read in Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes⁴; "mais l'élève surpassa promptement le maître". The notion of Corentin's artistry in detection is succinctly conveyed. In another aside Léon de Lora, the best and most famous landscape artist of his (fictional) generation, criticizes "l'école de David" for the lifelessness of its portrayal of hands⁵, a remark which is more applicable to Abel de Pujol or Léopold Robert than to David himself.

1 Les Payennes Pl. VIII, p. 67.

2 Pl. IV, p. 835.

3 Luxembourg 1823, no. 34. Cf. infra, p. 275.

4 Pl. V, p. 755.

5 Un Début dans la Vie; Pl. I, p. 656.

All in all, David symbolizes a generation and a school of painting; Balzac's knowledge of his work is never very deep—and even sometimes inaccurate.

Apart from the neo-Classical pleiad of David, Gérard, Girodet, Gros and Guérin, two other painters should be mentioned before we go on to consider the new school, of which Joseph Bridau was the leader in the fictive world of the Comédie Humaine, and Delacroix in real life.

Prud'hon, a portraitist and illustrator bridging the gap between eighteenth-century elegance and nineteenth-century Romanticism¹, was the only serious rival of the "école de David"—and therefore disliked by them. As with Gérard, Balzac refers to him largely in the early novels but with an isolated reference to him in the much later La Femme auteur². Ginevra di Piombo is copying one of his pictures during her art lesson³. Adélaïde de Bouville's face is "fin et délicat"⁴ like the faces painted by Prud'hon and his followers (one thinks immediately of Prud'hon's small oval portrait of "Madame Jarre"⁵, or of his much more celebrated canvas of the Empress Joséphine). An Englishwoman at Taillefer's banquet "ressemblait... à un remords fuyant le crime"⁶, a somewhat heavily humorous allusion to "La Justice et la Vengeance divine poursuivant le Crime"⁷. Achille de Melvaux has hung a Prud'hon in the antechamber to his drawing-room². Thus, Balzac records the vogue of an artist who was both drawing-master and Court painter to the Empresses Joséphine and Marie-Louise, and who appears to have been marginally returning into fashion in the late 1840s. Most of the comparisons between Prud'hon's portraits and Balzac's occur, however, in novels whose action dates from the time when Prud'hon was first in vogue.

1 Cf. J. Guiffrey: L'Œuvre de Pierre-Paul Prud'hon, Paris 1924.

2 Pl. XI, p. 108.

3 La Vendetta Pl. I, p. 867.

4 La Bourgeoise Pl. I, p. 329.

5 1822 Salon, no. 1,048. This work was deeply admired by Théophile Gautier.

6 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 64.

7 1808 Salon, no. 484.

Decamps would seem to be rather more important as an influence, but a later influence than the neo-Classical artists and Prud'hon, for—being more or less a contemporary of Balzac—he did not begin to exhibit at the Salons until 1827¹. He is remarkable for the warmth of his colouring, the naturalness and spontaneity of his figures, and the general Orientalism of his inspiration. In all these respects he bears some resemblance to Delacroix, although lacking the latter's intellectual power. Balzac, who admired Delacroix's "Femmes d'Alger", also came to admire Decamps², but had too high a regard for the flamboyancy of his ochres and vermilions. Admittedly, his exaggerated estimate of Decamps's ability is a mistake common to many in his generation, including Gautier³ and even Delacroix himself⁴. But the inevitable question arises: did Balzac completely seize the essential genius of Delacroix, when he rated Decamps so highly? or did he, to a very large extent, admire the subject-matter of Decamps's and Delacroix's paintings, rather than their expression and technique?

There can be no doubt that Balzac admires, and even envies, Decamps to an extraordinary degree. How can he describe the Chevalier d'Espard,

un homme droit, maigre et grand, vêtu de noir, à longs cheveux noirs, qui resta debout sans mot dire,

1 1827 Salon, nos. 279, 280. Decamps was born in 1803.

2 Decamps is one of the "men of talent" to whom Balzac refers in the opening pages of Le Cousin Pons (Pl. VI, p. 529).

3 "John Martynn", La Presse, 31 January 1837. He particularly admired "The Defeat of the Cimbri", shown at the Salon of 1834 (no. 469).

4 C.-P. Baudelaire: op.cit., p. 1,136.

without having the "puissance magnétiquement communicative" of Decamps's pencil? ¹ For Balzac does not merely admire the paintings, the "Joseph", the "Torture Scene", the "Turkish Café" and "Children playing by a Fountain", which, in Pierre Grassou ², he singles out for favourable comment amongst the 2,000 or so pictures in the Salon of 1839 ³. He admires the pencil sketches and drawings, such as the ones in Florine's possession ⁴, equally—if not more so. In L'Interdiction ¹ he pays a remarkable tribute to Decamps's evocative powers. A stone becomes, in his hands, as imbued with life as a human being. And to his pictures he can add the mysteriously terrifying quality of the witch's broomstick, the sabbath and the Brocken. (Balzac speaks of "le célèbre balai auquel Decamps a donné le pouvoir accusateur de révéler un crime"; until now, no one has identified this drawing or painting.) Decamps is admired for his glowing use of colour and his ability to invest with mystery and terror the most everyday of inanimate objects. But, so far as any direct influence upon Balzac is concerned, Decamps the colourist cannot be dissociated from Delacroix, and Decamps the creator of the grotesque is inseparable from Hoffmann.

For Delacroix's work Balzac had deep and increasing reverence, despite the coolness of their personal relationship ⁵. There are no allusions in the Comédie Humaine or the correspondence to either of the great works by which Delacroix made his name: "Dante and Virgil" ⁶ and "The Massacre in Chios" ⁷. Nor do we know Balzac's views on the

1 L'Interdiction; Pl. III, pp. 46-47.

2 Pl. VI, p. 113.

3 1839 Salon, nos. 500, 501, 503, 507.

4 Une Fille d'Ève; Pl. II, p. 101.

5 Cf. supra, p. 17.

6 1822 Salon, no. 309. This is the more remarkable because "Dante and Virgil" was subsequently bought for exhibition at the Luxembourg (Luxembourg 1823, no. 36).

7 1824 Salon, no. 450.

colossal painting, "La Mort de Sardanapale", which sealed his fame—but also his notoriety—on its belated appearance at the Salon of 1827-1828.

What is certain is that, though Balzac does not seem to have responded to Delacroix's earliest (painted) work, he sensed in later years the masterly skill of this prince of artists. Admittedly, his reason for venerating Decamps is that in "The Torture Scene" and "The Defeat of the Cimbri" is that same warmth of colour that characterizes Delacroix; but Balzac, who scarcely ever overlooks genius (particularly genius contemporaneous with himself), nevertheless appreciates the latter's greatly superior power and versatility. Decamps may be able to chill the spine with his sketches of witches' sabbaths; but, as we know, Delacroix can alternatively delight, terrify, amuse and move to pity, in his series of Faust lithographs; he can convey the savagery and voluptuousness of Turkey and Assyria in "The Massacre in Chios" and "Sardanapalus", the still mystery and drowsy warmth of north Africa in "Women of Algiers"¹—a picture which Balzac liked². Balzac also praises³ the "Cleopatra" exhibited at the Salon of 1839⁴ and now owned by the University of North Carolina.

As for Delacroix's influence upon the Comédie Humaine, it is the glow of his palette, together with a handful of portraits, which Balzac retains and sometimes emulates. Several descriptions may owe something to him, including Balzac's one description of a desert⁵. But, of course, this warmth of colouring was a feature of the new school generally, and in so far as Balzac transfers it to the novel, he is borrowing more from the style and mood of a cluster of artists than from any individual. He was aware that Delacroix had genius and Decamps mere talent—yet, in respect of his use of colour, his debt is probably identical to each.

1 1834 Salon, no. 497.

2 Balzac specifically mentions "Women of Algiers" as one of the few paintings of any real merit in the Salon of 1834. "Si j'étais riche, je me plainrais cependant à vous en envoyer un tableau, un "Intérieur d'Alger", peint par E. Delacroix qui me semble excellent" (Lettres à Madame Henska I, pp. 210-211; 28 April 1834).

3 Ibid., p. 645; 4 June 1839.

4 1839 Salon, no. 524.

5 Une Passion dans le désert; Pl. VII, pp. 1,073-1,075. Unlike Flaubert, Gautier and Rimbaud, Balzac never actually saw a desert scorching under the sun.

Sometimes, however, a derivation can be proved or cogently suggested. G.J. Hirschfeld has pointed ¹ to the indebtedness of La Fille aux Yeux d'Or, and above all the portrait of Paquita Valdès ², to the painting "La Jeune Femme au Perroquet" which Delacroix showed at the Musée Colbert in 1832 ³ and which now belongs to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, at Lyons ⁴.

Paquita Valdès, the companion of the Lesbian marquise de San-Réal, is about to be visited by Henri de Marsay, the lover who has more or less imposed his attentions upon her. Before the young man's arrival in the room, Balzac gives a memorable description of the boudoir and its occupant. The room is a transposition of Balzac's own drawing-room in his flat in the Rue des Batailles ⁵, but the description (and, perhaps, the prototype) owe much to Delacroix's painting.

Indeed, the symbolic use of colour throughout La Fille aux Yeux d'Or probably reflects a sensitive appreciation of Delacroix, to whom the novel is dedicated ⁶. "En écrivant cette étrange histoire", A. Béguin has remarked ⁷,

Balzac se proposait de rivaliser avec l'art pictural et d'exprimer par le moyen du langage ce que les peintres disent normalement par le jeu des couleurs.

Red signifies all that is carnal, passionate and lethal. The room where Paquita and de Marsay meet for their first assignation is furnished in red ⁸. At this first personal encounter he admires her "regards d'or et de

1 Balzac und Delacroix. Streiflichter auf den Roman "La Fille aux Yeux d'Or", Basel 1946, pp. 88-142 and especially p. 114, where Hirschfeld speaks of "die enge Verbundenheit der beiden Künstler". "Mit derselben Leichtigkeit hat Eugène Delacroix phantastische Farbkombinationen hingemalt, um eine seelische Stimmung von sich selbst und von der gemalten Person zu geben".

2 Pl. V, pp. 301-303.

3 Explication des ouvrages... exposés à la Galerie du Musée Colbert, le 6 mai 1832, Paris 1832, no. 141. The Musée Colbert, in the Rue Vivienne, was an exhibition whose proceeds were devoted to charity. It displayed modern works of art which might or might not have already been exhibited at a Salon. "La Jeune Femme au Perroquet" was on show for the first time.

4 For an illustration of "La Jeune Femme au Perroquet", cf. R. Escholiers op.cit., vol. I, Paris 1926, facing p. 218.

5 E. Werdetz op.cit., pp. 99-104. Cf. supra, p. 16.

6 As if to make public acknowledgment of his indebtedness, Balzac dedicated La Fille aux Yeux d'Or to Delacroix when the novel was inserted into vol. IX of the Furne edition of the Comédie Humaine in 1843.

7 Balzac lu et relu, Paris 1965, p. 81.

8 Pl. V, pp. 293, 295.

flamme" ¹. Like Balzac's own sitting-room, the boudoir in which the lovers' physical union is consummated is hung in white, gold and red silks ². At the close of La Fille aux Yeux d'Or, the contrasts between white and red become even more striking than they were at the height of the lovers' ecstatic passions: de Marsay bursts into Paquita's room to find both her and Madame de San-Réal dead or dying, in pools of blood, the one murdered in Lesbian jealousy by the other ³. As for Madame de San-Réal herself, the novel's original title was to have been La Femme aux Yeux Rouges ⁴; also, the marquise dresses in red ⁵—both evidently references to the lustful possessiveness of the older woman.

Gold is less completely symbolic of material wealth than red is of burning passion. Juxtaposed to the flames of the Parisian inferno ⁶, it not only represents the object of desire, but actually procures it (Paquita's yellow-eyed ⁷ mother has sold her daughter to the marquise). "L'âme a je ne sais quel attachement pour le blanc", Balzac writes in the course of describing Paquita's boudoir,

l'amour se plaît dans le rouge, et l'or flatte les passions, il a la puissance de réaliser leurs fantaisies .

La Fille aux Yeux d'Or is not unique in its colour symbolism, which Balzac carries over into Le Lys dans la Vallée, where he uses it less elaborately. The content of the symbolism is the same: the white lily represents Henriette de Mortsauf herself; her mental infidelity is a "creuset rouge", an experience some likeness of which all men must undergo "avant d'arriver saints et parfaits dans les sphères supérieures" ⁹. The very bouquets of flowers which Félix de Vandenesse picks for his hostess in the meadows around Clochegourde ¹⁰ are eloquent and infinitely expressive love-tokens—"fugitives allégories", "symphonies de fleurs", "éclans prodigieux vers le ciel". But they owe as much to Jan Breughel II, David van Heem, Monnoyer, etc. as to the colour techniques of Delacroix himself.

1 Ibid., p. 293.

2 Ibid., pp. 301-303, 315.

3 Ibid., pp. 320-321.

4 Revue de Paris, April 1833. Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 128; 20 November 1833.

5 La Fille aux Yeux d'Or; Pl. V, p. 305.

6 Ibid., pp. 255-267.

7 Ibid., p. 295.

8 Ibid., pp. 302-303.

9 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, p. 923.

10 Ibid., pp. 855-859.

Other instances of indebtedness to Delacroix come to mind. Balzac is perhaps most aware of his lithographs illustrating Shakespeare and Goethe, and most of all, of the seventeen Faust lithographs which appeared alongside P.-A. Stapfer's republished translation of Goethe's masterpiece in 1828¹. But the impact of these illustrations upon Balzac's visual imagination is difficult to assess; in all likelihood, they gave a quickening impulse to some of the early études Philosophiques. Twelve years after Balzac had begun his work on the Comédie Humaine, a variant of Ursule Mirouët provides firm evidence of Delacroix's lithographic influence.

At one point in the narrative the serialized version of this novel describes the postmaster, Minoret-Levrault, as

effrayé de l'atroce sourire qui donnait au visage de Goupil l'expression diabolique prêtée par Eugène Delacroix au Méphistophélès de Goethe²,

a simile retained in the Furne edition of Ursule Mirouët³. Very probably, "Méphistophélès apparaissant à Faust"—the fifth in the series of illustrations⁴—is referred to here. But when, towards the end of his life, Balzac corrected his personal copy of the Furne text for a projected second edition of the Comédie Humaine, he substituted Joseph Bridau's name for Delacroix's⁵; additional confirmation (if any were necessary) that Delacroix is, at very least, the principal prototype of Joseph Bridau. Many faces besides Goupil's may have been derived—in whole or in part—from the lithographic illustrations of Fausts Troubert's⁶, du Tillet's⁷ and Fraisier's⁸, for example. In view of

1 L.-H. Delteil: Le Peintre graveur illustré (XIXe et XXe siècles), vol. III, Paris 1908, nos. 58-74.

2 Le Messager, 17 September 1841. Cf. supra, p. 24, n. 12.

3 Ouvrages complètes, vol. V, Paris 1843, p. 161.

4 L.-H. Delteil: op.cit., no. 62. Delacroix also painted this subject in oils, and he is said to have exhibited the painting at the 1827 Salon. It is much less likely that Balzac is referring to the version in oils.

5 A 5, p. 161. Cf. Pl. III, p. 433.

6 Le Curé de Tours Pl. III, pp. 803-804.

7 César Birotteau Pl. V, pp. 359-360.

8 Le Cousin Pons Pl. VI, pp. 673-674.

the condemnation which these illustrations from the established art critics ¹, it is a mark of Balzac's discernment that he has acknowledged the (uneven) merit of the lithographs, although tardily.

Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale contains another named reference to the Faust lithographs. The scatterbrained young heroine, Caroline, is describing the thoughts and emotions that pass through her mind as she sits awaiting her lover Adolphe. In her daydream the harrowing face of Mephistopheles, with cleft nose, sardonic grin and defiantly aggressive gestures, is conjured up ², this time from the "Duel de Faust et de Valentin" (plate 6) ³,

Méphistophélès parle, le terrible valet qui dirige si bien les épees, il a quitté la gravure et se pose diaboliquement devant moi, rient par la fente que ce grand peintre lui a mise sous le nez, et me regardant de cet oeil d'où tombent des rubis, des diamants, des carrosses, des métaux, des toilettes, des soieries cramoisies et mille délices qui brûlent.

What more vivid admission could there be of the delight and fascination which the Faust lithographs held for many—though by no means all—of Balzac's contemporaries, nurtured as they were on the macabre horror of the Gothic romance (German, English and French), the sometimes morbid excesses of "sturm und Drang" literature—and the grotesque reveries of Hoffmann?

Indeed, when we consider the importance of duelling in the Comédie Humaine as a whole, the "Duel de Faust et de Valentin" may be seen to have exerted a far wider influence than that expressed in Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale. Take La Peau de Chagrin, with its remarkable instance of a duel which one of the combatants is supernaturally fated to win ⁴. The

1 C.-P. Baudelaire: op.cit., pp. 897-898. Goethe admired the Faust lithographs (Gespräche mit Eckermann, Zurich 1948; 29 November 1826).

2 Pl. K, p. 988. This reference is present, in a slightly different form, in the proof-sheets of Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale (A 184, fol. 55).

3 L.-H. Delteil: op.cit., no. 68.

4 Pl. IX, pp. 228-230.

name of the successful duellist is Raphaël de Valentin; like Faust, he has made a pact with the devil (the Antiquary of La Peau de Chagrin is likened to Mephistopheles¹); Faust's pact makes him inviolable in the duel with Valentin, Gretchen's brother; Raphaël de Valentin's pact makes him inviolable in his duel with Charles. From La Peau de Chagrin (the most seminal of all Balzac's novels), the concept of the talismanic duel ramifies through the Comédie Humaine. Michel Taillefer has no chance in his duel with Franchessini²; Vautrin, the talismanic influence of Le Père Goriot, has seen to that. The rôle of magic diminishes, however, as Balzac advances further into the Comédie Humaine. What is the importance of St Solange's tooth unwittingly worn by Philippe Bridau in his duel with Maxence?³ Though Philippe wins this duel, no one can assert that his success was due to anything other than superior skill. Ambiguous as the amulet is (the tooth may, after all, have been a talisman), Balzac is almost certainly ironical in his description of Madame Hochon's pious fervour. Duelling is functionally important within the Comédie Humaine as the supreme example of the audacious crime that goes scot-free: the crime that is not even criminal, in the world's eyes--the duel being a form of legalized murder. Duelling is the quick, neat path to immense success so ably propounded by that amoral artist in the world of action, Vautrin⁴; and the fact that--to a much greater extent than, say, burning a will⁵--it becomes the epitome of audacious crime is due, in no small degree, to Delacroix's "Duel de Faust et de Valentin".

1 Pl. IX, pp. 176, 32.

2 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 940-941, 991, 998, 1,006-1,007.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 1,082-1,085.

4 Cf. Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 935-936, 938, 941-942.

5 Pensées, Sujets, Fragments, Paris 1910, p. 8. Annette et le Criminel, vol. I, tome 2, p. 153. La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 56. Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, pp. 705, 707. Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, p. 11.

Other references to Delacroix in the Comédie Humaine indicate that Catherine Tonsard¹ is modelled on the figure of Liberty, or Bellona, in "La Liberté guidant le Peuple" (plate 5)—a painting in honour of the Revolution of July 1830, exhibited with so much éclat at the Salon of 1831². Balzac, who very probably visited this Salon³, must have remembered the picture, for he was even deriving imaginative sustenance from it fifteen years afterwards: Madame Cibot, though also owing much to Henry Monnier⁴ and (in real life) to Balzac's servant-mistress Madame de Bragnol, is based partly on Bellona⁵.

So much for the influence of Delacroix, both as painter and lithographer, aspects that have been considered together, rather than separately in this Chapter and in Chapter XII, because in his work painting and lithography are more closely integrated than in the work of any other artist. It is the lithography which confirms our tentative identification of Delacroix with Joseph Bridau. As a painter, Delacroix's influence upon the Comédie Humaine is largely to be found in the colour motifs of La Fille aux Yeux d'Or and La Lys dans la Vallée. As a lithographer, he contributes through Mephistopheles to the almost ubiquitous presence of evil, whether obvious or disguised.

Balzac's interest in and acquaintance with other contemporary French painters must now be indicated. Géricault, celebrated for his "Radeau de la Méduse", the sensation of the 1819 Salon⁶, was deeply revered by Joseph Bridau⁷, as indeed he was by Joseph's prototype Delacroix⁸. Balzac was well aware of the rarity of Géricault's paintings. He takes a

1 Les Ravisseurs; Pl. VIII, p. 171.

2 1831 Salon, no. 511.

3 Cf. supra, p. 9.

4 Cf. infra, pp. 82-83.

5 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 562.

6 Cf. supra, p. 7. Balzac recalls this sensation in Pierre Grassin (Pl. VI, p. 113).

7 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 902.

8 Journal, Paris 1932, vol. I, p. 41; 30 December 1823. Vol. I, pp. 189-190; 20 February 1847. Vol. III, p. 71; 5 March 1857.

subtle delight, therefore, in bestowing one upon Pons ¹, the shrewdest and acutest collector in the Comédie Humaine (could Pons have recalled J.-R. Auguste? ²).

Another Géricault painting turns up unexpectedly in Vanda de Mergi's sickroom, in L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine ³. It is a portrait of her mother and herself. She explains that her family, the Bernards, had come from Rouen, the birthplace of Géricault; to this accident of birth is owed a picture "tout à fait inconnu"—as Godefroid de Beaudenord says—"de ceux qui se sont occupés des oeuvres si rares de ce génie". Once again, some prototype in real life may—like M. Auguste—have influenced the creation of this family portrait. In the preface to La Femme Supérieure (now Les Employés) ⁴ Balzac tentatively suggests a reason for the (alleged ⁵) paucity of Géricault's output. Artists, he says, propounding a theory that had a distinctly personal relevance, die when they do not encounter the financial difficulties "indispensables à l'exécution de leurs pensées ou de leurs peintures" ⁶. Géricault, who exhibited only three pictures, and who died with the feeling that he had shamefully wasted his talents ⁷, was a prosperous man ⁸.

1 Pl. VI, p. 593.

2 E. Chesneau: loc. cit.; "A Rome, M. Auguste connut Géricault qui opéra la conversion du statuaire aux beautés vivantes de l'art".

3 Pl. VII, p. 384.

4 Pl. XI, p. 351.

5 One has only to consult C. Clément: Géricault. Étude biographique et critique, avec le catalogue raisonné de l'oeuvre du maître (Paris 1868) to see that Géricault's output was far from small, though it is true that little of it was exhibited in his lifetime.

6 Cf. infra, p. 300.

7 K. Berger: Géricault and his Work, Lawrence 1955, p. 23.

8 Girodet illustrates the truth of Balzac's maxim, as he abandoned painting on inheriting a large fortune.

Ingres, David's most outstanding pupil and (in opposition to Delacroix) the continuator of a severe neo-Classicism, does not seem to have appealed strongly to Balzac's taste. After all, Balzac himself was basically a visionary Romantic, although he made it his task to be the historian of his age and to record its phenomena clearly and meticulously. Nevertheless, he mentions three of Ingres's paintings in the Comédie Humaine, and he must also have been aware of others (such as "Ruggiere rescuing Angelica", then at the Luxembourg¹). Further, the three paintings recorded by name have helped to inspire the delineation of Balzac's own visual world. In Le Lys dans la Vallée², Madeleine de Mortsauf's heartbroken expression reminds Félix de Vandenesse of an alleged painting of "The Mother of God", by Ingres.

Here, Balzac is almost certainly thinking of "The Vow of Louis XIII"³, referred to elsewhere⁴ by its proper name, when Maurice de l'Hostal is reminded of Ingres's Holy Virgin as he pleads with Honorine de Bauvan. Admittedly, the placid joy with which the Virgin holds out her infant son for the world's adoration is somewhat different from the effect which Balzac is striving to produce in Le Lys dans la Vallée; but no other known painting can be implied, and the parallel is close enough to be meaningful.

The "Odalisque"⁵ is mentioned in the opening paragraph of Pierre Grassou⁶, but there is no apparent filiation in the Comédie Humaine—either from her or Delacroix's late and disquieting picture of the same name⁷. In the preface to Le Lys dans la Vallée⁸, Balzac, writing of

1 Luxembourg 1823, no. 74.

2 Pl. VIII, p. 1,010.

3 1824 Salon, no. 922.

4 Honorines Pl. II, p. 292.

5 1819 Salon, no. 619.

6 Pl. VI, p. 113.

7 This work was painted between 1845 and 1850, and is at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. Delacroix's other "Odalisque" is, of course, "La Jeune Femme au Ferret"—and from her (rather than from Ingres's "Odalisque") Paquita Valdès descends.

8 Pl. XI, p. 293.

the difficulties involved in artistic creation, cites "The Martyrdom of St Symphorian"¹ (now at Autun Cathedral) as a case in point: Ingres is said to have repainted the picture no less than ten times².

Horace Vernet, the grandson of Joseph and son of Carle Vernet, and especially famous for his scenes of Napoleonic battles in the Galerie des Batailles at Versailles, inevitably held some interest for so ardent a supporter of Napoleon. With David, Gros, Gérard and Prud'hon, Horace Vernet is one of the principal painters of the Emperor, whose legendary exploits are featured in so many of Balzac's novels, from La Vendetta and Le Médecin de Campagne to Une Ténébreuse Affaire. Without mentioning Vernet by name, Pierrette alludes³ to five engravings after paintings by the artist: "Poniatowski sautant dans l'Elster"⁴, "La Défense de la Barrière de Clichy" (30 March 1814)⁵, "Napoléon pointant lui-même un Canon"⁶ and "Les Deux Maseppa"⁷. They decorate the Rogrons' dining-room, and Balzac (or rather, Madame Tiphaine) says that the Minister of the Interior should promulgate a law banishing such hideous objects from public view.

1 1834 Salon, no. 998. The reference is therefore topical. Ingres's "St Symphorian" had been recorded seven years previously in a Salon catalogue (1827 Salon, no. 577), but it had not been finished in time for the exhibition.

2 H. Lepage (op.cit., pp. 304-310) confirms that Ingres took ten years to paint this picture, and that there were no less than thirty studies of St Symphorian himself, twenty studies of the saint's parents, fifty studies of the lictors, etc., before the picture was finally ready.

3 Pl. III, p. 680. Cf. infra, p. 294.

4 "Mort du Prince Poniatowski", 1817 Salon, no. 775. 1819 Salon, no. 1,165. The 1817 version was engraved by P.-L. Debucourt and J.-P.-M. Jazet.

5 This picture was turned down by the Salon hanging-committee in 1822, on account of its "liberal" tendencies. It was engraved by J.-P.-M. Jazet, and now hangs in the Louvre (G. Brière: op.cit., p. 264, no. 956).

6 This painting is as yet unidentified.

7 "Maseppa on Horseback" and "Maseppa amongst the Wolves" were both exhibited at the Salon of 1827 (no. 1,031). It is yet further proof ~~constitutes~~ of the Comédie Humaine's uncanny chronological consistency that the action of Pierrette begins in the year 1827 (Pl. III, p. 650). In Les Employés, a novel which Balzac was writing about the same time as Pierrette, the Phellions' drawing-room is also adorned with the two engravings of Maseppa (Pl. VI, p. 934). The engraving of "Maseppa à Cheval" would have been by S.W. Reynolds, and that of "Maseppa aux Loups" by J.-P.-M. Jazet.

Madame Bridau's drawing-room contains a coloured engraving of Vernet's "Battle of Jena", "où Napoléon passe rapidement à cheval, suivi de son escorte" ¹, and so does the antechamber to Vanda's bedroom, in L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine ². (This antechamber also has an engraving of a portrait of Prince Joseph Poniatowski ², possibly Vernet's portrait of the prince leaping to his death in the cold waters of the Elster ³.)

Besides the paintings of Napoleon, and "The Massacre of the Mamelucks" ⁴, well enough known for Georges Marest to have heard of it, in Un Début dans la Vie ⁵, Balzac also mentions—both in César Birotteau ⁶ and again in Le Rabouilleuse ⁷—the famous "Soldat Laboureur", perhaps the oftenest engraved of all Vernet's works. This picture commemorates the abortive project of setting up a colony in Texas for all those who had fought under Napoleon and were out of sympathy with Louis XVIII. The subject was also taken up by P.-E. Vigneron ⁸ and others, so that we cannot be certain Balzac is alluding to Vernet; but, as Vernet's work was the best known, this seems likely. One of the main events in Philippe Bridau's career is his emigration to America, to rebuild on the other side of the Atlantic the fortunes wrecked by the cessation of the Napoleonic wars. Instead, he returns disillusioned both with liberal Bonapartism and the world in general ⁹. By keeping the Texan fiasco constantly before Balzac's mind, for more than twenty years after the event, Vernet's and Vigneron's "Soldat Laboureur" decisively influenced the life of one of the most monstrous characters in fiction.

1 Le Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 862. "The Battle of Jena" is at Versailles. Cf. infra, p. 293.

2 Pl. VII, p. 366.

3 Cf. supra, p. 60, n. 4.

4 1819 Salon, no. 1,154. Balzac may well have seen this painting at the Luxembourg (Luxembourg 1823, no. 113).

5 Pl. I, p. 645.

6 Pl. V, p. 457.

7 Pl. III, p. 889.

8 1822 Salon, no. 1,321. Cf. infra, p. 293.

9 Le Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 877-882.

Vernet is also a possible prototype of Joseph Bridau¹, the Joseph Bridau of Illusions Perdues² and Pierre Grassou³, that is—not the young artist of La Rabouilleuse, whose model is Delacroix. In support of his suggestion that Horace Vernet inspired Joseph, M. Antoine Adam adduces a letter from Vernet to his wife, dated 11 October 1842⁴. Earlier that day, Vernet (then in Warsaw) had visited the Polish artist January Suchodolski, who in the previous decade had been one of his pupils at the Villa Medici⁵. Like Joseph in Pierre Grassou, Vernet criticized his friend's work, picked up a brush and palette and rapidly made improvements to it. It is certainly a possibility that the artist who was still eager to give an impromptu lesson at the age of fifty-three also gave them in 1839 and before. Horace Vernet may well have contributed essential traits of character to the mature Joseph Bridau (whose maturity the Comédie Humaine depicts before his youth)—especially as Vernet was as amorous as the older Joseph.

In his attitude towards the "philosophical" painting of Paul Chenavard (his adviser on artistic matters in the early part of 1846⁶), Balzac was something of a pioneer. Until 1848 Chenavard exhibited very little, his time being largely absorbed by study and preparation, so that when Balzac portrays him in 1845 in the person of Dubourdieu⁷, it is clearly as the result of personal acquaintance—his name was not famous enough for him to be much talked of in 1845. Dubourdieu is an unmistakable caricature of Chenavard. Balzac, like Thiers⁸, Delacroix and Charlet⁹, had met the ebullient artist from Lyons and had evidently been subjected to the long-winded disquisitions on artistic theory of which Delacroix has left us so unforgettable a picture¹⁰.

1 A. Adams art.cit., pp. 76-77.

2 Pl. IV, pp. 652-653.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 127-128.

4 A. Durand: Joseph, Carle et Horace Vernet. Correspondance et biographies, Paris 1864, p. 193.

5 For information on the French school of painting in Rome, cf. D. Puechs: "La Villa Médicis", Revue des Deux Mondes, 1 December 1926, pp. 594-609.

6 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, pp. 167, 169, 174, 177, 194, 269, 284; 10, 13, 15, 18 February, 1 June, 11, 19 July 1846.

7 Les Comédiens sans le savoir; Pl. VII, pp. 45-47.

8 J.C. Sloane: Paul-Marie-Joseph Chenavard. Artist of 1848, Chapel Hill 1962, p. 17.

9 P. Rioux de Maillou: Souvenirs des autres, Paris 1917, p. 12.

10 Op.cit., vol. I, pp. 267-269; 2 March 1849. Vol. II, pp. 247-248; 31 August 1854.

But Balzac's sketch is more than a caricature: it is a critique. In his view, "philosophical" painting irrespective of technical criteria is the negation of art. These strictures, though shared by Delacroix¹, were voiced by Balzac alone: when Chenavard was commissioned in 1848 to decorate the Panthéon with grisailles representing the march of world history towards a humanist Utopia², Balzac's overtly expressed criticisms were shown to have been abundantly justified. Not until some fifteen years later, long after the murals had been swept away by the advent of the Second Empire, did Baudelaire publicly repeat the substance of Balzac's views, albeit in a rather more moderate vein³. In this respect, as also in the prophetic nature of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu⁴, Balzac outran his contemporaries.

The references to such painters as Vigneron⁵, Meissonier⁶, the portraitist Robert Lefebvre⁷, Turpin de Crissé⁸, Léopold Robert⁹ (whose "Halte des Moissonneurs dans les Marais Pontins" inspired Lamartine's

1 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 281-285; 4 October 1854, and passim. At the same time, it must be admitted that Delacroix set much store by Chenavard's critical opinions, often noting them in his diary.

2 Cf. J.C. Sloane: op.cit., pp. 40-65.

3 Op.cit., pp. 918-924.

4 Cf. infra, pp. 305-307, 309.

5 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 120. Mockingly, Balzac refers twice (César Bixetteau; Pl. V, p. 457. Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 934) to Vigneron's celebrated "Convoi du Pauvre", which Phellion considers a "tableau sublime de pensée". Cf. infra, p. 293.

6 Meissonier, rather like Félix Ziem, enjoyed a European reputation at this time, but Balzac has at least the merit of disagreeing with the general view, though he does refer to Meissonier as a man of talent in Le Cousin Pons (Pl. VI, pp. 529-530). Cf. Pl. III, p. 929; Pl. IV, p. 914.

7 Pl. IV, p. 645; Pl. VI, p. 280; Pl. VII, pp. 620, 628. Pillereult's engraving of "Bonaparte en Premier Consul" is possibly after Lefebvre's portrait, though it may also be by Ingres. Lefebvre painted no less than thirty-seven portraits of Napoleon (H. Marcel: La Peinture française au XIXe siècle, Paris 1905, p. 40); and few of these are traceable today.

8 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 581.

9 Pierrette; Pl. III, p. 695. Robert was actually a Swiss, not a French artist.

"Chant des Laboureurs", in Jocelyn¹), Lethière², Raffet³, Madame Vigée-Lebrun⁴, C.-M. Dubufe⁵, Forbin⁶, Ducis⁷ and H.-L. Garnier⁸ could be multiplied; and very often they would reveal—as, for example, in the cases of Robert, Madame Vigée-Lebrun and Lefebvre—some very possible reminiscences of the visual arts; but no better instances can be found of the interplay between Balzac's creative imagination and that of even second-rate painters than the real identity of Joseph Bridau's first masterpiece, and the engraving of "Hero and Leander" in César Bixotteau.

Mention has already been made of Xavier Sigalon's "La Jeune Courtisane" (plate 25), keenly admired by Balzac at, perhaps, the Salon of 1822 and which inspired the subject of the young Joseph Bridau's epoch-making "Venetian Senator"⁹. Not only the painting as a whole, but also its individual elements, have given rise to features of Balzac's imaginative world. Michel Chrestien, a member of the young Cénacle to which Joseph belongs¹⁰,

1 Ouvrages poétiques complètes, Paris 1963, pp. 743-751.

2 Gobseck; Pl. II, p. 670. Balzac was aware of Lethière's "Brutus condamnant ses Fils à Mort", exhibited at the Salon of 1812 (no. 583), and the dying Gobseck recalls one of the elderly Romans in this picture. Cf. plate 16 and supra, p. 46.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 929.

4 Ursule Miroult; Pl. III, p. 305.

5 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 120.

6 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 581.

7 Entre Savants; Pl. X, p. 1,116.

8 It must be practically certain that Garnier's "L'Ombre d'Argyl apparaît à Ferragus" (classified as "Vue d'un Château gothique" at the Salon of 1822, no. 536?) inspired the title of the first novel in the trilogy, L'Histoire des Treize.

9 Cf. supra, p. 8.

10 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 883.

"posed for"—or rather, is himself inspired by—the senator whom Sigalon depicts vying with a younger man for the courtesan's love. The young woman herself may very possibly be Flore Bragier—admired by a wealthy man (Rouget), whose worldly goods she accepts, whilst yielding to the advances of Maxence Gilet. La Rabouilleuse does not only describe the beginnings of a young artist, Joseph Bridau; it is a novel profoundly imbued with pictorial images, some of which may (it seems) have exerted a more formative influence than is to be found elsewhere in the Comédie Humaine.

Secondly, the famous "huile céphalique"—the hair lotion which is the means of César Birotteau's rehabilitation from bankruptcy—itsself derives from Balzac's interest in the visual arts. César explains to his wife that he has picked up the idea of a new cosmetic from an engraving of "Hero and Leander"¹. The engraving to which he refers is by Jean-Nicolas Leugier, and it was based on Delorme's painting, of the same name, exhibited at the 1814 Salon². In this engraving, Hero is shown perfuming her lover's hair³.

The invention of the "huile céphalique" does not, of course, bear any relationship to the tragic circumstances of César's downfall: circumstances which, we may feel, are presented with ambiguity and imprecision and which certainly delayed the actual writing of the story. Balzac tells us⁴ that he spent six years revolving the concept of César Birotteau; not until 1837 did he feel able to cope (and even then, falteringly!) with the almost intractable problem of investing his hero with moral grandeur. Thus, the idea of the novel had come to him in

1 Pl. V, p. 339.

2 1814 Salon, no. 278. Cf. J. Adhémar: "L'Huile comagène et César Birotteau", ARéculana, March 1951, pp. 49-54.

3 For a reproduction of Leugier's engraving, cf. ibid., p. 51. Delorme's "Hero and Leander", which may formerly have been at the Château de Compiègne, is no longer traceable today.

4 Lettre à Hippolyte Castille; Le Semaine, 11 October 1846 (Ouvrages complètes, Société des Études Balzaciques edn., vol. XXVIII, Paris 1963, p. 492).

1831, the year in which Delorme exhibited at the Salon a second picture based on the story of Hero and Leander ¹. The nucleus of the novel, the chance encounter but for which Bizotteau would never have been created (at any rate, in that walk of life), was perhaps a now otherwise forgotten picture in a Salon boasting Delacroix ² and Corots ³.

Limited as is the impact of the visual arts upon the action of the Comédie Humaine, we should by no means underestimate their importance as inspirations in the description (and even conception) of characters and scenes. In the case of the contemporary French school, there is an additional purpose which they can serve. Delacroix (as Joseph), Gros, Girodet and others not only assist Balzac in the formation of verbal pictures, they appear personally in some of the novels where Balzac also brings fictional artists into play.

1 1831 Salon, no. 542.

2 Ibid., nos. 511-516.

3 Ibid., nos. 397-400. But, according to Dr Pontus Grate (Deux critiques d'art de l'époque romantique, Stockholm 1959, p. 217, n. 3), "le premier critique qui exprima son admiration pour les études de Corot fut Maquet", in 1840.

IV: THE FRENCH CARICATURISTS

Because so much of the caricaturists' work lies on the borders between art and semi-mechanical skill, no exhaustive study of their influence upon Balzac can be undertaken in this thesis. The caricaturists who will be studied (Gavarni, Daumier, Charlet and Monnier) are those who consistently strove for artistic excellence; even in their cases the argument will be summary, since a wide-ranging examination of their influence would demand a short dissertation in itself.

Balzac's formative years were spent at a time when the daguerreotype was unknown and people depended on lithographs, mezzotints, line-engravings, etc., to supplement their understanding of the written word. As he grew older, these engravings increasingly became an independent medium, often verging on caricature. Many of the best examples of the caricaturists' work fulfilled the rôle played by newspaper cartoons today. Others appeared in keepsakes, volumes containing stories and poems by various authors together with sentimental or amusing illustrations; it has been calculated that no less than twenty-one keepsakes were published in France in the year 1834 alone¹.

1 F. Lachèvre: Bibliographie sommaire des keepsakes..., Paris 1929, vol. I, p. 303.

Another feature of the age was the Physiologie, the humorous account of a particular class of people or aspect of human life, picking out all that was comic in human behaviour and placing it under the aegis of a medical-sounding vogue word: La Physiologie du Mariage, published in December 1829, was the first of Balzac's contributions in this vein, followed in April 1830 by La Physiologie de l'Épicier, in June and July of the same year by La Physiologie de la Toilette, in August 1830 by La Physiologie Gastronomique and, much later, in 1841 by La Physiologie de l'Employé. A roughly similar venture, to which he and other writers such as Nodier, Gautier, Monnier and Nerval contributed, was Les Français Peints par eux-mêmes¹, a project conceived on a wider scale than any of the physiologies in that it satirized the life of France and its colonies in all its aspects.

The illustration of these essays in literary journalism provided a further source of employment for the caricaturists. La Physiologie de l'Employé was copiously illustrated by Trimolet. Balzac's articles in Les Français Peints par eux-mêmes were illustrated by Gavarni ("L'Épicier", "La Femme comme il Faut", "La Femme de Province" and part of "Le Notaire") and Grandville ("Monographie du Rentier"); other artists contributing to the series were Henry Monnier, Traviès, Charlet, Daumier, Tony Johannot, Bellangé and Delacroix.

1 Les Français Peints par eux-mêmes, 9 vols. in-4o, Paris 1840-1842: vol. I (1840) "L'Épicier", pp. 1-8, "La Femme comme il Faut", pp. 25-32; vol. II (1840) "Le Notaire", pp. 105-112; vol. III (1841) "Monographie du Rentier", pp. 1-16; vol. VI (1841) "La Femme de Province", pp. 1-8. Cf. Charles Nodier: "L'Amateur de Livres", vol. III, pp. 201-209; Théophile Gautier: "Le Maître de Chausson", vol. V, pp. 263-270; Gérard de Nerval: "Les Banquets d'Anciens Écoliers", vol. IX, pp. 74-76; Henry Monnier: "La Portière", vol. III, pp. 33-42.

Moreover, most of the editions of Balzac's novels were also enriched with illustrations. Some of the leading illustrators of the day, Achille Devéria, Tony Johannot, Monnier, Gavarni and even Daumier, were called upon to help in illustrating the Contes Philosophiques and Nouveaux Contes Philosophiques of 1832 (with frontispieces by Johannot) and the first sixteen volumes of the Furne edition of the Comédie Humaine, published between 1842 and 1846¹. As with the Physiologies and articles in Les Français Peints par eux-mêmes, so too with the novels of the Comédie Humaine; the manner of their illustration was little removed from caricature.

Nor was the caricaturists' work only to be found in editions of novels, keepsakes and physiologies. Copies of their work were readily available at the "librairies d'estampes", or print shops, such as Clément, Delpech or Piéri Bénard (the latter referred to in César Bixot²); and the curious passer-by, unless in the frame of mind of Raphaël de Valentin³, would derive a great deal of interest and amusement from stopping to have a look at the window, even if he did not actually purchase a print. Thus, in Paris at least, familiarity with the work of the caricaturists was very nearly general. (The provinces tended to obtain their visual nourishment elsewhere: from engravings of such old masters as "The Sistine Madonna", or lithographs of the Napoleonic saga reproducing the work of Horace Vernet⁴, Vigneron⁵, Bellangé⁶, Raffet and Charlet, or prints of sickly, sentimental subjects like Vigneron's "Convoi du Pauvre"⁷.)

1 For example, Tony Johannot helped to illustrate vols. I, II and XIV; Traviès likewise in vol. III; Henry Monnier in vols. V, VI and VIII; Célestin Nanteuil in vol. VIII; and Daumier in vols. IX (including the celebrated portrait of Goriot) and XI.

2 Pl. V, p. 381.

3 La Peau de Charrin; Pl. IX, p. 21.

4 Cf. supra, pp. 60-61.

5 Cf. supra, p. 61.

6 Cf. supra, p. 16.

7 Cf. infra, p. 293.

The fruitful partnership of writers and illustrators extended beyond the mere presence of their works, side by side, on the printed page. Balzac reviewed lithographs¹, and even "transposed" them into words². Each helped to create a climate of ideas from which both sides drew inspiration. In this osmosis of the visual image and the written word it is not always easy to discern who inspired whom. But the first fact which stands out from a chronological study of Balzac's writings is his attraction towards the physiologic-type subject in the early years of the Comédie Humaine. Indeed, the about-turn in his choice of subject-matter, when he abandoned medieval, sixteenth and seventeenth century subjects for études de Mœurs relating to his own time, may itself have been brought about by the prevalence of visual studies of contemporary life, notably in the work of Monnier and Gavarni.

The starting-point of Gobseck was a study of the Money-Lender as a social type: a physiologie of L'Usurier, as the story was in fact called in its part serialization in La Mode (6 March 1830)³. Here the money-lender is portrayed almost as a distinct human species, different in nature, outlook and habits from (say) grocers or haberdashers or grisettes. In this portrait of a miser Balzac's aim is really more "Classical" than Molière's, since he aims to present the essence of the Miser and Money-Lender, untrembled by any contingencies of circumstance (such as the fact that Harpagon loves Mariane and is the rival in love of his son Cléante). It was a philosophy of human nature which Balzac was to

1 Gavarni: La Mode, 2 October 1830. Review of "Travestissements pour 1832" and "Physionomie de la Population de Paris", L'Artiste, 4 March 1832.

2 Voyage pour l'éternité, La Silhouette, 15 April 1830.

3 Corresponding to Pl. II, pp. 624-637, but less elaborate.

express twelve years later in his Avant-Propos to the Comédie Humaine

les différences entre un soldat, un ouvrier, un administrateur, un avocat, un oisif, un savant, un homme d'état, un commerçant, un marin, un poète, un pauvre, un prêtre, sont, quoique plus difficiles à saisir, aussi considérables que celles qui distinguent le loup, le lion, l'âne, le cerbeau, le requin, le veau marin, la brebis, etc. Il a donc existé, il existera donc de tout temps des Espèces Sociales comme il y a des Espèces Zoologiques¹.

The purpose of Balzac's huge undertaking is, therefore, not only to create a picture of contemporary France in all its aspects but to study each social type within contemporary France— Representative Man, whether a money-lender as in Gobseck, or a grocer as in L'Épicier, or a haberdasher as in La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote², or a grisette as in Ferragus³ or Une Double Famille⁴. When it is remembered that in 1828 Monnier had published a series of lithographs entitled "Les Grisettes", the possible influence of the caricaturists upon Balzac's choice of subject-matter will become apparent. It is not that the Comédie Humaine aims to transpose into words the visual image created and popularized by Henry Monnier: Balzac must, after all, have known grisettes; the primary importance of the caricaturists lies in the directions into which they channel the novelist's creative imagination; whether his own picture of the grisette is modelled upon theirs, or upon his own knowledge of human nature, or upon both, is a matter of less importance in the study of the Comédie Humaine.

1 Pl. I, p. 4.

2 Ibid., pp. 22-23; M. Guillaume.

3 Pl. V, p. 74; Ida Grugot.

4 Pl. I, pp. 927-929; Caroline Crochard.

Character sketches of the grisette and the money-lender are part of that kaleidoscopic picture of the capital which was the common ambition of Balzac, Monnier and Gavarni; indeed, "Physionomie de la Population de Paris" was the title of a collection of lithographs by Gavarni published in 1832—and reviewed by Balzac¹. But the Comédie Humaine derives much more from this shared preoccupation than the mere descriptions of Ida Gruget, Caroline Crochard and Gobseck—important as these are, particularly the last. There is the bravura passage in La Vendetta: the description of girls painting in the studio of their art master, Servin²—the passage with which La Vendetta originally opened, and which was published separately in La Silhouette ten days before the full story appeared. There is the pen portrait, in La Caricature³, of "Le Petit Mercier"—later to be incorporated into La Fille aux Yeux d'Or⁴. The very title of Chapter I of La Fille aux Yeux d'Or (when divided into chapters) was Physionomies Parisiennes. There is the physionomie, in Barzacia⁵, of a varied group of pedestrians sheltering from the rains: just the kind of subject that could have been treated by Gavarni or one of the lesser caricaturists. There is the physionomie of the lawyer's office, in Le Colonel Chebert⁶, and of the inmates of a frowzy boarding-house, in La Pâra Goriot⁷.

1 L'Artiste, 4 March 1832.

2 Pl. I, pp. 865-867.

3 16 December 1830.

4 Pl. V, pp. 258-260: considerably revised in its details, but essentially the same.

5 Ibid., pp. 37-38.

6 Pl. II, pp. 1,086-1,095.

7 Ibid., pp. 848-860.

All these passages—and more besides—display essential features of Balzac's art, especially in so far as the early novels are concerned. Pathos and terror, the perennial ingredients of tragedy, represented in the Comédie Humaine by the grisette and the money-lender: Ida Gruget, in her pathos, committing suicide ¹; Gobseck dying in terrifying lunacy ². Comedy, on the other hand, derived from the many satirical sketches of the crass, purblind Philistine: Monnier's relentless mockery of Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme, both in the written word and the visual image (plate 19); his verbal mockery of a Philistine middle-class family in La Peintre et les Bourgeois ³; Gavarni's hardly kinder mockery of the bourgeoisie, throughout his work; Balzac's Physiologie de l'Épicier, Monographie du Rentier, and (in the Comédie Humaine itself) portraits of the Vervelles ⁴, Phellion ⁵, Molineux ⁶, Birotteau ⁷ and Crevel ⁸. For reasons never yet explained, unless it is connected with the "Hero and Leander" engraving ⁹, two of Balzac's crassest bourgeois are perfumers whilst a third manufactures the bottles into which the perfumes go! Within his actual novels Balzac refrains from depicting the Grocer as the symbol of middle-class Philistinism, possibly because of his somewhat cryptic comment in La Rabouilleuse ¹⁰; on the other hand, the Perfumer had never been a prime target for the caricaturists' satire.

1 Ferragus; Pl. V, p. 120.

2 Pl. II, pp. 669-672.

3 Scènes populaires, vol. III, Paris 1839, pp. 67-276.

4 Pierre Grassou; especially Pl. VI, pp. 123-126.

5 Les Employés; Pl. VI, pp. 935-936.

6 César Birotteau; Pl. V, pp. 390-393.

7 Ibid., especially pp. 355-356, 379-380, etc.

8 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, pp. 135-136, 142.

9 Cf. supra, pp. 65-66.

10 Pl. III, p. 852: "l'Épicerie et la Poésie... auront toujours des relations secrètes".

Secondly, from the more precise standpoint of Balzac's narrative technique, scenes influenced by the caricaturists generally add suspense and even mystery to the action. The placid scene with which Le Vendetta originally opened not only fascinates the reader with its colourful touches but intrigues him to such an extent that he is bound to read on. Similarly with the description of the pedestrians in Farragut this short scene is rather like a "still" in the cinema; the whole action of the novel, barely begun, halts for a moment whilst the author digresses in a kind of reverie; a reverie which immensely stimulates our interest in what is to follow. Our puzzlement is extreme in Derville's office, as the story opens with the strange and comical entry of an old man wearing a box-coat; only in the second scene, immediately after this, is the mystery resolved. In the description of the Vauquer boarding-house many unusual and intriguing characters are briefly presented: a suitably mysterious opening for a novel the first third of which is a mystery story.

For all these scenes and characters, moreover, the setting is invariably Parisian. Like Gavarni, Balzac is describing the "Physionomie de la Population de Paris". The intriguing and colourful aspects of grisettes, money-lenders, sheltering pedestrians, lawyer's office and boarding-house could not, it seems, have been featured in a provincial setting. Balzac, born and brought up in Touraine, understood the habits and workings of small-town life in a way he did not understand Paris. Though he

himself worked for two years in lawyers' offices in Paris, though he must have seen sheltering pedestrians and known grisettes, the choice of such subject-matter has to a large extent been dictated by the prevailing fashions exploited by caricature. Nor is this the end of the caricaturists' influence. There are the frequent portraits of dandies, "en gants et à paroles jaunes" ¹; dandies both Parisian (Maxime de Trailles ², Ajuda-Pinto ³, Ferdinand du Tillet ⁴, La Palférine ⁵) and provincial (Desiré Minoret-Levrault ⁶, Maxence Gilet ⁷)—though the provincial dandies are more frequently described; the best portrait of a Parisian dandy (Charles Grandet ⁸) describes him in the provinces. It is certainly not suggested that for inspiration in these descriptions Balzac used sheets of Gavarni's lithographs (such as plate 9)—not that he was averse, however, from using pictures as a visual stimulus and aid, if such help was needed ⁹. But he had, after all, met many dandies—and even had pretensions of being one himself! Here, as in the earlier examples of caricatural influence, the important aspect of the question is the way in which caricature guides Balzac's imagination along certain paths.

1 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 941.

2 Ibid., pp. 893-895.

3 Ibid., pp. 901-904.

4 Géner Birotteau; Pl. V, p. 498.

5 Un Prince de la Bohême; Pl. VI, p. 832.

6 Hercule Mironet; Pl. III, p. 302.

7 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 1,016.

8 Pl. III, pp. 508-512.

9 Correspondance II, p. 14. Cf. supra, p. 15.

Gavarni's lithographs also help to explain the key rôle played in the Comédie Humaine by these dandies' mistresses. More than in any other subject, he specialized in the portrayal of young, smartly dressed women of easy virtue, known at that time as lorettes after the Rue Notre-Dame-de-Lorette, on the right bank of the Seine, which they were in the habit of frequenting; "Les Lorettes" is the title of a series of seventy-nine of his lithographs published in Le Charivari in 1841. As M. Adhémar has observed ¹, many pages in Illusions Perdues seem to have been inspired by Gavarni's "harlots' progress": the characters of Florine ², Florentine ³, Tullia ³, Mariette ³ and Susanne du Val-Noble ³ in particular. But the influence of Gavarni's portraits of dissoluteness extends far beyond this particular novel. The courtesans of the whole Comédie Humaine—Malaga, Antonia, Carabine, Hortense, Fanny Beupré, Madame Schontz, Héloïse Brisetout; there are thirty or forty of them altogether—owe their very preponderance within Balzac's work to the trend which Gavarni did so much to set in motion. Moreover, in their actions, if not in their appearance, even Coralie ⁴, Esther Gobseck ⁵ and Josépha Mirah ⁶ are partly modelled on Gavarni's caricatures, though their Jewish ancestry suggests some resemblance to the beauty of Raphael's Madonnas ⁷. Such lithographs as "La Cantonade" (plate 10) show us not only the vogue of the theatre in Balzac's and Gavarni's day, but the type of high-class prostitute Balzac so often represents.

1 "Balzac et les images", Arts, 26 January 1951.

2 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 709. Cf. Une Fille d'Ève; Pl. II, pp. 103-105.

3 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 801.

4 Ibid., p. 721.

5 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, pp. 687-690.

6 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, pp. 143, 145.

7 Cf. infra, p. 164.

A final aspect of Gavarni's general influence upon the Comédie Humaine is that of "travestissements"—the title of one of his best collections of lithographs, published in 1832 and reviewed by Balzac¹. "Travestissements" are disguises, whether those of the quick-change artist in the theatre or those of the guest at a fancy-dress ball; and disguise is a recurrent theme in the Comédie Humaine. Balzac attached great importance to masks, mystery and secret associations: the secret association known as "The Thirteen", in Ferragus, La Duchesse de Langeais and La Fille aux Yeux d'Or; the equally secret association between Vautrin and the criminal underworld; the hidden pact between himself and Lucien de Rubempré, in Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; the proposed but abortive pact between Vautrin and Eugène; Vautrin disguised as a business man at the Pension Vauquer, and as a Spanish priest in Illusions Perdues and Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; the mask which Madame de Beauséant advises women to wear, and never let drop for a moment, if they wish not to be exploited in love²; the mask of feigned attachment worn by the young, calculating dandies exploiting them³. Much of this influence came, of course, from his parents: his early interest in the occult, imparted by his mother; the belief in telepathy derived from his father, together with the strong fascination of freemasonry (Bernard-François Balzac having belonged to the masonic lodge at Tours⁴). But to some extent this influence may have been reinforced by Gavarni's "Travestissements", whilst the masked ball at the opening of Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes⁵ seems definitely to have been inspired by them.

1 Cf. supra, p. 70, n. 1.

2 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 912.

3 Cf. my article, "Le Père Goriot: Notes Towards a Reassessment", Symposium, 1965, p. 109.

4 A. Maurois: Prométhée, ou la vie de Balzac, Paris 1965, p. 11.

5 Pl. V, pp. 654-670.

To deal now with more specific references to caricature: Gavarni, we are told in La Rabouilleuse¹, excels in portraying "la misère en haillens, la misère du peuple, la plus poétique d'ailleurs". Such lithographs as "Pas le Sol", in the series "Les Misères" of 1838, come to mind. Bixiou, the Gavarni of the Comédie Humaine just as his cousin Joseph Bridau is its Delacroix², observes the worthy tradesman Gazonal pacing up and down the room in which a series of hoaxes are being played: Gazonal

arpentait la salle où se trouvaient en ce moment une dizaine de personnes en y regardant tout d'un air que Bixiou gravait dans sa mémoire pour en faire une de ces célèbres caricatures avec lesquelles il lutte contre Gavarni³.

It has been impossible to establish which, if any, of Gavarni's lithographs Balzac is alluding to; yet this passage seems to point to a two-way traffic in the Comédie Humaine between visual inspiration and verbal reminiscence: Gavarni's (presumed) caricature inspiring the scene with Gazonal and the practical jokers; the fictional scene itself inspiring Bixiou to create a brilliantly "original" print with which to compete against Gavarni.

Finally, in La Cousine Bette the scene⁴ which breaks upon Montès's eyes as he and Cydalise find Valérie Marneffe and Wenceslas Steinbock in a rented "paradise"—Wenceslas lacing Valérie's stays—has strong overtones of Gavarni's evocations of the seamier side of Parisian life: a chambermaid, happening to open the door, on instructions from Madame Hourrisson,

découvrit un de ces charmants tableaux de genre, si souvent exposés au Salon, d'après Gavarni.

As with the Gazonal scene, this may or may not be a borrowing from an actual Gavarni. Certainly such amorous appointments were not as frequently depicted in the Salons as Balzac suggests. The important fact is that Montès is shown a Gavarni-like subject: the cuckold surprises his faithless mistress in flagrante delicto; so much of the action in La Cousine Bette is of a kind Gavarni could, or did, depict.

1 Pl. III, p. 929.

2 Cf. supra, p. 54.

3 Les Comédiens sans le savoir; Pl. VII, pp. 54-55.

4 Pl. VI, p. 495.

Daumier is an artist of whom Balzac knew not only from his brilliantly satirical work in La Caricature and Le Charivari but from illustrations to the Physiologie du Rentier de Paris et de Province, the Monographie de la Presse Parisienne and the Furne collective edition of the Comédie Humaine. "Il aimait Daumier", as H. Focillon has noted in a remarkable passage ¹,

il sentait sa grandeur, il reconnaissait en lui un génie fraternel, et l'égal des plus grands. De cette anatomie herculéenne, mue par un instinct supérieur de la grande forme, il disait: "Il y a du Michel-Ange là-dessous"...

Comme Daumier, il a déversé dans La Comédie humaine les êtres qui le hantaient et qui s'agitaient silencieusement en lui, en leur conférant une puissance de relief, une ardeur de vitalité qui ne sont pas celles des pâles humains, plus plats et plus gris...

L'on est étonné de la qualité daumièresque de certains de ses portraits et de ses paysages. Il suffit pour s'en convaincre de relire la première partie de la Fille aux yeux d'or, l'étonnante peinture d'un Paris aux façades de plâtre baignées à leur pied par des ruisseaux noirs, du passant athlétique, acharné à mille besognes et dont l'ostéologie noueuse a déformé la vêtue, devenue, à force d'usage, cagneuse et gibbeuse comme l'homme qui l'habite...

Il n'est pas jusqu'à la prose du grand écrivain qui, dans son deuil monochrome, rarement éclairé d'une touche de couleur, ne fasse penser au blanc et noir du grand artiste...

The very captions of his lithographs recall the sayings of some of Balzac's characters: "mais pourrai-je emmener la petite?" ³, "d'abord, je suis royaliste, j'ai été blessé à Saint-Roch en vendémiaire..." ⁴, and the like.

Le baron Hulot est un Daumier, Birotteau est un Daumier, et Vautrin, sous ses déguisements de faux brave homme et d'abbé diplomate, l'est aussi...

But Daumier's lithographs do not seem to have influenced Balzac in his depiction of the poverty of young men and artists ⁵, nor even of Philippe Bridau's poverty ⁶, to which Balzac has still added the glow of a certain poetic feeling. For Daumier, poverty is grim and

1 H. Focillon: "Visionnaires: Balzac et Daumier", Essays in Honor of Albert Fouillerat, New Haven 1943, p. 206.

2 Ibid., p. 205.

3 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 519.

4 César Birotteau; Pl. V, p. 329.

5 Cf. infra, p. 215.

6 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 928-930.

constricting and utterly lacking in the picturesqueness with which the young Romantics liked to invest it. But the scenes of grinding poverty in Balzac's later years, especially in Les Paysans¹ and La Cousine Bette², may owe something to Daumier's influence. Daumier may, in other words, have furthered Balzac's tendency towards naturalism.

With Charlet the marks of inspiration are more clearly in evidence. Balzac, like most of his contemporaries, had experienced the spell of his evocations of the Napoleonic saga. Charlet is another of those lithographers, like Gavarni, Devéria and Johannot, who can convey the poetry of poverty, and Balzac mentions this specifically in relation to the portrait of Philippe Bridau³. Traces of his impact can be seen in the poverty of a crowd of pedestrians sheltering from a shower of rain⁴, the description of fetid streets in Farragus⁵ and L'Interdiction⁶, and the portraits of Fourchon (in Les Paysans⁷) and Madame Gruget (in La Rabouilleuse⁸). The case of Madame Gruget is especially interesting, for not only has she already played an important part in Farragus, a novel in which Charlet's inspiration is apparent, but again we are presented in La Rabouilleuse with Bixiou sketching (as perhaps in Les Comédiens sans le savoir) a character from a lithographer's album. Poupillier, the sham beggar around whose immense fortune the plot of the unfinished Les Petits Bourgeois seems (partly, at least) to have been destined to turn, is also inspired by Charlet⁹.

Besides poetic poverty, however, Charlet also depicts the Philistinism of the wealthy upper middle-class: Philistinism epitomized in Balzac's work by the Vervelles. We can almost imagine it is M. Vervelle himself talking to Pierre Grassou when the following caption accompanies Charlet's lithograph of "Un Mécène", published in 1840:

"Je veux un petit tableau meublant!... livré fin de mois avec garantie... 1 mètre 22 centimètres sur 95 centimètres... un centimètre de plus, je ne le prends pas... puis vous me rallongerez mon dernier... je paie comptant, déduction de l'escompte à 6... vous me traiterez bien?... n'est-ce pas?..."

1 Cf. Pl. VIII, pp. 41-57.

2 Cf. Pl. VI, pp. 510-511.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 929.

4 Farragus; Pl. V, p. 39. Cf. Pl. III, pp. 27-28.

5 Pl. V, p. 38.

6 Pl. III, pp. 17-18.

7 Pl. VIII, p. 34.

8 Pl. III, p. 1,109.

9 Pl. VII, p. 222.

But the aspect of Charlet's work by which he is best remembered—the social and personal repercussions of the age of Napoleon—means equally as much to Balzac as his portraits of simple poverty or purblind Philistinism, for Balzac was as ardent an admirer of the Emperor as anyone in his generation. Charles Mignon's two young daughters, Bettina and Modeste, are entrusted to the care of his chief cashier and confidential adviser Dumay, whilst he goes off to remake his fortune; Dumay's solicitude for the two girls cannot be better described than with reference to one of the most touching of Charlet's lithographs, "Le Gamin éminemment et profondément national"¹:

Dumay aime ces deux petites par l'effet de cette sympathie, si bien rendue par Charlet, qui rend le soldat père de tout enfant!²

That Balzac was able to deepen and enhance his portraits and characters in this way was, of course, only possible because of the general familiarity with Charlet's work. (Dutocq, in Les Employés³, is a zealous collector of his lithographs, of which indeed he is trying to build up a complete collection. One of the guests at the Taillefer banquet in La Peau de Chagrin⁴ says that he would gladly exchange forty years' heranguing in Parliament for a well cooked trout, a Perrault fairy tale or a sketch by Charlet: a sign that the latter's work had come into greater favour with the July Revolution. Émile Blondet familiarly quotes the title of a Charlet lithograph in Illusions Perdues⁵; in 1821.) Thanks to this widespread appreciation of Charlet, Balzac can lend clarity to his portrait of Julie d'Aiglemont's children Hélène and Charles; Charles and his uterine sister are playing together on the banks of the river Bièvre, shortly before Hélène pushes him into the river where he drowns:

à deux reprises son jeune frère était venu lui offrir, avec une grâce touchante, avec un joli regard, avec une mine expressive qui eût ravi Charlet, le petit cor de chasse dans lequel il soufflait par instants .

How appropriate this reference to Charlet is, in view of the highly charged, sentimental atmosphere, with this love-child and his vindictive sister!

1 At the same time, Balzac could also have had "C't' Hardiesse" and "La Petite école du Soldat" in mind.

2 Pl. I, p. 374.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 927, 975, 989.

4 Pl. IX, p. 55.

5 Pl. IV, p. 740.

6 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 778.

Lastly, there is one reference in the Comédie Humaine to Charlet's nocturnal subjects, actually few and far between in the corpus of his work. Describing Bianchon's and Granville's chance meeting, at night, in the Rue de Gaillon, Balzac says that a writer would need to have the pencil of Charlet and Callot and the brush of Teniers and Rembrandt, in order to describe it adequately¹. It is not too easy to say exactly which lithographs of Charlet Balzac is here alluding to, nor would it have been any easier for his readers in 1842. Perhaps it was such disparate works as "L'Embascade", "Bonaparte Factionnaire" and "Les Grottes d'Osselles", although this was definitely not a genre in which Charlet either excelled or was particularly interested.

A somewhat different influence was exerted upon Balzac by Henry Monnier, who was perhaps primarily a writer. Yet he was also an illustrator, constantly seizing upon human vanities and foibles, and delighting above all to lampoon the inanities of middle-class life; he was the Bixiou of mid-nineteenth century France². The parallelism between Monsieur Joseph Prudhomme (plate 19) and Balzac's Philistines has already been indicated; this archetypal bourgeois, not only drawn but written about by Monnier, exerted so great an impact upon his contemporaries that Daumier also drew a caricature of him, whilst Balzac repeatedly thought of him as the subject of a play³. In that much underrated novel Les Employés Monnier, alias Bixiou, is in his element: for not only does Bixiou play a key rôle in the story, clearly modelled on Monnier in that Monnier worked for a time in the civil service, but the irreverence of Monnier/Bixiou towards the civil service has also communicated itself to Balzac. Hence the Prudhomme-like figure of Phellion. Hence, too, something which Balzac never attempted in any other novel: the satire of professional incompetence in a whole body of men against whom Rabourdin stands out in vivid contrast. And when, on seven different occasions in the novel, Bixiou and his colleagues break out into sheer dialogue, we see that Monnier has also infected Balzac with his sense of dramatic fun.

1 Une Double Famille; Pl. I, p. 989. Cf. infra, pp. 104, 135, 288.

2 E. Melcher: The Life and Times of Henry Monnier, 1799-1877, Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1950, pp. 170-173.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 260; 18 October 1834. Lettres à Madame Hanska II, pp. 44, 376, 379, 387, 402; 20 January 1842, 10, 14, 20 February, 11 March 1844. Had Balzac written the comedy, he hoped Monnier himself would play the title part.

But quite apart from Bixiou, Prudhomme and the early collection of "Grisettes" lithographs (with their probable influence upon the characters of Ida Gruget, Fanny Malvaut and Caroline Crochard), there is another constructive link between Monnier and Balzac. The scheming landlady Madame Cibot, in Le Cousin Pons, is indebted to Monnier's various portraits of viragos. Describing the horrors of matrimony, a character in Petites Misères de la vie conjugale goes so far as to exclaim¹:

il vaut mieux rester deux heures sans boire, à l'agonie, assassiné de paroles testamentaires par une garde-malade comme celle que Henri Monnier met si cruellement en scène dans sa terrible peinture des derniers moments d'un célibataire!

Clearly, there is an imaginative debt to Monnier's "La Garde-Malade", where the dying bachelor is subjected to a ceaseless stream of abuse and cajolery from his housekeeper, Madame Bergeret². No less than with Prudhomme, however, the reminiscence may have been visual as well as literary: the sight of some sketch, drawing or lithograph in Monnier's studio³. Did Balzac's mistress and housekeeper at Passy, Madame de Brugnol, question and bully him as to his will? Her hectoring manner on other topics certainly seems to have given rise to the character of Flore Brazier, in La Rabouilleuse, and even to La Cousine Bette. But it is doubtful whether she ever subjected her employer to an "attaque ad testamentum"⁴, as happens in Le Cousin Pons; for there was little likelihood of Balzac's dying in the early 1840s and, though a bachelor, he was well endowed with relatives and friends. For the merciless harrying of Le Cousin Pons the obvious prototype is supplied by Monnier, of whose sharp sketch Balzac was aware, since he pointedly refers to it in Petites Misères de la vie conjugale.

1 Pl. X, p. 933.

2 Scènes populaires, vol. II, Paris 1835, pp. 165-218.

3 Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, p. 114.

4 Pl. VI, p. 659.

Far more than in the fact that Balzac evokes Charlet in an attempt to convey the poetic darkness of night, the essential influence of caricature upon the Comédie Humaine is that it seems to have predisposed Balzac towards certain types of subject-matter. Gobseck and Ida Gruget are not copied from Gavarni in minutest detail, but the concept of L'Usurier and La Grisette narquoise is almost a transposition into words of the visual concept underlying Monnier's "Grisettes" and Gavarni's "Physionomie de la Population de Paris". Dandies abound in the earlier novels of the Comédie Humaine because they abound in Gavarni's lithographs. Monnier's picture of a dying bachelor and his sicknurse is paralleled in Le Cousin Pons. A similar correspondence of subject-matter explains the presence of so many lozettes in the Comédie Humaine; a number far out of proportion to their true importance in the Paris of the Restoration and July Monarchy. Did Tullia and Mariette really have such a say in the corridors of power as Balzac seems to imagine? ¹ The Comédie Humaine was probably led by caricature into exaggerating the influence of lozettes, in the desire that they should not merely be decorative but also functional to the plot.

1 Cf. La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 1,093, 1,097.

V: TRADITIONAL FRENCH PAINTING

Foremost amongst French painters of the past, so far as Balzac is concerned, is Poussin—and not only because of his prominent rôle in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. In the confrontation with Porbus and Frenhofer, Poussin represents the painting of the future—of whatever country, for art knows no boundaries. The charismatic power of Mabuse, whose gifts as a painter Balzac (under Gautier's influence) probably overrated, is transmitted—as in an apostolic succession—to Poussin as he watches Frenhofer correcting the narrow academicism of Porbus's "Marie égyptienne". The young man can then apply what he has learned to his own art, and also hand it on to posterity. So great is Poussin's ambition to penetrate the utmost secrets of his art that he is even ready to insist that Gillette, his mistress, should pose naked for Frenhofer. Only by the sacrifice of his love—for, posing at his behest, Gillette never belongs to him again—can he attain his true stature as an artist ¹.

Poussin is the "Raphaël de la France" ². His importance as a landscape painter is only to be compared with that of Claude, Hobbema, Ruysdael and (in Balzac's own day, and his own fictional world) Léon de Lora ³. Yet he is not merely a landscape painter. His pure Classicism is such that the (highly stylized) treatment of landscape is perfectly subordinated to the portrayal of human figures, themselves liberated—as are the characters in a Racinian drama—from the confinements of space and time. An important passage in Les Paysans ² brings out very forcefully the fact that Poussin was not primarily a landscapist in the sense that, say, Ruysdael or Richard Wilson were, and gives us Balzac's considered view on the techniques of landscape painting. Sitting at the door of her cottage, Madame Michaud lends human interest and beauty to the landscape around her; but, says Balzac, this scene would lose its beauty if a landscape

1 Cf. infra, pp. 297-301.

2 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, pp. 155-156.

3 Un Début dans la Vie; Pl. I, p. 656.

artist were to transfer it to canvas. By concentrating on the landscape, and making Madame Michaud an accessory, the subtle harmony existing between her and the trees, fields and sky around her would somehow be destroyed. Nature and Art have their different laws. Only by subordinating the landscape to the human figure, as for example in Poussin's "Shepherds of Arcady", can the fine balance between landscape and human being be maintained. (Or else, of course, the painter must simply delineate the landscape itself with no human beings present in it. This, which was never Poussin's objective, still less Claude's, was no more an objective of Hobbema or Ruysdael.)

Balzac's comments on landscape art deserve to be quoted at some length. Madame Michaud

ajoutait au paysage un intérêt humain qui le complétait et qui dans la réalité est si touchant, que certains peintres ont par erreur essayé de le transporter dans leurs tableaux. Ces artistes oublient que l'esprit d'un pays, quand il est bien rendu par eux, est si grandiose qu'il écrase l'homme, tandis qu'une semblable scène est, dans la nature, toujours en proportion avec le personnage par le cadre dans lequel l'oeil du spectateur le circonscrit. quand le Poussin... a fait du paysage un accessoire dans ses "Bergers d'Arcadie", il avait bien deviné que l'homme devient petit et misérable, lorsque dans une toile la nature est le principal.

Balzac even seems to exclude the small genre figures who bestrew the landscapes not only of Avercamp, Altdorfer and "Velvet" Breughel (for whom, in any case, he had no particular liking), but of Claude, Hobbema and even Poussin himself! One has only to consult "The Four Seasons"¹, the "Landscape with Polyphemus"² or "Diogenes throwing away his Bowl"³ to see that Balzac's theory is invalidated. Poussin,

1 As a young man, Balzac could have viewed "Autumn" and "Winter" at the Louvre (Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, nos. 103, 96). "Spring" and "Summer", less highly regarded, were not then on show.

2 Diderot bought this painting in 1772 on behalf of Catherine the Great, and Balzac, at the time of writing Les Paysans, could already have seen it on his visit to the Hermitage in 1843.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 125.

particularly in his later years, did paint landscapes with subordinate human figures, though with his passion for allegory and mythology he would hardly have considered these paintings as landscapes himself. Nor are these "landscapes" unsuccessful, judged by any standard, however arbitrary: not even the "Landscape with Blind Orion", with its human figures on two scales. Why should the artist's eye be less capable of striking a harmony between a landscape and one or more human figures than the eye of the average beholder? If anything, the reverse is to be expected. Balzac's theory has something schematic about it. It seems to have been based largely, if not exclusively, on "The Shepherds of Arcady"¹; not on a careful study of the whole of Poussin's work, or even of those paintings which were accessible to him at the Louvre and the Hermitage.

Poussin's "Déluge" (or "Winter")² Balzac has certainly seen, though it does not appear to have taught him the full competence of Poussin as a landscape artist; Balzac refers to this work in Massimilla Doni³, where the heroine maintains that in Rossini's "Mosè" the scene of the invocation of Jehovah "est beau comme le "Déluge" de votre grand Poussin". And in the fragmentary novel Aventures administratives d'une idée heureuse⁴, Lemblerville, with his brown flowing hair and noble forehead, is said to have "une figure à la Poussin". Perhaps Balzac once again has the later version of "The Shepherds of Arcady" in mind⁵, which he must certainly have seen from about 1815, or else perhaps an engraving of "The Inspiration of the Poet"—for it is difficult to see how Balzac could have come into contact with the picture itself, which at that time formed part of Thomas Hope's celebrated collection at Deepdene, near Dorking, Surrey⁶. The

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 122.

2 Ibid., no. 96.

3 Pl. IX, p. 359.

4 Pl. X, p. 1,168.

5 The earlier version is in the possession of the Duke of Devonshire.

6 It had previously been in the Hope family's gallery in Amsterdam (cf. J.G.A. Forster: Voyage philosophique et pittoresque sur les rives du Rhin, Paris 1795, vol. II, pp. 396-410). Henry Hope, the brother of Thomas, was the celebrated "Happe" of Amsterdam (La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, pp. 550, 562).

charioted figure of Flore, in "Le Triomphe de Flore"¹, is likely to have inspired the portrait of Flore Brazier²—although Balzac does not say so in so many words. (He does, however, use the words: "le triomphe de Flore"³.)

The only person in the Comédie Humaine fortunate enough to own any of his works is the Antiquary, in Le Peau de Chagrin (1831). Several of the artist's paintings are in the upper room of the Antiquary's shop⁴, alongside Rembrandts, Velázquez and Claudes; but Poussins are never featured outside this early—and very magical—setting. In La Rabouilleuse⁵, we descend (so far as Poussin and magic⁶ are concerned) from the sublime to the ridiculous. Flore Brazier, trying to prove that Joseph dishonestly and disingenuously accepted his uncle's offer of the thirty-nine paintings, informs the young man that only twenty miles from Issoudun, at Bourges, there is said to be a Poussin:

on vient de nous dire à Bourges qu'il y a un petit poulet, comment donc? un Poussin qui était avant la Révolution dans le Choeur de la cathédrale, et qui vaut à lui seul trente mille francs...

Perhaps this was painted during the arduous journey from Poitou to Paris around 1618? But even this shred of information would seem to be inaccurate, for there does not appear ever to have been a Poussin at Bourges Cathedral⁷.

Claude, Balzac probably realizes, can much more properly be termed a landscape painter than Poussin. In the old Antiquary's treasure chamber, Raphaël de Valentin sees "plusieurs tableaux du Poussin", but "quelques ravissants paysages de Claude Lorrain"⁴. In Les Comédiens sans le savoir⁸, Léon de Lora is the rival of Hobbema, Ruysdael and Claude;

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 118.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 979-980.

3 Ibid., p. 1,018.

4 Pl. IX, p. 28. Cf. A 177, vol. I, p. 84.

5 Pl. III, p. 1,029.

6 Cf. pp. 55-56, 266.

7 I am most grateful to the Vicar-General of Bourges Cathedral for the following assurance: "les ouvrages sur la cathédrale de Bourges édités avant la Révolution ne signalent pas de tableau de Poussin".

8 Pl. VII, p. 11.

Balzac does not mention Poussin. (Admittedly, in Un Début dans la Vie¹ Schinner includes Poussin with Hobbema, Ruysdael and Claude in the list of eminent landscapists of whom Mistigris is a worthy successor.)

Sylvain Pons, by far the most discriminating collector in the Comédie Humaine, owns a Claude², one of the four pictures taken by Rémonencq as the old man is dying. Out of the musician's total of sixty or so paintings (the evidence is conflicting as to their number³), the Claude is therefore amongst the eight most important—Magus himself, of course, having appropriated the four gems of the gallery. But no other collector besides Pons owns a Claude, as far as we can tell—though Balzac is not always very forthcoming about the contents of his collectors' galleries and it is almost certain, for instance, that Magus's collection must have contained at least one specimen before he appropriated Pons's Claude. For Balzac, as for Keats⁴, Claude seems to have evoked the beauty of

... magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn,

but Balzac, whose outlook on the world (although frequently reminding us of a vision or a hallucination) was nevertheless more practical and down to earth than that of Ode to a Nightingale, does not seem ever to have come close to Claude or to have carried over into the Comédie Humaine any of the images, postures or attitudes of "A Seaport at Sunset"⁵, "Cleopatra Landing at Tarsus"⁶, etc.: their sunlit settings, noble retinues and Bambocciesque genre figures simply do not have a place in Balzac's imaginative scheme. Furthermore, in common with his contemporaries, Balzac—regardless of artistic technique—seems always to have viewed Claude through something of a reverential haze, never subjecting him to the close scrutiny he was to receive from Ruskin⁷ only ten or twenty years later.

1 Pl. I, p. 656.

2 Pl. VI, p. 716.

3 Ibid., pp. 594, 595, 600, 650.

4 Cf. I. R. J. Jack: Keats and the Mirror of Art, Oxford 1967, pp. 127-130.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 64.

6 Ibid., no. 60.

7 Modern Painters, vol. III, London 1856, pp. 325-329; vol. V, London 1860, pp. 249-252.

Gaspard Dughet, Poussin's brother-in-law and pupil and the landscape painter who attempted (with some success) to combine Claude's principles with his master's, also receives notice. Josépha Mirah owns two Gaspards¹. The vogue for his works had by then begun to decline (the height of his popularity having been reached about 1760), but Josépha, for whom pictures are little more than decorative ornaments or prestigious status symbols, followed well behind in the wake of fashion; furthermore, admirers—casting around their collections for a suitable gift—may wisely have presented her with them.

Other than with Callot², Balzac's familiarity with the seventeenth-century school is fairly tenuous. The only names to which he makes direct reference are Lebrun, Mignard and Largillière. And the reference to the latter is perfunctory in the extreme: Césarine Birotteau, we are told,

avait le nez retroussé de son père, mais rendu spirituel par la finesse du modelé, semblable à celui des nez essentiellement français, si bien réussis chez Largillière³.

In view of Largillière's minor status within the French school at all times since the seventeenth century, it is perhaps remarkable that Balzac should have paid attention to him at all.

Lebrun is in a different situation. Not only was he a practitioner of the "style noble", he was its principal exponent and apologist in France in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Balzac could not have failed to see Lebrun's prestigious decorations at Versailles, and his innumerable portraits of the Court of Louis XIV. We know, from direct personal references to it, that he was familiar with the painting of "Alexander entering Babylon", which he may have seen at the Louvre as early as 1816⁴. On the walls of Madame de Rouville's dining-room hang "des

1 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

2 Cf. infra, pp. 287-289.

3 Pl. V, p. 388.

4 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 17.

estampes représentant les batailles d'Alexandre par Lebrun" ¹; the hunchback Butscha observes Maître Latournelle, foiled in his attempt to identify Modeste Mignon's suspected (but, alas! all too imaginary) lover, no less triumphantly than Alexander the Great surveys the scene of the greatest victory in his career ². Moreover, amongst the treasures of the abbé Chapeloud's apartment, perhaps the most precious of all is "un Christ de Lebrun" ³--inspired either by the paintings of Our Lord displayed in the galleries of the Louvre ⁴ or else a preparatory sketch, or a replica, of the famous "Christ surrounded by Angels", painted by Lebrun for what had been Marie de' Medici's private oratory at the Louvre.

Mignard, the rival of Lebrun both as Court painter and theoretician, occupies an even smaller place than his rival in the scheme of the Comédie Humaine, there being no reference to him outside La Cousine Bette ⁵. And even this reference is puzzling: Montès has given Carabine what is alleged to be a Raphael, but in Madame Hourrisson's view (or rather, according to hearsay) it may well be a Mignard; but, whichever artist painted the picture, it is as pretty as a Girodet. To keep women and procuresses distinctions between different artists and schools of painting admittedly mean little, and Balzac is very probably being ironical in the kind of hearsay ("l'on m'a dit que les Raphaël étaient tout noirs") to which Madame Nourrisson gives credence. For whereas Lebrun advocated the traditional theories of disegno, Mignard supported colourism and practised it (as far as he dared) in his painting; how, then, could he be confused with Raphael and Girodet, whose strong point is emphatically not colour? The probability of Balzac's irony is confirmed in a deleted reference to Mignard in La Rabouilleuse, where the "deux tableaux d'église de Rubens" ⁶ in Jean-Jacques Rouget's collection were originally "deux tableaux de Mignard" ⁷. Mignard and Roger de Piles were the champions of Rubens, as against Poussin.

1 La Bourgeoise; Pl. I, p. 336.

2 Pl. I, p. 387.

3 La Cité de Tours; Pl. III, p. 792.

4 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, nos. 10, 11, 12, 13.

5 Pl. VI, p. 492.

6 Pl. III, p. 965.

7 A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67.

Balzac has a deeper interest in the eighteenth century, and in this he is something of a pioneer¹. One representative of the century actually features in the Comédie Humaine: J.-M. Vien is portrayed as a friend of the sculptor Sarrasine², but his part in the story is merely episodic. The young sculptor's statue of the eunuch, Zambinella, with whom he had been in love, is copied by Vien³ towards the end of the latter's life, and long after the events described in Sarrasine have taken place; and it is this Adonis-like picture which serves to introduce the story within a story⁴ of the early life of "cette créature sans nom dans le langage humain"⁵, once beloved of Sarrasine.

It comes as no surprise, on examining the serialization and first published edition of the novel⁶, to find that Balzac originally intended to make Girodet, not Vien, the painter of the marble statue copied from Sarrasine's original. Vien, however, who lived two generations before Girodet, would still have had a place in the novel as one of the boon companions whom Sarrasine asks to help him abduct the "woman" he loves. As it is, Vien's portrait of La Zambinella inspires Girodet's "Endymion"³. Here, as in Séraphita⁷, is the hermaphroditic mystery which, to Balzac's mind, underlies aspects at least of artistic creation. Why is Vien chosen as the painter of the hermaphrodite? Is it the mere accident that the Lanty family happened to commission from him the copy of a statue they happened to like? Do such accidents occur in Balzac's fictive universe? Or does the reason lie in Balzac's personal assessment of the meaning and tenor of Vien's achievement? If the reference to him occurs for the latter reason, it is difficult to share Balzac's assessment of Vien, whose painting of "Adonis étendu sur une peau de lion"⁴ is imaginary in any case. No convincing reason has yet been advanced why Balzac should have attributed to him the subject of one of the most famous statues in the Uffizi, "Hermaphrodite on a Lion-Skin"—unless, indeed, it was because of the prominence of Vien's name in Diderot's Salon de 1767, with its long excursus on human and ideal beauty⁸.

1 Cf. infra, p. 273.

2 Pl. VI, p. 107.

3 Ibid., p. 110. Cf. supra, pp. 35-36.

4 Pl. VI, p. 90.

5 Ibid., p. 87.

6 Revue de Paris, 28 November 1830, p. 251. Romans et Contes Philoconhiques, Paris 1831, vol. II, pp. 275, 319. Cf. supra, p. 36.

7 Cf. infra, pp. 227-228.

8 J.-J. Semnoz: "Diderot et Sarrasine", Diderot Studies, vol. IV, Geneva 1963, pp. 240, 243-244.

By name at least, there is only one other reference to Vien in the Comédia Humaine; and it is merely an incidental one. "Peyrade", we are told ¹, "avait formé Corentin, comme Vien forma David; mais l'élève surpassa promptement le maître". Balzac's work abounds in such incidental and not always irrelevant ² allusions. Asides like this show how real to Balzac the lives and works of artists actually were.

Of all the eighteenth-century painters, Balzac was most deeply in sympathy with Watteau. He seems to have had a lesser regard for Greuze, whose faults--Schinner tells Grassou ³--were only redeemed by qualities in which Fougères is lacking. Watteau is not merely admired for his paintings, but also for the fact that a great deal of porcelain (including some which was Balzac's own ⁴) is decorated with motifs from his principal work. Balzac was undoubtedly proud of his own share, however exiguous, in the glories of Watteau's art; especially so towards the end of his life. (We do not know when the Watteau tea services, goblets and enamel caskets were bought, but it was almost certainly in the mid or late 1840s, perhaps under the influence of Meret or Edmond Hédouin.)

Some references to Watteau are purely episodic. Thus, in Les Méfaits d'un procureur du roi ⁵,

ce Hervandieu (unnamed) avait son salon, comme à Paris on a un Greuze, un Watteau, un meuble de François Ier, un Raphaël.

In La Femme Auteux ⁶, Achille de Malvaux hangs a Watteau on the wall of his antechamber. But, in the major novels, Balzac's use of Watteau is more pointed and meaningful.

1 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 755.

2 Cf. supra, p. 47.

3 Pl. VI, p. 118.

4 A 329, folios 4 recto, 11 recto, 17 verso.

5 Pl. X, p. 1,076.

6 Pl. XI, p. 108.

Two of Watteau's paintings decorate Josépha Mirah's drawing-room, in La Cousine Bette¹. Josépha's collection is characterized by its faintly decadent eighteenth-century opulence and voluptuousness, for—with Carabine, Florine, La Schontz and the rest—she has inherited the mantle of Madame de Châteauroux, Madame de Pompadour and Madame du Barry.

Pons, too, owns a Watteau; not a picture, but a fan painted by the artist². A study of the proof-sheets of Le Cousin Pons reveals a strange indecision on Balzac's part³, for originally Pons's gift to his cousin and hostess Madame de Marville was to have been a crucifix carved by Girardon⁴. An alteration to the proofs transformed the crucifix into a fan painted by Lancret⁴, a pupil and imitator of Watteau; and only some time later, correcting the same proof-sheet a second time, does he finally upgrade the fan by substituting Watteau's own name for his pupil's. (Balzac disregards the fact that, in so doing, he is perpetrating a serious anachronism! Louis XV had ordered the fan as a present for Madame de Pompadour, yet Watteau died when the King was aged eleven. At Lancret's death in 1743, Louis was thirty-three. But the liaison with La Pompadour did not begin until almost eighteen months later; here, too, there would have been an inconsistency³.) And for exactly the same reason, the Présidente de Marville—who, as a girl, had been one of Servin's most talented pupils⁵—is made so ignorant as to be unaware of Watteau's name, let alone any of his individual works. But the text of Le Cousin Pons had

1 Pl. VI, p. 200.

2 Curiously enough, a Watteau design for a fan leaf was bought by the British Museum in 1965. It is the only known example of a water-colour by Watteau, and formerly belonged to Coypel. Cf. S. Blondel: Histoire des éventails chez tous les peuples et à toutes les époques, Paris 1875, pp. 118-119.

3 Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, pp. 123-124.

4 A 47, fol. 133.

5 La Vendetta; Pl. I, p. 867.

originally reads: "elle ne connaissait pas le nom de Girardon"¹, and later: "... de Lancret". Even so, there is an unintended logic in Madame de Marville's ignorance of the works of Lancret and Watteau, whilst on the other hand her contemporary Josépha Mirah is filling her house with the gracious vestiges of the eighteenth century. Mutatis mutandis, Josépha is carrying the previous century's charm and elegance on into the brash post-Revolutionary world of the first Industrial Revolution, the world to which Guizot had addressed the clarion cry: "Enrichissez-vous!" Madame de Marville, "âpre et sèche comme une brosse"², belongs wholly and utterly to this new world. She has entirely forsworn such culture as she had been able to imbibe as a young woman³.

Her cousin Sylvain Pons, on the other hand, like the Chevalier de Valois or the Vidame de Pamiers, has never ceased to belong to the eighteenth century. Or, at the very latest, to the early years of the Empire. And, although she does not know it, this is why Madame de Marville despises him. "J'ai l'esprit de connaître Lancret, Pater, Watteau, Greuze", he confesses to Cécile⁴. Fingering the rarities of a bygone age, rejoicing over the varied beauties of Dresden, Sèvres and Frankental porcelain, haggling with antique-dealers over a bonheur-du-jour, a snuff-box, a miniature or a Watteau fan, he relives the recollections of his youth. Out of the treasures of the stately castles of the ancien

1 A 47, fol. 133. Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", p. 124.

2 Pl. VI, p. 551.

3 A further but closely related reason for her ignorance is, of course, the neglect of eighteenth-century art during the first half of the nineteenth century. "Dans l'atelier de David, on a peint des figures d'étude sur des toiles de Watteau" (E. Cheneau: op.cit., p. 77). Madame de Marville may well have heard of Lancret, Pater, Watteau, Greuze when a pupil in Servin's studio, but she lacks the delicacy of taste to appreciate these artists--and, in any case, is a child of the nineteenth century, sharing its prejudices. Thus, the appreciation of different schools of art becomes deeply symbolic of character.

4 Pl. VI, p. 550.

régime, dispersed at the Revolution ¹ and hawked by junk-dealers in Paris in the ensuing years, Pons—a lesser Lord Hertford—has lovingly built up a microcosm of the grace and elegance of the eighteenth century; and Watteau is the quintessence of this elegance.

In Les Paysans ², like Bette and Pons another novel of the 1840s, Watteau inspires the portrait of Madame Soudry:

quand elle sortait, madame Soudry tenait sur sa tête le vrai parasol du XVIIIe siècle, c'est-à-dire une canne au haut de laquelle se déployait une ombrelle verte à franges vertes. De dessus la terrasse, quand elle s'y promenait, un passant, en la regardant de très loin, aurait cru voir marcher une figure de Watteau.

This is the only acknowledged indebtedness to Watteau, so far as the creation of scenes and characters is concerned. The portrait reminds one of Watteau's "Assemblée dans un Parc", or "Automne", but not exclusively of Watteau. Paintings by J.-H. Fragonard or even certain creations of Carlo Vanloo and François Boucher also come to mind. Balzac seems to have had an amalgam of these painters' works before his eyes. Watteau's "L'Indifférent" is, maybe, an inspiration to him when he is creating the Chevalier de Valois ³; but so, probably, are male figures in many other paintings by Watteau, particularly his alfresco parties. In the hands of another artist, such as Balzac, there cannot help but be a blurring of the outlines of the original portrait: "un passant, en la regardant de très loin, aurait cru voir marcher une figure de Watteau".

1 These treasures were not always hawked in Paris, although many were (cf. Pl. VI, p. 532). Rouget's collection (Pl. III, p. 965) consists of the remains of churches and monastic foundations of the ancien régime; the fortunes of Goriot (Pl. II, pp. 919-922), Grandet (Pl. III, pp. 483-486) and Sauviat (Pl. VIII, pp. 538-540) were amassed in the landslide that followed the Revolution of 1789, but we are not told that they acquired pictures or fine furniture out of the plunder of old castles, churches and monasteries—although they perhaps did.

2 Pl. VIII, p. 224.

3 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, pp. 210-213. In view of Watteau's celebrated "Embarkation for Cythera" (Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 233), the reference to the "cour de Cythère" (Pl. IV, p. 211) is no coincidence.

For Balzac, therefore, Watteau summed up the spirit of the eighteenth century even in the days before Moret and Hédouin brought him to a fuller sense of Watteau's artistic merit. Balzac's admiration of Greuze was more subject to reservation. A very early reference to him is to be found in La Peau de Chagrin¹: tracing the full social horror of debt, Raphaël de Valentin illustrates his argument by pointing out that, if he borrowed M money, it could well turn out that his creditors were "un vivant tableau de Greuze, ... un paralytique environné d'enfants, ... la veuve d'un soldat, qui me tendront des mains suppliantes". Here, the paintings to which Balzac would seem to be referring are "The Paralytic", at Leningrad, and "The Inconsolable Widow", in the Wallace Collection. Pierre Grassou's faults as a painter, his friend Schinner tells him², are the same as Greuze's, but unredeemed by the latter's qualities. Balzac does not go on to explain, in so many words, what he believes Greuze's deficiencies to be: judging from Grassou's own work, we may surmise that they are unimaginativeness, sentimentality and even faultiness of construction. Grassou's first contribution to the hanging-committee of the Salon of 1819 is "une noce de village, assez péniblement copiée d'après le tableau de Greuze"³—an evident reference to the Louvre painting, which Balzac could have seen as early as 1816⁴. Grassou's pastiche is turned down by the committee. It seems that Balzac had no high opinion of Greuze in 1839.

He thinks more highly of him when writing Les Parents Pauvres, for which reversal of opinion Moret, the picture-restorer who is busily at work on Balzac's acquisitions in 1846, and Edmond Hédouin are responsible. Balzac himself owns a Greuze⁵—or so Moret tells

1 A 177, vol. II, p. 73. Pl. IX, p. 154.

2 Pl. VI, p. 118.

3 Ibid., p. 117.

4 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 69: "L'Accordée de Village".

5 A 329, fol. 14, verso.

him!¹ The references to Greuze become appreciably warmer. Josépha Mirah is endowed with two of his paintings, in La Cousine Bette². Pons is a fervent admirer, and collector, of his works; and, thanks to his ingrained shrewdness, he is able to buy them for a mere pittance³. In the first description of Pons's museum, his Greuzes are mentioned by name⁴. We even know that he owned at least two, for a Greuze is one of the four pictures abstracted by Rémonencq whilst Pons is still alive⁵, and later, Pons, who has a presentiment that something is amiss with the collection, notices that in place of Sebastiano del Piombo's "Chevalier de Malte en prières" a Greuze portrait has been substituted⁶. Achille de Malvaux is also given a Greuze, in La Femme autour⁷.

Balzac also pays considerable attention to Boucher and Quentin de La Tour. The elegant grace of their portraits evidently attracted him. Bonheurs-du-jour from aristocratic castles⁸, camafoux at Montcornet's Château des Aigues⁹, and Madame Soudry's ivory fan¹⁰ are all decorated with motifs by Boucher, and even the furniture in Madame de Granville's drawing-room shows traces of his inspiration¹¹. Pastels by La Tour grace Sylvain Pons's museum¹², the old Antiquary's shop¹³ and the

1 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, pp. 290, 292-293; 23, 25 July 1846.

2 Pl. VI, p. 200.

3 Ibid., p. 531.

4 Ibid., p. 592.

5 Ibid., p. 716.

6 Ibid., p. 722.

7 Pl. XI, p. 108.

8 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 554.

9 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, p. 20.

10 Ibid., p. 224.

11 Une Double Famille; Pl. I, p. 967.

12 Pl. VI, p. 592.

13 La Peau de Chagrins; Pl. IX, p. 23. A 177, vol. I, p. 72.

drawing-rooms of Madame Ragon¹, Mlle Cormon² and Madame de Portenduère³. But Fragonard, Carle Vanloo and Hubert Robert seem to mean nothing to him, so far (at least) as direct attribution is concerned, whilst Joseph Vernet—whose seascapes cannot, admittedly, have been of much inspiration to Balzac in the creation of scenes and characters—still receives only the most perfunctory mention⁴. One of Vernet's seascapes hangs in Achille de Malveaux's apartment⁵, and M. Guillaume, berating the irregularity of artists' conduct, recalls that Vernet lived on the breadline⁶. Even Chardin does not seem to have made any appreciable impression, though Pons, in his shrewdness, has bought one of his works: the portrait of a lady⁷. This deficiency in Balzac's taste is, however, by no means as blameworthy as it might appear today, for he was still living under the shadow of Winckelmann and Quatremère and paid much less attention to French genre-painting (not until the 1860s did Champfleury revive interest in the Le Nains⁸) than to the sublimities of allegory, history painting, portraiture and even landscapes. With Dutch and Flemish genre, the position was different.

1 César Bircottes; Pl. V, p. 508.

2 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, p. 248.

3 Ursule Mirouët; Pl. III, p. 355. Cf. Le Messager, 8 September 1841.

4 Balzac, however, owned "une étude de Joseph Vernet représentant les bords de la Méditerranée" (A 329, fol. 11, verso), probably purchased in the mid-1840s.

5 La Ferme Autour; Pl. XI, p. 108.

6 La Maison du Chat-qui-Palote; Pl. I, p. 45.

7 Pl. VI, p. 779.

8 Champfleury's Les Peintres de la réalité sous Louis XIII. Les frères Le Nain (Paris 1862) and Nouvelles Recherches sur la vie et l'œuvre des frères Le Nain (Laon 1862) were primarily responsible for the Le Nains' new lease of popularity. His earlier book, Essai sur la vie et l'œuvre des Le Nain, peintres leunois (Laon 1850), had attracted less national attention.

VI: DUTCH, FLEMISH AND GERMAN PAINTING

For Balzac, as indeed for all his contemporaries, the Dutch and Flemish schools of painting were of the very first importance; their influence upon his novels was far-reaching—no less so than were Girodet's "Endymion", the contemporary French caricaturists or Delacroix's Équat lithographs. Like the early German painters, the minor masters of Holland and Flanders were beginning to emerge into popularity about 1800¹, and Rembrandt a few years later². (At the end of the eighteenth century, the Choiseul and Orléans collections had boasted Rembrandts in considerable numbers, but no real distinction was drawn between them and the works of minor genre-painters.)

Viewing the Comédie Humaine as a whole, it is clear that the preeminent Dutch artist (indeed, the chief artist of the whole Netherlandish school) is Rembrandt—and Balzac is one of the first Romantic writers to become aware of his importance. His works feature in the collections of the old Antiquary (where "des Rembrandt" occupy a place of honour, even as early as 1831)³, Balthazar Claës⁴, Louise de Macumer⁵ and Josépha Mirah⁶. In addition, Vervelle believes he owns a number of Rembrandts (although they are, in fact, fakes)⁷, and one of Dutocq's ambitions is to build up a complete collection of Rembrandt engravings⁸. For Modeste Mignon⁹, Rembrandt symbolizes the "beau idéal" in Dutch painting.

1 H. van der Tuin: Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la littérature en France dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle, Paris 1953, pp. 11-15, 38-39.

2 Ibid., pp. 127-128, 150-164.

3 La Pesu de Chagrins; Pl. IX, p. 28. A 177, vol. I, p. 84.

4 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. A 201, fol. 27.

5 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 291.

6 La Cousine Betta; Pl. VI, p. 200.

7 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, pp. 127, 130.

8 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 927.

9 Pl. I, p. 388.

Even so, Balzac and his friends do not seem to have understood Rembrandt's work in quite the way in which it is understood today. The long series of self-portraits which are to us amongst the very highest revelations of European art did not appear in this light to them. Balzac, apparently unaware that these paintings are self-portraits, calls them portraits of old men. They have obviously impressed him deeply; but not much differently, if at all, from other paintings of old men by Gerard Dou, Mieris the elder and Ostade¹. What he refers to as Rembrandt's portraits of old men are not always the self-portraits, however. "The Philosopher"², a picture destined to impress Valéry seventy or eighty years later, also fascinated Balzac. But whereas Valéry observes "The Philosopher" analytically, detecting a subtle appeal to the subconscious in the mysterious juxtaposition of light and shade, of visible and almost invisible objects³, Balzac and his generation saw nothing more in Rembrandt's paintings and etchings than a powerful reflexion of their own visions and preoccupations. In the feverish debate whether the ugly and grotesque had a place in art, they did not scruple to enlist Rembrandt on their side. Victor Hugo speaks in one and the same breath of "les sorciers de Rembrandt, les gnomes de Goya"⁴. In Balzac's mind Rembrandt seems to have been unconsciously linked with images of darkness, evil, magic and the uncanny. (Rembrandt's faulty pigment and the heavy coatings of varnish with which it was then the fashion to lard valuable paintings no doubt contributed to the sinister impression; Louise de Macumer's own Rembrandt is "ni plus ni moins qu'une croûte"⁵.) This is not, of course, to deny that Rembrandt's bold chiaroscuro does leave an impression of sombre solemnity; but, for our generation at any rate, the overtones of evil and foreboding are mercifully absent.

1 Bénatrix Pl. II, p. 333.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 534.

3 Le Retour de Hollande. Descartes et Rembrandt, Maastricht 1926, pp. 22-25.

4 Ouvrages posthumes, vol. I, Paris 1964, p. 1,064.

5 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées Pl. I, p. 291.

Innumerable portraits of old men are inspired by the self-portraits. Many of the occasions of indebtedness are acknowledged by Balzac himself. The old Antiquary ¹, Chabert ², M. Becker ³, Frenhofer ⁴, Gobseck ⁵, M. du Guénic ⁶, Halpersohn ⁷—all these debts are freely admitted. In each case, Balzac is describing an old man, with greying hair and plentiful wrinkles across the forehead. Sometimes, the suggestion of the daemonic or diabolical is distinctly in evidence; at other times, Balzac does no more than hint at it, if even that. Frenhofer, for example, conveys an indefinable sense of the mysterious: Poussin, we are told ⁸,

aperçut quelque chose de diabolique dans cette figure, et surtout ce je ne sais quoi qui affriande les artistes.

The portraits of the Antiquary and Gobseck also offer unmistakable suggestions of the daemonic. But Frenhofer, Gobseck and the Antiquary all appear in very early novels, and as time goes on, the diabolical overtones are muted.

But Balzac is far from acknowledging the extent of his indebtedness to Rembrandt. Take, for instance, his portrait of Bartholoméo di Piombo, in La Vendetta ⁹:

ses cheveux devenus blancs et rares laissaient à découvert un crâne large et protubérant qui donnait une haute idée de son caractère et de sa fermeté. Sa figure marquée de rides profondes avait pris un très grand développement et gardait ce teint pâle qui inspire la vénération. La fougue des passions régnait encore dans le feu surnaturel de ses yeux, dont les sourcils n'avaient pas entièrement blanchi, et qui conservaient leur terrible mobilité,

and particularly in the final scene of the novel ¹⁰:

Bartholoméo et sa femme étaient assis dans leurs fauteuils antiques, chacun à un coin de la vaste cheminée dont l'ardent brasier réchauffait à peine l'immense salon... Leur salon désert... était faiblement éclairé par une seule lampe près de mourir. Sans les flammes pétillantes du foyer, ils eussent été dans une obscurité complète...

1 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 176. A 177, vol. II, p. 139.

2 Pl. II, p. 1,096.

3 Séraphita; Pl. X, p. 487.

4 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 391.

5 Pl. II, pp. 624, 671.

6 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 333. A 6, fol. 24.

7 L'Evares de l'Histoire Contemporaine; Pl. VII, pp. 387, 389.

8 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 390.

9 Pl. I, p. 889.

10 Ibid., p. 923.

Here, and in other instances, a debt to Rembrandt (and perhaps also to Raphael's "Baldassare Castiglione"¹) may be suspected, though it cannot be proved. The pictures which Balzac seems particularly to have had in mind (and which he could well have seen at the Louvre on his arrival in Paris) are self-portraits dated 1633², 1634³, 1637⁴ and 1660 (plate 23)⁵.

But, during his later travels, he would have seen other similar self-portraits: at Vienna, self-portraits of 1652, 1655 and 1656-1658 at the Kunsthistorisches Museum⁶, and also perhaps a portrait of 1635 in the Liechtenstein Gallery; at the Uffizi, a self-portrait of about 1660, and one of about 1635 in the Palazzo Pitti; at Berlin, a portrait of 1634 and another of about the same date; at Dresden, "The Bittern Hunter" of 1639, his "Self-Portrait with Saskia" and a self-portrait dated 1657.

Not until 1652, however, can one begin to detect old men in the seemingly endless gallery of Rembrandt's self-portraits. Only one of the four portraits in the Louvre can properly be termed the portrait of an old man (plate 23)⁵. Unless Balzac is altogether mistaken as to the attribution of the paintings to which he refers, he must therefore have relied on his travels to Vienna, Florence and Dresden to supplement his knowledge of Rembrandt's aging self-portraits--and, more important still, he must have relied on engravings of them in his earlier years.

1 Cf. *infra*, p. 167.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 524.

3 Ibid., no. 523.

4 Ibid., no. 522.

5 Ibid., no. 521.

6 Kunsthistorisches Museum. Katalog der Gemäldesammlung, vol. II, Vienna 1963, nos. 287, 288, 290.

Secondly, it is also clear that, though he must have seen the earlier self-portraits—of which the three at the Louvre are especially fine examples—, he paid little attention to them, despite their technical brilliance no less great than that of the later works. (The Louvre portrait of 1637 is outstanding.) Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, and Balzac was looking for the weirdness of Hoffmann, Nodier and Faust.

But there is something more than weirdness in these Rembrandtesque portraits of Chabert, Becker, Frenhofer, Bartholomée di Piombo and the like: Rembrandt's self-portraits impart dignity and solemnity to the characters whose physical appearance they inspire. Balzac does not borrow from Rembrandt by accident or caprice, nor did he merely look on Rembrandt as another invoker of the grotesque. Thus, he is led to Rembrandt by the whimsicality of fashion (for what fashion discerned in Rembrandt was whimsical); but the Comédie Humaine goes beyond the starting-point of Balzac's admiration, using Rembrandt to convey a sense of the grandeur and dignity of old age.

Outside the portraits of old men, Balzac is still fascinated by Rembrandt's chiaroscuro. Describing Bianchon's and Granville's chance meeting, by night, in the Rue de Gaillon, he exclaims¹:

il faudrait qu'un même homme possédât à la fois les crayons de Charlet et ceux de Callot, les pinceaux de Téniers et de Rembrandt, pour donner une idée vraie de cette scène nocturne.

The dramatic contrast of light and shade in "The Disciples at Emmaus"², "St John the Baptist Preaching" (Staatliches Museum, Berlin-Dahlem) or "The Raising of Lazarus"³ appeals to him. Witness again the portrait of the old man in Balzac's fragmentary Sœur Marie des Anges⁴:

1 Une Double Famille; Pl. I, p. 989. Cf. pp. 82, 135, 288.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 531.

3 This is Balzac's most probable borrowing from an engraving after Rembrandt, whose painting of "The Raising of Lazarus" is in private ownership and is in any case a very early work (c. 1628) in which small use is made of chiaroscuro effects. What Balzac may have in mind is Delacroix's "Résurrection de Lazare d'après Rembrandt", an etched copy of Rembrandt's painting.

4 Pl. XI, p. 53.

il nous parla de ses plaisirs dans un langage vraiment biblique, et avec une puissance de geste dont la pose de certains personnages peints par Rembrandt peuvent seuls donner une idée, vous savez, ces figures qui semblent épancher la vie et la lumière comme celle de Jésus ressuscitent le Lazare ou celle de St Jean prêchant dans le désert. C'était Lucifer à l'agonie!

Again, at César Birotteau's deathbed the abbé Loraux indicates the death of a just man

par un de ces gestes divins que Rembrandt a pu deviner pour son tableau du Christ rappelant Lazare à la vie ¹.

The art of chiaroscuro represents the intervention of the divine into the affairs of men, as the worldly foolish--ensnared by the "rulers of the darkness of this world"--are received into Heaven.

Other paintings specifically alluded to are "The Anatomy Lesson", the original of which was (and is) at The Hague, but which Balzac could have known from engravings long before he visited the Mauritshuis in 1845; "The Flight into Egypt", also at The Hague; and "The Angel Raphael taking leave of Tobias", which was at the Louvre ². The very second-rate artist Pierre Grassou is commissioned to copy "The Anatomy Lesson" for Élias Magus, who then sells the fake to Vervelle ³. The "nocturne caravane" of Marie de Verneuil, Francine and Galope-Chopine, travelling to the ball given by Montauran at Saint-James, is said to resemble "The Flight into Egypt" ⁴. (Miss Scott suggests ⁵ that this scene was perhaps inspired by Rubens's "Flight into Egypt" ⁶, "which, contrary to the custom of Rubens, has an effect of moonlight that Balzac might easily have confused with the work of Rembrandt". But Balzac, as we have seen, was familiar with "The Anatomy Lesson" before visiting The Hague; and he may equally have been familiar with Rembrandt's own "Flight into Egypt". He was certainly familiar with Rembrandt's name, because he first refers

1 Pl. V, p. 591.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 529.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 120, 130.

4 Les Chouans; Pl. VII, p. 972. Cf. A 13, fol. 53, recto, where the Rembrandt simile is already present.

5 Op.cit., p. 127.

6 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 541.

to him in L'Héritière de Birague¹, published in 1822. This was perhaps the earliest of all references to Rembrandt in French Romantic literature.) Finally, in La Physiologie du Mariage² Balzac mentions the "Sacrifice d'Abraham", presumably implying "The Angel taking leave of Tobias".

Rembrandt also appears to Balzac in another light: not simply as the portraitist of old men, sorcerers and alchemists, nor as the dramatic wielder of chiaroscuro effects, but as the artist who knows how to bring out the true pathos of poverty. Balzac assures us that the crowd of poor people waiting to see Judge Popinot would have been painted by a latter-day Rembrandt, if in fact one had existed and had seen them³, and he actually refers (in a significant metaphor) to "un austère vieillard à barbe blanche, au crâne apostolique"³ who would have made the perfect model for a portrait of St Peter. Which portrait of St Peter, by Rembrandt, did Balzac have in mind? It is difficult to say, because, of the four versions of this subject, three were and still are in private ownership, whilst the fourth (painted about 1636) is at the Hermitage, Leningrad, a gallery to which Balzac did not, of course, go until 1843. He may well have had an engraving of one of these pictures in mind, or else a false attribution.

In any case, it is not easy to establish which actual work of Rembrandt's could have inspired the crowd scene in L'Interdiction, for Rembrandt painted few genre pictures, and we must conclude that an error of criticism has attributed to Rembrandt a work actually by Terborch, Motzu or Ostade.

Rembrandt's preponderating influence is in the earlier novels, where the self-portraits are termed portraits of sorcerers and alchemists. Later, as Hoffmann's influence recedes into the background, the magical element of the Comédie Humaine becomes more subdued⁴. For this reason, perhaps, Balzac did not place any Rembrandts (so far as we can tell) in either Pons's or Magus's collections.

1 L'Héritière de Birague, vol. II, p. 203, apropos of Countess Mathilde de Morven: "sa marche silencieuse au milieu de la nuit et de cette vaste cour, produisait un effet digne de Rembrandt".

2 Pl. X, p. 684.

3 L'Interdiction; Pl. III, p. 27.

4 Cf. supra, pp. 55-56.

Of all the Netherlandish painters, the Fleming Rubens is next in importance to Rembrandt. Balzac has occasion to refer to him in many novels, and in a variety of ways. Yet he is doubtful whether Rubens can be ranked amongst the artists who are truly great. As Miss Scott has insisted ¹, he is far from sharing Delacroix's enthusiasm. Writing in Les Petits Bourgeois of the difference between genius and mere talent, he attributes talent to Rubens, but genius to Titian ². Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu offers a rather similar evaluation, but this time it is Frenhofer who is speaking, rather than Balzac himself ³. Frenhofer castigates "ce faquin de Rubens", with his mountains of Flemish flesh, sprinkled with vermilion, his tidal waves of russet hair and strident discordances of colour. Infinitely preferable is Porbus's less glamorous style of painting. We may suspect that Balzac shares the views put forward in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu. What is certain is that, leaving aside the question of strictly technical excellence, Balzac frequently refers to Rubens in the Comédie Humaine, and that his visual world owes much to him. And, severe as may be the condemnation in Frenhofer's diatribe to Poussin, it is also certain that Rubens's "Battle of the Amazons" ⁴ (at the Pinakothek, Munich) is one of the two paintings used by Balzac to illustrate the "beau idéal" ⁵. It is also the painting which gave rise to Baudelaire's beautiful sonnet, "Duellum" ⁶, and inspired two poems by Gautier ⁷.

1 Op.cit., p. 130.

2 Pl. VII, p. 114.

3 Pl. IX, p. 396.

4 Balzac refers to this painting by its other name of "La Bataille du Thermidon". Cf. Théophile Gautier's feuilleton, "Le Passage du Thermidon", La Presse, 8 November 1836.

5 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, p. 18. The other painting is Luini's "Marriage of the Virgin". In Modeste Mignon (Pl. I, p. 388), Balzac actually uses the term "beau idéal" with reference to Rubens, whose work, in the young heroine's eyes, is the quintessence of Flemish art, as Raphael's and Titian's is of Italian painting, or Murillo's of the Spanish school.

6 Ouvrages complètes, Paris 1961, p. 34.

7 Poésies complètes, Paris 1932, vol. I, p. 71: "Le Champ de bataille"; vol. II, pp. 196-201: "Le Thermidon".

Balzac's young opulent beauties, glowing with youthful energy and freshness, are often in Balzac's mind when he describes his own young, and not so young, women characters. Not that the novelist always gives us the clue to this transference of visual images: Madame Madou, for example, seems to have been inspired by Rubens¹.

Of those women concerning whom Balzac does acknowledge his indebtedness, Césarine Birotteau is outstanding:

la beauté de cette belle fille n'était ni la beauté d'une lady, ni celle des duchesses françaises, mais la ronde et rousse beauté des Flamandes de Rubens².

In Les Faysans³, Madame Rigou—in her younger days, before her seduction by the abbé Niseron and her long senility as Rigou's wife—is described as resembling a Rubens virgin. But

le plus habile observateur n'aurait pas trouvé trace de la magnifique taille, de la fraîcheur à la Rubens, de l'embonpoint splendide, des dents superbes, des yeux de vierge qui jadis recommandèrent la jeune fille à l'attention du curé Niseron.

The young widow Louise de Macumer is yet another instance of what may be called the angelic female type derived r from Rubens. "Elle est jolie, blonde, mince et légèrement grasse", writes the poet Marie Gaston, the admirer who is about to become her second husband, "à faire croire que Raphaël et Rubens se sont entendus pour composer une femme!"⁴

1 César Birotteaus Pl. V, pp. 399-400.

2 Ibid., p. 388.

3 Pl. VIII, p. 205.

4 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 295.

Suzanne du Val-Noble, whose early beginnings, as a laundress, are chronicled in Le Cabinet des Antiques, and who is destined to become one of the most dazzling courtesans in the Comédie Humaine, also has this fresh, opulent quality, only this time Balzac adds a nuance to the portrait. For Suzanne, who comes from Alençon, is a Norman beauty, not a Flemish one, and so, though sharing the radiant freshness of "The Three Graces" (in the Akademie der Bildenden Künste, in Vienna) or "The Toilet of Venus" (then at the Liechtenstein Gallery, Vienna), she has the strong, muscular frame of the Norman peasant, not the more graceful contours of Italy and Flanders:

c'était la beauté normande, fraîche, éclatante, rebondie, la chair de Rubens qu'il faudrait marier avec les muscles de l'Hercule-Farnèse, et non la Vénus de Médicis, cette gracieuse femme d'Apollon ¹.

But the reminiscence is not always of the young virginal type. Balzac must also have been powerfully impressed by the voluptuous, orgiastic figures of "The Triumph of Silenus", "Venus and Adonis" and "Neptune and Amphitrite" which he had seen on his visits both to the Louvre and to foreign galleries (notably Berlin and St Petersburg). The buxom and far from virginal Madame Cibot ² is the conspicuous example of this "woman of the world", and perhaps it is scarcely surprising that she and others like her belong to the proletariat. Such women of the world as Lady Dudley, Madame de Beauséant and Madame d'Espard do not seem to have been inspired by any such reminiscences, although there may be a slight affiliation in the case of Delphine de Nucingen and, as we have noted, Suzanne du Val-Noble brings Rubens to mind in the resplendence of her complexion.

1 Pl. IV, p. 220. Cf. infra, p. 230.

2 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 562.

Madame Cardinal, in Les Petits Bourgeois, is another of the matrons inspired by Rubens's bacchanalian orgies. Her belly and breasts, we are told ¹, "se recommandaient par une ampleur à la Rubens". It is no coincidence that Balzac was writing Le Cousin Pons and Les Petits Bourgeois more or less simultaneously. The concierge and the fishwife are contemporaneous creations.

In Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale, Madame Deschamps, the wife of a rough and coarse-minded lower-class solicitor, is the third and final instance of the acknowledged borrowings from Rubens's gallery of licentious women. "Comment avoir, comme cette grosse madame Deschamps, des cascades de chairs à la Rubens?" ² the young mock-heroine Caroline asks in dismay, on being informed that she has put on two inches round the waist. The portrait of Madame Deschamps is satirical in the extreme, as is the novel in which she is presented. In the glib manner of the cocktail party, Rubens's name has been associated with a caricature. But, in the presence of Silenus and the Bacchantes, laughter is never very far away.

Apart from the evocation of female beauty, Balzac twice alludes to Rubens in order to give precision to the portrait of a man. Godefroid de Beaudenord's tiger Paddy is as blond as a Rubens virgin ³, a simile which invites comparison with Zambinella's inspiration of Girodet's "Endymion" ⁴, or the hermaphrodite Séraphite's indebtedness to Théophile Bra ⁵, and which perhaps lends weight to those who have suspected a homosexual streak in Balzac ⁶. Turning from homosexuality to

1 Pl. VII, p. 216.

2 Pl. X, p. 940.

3 La Maison Nucingen; Pl. V, p. 607.

4 Cf. supra, pp. 35-36, 92.

5 Cf. infra, pp. 227-228.

6 Cf. P. Citron: "Sur deux zones obscures de la psychologie de Balzac", Année Balzacienne, 1967, pp. 3-27.

satyriasis, Hector Hulot still has "des tons de chair à la Rubens"¹ even when, towards the end of his life, his lechery is beginning to undermine him:

cette discordance rendait le regard, vif et jeune encore, d'autant plus singulier dans ce visage bistré que, là où pendant si longtemps fleurirent des tons de chair à la Rubens, on voyait, par certaines meurtrissures et dans le sillon tendu de la ride, les efforts d'une passion en rébellion avec la nature.

Both in his female and in his male portraits, Rubens primarily evokes a dazzling clearness of complexion.

Balzac rarely descends into the technicalities of Rubens's art. He is, of course, always ready to assure us that his technique, if not of the very highest order, is brilliant and original. In the preface written in 1840 for the first edition of Pierrette, he scolds those who imagine that fecundity of invention necessarily excludes reflexion and attention to detail:

comme si Raphaël, Walter Scott, Voltaire, Titien, Shakespeare, Rubens, Buffon, lord Byron, Boccace, Lesage ne donnaient pas d'éclatants démentis à leurs niaises assertions².

Here, Rubens is placed in Balzac's most select company. Raphael—as will be shown in Chapter VIII³—was, and always remained, the artist for whom he had the keenest admiration; and, generally speaking, Titian came second in the rank order of Balzac's most revered artists. Admittedly, there is a certain amount of hesitation in Balzac's mind whenever he refers indiscriminately to painters, or indeed to artists generally. And, to a considerable extent, his opinions also evolved with time. Nevertheless, he was prepared to admit Rubens's brilliance, however meretricious.

1 La Cousine Bettie Pl. VI, p. 271.

2 Pl. XI, p. 394.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 161-178.

On one occasion in the Comédie Humaine, Balzac approaches an understanding of Rubens's brush technique. A party, given by Lady Budley, is being described, a brilliant social event, with dancing, and with the most fashionable women in Paris dressed in their finest costumes:

l'œil embrassait les plus blanches épaules, les unes de couleur d'ambre, les autres d'un lustré qui faisait croire qu'elles avaient été cylindrées, celles-ci satinées, celles-là mates et grasses comme si Rubens en avait préparé la pâte, enfin toutes les nuances trouvées par l'homme dans le blanc.

Even so, it is nothing more than a superficial understanding. Rubens's name is an adjunct, rather than an indication of a visual reminiscence.

The only other visual transference from Rubens, in the Comédie Humaine, is of an incidental kind and illustrates Balzac's practice of using artists' names as a sort of aesthetic small change. "Il nous faut une demi-heure pour éteindre nos joues un peu trop dans la manière de Rubens", Bixiou remarks to his three post-prandial companions, at the opening of the fragmentary novel, La Femme Auteur². Balzac revelled in such journalistic glibness.

The Comédie Humaine also contains one allusion to Rubens's art that concerns not human beings but animals. Balzac is obviously thinking of such pictures as "Meleager and Atalante" and the "Bear-Hunting Scene" which he had almost certainly noticed during his visits to the galleries of Vienna and Dresden, in 1835 and 1843 respectively. Once again, the allusion occurs in Les Paysans, which of all Balzac's novels

1 Pl. II, p. 97.

2 Pl. XI, p. 103.

is the one most clearly indebted to Rubens. In a historical flashback, Balzac is describing a sixteenth-century hunting scene ¹:

en 1595, de ce splendide pavillon, partit une chasse royale, précédée de ces beaux chiens affectueux par Paul Véronèse et par Rubens, où piaffaient les chevaux à grosse croupe bleuâtre et blanche et satinée qui n'existent que dans l'oeuvre prodigieuse de Vouwermans.

Though the horses in this scene are principally inspired by Vouwerman, its Baroque movement and exuberant colour are the gift of Rubens. It should be borne in mind that, despite the occasional French hunt (including the one at Cheverny), fox and stag-hunting have never been part of French social life in the way that even nowadays they are to be found in Great Britain. Balzac sees this scene with eyes conditioned by Rubens.

Rubens's works also feature quite prominently in the various art collections of the Comédie Humaine, a fact which reflects the sudden popularity he began to enjoy with critics from the turn of the century ². (Collectors had already begun to compete for his works in the second half of the eighteenth century ³.) Balzac's amateurs, art teachers, even Vervelle, are all aware of him. And if they do not all own his actual paintings, then, like Vervelle, they probably own forgeries or pastiches—or else engravings.

To deal first with the authentic Rubens, Pons—as befits his discernment and business sense—is the proud owner of a preparatory sketch (in oils) of what is perhaps B Rubens's most celebrated religious work, "The Descent from the Cross" ⁴. Balzac may well have seen this picture, which was (and still is) in Antwerp Cathedral, during his tour of Belgium in the summer of 1845—eighteen months before writing the second half ⁵ of Le Cousin Pons. The old musician may also have owned

1 Pl. VIII, p. 125.

2 H. van der Tuin: Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la critique artistique en France de la première moitié du XIXe siècle, Paris 1948, pp. 12-17.

3 G.R. Reitlinger: The Economics of Taste. The Rise and Fall of Picture Prices, 1760-1960, London 1961, pp. 441-442.

4 Pl. VI, p. 746.

5 Ibid., pp. 609-803.

another Rubens, for we are told ¹ that one of the four paintings abstracted from Pons's collection by Rémonencq as the old man lies on his deathbed is by Rubens, but no name is given to this picture and it could be that Rémonencq purloined the prototype "Descent from the Cross", a picture which—by the terms of Pons's will—was to have gone to his parish church.

Again, it is only to be expected that works by Rubens will grace Balthasar Claës's ancestral collection at Douai; and we find that the visionary scientist owned "de célèbres morceaux de Rubens" ², which had doubtless been there since (in the fictive universe, at least) they were commissioned from the artist himself by the Claës-Molina family. Louise de Macumer, describing the chalet at Ville-d'Avray which she has had fitted up for herself and her future husband Marie Gaston, with furniture brought from her home in the Rue du Bac, writes ³ to her friend Renée de l'Estorade that in Gaston's study she has hung her Rubens on one wall, and her Hobbema facing it.

Finally, two authentic Rubens are at Issoudun, in Jean-Jacques Rouget's collection ⁴. Religious paintings, they are part of Rouget's inheritance from the Descoings family, who had acquired them after the Revolution from the ransacking of various churches, abbeys and convents in the neighbourhood of Issoudun and Bourges.

Besides the authentic Rubens, however, there are the counterfeits. As Rubens was one of the most popular artists in the early years of the nineteenth century, and in the 1830s became even more popular as a result of Gautier's feuilletons, it is not surprising that Vervelle owns works allegedly by him ⁵. Indeed, one of the gems of Vervelle's

1 Ibid., p. 716.

2 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. Cf. A 201, folios 26-27.

3 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 291.

4 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. In the galley-sheets of the novel these "deux tableaux d'église" were, curiously enough, originally intended to be two Mignards (A 199, fol. 67; cf. supra, p. 91).

5 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 127.

collection is an allegorical picture of "Fauns and Nymphs Dancing"¹, supposedly by the Flemish master, and inspired perhaps by Rubens's many renderings of this subject in the Pinakothek, Munich. Vervelle has collected all these spurious masterpieces between the years 1819 and 1832², and they have been palmed off on him by none other than Elias Magus, who, as Élie Magus in Le Cousin Pons, is destined to succumb to the thraldom of great art, and cease to regard it as merely another form of profitable speculation.

But Grassou is not the only painter to have assisted Magus in his gigantic confidence trick; even Joseph Bridau, a very different kind of artist, has played his part. We see Joseph finishing off the copy of a Rubens belonging to a rich Swiss banker³; a commissioned fake, but a fake nevertheless. Although, however, both young men work for Magus, there is an important difference between them. Grassou wished to become a great painter, and exhibit at the Salon. It was only when his first contribution to a Salon (in 1819) was rejected by the hanging-committee that he disappointedly descended to selling his works to Magus. Joseph, an artist of genius, copies a Rubens for Magus because he is short of the money to frame his two contributions to the Salon of 1822³, contributions which are accepted by the jury and at least one of which is an outstandingly successful work of art.

Finally, Rubens's name occurs several times in lists of great artists, lists which are more significant than they may seem, because they illustrate not only the painters who were uppermost in Balzac's mind but also those who dominated the public imagination. "Votre fils a le plus bel avenir!" Chaudet assures Madame Bridau⁴, "des

1 Ibid., p. 130.

2 Ibid., pp. 117, 113.

3 Le Rabouilleuses Pl. III, p. 925.

4 Ibid., p. 870.

dispositions comme les siennes sont rares, elles ne se sont dévoilées de si bonne heure que chez les Giotto, les Raphaël, les Titien, les Rubens, les Murillo". The artists cited by Chaudet are not the only ones to have given precocious evidence of their genius. But they happen to be the ones of whom Balzac, in common with his contemporaries, was most keenly aware. Again, Grassou is said to be "Rubens, Paul Potter, Mieris, Metzou, Gérard Dou"¹, "Rubens, Rembrandt, Terburg, Titien"², paintings by all of whom he has, of course, forged for Vervelle. The first roll-call is particularly significant, for there Rubens is in rather inferior company, a Flemish genius amongst minor Dutch masters. It is not enough to say that this confusion as to Rubens's true worth arises only because Vervelle is speaking: why had Vervelle been sold these particular names, if not because it was they—rather than Vermeer³ or Tintoretto⁴—who were currently appreciated even by the arbiters of taste? Finally, in his preface (1838) to La Femme Supérieure (now Les Employées), Balzac himself indulges in a list: "Rubens, Van Dyck, Raphaël, Titien... ont-ils pu monumentaliser leurs oeuvres sans les ressources d'une existence princière?"⁵ Other beneficiaries of patronage could have been adduced—equally great ones, such as Leonardo, Velásquez and Giovanni Bellini. But, at the moment of writing this preface, Balzac was primarily aware of Rubens and the other three, and used them to support his argument.

1 Pl. VI, p. 130. Cf. A 190, fol. 17.

2 Pl. VI, p. 131. Cf. A 190, fol. 18.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 143-144.

4 Cf. infra, p. 200.

5 Pl. XI, p. 350.

Van Dyck is also a painter whom Balzac respects, but references to him by name are far fewer than references to Rubens. Balthazar Claës's collection has a number of his works ¹. The courtesan Josépha Mireh owns two Van Dyck portraits ². Sylvain Pons's claim to ownership of a Van Dyck is rather more dubious, for his Van Dyck is, or purports to be, one of the four paintings taken by Rémonencq ³; Balzac, however, did not actually intend this to be so, as is revealed by even a cursory examination of the MS of Le Cousin Pons ⁴, for in the MS he speaks of a Van Eyck. This is all the more curious because in August 1846 Balzac already owned one Van Dyck ⁵ (or so-called Van Dyck!), whereas he was never the owner, or imagined owner, of any work by the Van Eycks. Nevertheless, the MS leaves no doubt of Balzac's real intention, which was only frustrated by a misreading on the part of the compositor and Balzac's failure to notice the error when correcting the proofs.

A final reference to Van Dyck occurs in the preface to Les Chouans, where "ce tableau de Vandyck où Charles Ier est représenté" is mentioned ⁶. Here, Balzac was thinking of the celebrated portrait of Charles I ⁷ purchased from Madame du Barry by Louis XVI.

Le Cousin Pons establishes, however, that its hero did own works by Van Eyck, for—quite apart from the abortive MS reference in the latter half of the novel—the Van Eycks' name crops up in the first description of Pons's collection ⁸. The old musician obviously had a particular liking for their work, for when talking to his cousin, Madame de Marville, about the

1 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. Cf. A 201, fol. 27.

2 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

3 Pl. VI, p. 716.

4 A 47, fol. 90. Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, p. 121, n. 5.

5 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 308; 2 August 1846.

6 Pl. XI, p. 146.

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 333; L. Demontès: Catalogue des peintures. Musée national du Louvre, vol. III, Paris 1922, p. 6, no. 1,967. This painting gives rise to a memorable passage in Michelet's Histoire de la Révolution française (vol. I, Paris 1961, pp. 577-579); it hung at Versailles in Madame du Barry's apartments from 1771 to 1774.

8 Pl. VI, p. 593.

various makes of porcelain he remarks that certain types (Dresden, Mainz, Vincennes, Frankenthal) will never be manufactured again, "comme on ne refera plus des Raphaël, des Titien, ni des Rembrandt, ni des Van Eyck, ni des Cranach!..."¹ This is exalted company for the Van Eycks and Cranach, but Pons is an astute amateur, who would not think of mentioning Teniers, Brauwer or the Ostades in the same breath as Rembrandt, Raphael and Titian.

The other reference, in the Comédie Humaine, to the Van Eycks is in La Cousine Bette², a novel written at about the same time as Le Cousin Pons. Again, their name is linked to Cranach's, this time to illustrate Balzac's description of Lisbeth Fischers:

Bette, comme une Vierge de Cranach et de Van Eyck, comme une Vierge byzantine, sorties de leurs cadres, gardait la roideur, la correction de ces figures mystérieuses, cousines germaines des Isis et des divinités mises en gaine par les sculpteurs égyptiens. C'était du granit, du basalte, du porphyre qui marchait.

(Elsewhere³, she is likened to a figure by Giotto.) Her almost mechanical rigidity, both bodily and facial, her rock-like obduracy and the brick-like dulness of her complexion cannot be better conveyed than by these references to the Primitives of Florence, Germany and Flanders. And it is clear, from the fact that their names are only to be found in Les Parents Pauvres, that Balzac had only recently become aware of the Van Eycks. In this, he resembled his contemporaries⁴. With the Flemish school, his tastes and responsiveness continued to develop throughout his life.

1 Ibid., p. 553. Cf. infra, p. 123.

2 Pl. VI, p. 273. Cf. infra, p. 123.

3 Pl. VI, p. 165. Cf. infra, pp. 190-191.

4 H. van der Tuin: Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la critique artistique en France de la première moitié du XIXe siècle, Paris 1948, p. 145.

Equally, Balzac's awareness of German art keeps pace with his expanding interests. The visits to Germany and the Low Countries in 1845 do much to account for his growing appreciation of both schools, though Gautier undoubtedly contributed to his understanding of Flemish art, whilst there was a Romantic cult of Dürer, to whom in 1837 Victor Hugo had devoted one of the principal poems in Les Voix Intérieures¹. In Balzac's eyes, however, Dürer is not so much the author of the "Apocalypse" and "Melencolia" woodcuts as the portraitist of women: an aspect of Dürer's work unjustly neglected both then and now. The portraits to which Balzac seems to give most of his attention are the religious ones, where Dürer could give free rein to his imagination in creating paragons of female beauty. But when it comes to the imaginary collections of the Comédie Humaine, he devises a secular portrait: the missing counterpart to a great masterpiece, somehow retrieved by Pons in the same way that Magus discovers two long-lost Raphaels, two Titians and a Giorgione².

Balzac gives a lengthy description of this Dürer portrait, which is one of the four gems in the old musician's collection³:

quant à l'Albert Dürer, ce portrait de femme était pareil au fameux "Holzschnur" de Nuremberg, duquel les rois de Bavière, de Hollande et de Prusse ont offert deux cent mille francs, et vainement, à plusieurs reprises. Est-ce la femme ou la fille du chevalier Holzschnur, l'ami d'Albert Dürer?... l'hypothèse paraît une certitude, car la femme du Musée Pons est dans une attitude qui suppose un pendant, et les armes peintes sont disposées de la même manière dans l'un et l'autre portrait. Enfin, le statut susa XLI est en parfaite harmonie avec l'âge indiqué dans le portrait si religieusement gardé par la maison Holzschnur de Nuremberg, et dont la gravure a été récemment achevée⁴.

1 Ouvrages poétiques, vol. I, Paris 1964, pp. 963-964.

2 Pl. VI, pp. 636-637. Cf. infra, pp. 178, 183-184, 196-197.

3 Pl. VI, p. 651. Originally, however, Balzac meant Pons's German masterpiece to be an Abraham Mignon (cf. infra, p. 142). Pons owns other Dürers, too (Pl. VI, p. 593), but whether these were afterthoughts or not it is impossible to say, as nothing in the MS or proofs of Le Cousin Pons corresponds to this page of the story.

4 Ibid., p. 652.

Along with the Sebastiano del Piombo, the Fra Bartolomeo and the Hobbema, the Dürer is removed from Pons's museum by Magus as its owner lies on his deathbed¹. But, alone of all the four masterpieces, it receives an attribution to its actual author: "l'un de ces tableaux, attribué à Dürer, est un portrait de femme"¹. Presumably, this picture was so strikingly characteristic of its creator that any attempt to disguise it would have been worse than useless. Clearly, the Holzschuher portrait in Nuremberg (to which the Holzschuher portrait in the "musée Pons" was the long-lost counterpart) was a picture of exceptional importance in Balzac's eyes. Moreover, the reference to it in Le Cousin Pons is evidently topical.

This picture of a celebrated senator of Nuremberg, painted in 1526, remained with his descendants in that town until as late as 1884, when a member of the Holzschuher family sold it to the Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum (now the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem). Throughout the nineteenth century, and particularly from 1830, it was an object of envy to many collectors: Balzac recalls that William II of the Netherlands, Ludwig I of Bavaria and Frederick William IV of Prussia repeatedly vied with one another for its possession (the latter's nephew, Crown Prince Frederick William, being ultimately successful in acquiring it). It seems unlikely that Balzac ever saw the original "Hieronymus Holzschuher": certainly, he could not have seen it in the Berlin Gallery, which he probably visited in October 1843 on his way back from Russia, and there is no evidence of an actual trip to Nuremberg, though he did continue his journey from Berlin to Paris via Mainz².

1 Ibid. p. 716.

2 Lettres à Mademoiselle Hanska II, p. 269; 7 November 1843.

where, then, did Balzac derive his admiration for Dürer, to the extent of ranking this Dürer portrait amongst the four masterpieces in the collection of the Comédie Humaine's shrewdest connoisseur? Partly, perhaps, from the engraving of "Hieronymus Holzschuher", which—as Balzac relates—was completed by Friedrich Wagner in 1843. Partly again, perhaps, from newspaper reports enthusiastically describing the royal rivalry for the trophy¹. Partly, too, from another work, allegedly by Dürer, which Balzac had contemplated and admired on 25 October 1843 in Mainz Cathedral. "que les vrais amants de l'art aillent voir à Florence "le Penseur" de Michel-Ange", he writes in La Cousine Bette²,

et dans la cathédrale de Mayence "la Vierge" d'Albert Dürer, qui a fait, en ébène, une femme vivante sous ses triples robes...

But this brings us into the area of sculpture, and will be dealt with in its appropriate chapter³. Suffice it to say that, in this respect at least, Balzac is founding his admiration for Albrecht Dürer on an inaccurate premise. Whether or not he liked the woodcuts and engravings, we have little idea. He certainly possessed a Dürer engraving of "Christ", in addition to an engraving—presumably by Wagner—of the Holzschuher portrait⁴. But all we are told in the Comédie Humaine is that "les gravures d'Albrecht Dürer (elle prononçait Dur)" are one of Dinah de La Baudraye's staple topics of conversation⁵, and that Dutecq, in Les Employés⁶, is

passionné pour les collections de vieilles gravures, il voulait avoir tout Rembrandt et tout Charlet, tout Sylvestre, Audran, Callot, Albrecht Dürer, etc.

The vulgarity of tone is unmistakable. These engravings, we feel, are to be admired in the way coffee-table books and stamp albums are admired, rather than as works of art in their own right.

1 These reports (if any) still need to be traced.

2 Pl. VI, p. 322.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 236-237.

4 A 329, fol. 9. From the same folio, he also appears to have owned a "portrait de Mélanchthon par Albert Dürer", presumably based on the engraving of 1526.

5 La Muse du Département; Pl. IV, p. 65.

6 Pl. VI, p. 927.

The impression with which we are left by the Comédie Humaine is of the sculptor (which Dürer manifestly was not) and the painter, especially the painter of women. "Et comment ne pas adorer une blonde échappée d'un tableau d'Albert Dürer...?" Balzac asks apropos of Bettina Mignon ¹, perhaps thinking of his "Adam and Eve", which can still be seen at Mainz Cathedral today. Rosalie de Watteville's face, we are informed in Albert Savarus ²,

ressemblait parfaitement à ceux des saintes d'Albert Dürer et des peintres antérieurs au Pérugin; même forme grasse, quoique mince, même délicatesse attristée par l'extase, même naïveté sévère. Tout en elle, jusqu'à sa pose, rappelait ces vierges dont la beauté ne reparait dans son lustre mystique qu'aux yeux d'un connaisseur attentif.

The central panel of the Paumgartner altarpiece of "The Nativity", in the Pinakothek, Munich, or Dürer Virgins in the Uffizi and at Vienna, may well have been in Balzac's mind as he wrote those lines.

Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu actually leads us towards the secrets of Dürer's art ³. He is the opposite, in technique, of Veronese, just as Holbein is the opposite of Titian. Criticizing Porbus's "Marie Égyptienne" for its straightlaced academicism ⁴, Frenhofer—the precursor of Impressionism and Cubism—explains that the drawing in the "St Mary Magdalene" ("le maigre contour d'Albrecht Dürer") is not powerful enough to contain its exuberant colouring ("la riche et blonde couleur du Titien"). Drawing, Frenhofer concludes, must be eliminated, and the artist must proceed straight to the canvas, colouring after Nature with impressionistic vigour. Thus, it would seem that for Balzac Venetian art and German art are antipodal, exemplifying the age-old tension between colour and design: neither, of course, complete in itself but, if anything, the Venetian school, lavish and ornate, to be preferred to the German school with its old-fashioned and meticulous academicism.

1 Pl. I, p. 374.

2 Ibid., p. 762.

3 Pl. IX, p. 393.

4 Cf. infra, pp. 305-306.

If Dürer is to be reproached with academicism, then it is only to be expected that both Holbein and Lukas Cranach will also incur censure. However, Balzac's theories do not single them out as representing an inadequate and outmoded conception of form. Indeed, he claims that Holbein (like Dürer himself) embodies the "beau idéal" in German art ¹. And Pons, like Chenavard, may have been a collector of Holbeins ² (though we are not told that he possesses any). Claës's collection undoubtedly contains Holbeins ³. Cranachs grace both Pons's ⁴ and Claës's ³ galleries and are amongst the works of art the like of which, we are assured, will never be seen again ("on ne refera plus des Raphaël, des Titien, ni des Rembrandt, ni des Van Eyck, ni des Cranach!" ⁵). Liebeth Fischer's stiffness and semi-mechanical gait ⁶ calls to mind Cranach's "Rest during the Flight into Egypt" (Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem) or his "Crucifixion" at the Pinakothek, Munich, perhaps even one of his woodcuts of "The Crucifixion". Well abreast, if not ahead, of his time, Balzac is aware of the importance of Cranach and the Van Eycks; in associating Cranach with Egyptian sculpture ⁷, he seems to have recognized the mysterious resonances of this commanding painter, not only one of the most imaginative and original artists of the sixteenth century but also the only early German master to have influenced such present-day practitioners of the art as Matisse and Picasso.

Other than for Rembrandt and Rubens, however, Balzac's chief predilection is for genre-painting, a field in which the Dutch school is preeminent, and which was certainly the most widely appreciated aspect

1 Modeste Mignon; Pl. I, p. 388.

2 Pl. VI, p. 531.

3 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. Cf. A 201, fol. 27.

4 Pl. VI, p. 593.

5 Ibid., p. 553. Cf. supra, p. 118.

6 Cf. supra, p. 118.

7 Cf. infra, p. 236.

of Netherlandish art at that time. Not until Ruskin denounced the current over-reverential regard for the Dutch school generally¹ did some semblance of a balanced estimate of the merits of Metzger, Dou, Ostade, Terborch and Mieris come to be formed.

Gabriel Metzger belonged, in Balzac's opinion, to the foremost rank of Dutch artists. In Gobseck² he is mentioned in the same breath as Rembrandt himself: the old money-lender resembles those alchemists and little old men painted by Rembrandt and Metzger. Balzac, as we have seen, is thinking more of paintings by Metzger than of any by Rembrandt. No doubt such works as Metzger's "Alchemist" (plate 17), at the Louvre³, came to Balzac's mind as he created Gobseck. And what of the Comédie Humaine's own alchemist, Balthazar Claës, created a mere four years later, about the time when Balzac was thinking of adding finishing touches to Les Dangereux de l'Inconduite (the title of Gobseck in 1830)? What suggested the idea of an alchemist to Balzac? More important still, what prompted him to place an alchemist in the thrusting world of nineteenth-century capitalism? The search for the philosopher's stone (one manifestation of the Absolute) was clearly bound to appeal to a man of Balzac's theosophical tendencies: it is in complete harmony with Frenhofer's⁴ and Cambara's quests, but was it in harmony with the ambition to be a historian of society? By situating the alchemy in Flanders, rather than Tours or Issoudun, Balzac has already, in some intangible way, set it apart from the series of provincial "documentaries". Indeed, the Dutch and Flemish schools of painting may even have led Balzac to place the story where he did: at the intersection of France and the Netherlands. It would be unwise to push the connexion further than this: the figure of the alchemist appealed to Balzac as to others of his generation (but especially to him), perhaps because of the influence of Netherlandish art.

1 Modern Painters, vol. V, London 1860, pp. 281-286.

2 Pl. II, p. 624.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 438.

4 Cf. infra, pp. 306-307.

Even in the 1840s, Metzger's influence is still detectable. Indeed, Balzac's admiration of his qualities as a painter is stronger than ever. His name is again linked with Rembrandt's in Pierre Grassou¹; Fougères begins his career with servile imitations of the Dutch school, and Rembrandt and Metzger, together with the landscapists, are the artists whom he chooses to copy. Josépha Mirah owns two of his paintings², and Sylvain Pons is given "un petit tableau sur bois, de Metzger, désigné comme un chef-d'oeuvre"³. It is "un sublime petit tableau... qu'Élie Magus avait beaucoup admiré, et dont il avait dit: C'est un diamant!"⁴ The old Jew's enthusiasm is encouragement enough for Madame Cibot to steal the picture, when Pons is dying. Thus, whereas in the 1830s Metzger contributed to the visual images of the Comédie Humaine at least once (and probably twice, or even perhaps oftener), he contributes to the furnishings of Les Parents Pauvres in the last decade of Balzac's life.

Gerard Dou, Metzger's master and a pupil of the young Rembrandt, would be rated more highly than Metzger today; and Balzac, too, seems to have been more deeply influenced by Dou than by Metzger in his delineation of portraits and scenes—whilst still according Metzger an honourable place in the hierarchy of artists. Balzac appreciates Dou's fineness of touch and meticulous attention to detail; also, of course, the subject-matter of Dou's paintings is extremely congenial to him. Balzac shared with his generation an extreme fondness for genre-painting, intimate scenes from ordinary domestic life, peasants playing cards at an inn or smoking or drinking, or a lady playing a clavichord or looking out of a window.

1 Pl. VI, p. 120.

2 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

3 Pl. VI, p. 779.

4 Ibid., p. 748.

For Balzac, Dou is primarily the portraitist of old men and young girls, and in both these departments he shares pride of place with Mieris and Ostade. "The Gold Weigher" (plate 8), at the Louvre ¹, has made a particular impression on him--and probably at an early age. He alludes to it twice in the Comédie Humaine. In La Peau de Chagrin ² the old Antiquary is modelled upon "The Gold Weigher"--to such an extent, Balzac says, that a stranger, seeing the Antiquary, might well think that the subject of the picture had stepped out of its frame. Judge Blondet, likewise, regulates his life with the precision of the man weighing gold ³. We are not told whether the judge resembles "The Gold Weigher" in personal appearance, and indeed it does not seem that there could have been much physical resemblance between the two men. But other portraits undoubtedly owe much to "The Gold Weigher", though Balzac does not name this picture specifically. M. du Guénic, for instance, his face lined with a thousand wrinkles ⁴, or (although in these cases there is not even an acknowledgment of Dou's name) the portraits of Gobseck ⁵, Dante Alighieri ⁶, even Judge Popinot ⁷.

Another familiar scene from the minor Dutch masters, the young lady seated at her window, or playing the virginals, also inspires Balzac in numerous portraits; and in this respect, his debt is probably as great to Gerard Dou as to Terborch or any other Dutch (or Flemish) genre-painter. The portrait of Véronique Graslin as a girl, seated at the window of the Sauviate's house ⁸, is an obvious reminiscence of such paintings as Dou's "Femme accrochant une Volaille à sa Croisée" ⁹, which Balzac could have

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 323.

2 Pl. IX, p. 32. A 177, vol. I, p. 98.

3 Le Cabinet des Antiques; Pl. IV, p. 436.

4 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 333. Cf. A 6, folios 23-24.

5 Pl. II, pp. 624-625.

6 Les Proscrites; Pl. X, pp. 328-330.

7 L'Interdiction; Pl. III, pp. 19-21.

8 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 548.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 328. L. Demonts: op. cit., p. 132, no. 2,353.

seen at the Louvre on his arrival in Paris. The portrait of Véronique Sauviat is, in fact, the only one in which an acknowledgment is made to Dou. But there are others: the portrait of Augustine Guillaume, in La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote¹, or of Pierrette². A similar portrait can even be found in the apprentice novels³.

In the case of La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote, there is an evident and truly enormous debt to the minor Dutch masters. As with the caricaturists' inspiration of a view of Paris⁴, or Girodet's link with Sarrasine⁵ or Delacroix's insistence on Goethe's character of Mephistopheles⁶, we have here an authentic example of a style of art which sets Balzac's imagination in motion and helps to give rise to an artistic creation of Balzac's own. La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote is one of the very earliest of Balzac's novels, a cautionary tale about the dangers that can arise when a young girl from the old-established middle classes marries an aristocratic artist. Augustine's background is indeed that of the prosperous Dutch trading families of the seventeenth century. M. Guillaume, her father, belongs to a family of merchants which goes back many generations. His uprightness and honesty are a model to all. He is not treated in the way Henry Monnier would have described him, or for that matter in the way in which Balzac describes Vervelle; nor is he even portrayed as an older and wiser César Birotteau. He is a solid, dignified and thoroughly worthy tradesman whose elder daughter Virginie, in marrying Joseph Lebas, marries into an equally dignified and worthy family.

1 Pl. I, pp. 20-21.

2 Pl. III, pp. 650-653, 656-657.

3 La Dernière Fée ou la Nouvelle Lame Merveilleuse, Paris 1963, vol. II, pp. 70-71: "la charmante Catherine (Grandvani) assise sur sa chaise, le visage éclairé par le jour, la main agile à tirer le point, doucement rêveuse".

4 Cf. supra, pp. 70-77.

5 Cf. supra, pp. 35-36, 92.

6 Cf. supra, pp. 54-56.

The story's tragedy of incompatibility arises precisely because Sommervieux is an artist and Augustine happens to be seen by him, at her window and in the bloom and freshness of early morning. It is as beautiful a scene as any in Dutch art, and Sommervieux falls in love with it¹. Thus, the juxtaposition in Balzac's mind of the beauty of a painting and the attraction it can exert upon an artist leads to this tragedy of "private life". The ideal and the real will, it seems, always be incompatible to the artist. Sommervieux cannot live with the woman whose beauty and character—had it been fixed long ago in a painting—he would have eternally admired.

The debt here is not, of course, solely to Gerard Dou, but to all minor Dutch artists. Yet Dou must certainly have been well in the forefront of those painters of young feminine beauty whom Balzac prized.

Dou impinges upon the Comédie Humaine in yet another important way, and this time it is his influence alone which we discern. One of his best known and most keenly appreciated paintings, "The Dropsical Woman", which is (and was²) at the Louvre, has a considerable rôle in Pierre Grassou. Fougères's first acceptable contribution to a Salon, the "Toilette d'un Chouan", shown at the (fictitious) X exhibition of 1829, imitates "The Dropsical woman"³. Grassou has simply reversed the grouping of Dou's picture and added the figure of an old woman. The style, the treatment, the basic composition of "La Toilette d'un Chouan" are a shameless plagiarism. It is a method which leads its practitioner to fortune, even if his immediate success at the Salon of 1829 was due to his painting's Royalist appeal. Grassou had numerous counterparts in real life: Duval-Lecamus, Fouquet, Granet, Vigneron, Dubufe, all of whom imitated the style of the minor Dutch artists. Much to Balzac's credit, he despised their work.

1 In much the same way, Swann's mental picture of Odette is coloured and indeed enhanced (in Du Côté de chez Swann) by the fact that he involuntarily links her with Botticelli's "Zipporah", a photograph of which stands on his writing-table (A la Recherche du Temps perdu, Paris 1954, vol. I, pp. 222-225).

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 324.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 120-121.

Many collectors in the Comédie Humaine own Gerard Dou--although not that doyen of all collectors, Pons. Not only does the old Antiquary resemble a Dou painting, he actually possesses one ¹. It is in the upper room of his shop, amongst his very choicest pictures. And, strange to say, Balzac tells us that it is like "une page de Sterne" ¹. From his early years, he had been an enthusiastic reader of Tristram Shandy. The novel's picaresque gaiety, the always unexpected working-out of events, the verve and quaintness of both narration and dialogue--these qualities appealed to him. The resemblance to Gerard Dou must, however, be in the subject-matter, not in Sterne's use of dialogue or his narrative skill. The matronly Mrs Wadman and her maid Bridget have many counterparts in Dou's scenes from domestic life; Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim call to mind his braggadocios and roisterers. Other paintings by Dou are to be found in the collections of Hélène d'Aiglemont and her husband the Capitaine Parisien ², Balthazar Claës ³ and (to most eyes, at least!) the philistine and fashion-mongering Vervelle ⁴.

Gerard Terborch stood rather less high in Balzac's estimation. The Comédie Humaine never manifests admiration for Terborch's portraits of old men, although Balzac does admire the portraits of old men painted by Rembrandt, Dou, Mieris and Ostade. But, perhaps with such works in mind as Terborch's "Militaire offrant de l'argent à une Jeune Dame", at the Louvre ⁵, or his "Woman Peeling Apples", at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, he associates the artist with the portraiture of girls and young women ⁶. Claës owns Terborche ³, Vervelle mistakenly believes

1 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 28. A 177, vol. I, p. 84.

2 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 822.

3 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. Note, however, that Dou is not mentioned in the MS of the novel (A 201, fol. 27).

4 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 127.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 627.

6 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 548.

he owns Terborchs ¹, and yet another painting by the master is to be found in Hélène d'Aiglemont's cabin ² alongside a sunset by Théodore Gudin.

Terborch's most important contribution to the Comédie Humaine—though, once again, in conjunction with other artists, both Dutch and Flemish—is perhaps his inspiration of two décors. The most important and earliest of these is Balzac's description of Douai, the town painted by Corot ³ and sketched (in 1837) by Victor Hugo ⁴, in which the action of La Recherche de l'Absolu is set. Describing the coffee-houses of Douai, where the men spend their evenings imbibing wine and liqueurs, drinking coffee and eating cakes, whilst the ladies sing romantic songs, gossip and discuss fashion, Balzac comments:

c'est toujours les tableaux de Miéris ou de Terburg, moins les plumes rouges sur les chapeaux gris pointus, moins les guitares et les beaux costumes du seizième siècle ⁵.

Without perhaps ever visiting Douai ⁶, Balzac has formed a distinct picture of the old town, of Claës's house, its meticulous sitting-rooms, arched window-frames and gleaming tiled vestibules. In his mind's eye, and with the aid of Terborch, Metzger, Feniers, etc., he visualizes the scene as confidently—and accurately—as if he had made a personal reconnaissance. What purpose, from the novels' point of view, was served

1 Pierre Grassous; Pl. VI, p. 127.

2 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 822.

3 G. Bazin; Corot, Paris 1951, pl. 126.

4 V.-M. Hugo; En Voyage, vol. II, Paris 1910, pp. 83, 157. R. Escholiers; Victor Hugo, artiste, Paris 1926, p. 27. Hugo's black-lead drawing is dated 14 August 1837.

5 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 546. This passage is not present in the MS of the novel (A 201, fol. 70). There are no proof-sheets of La Recherche de l'Absolu in the Collection Lovenjoul. However, it is present in the first edition of La Recherche de l'Absolu (Études de Mœurs au XIXe siècle), vol. III, Paris 1834, p. 160).

6 We have no concrete evidence to suggest that Balzac did visit Douai, but M. Xavier Bavière, whose family have been established in the town for upwards of 200 years, tells me of an old-established tradition that Balzac came to Douai as a young man, apparently in connexion with some legal business. The probability of this is flatly denied by Mlle M. Fergeaud (Balzac et "La Recherche de l'Absolu", Paris 1968, pp. 390-407), who did not however examine the Douai records of entry and exit prior to 1823 (op.cit., p. 286, n.).

by the visits to Angoulême (where he often stayed with the Carrauds), Issoudun, Nemours, Limoges, when Balzac could dispense with the sort of documentation so urgently required by both Flaubert and Zola? Sometimes, as with Illusions Perdues, he may only have needed topographical details. (At Angoulême, he fixed in his mind the names of the streets, their interrelationship, the relationship of the Houmeau to the older part of the town.) At other times, as in the case of Ursula Mirouët, his visits to provincial towns may have suggested themes for new novels, rather than vice versa. The visionary nature of Balzac's realism, stressed by Baudelaire¹ and revealed by Balzac himself in Facino Cane², is the most remarkable—and, until recent years, least suspected—feature of the Comédie Humaine. Douai is, perhaps, a figment inspired by Dutch and Flemish genre-painting, together with the sight of a Flemish-style house in Tours³. But even the descriptions of Limoges, Nemours, etc., owe something to the visual arts.

The reference to Terborch and Mieris is revealing from yet another angle. These two artists did not live in the sixteenth century. Indeed, of no other school of painting can it be so categorically asserted that it grew, flourished and died away within the space of a mere sixty years. Apart from Mierevelt⁴, Hobbema and Jan van Huysum⁵, not one artist in the whole of the Dutch school was born in the sixteenth century or survived into the eighteenth⁶. This astonishing historical phenomenon, the reasons for which are obscure but which must have had much to do with the emergence of Holland in the seventeenth century as a major trading

1 Op.cit., p. 1,029.

2 Pl. VI, pp. 66-67.

3 Cf. infra, p. 258, n. 6.

4 M.J. van Mierevelt, the earliest of the Dutch portraitists, and Court painter to the House of Orange, was born in 1567 and died in 1641. Balzac, who owned a portrait by Mierevelt purchased in Rome in April 1846, knew of his work at least two years earlier, for we are told that Madame Mignon resembles the portraits of burgomasters' wives painted by him (Pl. I, p. 367). Modeste Mignon was written in 1844.

5 Jan van Huysum was born in Amsterdam in 1682 and died there in 1749.

6 This generalization does not, of course, take into account such minor still-life painters as Jan Weenix and Coenraet Hoepel, or such marine artists as Backhuysen, van de Velde the younger and Abraham Storck.

power, seems somehow to have escaped Balzac's attention, at any rate until the year 1834, when the paragraph in question was written. In all his formative years, Balzac's knowledge of the Dutch school was never so deep that he was historically aware of its unparalleled cohesion, both in time and in style. He undoubtedly admired and enjoyed Dutch genre-painting, but so unquestioningly and uncritically as to have also ignored the close links uniting the Dutch masters to the masters of the Flemish school, the fine flowering of which was also attained in the seventeenth century.

The second description borrowed from Terborch is of Liebeth's apartment, whose living-room is "un vrai tableau de Terburg"¹. The tiled floor is meticulously scrubbed and clean, not a speck of dust is to be seen anywhere, and there is the same cold atmosphere which Balzac evidently associates with "The Music Lesson"², or "The Messenger" at Leningrad. No feature from a Terborch painting is lacking in this room, Balzac tells us, "pas même sa teinte grise, représentée par un papier jadis bleuâtre et passé au ton de lin".

Mieris and Ostade are closely associated in Balzac's mind with Dou and Terborch. Both, like Dou, excel in portraying old men³. Like both Dou and Terborch, they also excel in their portraiture of girls and young women⁴. Mieris is linked with Terborch in the description of Douai⁵. Claës's collection represents Mieris⁶, as does the Antiquary's⁷. Almost inevitably, Mieris is also represented in Vervelle's spurious collection⁸. But also, an Ostade is to be found in N. Mignon's ownership⁹ (it is, in fact, the only Ostade to feature in any of the

1 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 216.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 628. L. Demonts: op. cit., p. 136, no. 2,588.

3 Rantzia; Pl. II, p. 333. Cf. A 6, fol. 24.

4 Le Curé de Villages; Pl. VIII, p. 548.

5 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 546.

6 Ibid., p. 501. Mieris is not mentioned in the MS of the novel (A 201, fol. 27).

7 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 27. A 177, vol. I, p. 81.

8 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 127.

9 Pl. I, p. 580.

galleries of the Comédie Humaine); and, in Béatrix¹, Balzac makes specific reference to a painting by Mieris a copy of which, he tells us, belongs to Camille Maupin, the George Sand of his novels. So great, it seems, is Mieris's popularity that even a woman as wealthy as Camille owns—not an original work but merely a copy! Why are there not more copies in the Comédie Humaine? (Almost the only others are Vervelle's huge gallery of fakes.) Is it perhaps that Camille, with her taste and intellectual fastidiousness, is aware that such and such a painting is a copy, whereas others showing it to Calyste du Guénic would have lacked either the discernment or the candour, or perhaps both, to confess this fact to their guest? But why, of all people, does she, with her immense resources, not treat herself to an original? Many were then on the market, admittedly fairly sought after. The problem seems insoluble.

The description of the painting is as follows¹:

une belle copie du tableau de Mieris, où se voit une femme en satin blanc, debout, tenant un papier et chantant avec un seigneur brabançon, pendant qu'un nègre verse dans un verre à patte du vieux vin d'Espagne, et qu'une vieille femme de charge arrange des biscuits.

M. Regard suggests² that the picture to which Balzac is referring may be "Le Déjeuner d'Huitres"—presumably meaning the version at the Pinakothek, Munich, which Balzac probably saw on 12 June 1835. But this would imply a very indistinct recollection of a painting seen, and evidently admired, only four years previously. For in the Munich painting there is neither negro, nor music, nor duenna. Is it not equally reasonable—and certainly fairer to Balzac—to suppose that he had some other Mieris in mind, as yet unidentified? Our failure to identify it may well have resulted from a change in attribution.

1 Pl. II, p. 397. Cf. A 6, fol. 43.

2 Béatrix, Garnier edn., Paris 1962, p. 105, n. 2.

The Fleming Teniers the younger (1610-1694) also held much interest for Balzac, though the latter does not claim to own any of his pictures and indeed never mentions him in his correspondence. The earliest reference to him occurs in the first edition of La Peau de Chagrin¹, where the young hero Raphaël de Valentin, seriously contemplating suicide, enters an antique shop on the Seine embankment and is shown round it by a young employee. Balzac creates a most evocative description of the antique dealer's wares and the glories of the past which they call to mind². With, perhaps, the fantasy of the dying, the hero enters into the spirit of each picture and object of art:

devant quelques Teniers, endossant la casaque d'un soldat, la misère d'un ouvrier, ou le bonnet sale et enfumé des Flamands, il s'enivrait de bière, ou jouait aux cartes avec eux, souriant à une grosse paysanne fraîche, et d'un attrayant embonpoint...

Here, Balzac is thinking of such pictures by Teniers as the "Intérieur d'un Estaminet"³, "Intérieur d'une Tabagie"⁴ and "Fumeur"⁵, all at the Louvre. Later in his career, he was to see other, very similar, genre-paintings in Vienna and Dresden; but, resembling Joseph Bridau in the "profonde et sérieuse instruction... à laquelle tous les gens de talent se sont livrés entre vingt et trente ans"⁶, it must undoubtedly have been at the Louvre that Balzac first became interested in Teniers and the other minor genre-painters, whose effects he was to emulate in La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote, La Recherche de l'Absolu and indeed elsewhere.

1 A 177, vol. I, p. 81. Cf. Pl. IX, pp. 26-27.

2 Cf. infra, pp. 266-267.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 619: "Intérieur d'un estaminet. Sur le devant, à gauche, des hommes jouent aux cartes; plus loin l'hôte reçoit de l'argent d'un cavalier; une femme et des enfants sont assis auprès du feu".

4 Ibid., no. 620: "L'Intérieur d'une tabagie. Une femme assise près d'un buveur; dans le fond des fumeurs devant une cheminée".

5 Ibid., no. 618: "Un Fumeur assis seul devant une table. Plus loin des hommes qui jouent aux cartes".

6 La Rebouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 901.

Several situations and characters have been inspired, more or less closely, by Teniers's work, the most important of these being the description, in Une Double Famille¹, of Bianchon's and Granville's chance meeting, at night, in the Rue de Gaillon. To give an adequate picture of this scene, says Balzac², a writer would need the pencils of Charlet and Callot, the brushes of Rembrandt and Teniers.

Yet another scene, this time in Les Paysans³, is inspired by the Flemish genre-painter. Montcornet, the owner of the Château des Aigues, in Burgundy, is inspecting his estate in company with Michaud, the head gamekeeper. They come upon a harvesting scene, far removed from the Arcadian simplicity of George Sand's La Mare au Diable and Les Maîtres Sonneurs, or Léopold Robert's "Halte des Moissonneurs dans les Marais Pontins":

au bout des champs moissonnés..., il y avait une centaine de créatures qui, certes, laissaient bien loin les plus hideuses conceptions que les pinceaux de Murillo, de Teniers, les plus hardis en ce genre, et les figures de Callot, ce prince de la fantaisie des misères, aient réalisées; leurs haillons déchiquetés, leurs jambes de bronze, leurs têtes pelées, leurs couleurs, si curieusement dégradées, leurs déchirures humides de graisse, leurs reprises, leurs taches, les décolorations des étoffes, les trames mises à jour, enfin leur idéal du matériel des misères était dépassé, de même que les expressions avides, inquiètes, hébétées, idiotes, sauvages de ces figures avaient, sur leurs immortelles compositions, l'avantage éternel que conserve la nature sur l'art.

But this description, strangely reminiscent of a memorable passage in La Bruyère⁴, and foreshadowing the militant naturalism of Zola's La Terre and the early Van Gogh, certainly owes more to Balzac himself than

1 Pl. I, pp. 984-990.

2 Ibid., p. 989. Cf. pp. 82, 104, 288.

3 Pl. VIII, pp. 288-289.

4 Oeuvres complètes, Paris 1957, p. 333.

to Teniers, who was completely lacking in the sense of social criticism which, in this passage, transcends Balzac's usual conservatism. Even so, Teniers—with Murillo ¹, Callot ² and possibly Louis Le Nain and Ribera—provides the mould into which Balzac pours his own feeling of the horror of human degradation. The passage also underlines Balzac's belief in the limitations of painting; the horrifying pictures of peasants and beggar boys are left far behind by the sight of human degradation in real life.

Only one portrait is acknowledged by Balzac as owing something to Teniers: that of the innkeeper Madame Lepas, in Autre étude de Femme ³. "C'était une Flamande qui aurait dû naître dans un tableau de Teniers". But the Comédie Humaine probably contains other portraits (François Tonsard, for example ⁴) in which, without actually admitting it, Balzac draws on the 2,000 or so works attributed to Teniers the younger even today.

Several works in this vast opus belong to characters in the novels. Inevitably, Balthazar Claës owns several ⁵, and—such was the popularity of the genre-painters in Balzac's lifetime—two others have found their way into Josépha Mirah's collection ⁶. It is perhaps surprising that there are not more named Teniers in the seven important picture collections of the Comédie Humaine.

1 Cf. infra, pp. 214-215.

2 Cf. infra, p. 288.

3 Pl. III, p. 252.

4 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, pp. 55-56.

5 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. A 201, fol. 27.

6 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

But Balzac is not only aware of a rather satanic Rembrandt and the delightful (or occasionally sordid) homeliness of Dutch and Flemish genre-painting. (Did Balzac wish to imply that sordid homeliness was the prerogative of Flemish artists?) The range of his interests in Dutch, German and Flemish art is truly enormous, not only in breadth but also in chronological span. To begin with, he is familiar with the German "Nazarene" school, a manifestation of his own century; he is also conversant with the landscapists Hobbema and Ruysdael, the seascape painter Beckhuyzen (although not, apparently, with Van de Velde), the animal painters Potter and Houwerman, and the outstanding flower painters David van Heem, Jan van Huysum and Abraham Mignon. And he himself owned a flower-painting by David van Heem and two landscapes in the manner of Ruysdael ¹.

There were three principal exponents of the Nazarene movement in Germany: Peter von Cornelius (1783-1867), Julius Schnorr von Karolsfeld (1794-1872) and Friedrich Overbeck (1789-1869) ². Their object was to give new life to religious art by returning to the simplicity of the past; they idolized Raphael, studied and worked in Rome, and revived fresco-painting. The Pre-Raphaelites owed much to their initiatives.

Cornelius's frescoes are--or were--mostly in Munich, where he spent much of his life; but there are some in Rome. At the Glyptothek, until their destruction in the Second World War, were frescoes illustrating the influence upon mankind of both pagan and Christian deities ³; a vast scheme of Christian theodicy--with frescoes of the Creation and Last Judgment (recalling Michelangelo), the Revelation of the Trinity and the foundation of the Church--adorns the Ludwigskirche, Munich ⁴; whilst, in

1 A 329, folios 22, 24-25.

2 There is never any reference to Overbeck in the Comédie Humaine, although he perhaps was the greatest of the Nazarenes.

3 K.K. Andrews: The Nazarenes. A Brotherhood of German Painters in Rome, Oxford 1964, pp. 56-57.

4 Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Rome, Cornelius assisted in decorating the Casa Bartholdy (now the Biblioteca Hertziana) ¹. As for Schnorr, Cornelius's pupil, the works by which he is best remembered are to be found in the former Residenz of the Kings of Bavaria, in Munich: frescoes of the Nibelungen saga, and scenes from the lives of Charlemagne, Frederick Barbarossa and Rudolf of Habsburg, all commissioned by Ludwig I shortly after his accession but not completed until forty years later, at the very end of his reign ².

Balzac had seen some, even if not all, of the Nazarenes' frescoes during his visit to Munich in June 1835, for shortly after returning home from the Bavarian capital he gives his impressions of it in a letter to Madame Hańska:

je ne suis pas content de Munich. C'est par trop de fresques, et par trop de mauvaises fresques. Celles du haut plafond de la Pinacothèque valent seules quelque chose, et celles des salles d'en bas de la Königsbau. Tout le reste est à la hauteur de nos décorations de cafés, à Paris ³.

In other words, Balzac can tolerate the Nibelungen frescoes at the Residenz (or Königsbau), but not the scenes from German history (which Schnorr himself detested painting, and, except for one wall of the State Apartments, left to assistants), or Cornelius's work at the Glyptothek and Ludwigskirche. In view of his disapproval of Cornelius, it is perhaps surprising to note that the only reference to the Nazarenes in the body of the Comédie Humaine is a fairly graceful and complimentary one. It occurs eleven years after the Munich visit, in Le Cousin Pons, when Balzac is extolling the staid euphoria of German banquets:

le discours reste sage comme l'improvisation d'un usurier, les visages rougissent comme ceux des fiancées peintes dans les fresques de Cornélius ou de Schnorr, c'est-à-dire imperceptiblement, et les souvenirs s'épanchent comme la fumée des pipes, avec lenteur ⁴.

1 Ibid., pp. 33-37.

2 Ibid., pp. 62-64.

3 Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 336; 12 June 1835.

4 Pl. VI, p. 588.

This, of course, is one of the very many allusions to art in the Comédie Humaine which, indicating no particular depth of understanding or appreciation, are items of Balzac's mental (rather than creative) equipment: an assemblage of visual similes on which he can draw as occasion allows or demands. But it is interesting to note that when describing a German banquet, he resorts ironically to a Bavarian image, and an image which he has carefully treasured for almost a quarter of his lifetime. He frequently establishes such parallels, where the painter does not suggest a visual image but merely fits into a system of reference: Teniers's depiction of the sordidness of peasant life is another instance of this.

Although Balzac owned two Ruysdael-type landscapes, Hobbema seems to have exerted a stronger influence upon the Comédie Humaine. Balzac also seems to attach more merit and importance to Hobbema. One of his landscapes is amongst the four great pictures in Pons's collection ¹, a work of great beauty and also of extreme value—we are told that it would fetch 60,000 francs, if auctioned ², which, by the prices obtaining at that time ³, was an enormous sum. (Bouquet's collection of thirty-nine pictures, including Correggios, a Titian and a Leonardo, is only valued at 150,000 francs ⁴.) Balzac, who refers no less than four times ⁵ to Hobbema in Le Cousin Pons, clearly remained enamoured of his work until the very end of his career. In the earlier Ursule Miroult (1841), he can summon to mind no better way of describing the ideal setting, just outside Nemours, where the postmaster Minoret-Levreult is standing awaiting Ursule's arrival in the town, than to compare it with a Hobbema:

ne faut-il pas être bien maître de poste pour s'ennuyer devant une prairie où se trouvaient des bestiaux comme en fait Paul Potter, sous un ciel de Raphaël, sur un canal ombragé d'arbres dans la manière d'Hobbema?

Here the natural countryside fleetingly captures the ideal beauty made permanent by Hobbema, beauty to which the crass postmaster

1 Pl. VI, p. 651.

2 Ibid., p. 652.

3 In 1829 Peel paid £840 for "The Avenue at Middelharnis"; "Entry to a Wood" fetched £1,722 at Cardinal Fesch's sale in 1845; Lord Hertford paid £2,250 for a Hobbema in the sale of William II of Holland in 1850 (G.R. Reitlinger: op.cit., p. 339).

4 Le Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 965, 1,022.

5 Pl. VI, pp. 531, 593, 651, 652.

6 Le Messager, 25 August 1841. Cf. Pl. III, p. 266.

--another Birotteau or Vervelle ¹--is not surprisingly indifferent. The only horses he can admire are those which make his fortune as a postmaster.

Other than in Ursule Mirouët, however, there are no landscapes for which an indebtedness to Hobbema is acknowledged. Balzac did not excel in descriptions of the countryside. Wherever he derived a scene from the landscapists of Holland, he would almost certainly have admitted the fact, if only to make his readers' vision identical with his own. But if the only occasions of indebtedness to Hobbema and Ruysdael are those he acknowledges, they are few indeed; in fact, none in Ruysdael's case. Such concealed inspiration from Dutch landscape art as there possibly is would presumably have come from Hobbema, with his peaceful countrysides so unlike the rushing cataracts of his master and contemporary. Only the description of Montégnac, in La Curé de Village ², shows any trace of a possible influence by Ruysdael. The fact of the matter is, of course, that there is probably little or no concealed inspiration--either from Ruysdael or Hobbema. Balzac would have introduced their names more often if he had needed their help in visual notation. He had direct personal knowledge of the landscapes he describes most lovingly: the countryside around Clochegourde ³. In Ursule Mirouët the reference to Hobbema is made with ironical intent: to raise the beauty of a natural landscape to the level of the Ideal, thus underlining the blindness of mercenary Philistinism.

Both Hobbema and Ruysdael feature in one of the best of the Comédie Humaine's collections: that belonging to Balthazar Claës ⁴. And both are judged to be the equals of Claude and Poussin, and only rivalled (in the novelist's own day and his own fictive world) by the landscapist Léon de Lora ⁵. But Pons, so far as we know ⁶, does not possess a

1 Cf. supra, p. 73.

2 Pl. VIII, pp. 656-658, 670, 676.

3 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, pp. 789-790, 856-857 etc.

4 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. Cf. A 201, fol. 27, where only Ruysdael is mentioned, however.

5 Un Début dans la Vie; Pl. I, p. 656. Cf. Les Comédiens sans le savoir; Pl. VII, p. 11. (Poussin is not mentioned in the latter passage.)

6 We are told, however, that Pons "pratiquait l'axiome de (Paul) Chenavard..., qui prétend qu'on ne peut avoir de plaisir à regarder un Ruysdaël... qu'autant que le tableau n'a coûté que cinquante francs" (Pl. VI, p. 531). Amongst the forty or so unnamed pictures in his collection, Ruysdael may have been represented.

Buysdael, nor does Louise de Macumer, who is however the owner of a Hobbema ¹.

On the other hand, Pons certainly possesses a seascape by Backhuysen ², the only one to be mentioned in the Comédie Humaine. Balzac does not appear to have heard of van de Velde (at any rate, he is not mentioned in any of the novels), and the influence of the seascape artists upon Balzac would seem to be minimal, for except in Jésus-Christ en Flandre, Le Tonneau de Trente Ans and Un Drame au bord de la Mer there are no seascapes in the Comédie Humaine—and nowhere is the physical presence of the sea accentuated, as it so often is in Les Travailleurs de la Mer, or in Conrad's and Melville's novels. But what is apparent, from a study of the chronology of Balzac's references to Dutch art, is that his acquaintance with the landscapists and seascape artists, scanty at the time of the Scènes de la Vie Privée, deepened with time, whereas his interest in the genre-painters to some extent declined.

David van Heem and Jan van Huysum, Holland's outstanding flower painters, are further revelations to Balzac towards the end of his career. Since he himself owned a flower-painting by van Heem ³, Pons is endowed with a similar work ². As for van Huysum, Balzac is rather more liberal in his allocations. This later and less accomplished artist, none of whose works Balzac either owned or imagined he owned, features in two of the Comédie Humaine's collections: Pons's ² and Josépha Mirah's ⁴, both of them created in Balzac's last outburst of imaginative energy. As for Abraham Mignon, who in fact stands at the confluence of three tributaries (born in Frankfurt, where he lived, but a pupil of the Dutch artist van Heem, and with strong links with the Flemish school), Balzac also becomes aware of his work at the eleventh hour. Josépha Mirah owns a Mignon ⁴, and Pons owns several. In the

1 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 291.

2 Pl. VI, p. 593.

3 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

4 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

first description of the old musician's collection ¹, Pons's "insectes d'Abraham Mignon" are mentioned. Balzac was perhaps thinking of "Fleurs et Fruits, Oiseaux et Insectes" ², a painting which has long been at the Louvre. In Pons's will, his "tableau de fleurs d'Abraham Mignon, composé de tulipes" ³ is bequeathed to his solicitor, Maître Trognons; here, various pictures at the Zwinger (such as "Ein Blumenstrauß in einem gläsernen Gefäße auf einem Steintische" and "Ein Strauß von mehrerlei Blumen" ⁴) may have been in Balzac's mind as he enumerated the treasures of Pons's gallery, one of whose "quatre diamants" was originally intended to be a Mignon ⁵; but equally, pictures at The Hague, in Amsterdam and Brussels, and at the Hermitage, Leningrad, could have occasioned the visual transference—Balzac had visited all these galleries less than three years before he began Le Cousin Pons. These mentions of van Heem, van Huysum and Mignon are highly topical reflexions of contemporary taste. After a burst of popularity in the late eighteenth century, they—along with Savery, van Beyeren, William van Aelst, Adrian Coorte, etc.—were again coming into favour, in that never-ending alternation of fanatical reverence and blind neglect which seems the peculiar destiny of flowerpieces.

Balzac's acquaintance with Potter and Wouwerman was of rather longer standing. In this respect, they resemble the landscapists rather than the painters of flowers and seascapes. But then, they had been firm favourites with the French public for almost as long as Hobbema and the Ruysdaels. Both artists are represented in Claës's collection ⁶, the strongest in Dutch and Flemish painters of all the collections in the Comédie Humaine; Potter, who has always been rather more popular than Wouwerman, also features—illusorily, of course—in Vervelle's mausoleum of fakes ⁷. The beauty of the countryside around Nemours has

1 Pl. VI, p. 593.

2 L. Demonts: op.cit., p. 66, no. 2,728. This may be catalogued as no. 566 in the Louvre catalogue of 1825 ("Fleurs et Fruits. Une Souris entrant dans un Nid d'Oiseaux").

3 Pl. VI, p. 746.

4 Verzeichnis der königlichen Gemäldesammlung zu Dresden, Dresden 1843, nos. 1,198, 1,328.

5 A 47, fol. 37. Immediately Balzac had written Mignon's name, however, he crossed it out in the MS, substituting the name of Dürer (Pl. VI, p. 652).

6 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 501. A 201, fol. 27.

7 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 127.

for a brief moment something of the ideal perfection of a Paul Potter, whilst Wouwermen's "oeuvre prodigieuse" (Balzac does not anticipate Ruskin's terrific denunciations! ¹) is called to account in the evocation of the magnificent hunting-party, with Henri IV himself riding to hounds, that could have been seen some time in 1595 at the Château des Aigues ².

Nowhere, it will have been noticed, has there been any reference in this chapter to Frans Hals, Pieter de Hooch and Vermeer, whose names—though not their works—were scarcely known to Balzac's generation. Not until 1866 was Vermeer "rediscovered" by the French critic Théophile Thoré (whom Balzac knew ³), when a series of three articles on "Van der Meer de Delft" appeared in the Gazette des Beaux-arts ⁴. About the same time, Pieter de Hooch also came back into public notice after a lapse of almost two hundred years—largely owing to the admiring reappraisal of Eugène Fromentin ⁵. (There were, however, De Hoochs at the Louvre when Balzac was a young man ⁶.) Paintings formerly attributed to Dou, Terborch, Ostade and above all Mieris were reallocated to the reinstated masters—but not too many, for Vermeer's total authenticated opus consists of less than forty works. Hals, whose paintings had never been reattributed to other artists to any large degree, was "rediscovered" in a different sense: for the first time (partly, again, owing to Fromentin's influence ⁷), his true importance was seen. Only fifteen years after Balzac's death, Lord Hertford paid 51,000 francs at the Pourtales sale for "The Laughing Cavalier"; by 1880, Hals's popularity had mounted to heights unknown even in his lifetime ⁸. But Balzac can scarcely be reproached for failing to notice artists unnoticed & by anyone else, connoisseur or layman, of his own generation. Indeed, M. Raymond

1 Modern Painters, vol. V, London 1860, pp. 281-286.

2 Les Paysans, Pl. VIII, pp. 125-126. Cf. supra, p. 113.

3 Correspondance V, pp. 169-170; Balzac to Thoré, 13 December 1846.

4 Gazette des Beaux-Arts, October-December 1866, pp. 297-330; 458-470; 542-575. In his Musées de la Hollande, 2 vols., Paris 1858-1860, Thoré had already written admiringly of Vermeer, but his remarks then had attracted less attention.

5 Les Maîtres d'autrefois, Paris 1876, pp. 228-241.

6 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, nos. 396, 397: "Intérieur d'une maison hollandaise", "Intérieur d'une chambre richement meublée".

7 Op.cit., pp. 299-312.

8 G.R. Reitlinger: op.cit., p. 337.

Charmet has made the ingenious suggestion ¹ that Balzac was possibly ahead of his generation in the reasons for the great importance he was prone to ascribe to the Dutch school:

à travers des artistes de second plan, comme Gérard Dou et Miéris, il entrevoit une oeuvre profonde, que l'on a découverte après lui chez Vermeer de Delft. Intuition du génie!

It is doubtful whether Balzac was quite so prescient. Until his visit to Holland in 1845, what Balzac had been able to see of the Dutch school was largely confined to the Louvre (although the minor Dutch masters are well represented at Dresden). And though the Louvre now boasts a sizable and important collection of Vermeers, many of them were only acquired after 1850.

The name Breughel seems to have had only one association for Balzac. In this partial ignorance, he resembled, however, all but the most enlightened of his contemporaries. Whereas today the name conjures up colourful and earthy peasant scenes, the "Peasant wedding" ² which Balzac probably noticed in Vienna, or the "Months" in Vienna, Prague and New York, all of which were the work of Pieter Breughel the elder (1529-1569), to Balzac's generation it evoked the work of Jan Breughel I (1568-1625), better known by his nickname of "Velvet" Breughel and the younger son of his more celebrated father. The reason for Balzac's ignorance of Pieter Breughel is probably not far to seek. Not until 1892, by the generosity of Paul Mantz, did the Louvre permanently acquire an example of his work ³, and to this day there is only "The Beggars" ⁴ to commemorate the artist who, in the first half of the sixteenth century, was the most accomplished of all landscape painters. Though Balzac visited the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, with its large and representative

1 "Balzac collectionneur et romancier fut un véritable prophète de l'art", Artia, 13-19 August 1958.

2 Kunsthistorisches Museum. Katalog der Gemäldesammlung, vol. II, Vienna 1963, no. 55.

3 L. Demonts op.cit., p. 55, no. 1,917.

4 And possibly "The Farmyard".

collection of Pieter Breughel's works, many of them acquired in the sixteenth century by the Archduke Ernst and the Emperor Rudolf II¹, he does not seem to have noticed them, and elsewhere not to have come across the available documentation, with the result that "Velvet" Breughel's feathery, diaphanous landscapes were the only paintings by any of the Breughels to receive his recognition.

Even this recognition comes belatedly. The first reference to "Velvet" Breughel is found in Las Pavaens², where Blondet, describing the estate of Les Aigues and the adjacent properties of MM. de Bonquerolles and Soulanges, speaks of their castles, parks and villages, which "vus de loin et de haut donnent de la vraisemblance aux fantastiques paysages de Breughel-de-Velours"—an obvious reference to such works as "Le Paradis Terrestre"³ and the tondo, "Un Pont sur une Rivière"⁴, both at the Louvre.

The second and final reference to him (by name, at least) occurs in Le Cousin Pons⁵. Magus abstracts four pictures from Pons's collection as their owner is dying, and one of them, which is in fact Pons's Hobbema, is described in the receipt which Magus gives Schmucke to sign as a "Velvet" Breughel. Magus, of course, wishes to play down the value of the four pictures he is buying from Schmucke, on Pons's behalf, for a paltry sum. In this connexion, it is relevant to note that Balzac also owned a "Velvet" Breughel for a short time. In the first flush of enthusiasm, he had bought it from the art-dealer Lazard when passing through Marseilles in March 1846. Later, convinced by Paul Chenavard and the picture-restorer Moret that it was a valueless daub⁶, he succeeded in exchanging it for a painting variously entitled "The Birth of Louis XIV" and "The Adoration of the Shepherds"⁷. Small wonder that

1 Kunsthistorisches Museum. Katalog der Gemäldesammlung, vol. II, Vienna 1963, nos. 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55.

2 Pl. VIII, p. 14.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 279.

4 Ibid., no. 283.

5 Pl. VI, p. 716.

6 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, pp. 314-315; Balzac to Georges Mnischech, 29 July 1846.

7 Ibid., pp. 316-317; 4 August 1846.

no "Velvet" Breughel is to be found in Pons's collection!

Adrian Brauwer, an artist much admired by Théophile Gautier, is referred to once, in Le Cousin Pons¹, when Fraisier's servant-mistress Madame Sauvage is likened to "une de ces vieilles devinées par Adrien Brauwer dans ses "Sorcières partant pour le Sabbat" ". This, however, is another purely topical reference (Balzac himself owned "Une Jeune Fille allant au Sabbat", by Adrian Brauwer²); despite Balzac's friendship with Gautier³, it does not seem that any scenes or portraits in earlier novels reflect Brauwer's influence.

As for the historical painter Adam Frans van der Meulen, the chronicler of the principal military events of Louis XIV's reign, Balzac alludes twice to him, on each occasion with the same sort of effect in mind. Towards the end of Modeste Mignon⁴, a hunting scene is described, almost medieval in its studied simplicity, with the chivalry of the Duc d'Hérouville and the triumph of the young lovers Modeste and Ernest de La Brière:

en arrivant au rond-point, où ces chasseurs habillés de rouge et armés de leurs cors de chasse, entourés de chiens et de piqueurs, formèrent un spectacle digne des pinceaux d'un Van der Meulen...

In the second case, in Les Paysans⁵, Balzac is again describing a hunting scene, where the hounds are compared to those in the paintings of Veronese and Rubens. Liveried grooms follow the hunt, and whippers-in, in their huge boots and yellow leather breeches, enliven an already gay spectacle. It seems, says Balzac, as if this scene has come straight out

1 Pl. VI, pp. 672-673.

2 A 329, fol. 22.

3 Cf. supra, p. 17.

4 Pl. I, pp. 597-598.

5 Pl. VIII, pp. 125-126. Cf. supra, p. 113.

of a painting by van der Meulen--probably one of the numerous van der Meulens exhibited at the Louvre in the novelist's youth: "Vue du château et des environs de Fontainebleau. Louis XIV y fait la chasse au cerf" ¹.

In addition to the various Flemish painters whose works add definition to the Comédie Humaine, one, Frans Porbus II (1569-1622), actually features in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu ². He is not mentioned elsewhere, however, and it is not known whether any of his paintings have inspired portraits or scenes in Balzac's novels. A mannerist, Porbus came to work in Paris in 1609, where he enjoyed Marie de' Medici's protection. Two portraits by him of Henri IV and one of his consort hang at the Louvre ³, and it may have been these which first stimulated Balzac's interest in the artist. (Nothing, incidentally, bears out the claim that Porbus was "délaissé pour Rubens par Marie de Médicis" ⁴. On the contrary, Porbus seems to have held his own with Rubens ⁵.) Yet, however experienced he may have been in 1612 and 1613, the years when the action of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu takes place, Porbus is not so skilled as to be able to dispense with the advice of an entirely imaginary painter, Frenhofer.

Frenhofer, an artist on whom Balzac confers almost daemonic power and skill, was the sole pupil of yet another Fleming, Mabuse (c. 1478-c. 1533). Thus, of the three Flemish painters who appear in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu, two are historical and only one is legendary. They

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 445.

2 Cf. infra, p. 306.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, nos. 511, 512, 513.

4 Pl. IX, p. 389.

5 H. Gerson and E.H. ter Kuile: Art and Architecture in Belgium, 1600-1800, Harmondsworth 1960, pp. 55-56.

are joined by the young Nicolas Poussin, who at this time is aged only nineteen, who has only just arrived in Paris from his native Normandy and whose career as an artist of the first rank has not yet begun. Why should Frenhofer be mythical when the other three artists are very much rooted in history? For, although Balzac ascribes actions and words to Porbus and Poussin for which there is no evidence, he is careful not to ignore the basic facts.

The legend of Frenhofer arises primarily from the fact that, whereas Porbus and Poussin were contemporaries (Porbus being, however, twenty-four years older than Poussin), Mabuse lived four generations before Poussin, and three before Porbus. There was no way of transferring Mabuse's charismatic power to Poussin without a mythical intermediary. No Flemish artist senior to both Porbus and Poussin could have imparted this knowledge. From the death of Mabuse to the appearance of Rubens (1577-1640) and Van Dyck (1599-1641), the only Flemish painter to attain the first rank was Pieter Breughel, with whom (as we have seen) Balzac was unfamiliar and who, in any case, died in 1569, the year of Porbus's birth. By no stretch of the imagination could "Velvet" Breughel have transmitted the genius of early Flemish painting! And for Rubens or Van Dyck to have handed down these mysteries would have been unthinkable: Rubens was vying with Porbus for Marie de' Medici's patronage; Van Dyck's oily, flaccid style was unfitted to foreshadow the almost Impressionistic art which Balzac apparently sees as the ideal.

But the creation of a legendary painter to transmit the secrets of Mabuse's hermetic art serves, perhaps, a deeper purpose. Sound and, indeed, prophetic as Frenhofer's theories are ¹, they are nevertheless surrounded with a mystery akin to Clavius's alchemy. Neither Breughel nor Van Dyck, not even Rubens, would have been magical enough to convey so premature a message.

Why is Mabuse, rather than Memling or Rogier van der Weyden, given the important rôle of embodying all that was best in early Flemish art? For it could well be argued that, under Leonardo's and Michelangelo's influence, he italianized the early traditions of Flanders—to his own detriment. In a work with which he was undoubtedly familiar, J.-B. Descamps's Vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais (1753-1763), Balzac must have read the short biography of Mabuse ², in which the author describes how, on the occasion of a visit from the Emperor Charles V, the margrave of Veurne provided each of his servants with a white damask tunic. Mabuse, being of a raffish disposition, quickly sold his, spending the proceeds on drink. For the imperial banquet he improvised another tunic out of white paper, so cunningly painted as to resemble the sheen of fine damask, and which—for a time—deceived even the Emperor himself. Such dexterity seems to have fired Balzac's imagination; and, a little undeservedly, Mabuse is made to symbolize the glories of early Flemish painting. The same technical virtuosity is imparted to Frenhofer—but not without chronological inconsistency, because Mabuse died some time between 1533 and 1536 ³, eighty or so years before Frenhofer met Poussin. Once again, Balzac

1 Cf. infra, pp. 306-307, 309, 316.

2 La Vie des peintres flamands, allemands et hollandais, vol. I, Paris 1753, pp. 83-85.

3 U. Thieme and F. Becker: Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler, vol. XIV, Leipzig 1921, p. 410.

seems to be following Descamps, who states ¹ that the date of Mabuse's death was 1562. Frenhofer criticizes and himself retouches Porbus's academic "Marie Égyptienne"—and thereby confers on Poussin a lasting benefit. Unconnected with the technical brilliance which owes so much to the Flanders of the early sixteenth century (this, at least, is Balzac's claim), and which is so strongly prophetic of the art of Cézanne, the magical aura surrounding Frenhofer accords with the prevailing atmosphere of the Études Philosophiques, with their strong emphasis on the "ravages de la pensée" ² arising from the misuse of conceptual power ³.

The Flemish school, popular in the extreme during Balzac's lifetime, had rather less attraction for him than for many of his contemporaries—though he shared their liking for "Velvet" Breughel's landscapes, Brauwer's witches' covens, and Teniers's coarse-grained toppers and village bores. Rubens, whom Delacroix venerated, he regarded dubiously, admiring the opulent voluptuousness of his female portraits but doubting his entire competence as a colourist. Not only was Balzac unaware of Pieter Breughel, he was equally ignorant, it seems, of Memling, Rogier van der Weyden, Matsys and Patinir. For reasons which still partly escape us, it is the Flemish school—not Italian or German painting—that transmits to Frenhofer, and thence to Poussin and Cézanne, art's seminal mysteries.

1 Op.cit., p. 85.

2 Pl. I, p. 15.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 306-307.

Balzac's awareness of German art is largely confined to Dürer, whose reputation was as great in 1850 as it is today. He has noted Cranach's originality, however, and is vaguely aware of Holbein (though less aware of him than an Englishman would be). He does not appear ever to have heard of Mathis Grünewald (to whom the so-called Dürer sculpture at Mainz should possibly be attributed: ¹) or Albrecht Altdorfer—still less of Adam Elsheimer, Martin Schongauer or Stefan Lochner. But it was not until the present century that the German primitives came really into their own, though the Wallraf-Richartz Museum, Cologne, had already begun to amass them just over a hundred years ago. In 1854 Christie & Manson auctioned thirty-seven German primitives for a total of £230! ² Finally, Balzac thinks of German painting as relying on line rather than colour to achieve its effects: on content rather than on form.

His enthusiasm for the Dutch genre-painters seems to have been abreast, not ahead, of his generation. Fundamentally, it was the same enthusiasm as infected Vervelle, and for the same reasons. The faithful, even meticulous rendering of homely scenes, portraits of old men and young maidens (but not of poverty—Balzac looks to the French caricaturists ³, Callet ⁴ and occasionally Teniers, for his scenes of lower-class life), the painstaking and methodical brush strokes "qui veulent une loupe pour être admirés" ⁵, these things he admired in Mieris, Dou and the rest. For Balzac, genre-painting was indeed almost synonymous with the Dutch school: he seems hardly to have been aware of Chardin and the Le Nains ⁶. And though he is certainly familiar with Rembrandt's work, and admires it deeply, it is, none the less, a sombre "Mephistophelean" Rembrandt, unrepresentative of the balanced master we

1 Cf. *infra*, pp. 236-237.

2 Cf. G.R. Reitlinger: *op.cit.*, p. 326.

3 Cf. *supra*, pp. 78, 80.

4 Cf. *infra*, p. 288.

5 *Mémoires*; A 6, fol. 24. Cf. Pl. II, p. 333.

6 Cf. *supra*, p. 99.

see in him today. Rembrandt, no doubt, receives his due meed of praise, although Balzac seems to have become rather more lukewarm towards him in the 1840s, possibly because the Romantic aspect of his work had by then diminished in importance and Balzac had not been able to formulate a more complete view. But the painters of "scenes from the private life" of Holland in the seventeenth century receive, on the other hand, more than their due of admiration. Yet we should not be carping or ungrateful in our criticism of Balzac's appreciation of the Dutch school, because from his early intense interest came the Scènes de la Vie Privée--and, with them, his early stature as a novelist. Whether or not the description of, for instance, Douai in La Recherche de l'Absolu owes more to Terborch and Mieris than to Balzac's personal observation (for I am inclined to think that he did visit Douai): this question now falls into a juster perspective. A legal errand on behalf of Maître Guillonnet-Merville may have prompted Balzac to go to Douai as a young man. But what prompted his interest in a Flemish setting in Jésus-Christ en Flandre, or the creation of the homely setting of La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote so reminiscent of a painting by Vermeer or De Hooch? The springs of a novelist's inspiration are deep and difficult to discern; but not least of them, as he was writing these early tales, seems to have been a profound and ineradicable interest in the lesser masters of seventeenth-century Holland.

VII: ENGLISH PAINTING

Balzac knew remarkably little about English art, which in his own day was undergoing such radical changes in the hands of both Constable and Turner. And what he did know he does not seem to have particularly appreciated. As far as we can tell, he never visited England. It is just possible, though unlikely, that he paid a brief visit to this country in 1835, when he may have accompanied his mistress Frances Sarah Guidoboni-Visconti to her parents' home at Cole Park, Malmesbury, Wiltshire. Even so, it is doubtful whether he would have visited London, and seen the National Gallery, which had only recently been set up by Act of Parliament, following the sale of J.J. Angerstein's art collection in 1824, and until April 1838 was housed in Pall Mall.

In his correspondence Balzac hardly ever refers to English artists, and the only two paintings he possessed by an English master were the portraits of a man and a woman, by Thomas Beach (1738-1806), a pupil of Reynolds. Nor is it known how Balzac came by these two paintings, which are mentioned in the Inventory of twenty-six paintings drawn up in 1848¹.

The name of Turner, whose fame was established by "The Shipwreck" (1805) and the Liber Studiorum of 1807-1819, apparently means nothing to Balzac, and Constable is equally unknown. Turner's neglect is, perhaps, more surprising than Constable's, for great as is Constable's popularity now, in his own lifetime he was overlooked and misunderstood. On the other hand, Constable attained a measure of recognition in France during his life, and his peaceful landscapes--reminiscent of the minor Dutch masters, though immensely superior in technique--might have been expected to appeal to Balzac.

1 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

Not that Balzac lacked sources of information on the subject of English art. His friend Nodier, whose parties at the Arsenal he attended from the autumn of 1830¹, admired Constable's painting. He had seen at least one of his landscapes as early as 1821, when he passed through London with Baron Taylor, Alphonse de Cailleux and Eugène Isabey on a journey from Dieppe to Scotland². And Delacroix, with whom Balzac first became acquainted at the Arsenal (though they had perhaps exchanged a few words as early as July 1829³), had known Sir Thomas Lawrence and William Etty, when in England during the spring and summer of 1825⁴. The young Delacroix had been powerfully impressed, in 1816 or 1817, by the English water-colourist Bonington, who was then studying at the *École des Beaux-Arts*. Constable's "Stour at Dedham"⁵ and "View of the Thames at Waterloo Bridge", exhibited at the Salon of 1824⁶, had caused Delacroix to make hurried changes to the background of his "Massacre in Chios", intended for the same Salon. Did Nodier speak of his admiration for Constable to the budding artists whom he invited to the Arsenal? Did Delacroix mention the premature death of his friend Bonington, or Constable's outstanding merits as a landscapist, or even perhaps some acquaintance with Turner or Constable unrecorded for posterity? At all events, Balzac did not listen with attentive ears.

And besides Delacroix, many other young French artists had studied in London between 1820 and 1830⁷. Could not Balzac have learned more about English painting from them? Even allowing for the novelist's dislike of everything English, it is indeed strange that Constable, Bonington and the young school of English water-colour design should never have been referred to by Balzac in either novels, articles or

1 Cf. *supra*, p. 11.

2 J.-C.-E. Nodier: Promenade de Dieppe aux montagnes d'Écosse, Paris 1821, pp. 84-85.

3 Cf. *supra*, p. 11, n. 9.

4 R. Escholier: Delacroix, peintre, graveur, écrivain, vol. I, Paris 1926, p. 142.

5 Now in the Huntington Library, New York.

6 1824 Salon, nos. 359, 360.

7 R. Escholier: Delacroix, peintre, graveur, écrivain, vol. I, Paris 1926, p. 148.

correspondence, when for Delacroix they had provided one of those climacteric experiences which occur only once or twice in a lifetime.

Hogarth is the greatest English artist to whom Balzac has occasion to refer--and then only once¹. According to Balzac, he is one of the artists who have best described the poetic destitution of the working class:

la misère en heillone, la misère du peuple, la plus poétique d'ailleurs, et que Callot, qu'Hogarth, que Murillo, Charlet, Raffet, Gavarni, Maissonier, que l'Art adore et cultive, au carnaval surtout!²

No particular depth of understanding is indicated here, but what Balzac most probably has in mind are the engravings of "Industry and Idleness", "Gin Lane" and "Beer Street", all of them widely admired in the latter half of the eighteenth century. But in admiring these engravings for their poetic effects, he has, of course, overlooked Hogarth's moralizing purpose.

Sir Thomas Lawrence elicits two responses in the Comédie Humaine, the first in La Torpille³, the second in Une Fille d'Ève; and both in 1838. Lawrence the society painter appealed to every denizen of the Faubourg Saint-Germain: acclaimed for his portrait of George IV, in undisputed command of English portrait-painting within a year or two of the deaths of Gainsborough and Reynolds, triumphally received in Paris in 1825, commissioned to portray Charles X--and invested by the King with the Legion of Honour!

"La Torpille est trop chère", Émile Blondet remarks, in Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes³,

comme Raphaël, comme Carême, comme Taglioni, comme Lawrence, comme Boule, comme tous les artistes de génie étaient trop chers;

but this is the glib patter of the journalist, and merely confirms that Lawrence was fashionable at the time, a genius in Blondet's eyes

1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 929.

2 Cf. pp. 78, 80, 215, 288.

3 Pl. V, p. 667.

and also perhaps in Delacroix's ¹, but Balzac (like Stendhal ²) would most assuredly not have placed Lawrence in the front rank of genius. "Ce flou délicieux des peintures de Lawrence", we read in Une Fille d'Ève ³, as Balzac is describing Marie de Vandenesse, "cette charmante créature, si jolie dans sa parure de marabouts". Portraits such as "Miss Mary Palmer" (later Marchioness of Thomond) ⁴, "The Countess of Blessington" ⁵, "Miss Eliza Farren" (later Lady Derby) ⁶ come to mind; Lady Peel and Mrs Michel actually wear feathers in their portraits; and no doubt Balzac saw similar portraits of the French aristocracy, perhaps through the medium of keepsake engravings—for, though Lawrence's services were in great demand in France, he only exhibited at one Salon ⁷. The cult of Lawrence persisted beyond Blondet and Delacroix into the next generation, Baudelaire being another of his admirers ⁸.

John Martin, like Blake one of the most visionary and original of English artists, must certainly have been very familiar to Balzac, as to all his contemporaries, both as illustrator of Paradise Lost and author of "Le Déluge" ⁹ and "Le Festin de Balthazar". Something in these steely, panoramic depictions of Sodom, Nineveh, Babylon, Pandemonium and the rest kindled the Romantic imagination. "Belshazzar's Feast" was one of the principal sources of "Le Feu du Ciel", the poem placed by Victor Hugo at the head of Les Orientales ¹⁰. Even Gautier, who knew well enough that Martin's technique was second-rate ¹¹, had to admit that no painter could rival him in describing "le cauchemar de l'infini". Balzac seems to have been still less impressed by Martin as a technician, but (like Hugo and Gautier) retains a strong memory of his subject-matter. The Comédie Humaine ¹² refers to him once: in Modeste Mignon ¹³ Ernest de La Brière, who is about to fall in love

1 R. Escholier: Delacroix, peintre, graveur, écrivain, vol. I, Paris 1926, p. 142.

2 Mélanges d'art, Divan XXV, Paris 1932, pp. 79-80.

3 Pl. II, p. 99.

4 L. Demonts: op.cit., p. 179, no. 1,813 B. This portrait was donated to the Louvre in 1905.

5 Wallace Collection, London.

6 Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

7 1824 Salon, no. 1,053: "Portrait de feu M. le duc de Richelieu".

8 C.-P. Baudelaire: op.cit., pp. 921-922, 1,072, 1,181.

9 1835 Salon, no. 1,523. For full information on Martin's reception in France, cf. J.-J. Seznec: John Martin en France, London 1964.

10 Cf. C.W. Thompson: Victor Hugo and the Graphic Arts (1820-1833), Geneva 1970, pp. 74-77, 85.

11 "John Martynn", La Presse, 31 January 1837: "comme peintre, il est nul, il n'a aucun sentiment ni du dessin ni de la couleur".

12 There is also a passing reference to Martin in a letter from Balzac to Astolphe de Custine (Correspondance III, p. 424), written some time in the latter half of 1838.

13 Pl. I, p. 428.

heroine, contemplates all the attractions of the unknown which love portends:

l'inconnu, c'est l'infini obscur, et rien n'est plus attachant. Il s'élève de cette sombre étendue des feux qui la sillonnent par moments et qui colorent des fantaisies à la Martynn.

Taken by itself, this reference does not suggest any particular bond of understanding. But what of the frequent heightening of contrasts in the Comédie Humaine, the "sublimities and degradations"¹ and "romantic rhetoric"¹ so roundly censured by Professor Leavis?² Nowhere is the opposition of "sordid" and "sublime" more forcibly expressed than in Le Père Goriot. Momentarily yielding to the unworthy temptation of marrying Victorine, an heiress whom he does not love, Eugène becomes a Lucifer or a Mephistopheles: "il s'était embelli de son désespoir, et resplendissait de tous les feux de l'enfer qu'il avait au coeur"³. Vautrin is the "archange déchu qui veut toujours la guerre"⁴, "un poème infernal où se peignirent tous les sentiments humains, moins un seul, celui du repentir"⁴. Goriot⁵, Madame de Beauséant⁶ and Madame de Nucingen⁷ are all "sublime". Elsewhere in the Comédie Humaine the same pictorial technique is present, as striking as in Goriot though no longer productive of architectonic complexity. Fraisier "se tenait dans la pose que les peintres prêtent à Méphistophélès"⁸; Schmucke "s'élève jusqu'au trône de Dieu"⁹. Are we to conclude that Martin has inspired this Satanic imagery? Or has it come from Delacroix's Faust lithographs?¹⁰ Or else, perhaps, from Milton's actual poem? A clue is provided by Taillefer's saturnalian banquet in La Peau de

1 F.R. Leavis: The Great Tradition. George Eliot. Henry James. Joseph Conrad, London 1948, p. 29.

2 Cf. my article, "Le Père Goriot: Notes towards a Reassessment", Symposium, 1965, pp. 101, 111-112.

3 Pl. II, p. 990.

4 Ibid., p. 1,015.

5 Ibid., pp. 912, 957.

6 Ibid., p. 950.

7 Ibid., p. 969.

8 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 720.

9 Chapter XXIII of the serialization of Le Cousin Pons was entitled "Où Schmucke s'élève jusqu'au trône de Dieu", but in the Furne edition of 1848 this title--like all the other chapter titles--was suppressed.

10 Cf. supra, pp. 54-55.

Chazrin: "contempler en ce moment les salons, c'était avoir une vue anticipée du Pandémonium de Milton"¹. Balzac was apparently aware of Paradise Lost, Book II, for which John Martin had provided remarkable illustrations; and it is from this vision of Paradise Lost that the vaporous inferno of Paris, with its Belials and Molechs, seems largely to be derived.

Là, tout fume, tout brûle, tout brille, tout bouillonne, tout flambe, s'évapore, s'éteint, se rallume, étincelle, pétille et se consume,

Balzac writes² of Paris, in the unforgettable hallucination with which La Fille aux Yeux d'Or opens³. This again is a Martinesque vision, but it is something more, and in recognizing this fact, we admit that Martin's impact upon the Comédie Humaine, though deep, is limited in extent. Balzac's vision of a city divided into the five social levels of Workman, Clerk, Business Man, Artist and Aristocrat owes more--not in its details, but in its synchronous movement--to Dante's Divine Comedy than to anything by Martin. The Satanic element so prominent in the Comédie Humaine--with its Manichean contrasts of good and evil, and the chiaroscuro symbolizing these contrasts--is by no means peculiar to John Martin; indeed, it is less present in Martin's work than in Balzac's, whilst the architectural panoramas that so characterize Martin have no place in Balzac's imaginative universe.

Finally, at the very end of his life, when Balzac was no longer occupied with the Comédie Humaine, he refers twice to the Anglo-American artist Charles Robert Leslie. He even goes so far as to call him "un des plus grands maîtres", but the context of the letter can throw some light on this totally undeserved epithet. In 1849 Georges Wniszech brought certain pictures to Wierszchownia from his family home of Wisniowiec as a gift (?) for his mother-in-law and Balzac⁴; these pictures, which had formerly belonged for the most part to Georges's great-great-uncle Stanisław Poniatowski⁵,

1 Pl. IX, p. 71.

2 La Fille aux Yeux d'Or; Pl. V, p. 255.

3 Ibid., pp. 255-267.

4 Cf. supra, p. 29.

5 But the Leslies to which Balzac refers could not have belonged to Stanisław, since the ex-King of Poland died when C.R. Leslie was aged four.

had been inherited by him on his father's death in 1846 and are described at some length by Balzac in letters both to his sister Laure Surville and to his nieces Sophie and Valentine. The letter to his nieces dated 29 November 1849¹, in which—no doubt to make the girls' eyes boggle with astonishment—Leslie is said to be one of the greatest masters, discloses that one of the pictures from Wisniowiec is of James II of England in his youth, whilst the letter to Laure Surville of 21 October 1849² also mentions a portrait of James II's first wife, Anne Hyde, by Leslie. (But "Anne Hyde" is attributed to Netscher in the letter of 29 November¹.)

Whether or not Georges Mniszczek gave one or two Leslies to Balzac and Madame Hańska, it is clear, first that the portrait of "James, Duke of York" is a copy of some seventeenth-century likeness, and secondly, that the epithet "un des plus grands maîtres", as applied to Leslie, is quite unmerited.

Though we remain uncertain as to the number of Leslies given by Georges Mniszczek, and even in fact whether they were given or lent, it is now fairly clear that it or they eventually reached their allotted destination as Balzac lay dying³. They do not appear to have been disposed of at either of Madame Hańska's sales (yet it is unlikely that they remained with Anna after her mother's death), and their present whereabouts is unknown.

Constable and Turner, then, leave no impression upon the Comédie Humaine, despite keen admiration of Turner on both sides of the Channel and the high regard of Nodier and Delacroix for that characteristically British artist who was never a prophet in his own country, John Constable. This indicates, perhaps, that at least until the 1830s

1 Correspondance V, p. 675.

2 Ibid., p. 631.

3 Année Balzacienne, 1966, p. 259. Cf. supra, pp. 30-31.

Balzac's artistic taste remained severely traditional. Martin, however, makes a strong impact upon him at the turn of the decade, moulding (it seems) his vision of infernal Paris. Lawrence and Hogarth were fashionable, easily understood artists to whom Balzac responded at a superficial level. Reynolds and Gainsborough exert no influence. More so with the English school than with any other, Balzac found what he looked for (John Martin, an atypical British artist) and remained supremely indifferent to the rest.

VIII: ITALIAN PAINTING

In Balzac's eyes, Raphael is the most accomplished of all painters, of whatever school: a preference in which he reflects the taste of a generation nurtured on such neo-Classical theorists as Quatremère de Quincy¹. Long before visiting Italy, he was thrilled by the beauty of Raphael's works, the chief of which ("The Transfiguration", "Leo X", "St Cecilia", "The Vision of Ezekiel", "La Belle Jardinière", "Baldassare Castiglione" and others) he had almost certainly seen before ever travelling abroad—for quite apart from the Louvre's legitimately acquired Raphaels many more were confiscated by Napoleon and only returned to their countries of origin after 1815².

Yet, despite a lifetime's admiration, it was not until the very end of his career that Balzac explained, in a memorable passage in La Cousine Bette³, his considered attitude towards Raphael, giving at the same time a rapid assessment of most of the principal works. Before 1846, though there had been many references and borrowings, there had been little in the way of objective criticism. Rather, the tribute of Balzac's admiration had been to liken the most beautiful faces in the Comédie Humaine, and its sublimest moments of happiness, to portraits and scenes in Raphael's art.

Thus, Augustine Guillaume—seen by Sommervieux sitting at her window in the early morning—has the grace and tranquillity of Raphael's Holy Virgins⁴. The eunuch Zambinella is drawn by Sarrasine in that apparently calm and even frigid attitude beloved of Raphael⁵ (such paintings as his "Belle Jardinière" and the "Madonna del Cardellino", at the Uffizi, come to mind). Struggling to beat off the Antiquary's

1 A.-G. Quatremère de Quincy: Histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Raphaël, Paris 1824.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 6-7.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 205-206.

4 La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote Pl. I, p. 21.

5 Pl. VI, p. 97.

terrible fascination, Raphaël de Valentin (the name itself is significant!) invokes Heaven and is granted a vision of

des nuages, un vieillard à barbe blanche, des têtes ailées, et une belle femme assise dans une auréole¹,

such as is vouchsafed to all in, for example, "The Madonna of Foligno"² (now at the Vatican) or "The Sistine Madonna" (at Dresden). Eugénie Grandet calls to mind the celestial purity of Raphael's Virgins³. Gustave, Hélène d'Aiglemont's eldest son, resembles a self-portrait by Raphael:

la clarté tombant d'aplomb sur son visage et le reste du corps étant dans l'obscurité, il ressemblait ainsi à ces portraits noirs où Raphaël s'est représenté lui-même attentif, penché, songeant à l'avenir⁴.

(Here, Balzac seems to have in mind the "Portrait d'un Jeune Homme dont la Tête est appuyée sur la Main" (plate 21)⁵, at the Louvre, which in his day was thought to be a self-portrait by Raphael, though it is now attributed to Parmigianino.) Emmanuel de Solis and Marguerite Claës recall, in their tender and indirect confessions of love, those "allégories peintes par Raphaël sur des fonds noirs"⁶ ("The Annunciation", "The Adoration of the Magi" and "The Presentation in the Temple"⁷, confiscated from Italy and shown at the Louvre until 1815)—a theme to which Balzac returns five years later in Le Cabinet des Antiques⁸. And in Séraphita⁹ the face of the celestial hermaphrodite Wilfrid, which to Minna embodies all that is manly and handsome, appears to men a female face equal in beauty to Raphael's sublimest paintings of the Holy Virgin.

1 La Peau de Chagrin; A 177, vol. II, pp. 140-141. Cf. Pl. IX, p. 177.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,140.

3 Pl. III, p. 528.

4 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 790.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,022. F. Villot; Notice des tableaux... du Musée National du Louvre, vol. I, Paris 1849, no. 429.

6 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 566. This passage is not present in the MS (A 201, fol. 90).

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,126; "ces trois sujets ne sont séparés entre eux que par des arabesques peintes sur le fond".

8 Pl. IV, p. 408.

9 Pl. X, pp. 470-471.

After Balzac's visit to Milan, Venice and Florence in 1837, the visual reminiscences become more numerous still. Massimilla Doni, written on his return from Italy¹ but not published until 1839, marks a renewal of his old enthusiasm. The very name of the novel is a reminiscence of the portraits of Angelo and Maddalena Doni, at the Palazzo Pitti². Many of its portraits and scenes are inspired by canvases admired in Florence—besides which there are numerous other references. The heroine herself resembles Maddalena Doni³, and Balzac completes the illusion by stating that she is descended from her⁴. Massimilla's and Emilio's radiant chastity is only equalled by the celestial emotions conveyed by Raphael⁵. Here, we are reminded of the "Madonna del Granduca", at the Palazzo Pitti, but equally of such works as "La Belle Jardinière"⁶ and "The Annunciation"⁷, both of which works Balzac could have seen as a young man.

For the allusions to Raphael in Massimilla Doni do not all derive from the ten days' stay in Florence in 1837. At times, Massimilla takes on the beauty of "St Cecilia"⁸, a memory (perhaps) from 1815⁹ and certainly from 1837. The singer Genovese's exalted expression recalls Raphael's martyrs¹⁰, an apparent allusion to the "Maestà"¹¹ which Balzac could also have seen at the Louvre during the Empire.

1 The bill for binding the MS of the novel is dated 31 July 1837 (A 340, fol. 372).

2 Seen by Balzac on 11 April 1837 (Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 491).

3 Balzac erroneously refers to this picture as the "Portrait of Margherita Doni" (Pl. I, p. 369).

4 Pl. IX, p. 327. Cf. ibid., p. 340.

5 Ibid., p. 334.

6 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,027.

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,126.

8 Pl. IX, p. 347.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,139.

10 Pl. IX, p. 384.

11 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,133: "Jésus dans sa gloire, accompagné de la Vierge et de Saint Jean-Baptiste; au-dessous, Saint Paul debout tenant son épée, et Sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie, à genoux, présentant au Christ la palme obtenue par son martyre. Tableau connu sous le nom des cinq Saints".

Contradicting Ruskin in advance ¹, La Tornilla, the first part of Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes, maintains that "Raphaël est le peintre qui a le plus étudié, le mieux rendu la beauté juive" ²; and the portrait of the Jewess Esther Gobseck is therefore modelled on Raphael's Madonnas. Inspired once again by such paintings of the Mother of God as "La Belle Jardinière" ³ and the "Madonna del Granduca", Balzac gives Esther the same steeply arched eyebrows as theirs. Again in La Tornilla ⁴, Esther, escorted by her lover Lucien de Rubempré to the masked ball, "était sous la voûte céleste des Amours, comme les madones de Raphaël sont sous leur ovale filet d'or". Perhaps it is no coincidence—though, if intended, it certainly amounts to an act of blasphemy—that two other leading prostitutes in the Comédie Humaine, Coralie ⁵ and Josépha Mirah ⁶, are also Jewish.

"Joan of Aragon" (plate 22), formerly in the collection of Francis I, and another early memory ⁷, is woven into the texture of Une Fille d'Ève, though it is not mentioned by name: some of the women guests at a ball given by Lady Dudley wear ruffles similar to Joan's ⁸. The "St Cecilia" ⁹, mentioned by name in Une Fille d'Ève ¹⁰, also contributes to the fictional vision. Marie de Vandenesse listens with rapt attention to Schmucke's piano-playing just as St Cecilia thrills to the singing of angels.

1 Modern Painters, vol. I (5th edn.), London 1851, p. 121: "the Madonna of Raffaello was born on the Urbino mountains, Ghirlandajo's is a Florentine, Bellini's a Venetian; there is not the slightest effort on the part of any one of these great men to paint her as a Jewess".

2 Pl. V, p. 688.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,027.

4 Pl. V, p. 669.

5 Illusions Perdus; Pl. IV, p. 721.

6 Le Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 145.

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,020.

8 Pl. II, p. 97.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,139.

10 Pl. II, p. 153.

Again, the upright lawyer Chesnel, in Le Cabinet des Antiques¹, resembles one of the Old Testament prophets painted (or rather, supervised) by Raphael in the Loggia of the Vatican. In Le Curé de Village, Véronique Graslin is twice likened to a Raphael Madonna, first² as a girl of eleven before her radiant beauty is disfigured by smallpox, later³ as a mature woman, with what remains of her beauty again ravaged by illness and only fitfully apparent. In Béatrix⁴, Claude Vignon almost resembles the divine Raphael himself⁵. The dress worn by Diane de Cadignan at her first meeting with Daniel d'Arthez⁶ is modelled on Joan of Aragon's, the Donna Grevida's⁷ and Maddalena Doni's⁷.

Pierrette, too, is likened to a Raphael Madonna⁸. Here, Balzac seems to have "The Presentation in the Temple"⁹ in mind, which he may have seen as a young man—and also, perhaps, the "Sposalizio", seen at Milan in 1837. At the opening of Ursule Mirouët, the landscape near Nemours is overarched by "un ciel de Raphaël"¹⁰. More than one of Joseph Bridau's fellow students (in Le Rabouilleuse), seeing his mother for the first time, her ~~and~~ unblemished forehead, slender mouth, delicate nose and clear blue eyes, wondered in amazement: "Est-ce la copie d'une tête de Raphaël?"¹¹ Even the intrepid Maxence Gilet's face has something of the softness and delicacy of a Raphael Madonna¹². The portrait of Honorine de Bauvan, sitting beneath acacias, with sunlight filtering through the foliage, is also borrowed from the paintings of the

1 Pl. IV, p. 426.

2 Pl. VIII, p. 640.

3 Ibid., p. 575.

4 Pl. II, p. 403. Cf. A 6, fol. 51.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,022: a portrait of an unknown young man nowadays attributed to Parmigianino.

6 Pl. VI, p. 29.

7 At the Palazzo Pitti.

8 Pl. III, p. 749. Cf. A 191, fol. 70.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,126.

10 Pl. III, p. 266. Cf. supra, pp. 139-140.

11 Pl. III, p. 854.

12 Le Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 957. It is implied, but not stated, that Max's mother (also a woman of easy virtue) bore some resemblance to a Raphael Madonna (ibid., p. 943). Trastevere provided Raphael with many female models (Pl. X, p. 1,082).

Madonnas, for she is surrounded by a golden nimbus of a kind, says Balzac¹, only to be found encircling the heads of Raphael's and Titian's Virgins. At her first meeting with Manchon and Lousteau, Dinah de La Baudraye wears "un béret de velours noir à la Raphaël"²—another recollection of "Joan of Aragon", and also perhaps of "Binde Alteviti" (at the Pinakothek, Munich). In Esther ou les amours d'un vieux banquier (the continuation, dated 1843, of La Toraille), Esther Gobseck is likened to a Raphael Madonna³, and also to Raphael's portrait of his mistress La Fornarina⁴, which Balzac had not yet seen at the Palazzo Barberini, Rome—though he had no doubt seen "La Velata", at the Pitti. Modeste Mignon, again, has much of the Raphael Madonna⁵ about her, though Balzac adds that she was really more like a Murillo Virgin than any by Raphael⁶.

Finally, at the very end of his literary career, Balzac turns again to the Madonnas for his portrait of Olympe Bijou⁷ (another fallen woman!) and—reverting, in a description of Schmucke, to the "St Cecilia" imagery—compares the ecstasy felt by Pons as his friend plays the piano for him for the last time to the ecstasy of St Cecilia herself⁸.

Raphael's influence on Balzac's novels is thus long, continuous and deep, for I have referred only to those visual reminiscences (and not even all of them⁹) that have inspired portraits and scenes. This is the important aspect of his influence. The almost equally numerous asides, in which Balzac indulges his persistent habit of informing the reader of miscellaneous items of knowledge, is unimportant from the standpoint of his creative imagination. Nevertheless, they are worthy of study.

1 Pl. II, p. 284. Cf. A 101, fol. 24.

2 La Muse du Département; Pl. IV, p. 86. Gigoux informs us that this type of beret was also worn by the sculptress Félicie de Fauveau (Conversations sur les artistes de mon temps, Paris 1885, p. 212), whom Balzac met in 1837 (Lettres à Madame Hanska I, pp. 544-545; 12 October 1837). Perhaps here there is a reminiscence from real life as well.

3 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 798.

4 Ibid., p. 717.

5 Pl. I, p. 370.

6 Ibid., p. 371.

7 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 437.

8 Pl. VI, p. 743.

9 Cf. Pl. I, p. 295; Pl. III, pp. 227, 357; Pl. X, p. 964. Cf. also the small talk of polite conversations: Pl. I, pp. 52, 656.

But first, what do the visual reminiscences themselves reveal in the way of knowledge and appreciation? Balzac had (I believe) the extreme good fortune to see at an early age most of Raphael's greatest works: "La Belle Jardinière", "Baldassare Castiglione"¹, "Joan of Aragon", indigenous masterpieces—as it were—of the Louvre; and in addition to them, but only until 1815, the spoils of war: "The Madonna of Foligno", the "Madonna della Sedia"², "St Cecilia", "The Vision of Ezekiel"³, "The Transfiguration"⁴ and "Leo X"⁵.

Of the works seen in 1815, what most impressed him were the Madonnas: not only "La Belle Jardinière" and the "Madonna della Sedia"⁶, but the three companion pictures of "The Annunciation", "The Adoration of the Magi" and "The Presentation in the Temple"⁷, then attributed to Raphael, and also other indigenous Madonnas. Equally, he was impressed by the indigenous "Portrait d'un Jeune Homme dont la Tête est appuyée sur la Main", assumed to be a Raphael self-portrait until 1849⁸. The Madonnas' seraphic purity and the Romantic melancholy of the young man gripped not only Balzac's imagination, but his contemporaries'. (Stendhal was another admirer of the Parmigianino⁹.) Less certain is Balzac's youthful opinion of "The Transfiguration", considered by many at that time to be the greatest of all paintings¹⁰. Nor do we know his initial reaction to "The Vision of Ezekiel". But it is likely that the mystical strain in his nature responded warmly to the transcendental appeal of these late works: Séraphita, in particular, may owe much to "The Transfiguration", but only—needless to say—"toute comparaison gardée"¹¹.

1 In the MS of Le Cousin Pons (A 47, fol. 38) this painting is quite simply referred to as "le portrait de Raphaël".

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,129.

3 Ibid., no. 1,125.

4 Ibid., no. 1,132.

5 Ibid., no. 1,120.

6 In La Recherche de l'Absolu (A 201, fol. 50; Pl. IX, p. 523), there is an acknowledged borrowing from the "Madonna della Sedia", of an unusual and incidental kind. Cf. infra, p. 269.

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,126.

8 F. Villot (op.cit., vol. I, no. 429) suggests that it is not a self-portrait.

9 Journal, Dixen XXXII (2), p. 256; 28 July 1805.

10 Cf. A.-C. Quatremère de Quincy: op.cit., pp. 365-373. C.-P. Landon: op.cit., p. 36. G. Vasari: Vies des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes, vol. IV, Paris 1839, pp. 243-245.

11 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 231; 15 July 1834.

Indeed, whether we look at the apprentice novels ¹ or at the Comédie Humaine itself, none of the early references to Raphael shows anything beyond the vaguest, yet most unbounded admiration. The young heroine is a Raphael virgin; the young hero is even, perhaps, a self-portrait by Raphael. And this, of course, is so whether or not Balzac actually admits his indebtedness. So emotive is Raphael's name that visual reminiscences from him are, perhaps, oftener acknowledged than in other cases. But we have only to think of the portraits of Emmanuel de Solis ², Savinien de Portenduère ³, Maximilien de Longueville ⁴, Louis Lambert ⁵, Pierrette Lorrain ⁶ and Ève Chardon ⁷ to realize that here, too, although there is no explicit indication of it in the text, are verbal portraits in Raphael's manner.

In 1837, more than twenty years after the early visits to the Louvre, comes the first great Italian journey. At the Galleria Brera he admired the "Sposalizio"; at the Palazzo Pitti, the "Donis". He also renewed his acquaintance with some of the masterpieces first seen in his youth ⁸. And finally, in 1843, he saw "The Sistine Madonna". Now, his knowledge of Raphael's works was almost complete, but he had derived little in the way of deeper critical appreciation from the new impressions received in Milan, Florence and Dresden. Better than deeper critical appreciation, however, was the enthusiasm which in a creative artist inspires new flights of fancy. Massimilla Doni originated in the Palazzo Pitti.

The fact is that Balzac's analytical faculties, which were profound, must be sharply distinguished from critical faculties (in the manner of Berenson or Venturi) which—like those of every other artist, with the possible exception of Valéry—were quite negligible. The distinction

1 Falturna (1819), Ouvrages complètes, vol. XXV, p. 48; Sténie (1820), Ouvrages complètes, vol. XXV, p. 238; La Dernière Ève (1823), vol. I, p. 61; Annette et le Criminel (1824), vol. I, p. 145, vol. II, p. 169; Wann-Chlora (1825), vol. I, p. 185.

2 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, pp. 557-558. The MS, however, gives the clue to Balzac's indebtedness (A 201, fol. 82).

3 Ursule Mirouët; Pl. III, p. 384.

4 La Bal de Sceaux; Pl. I, pp. 97-98.

5 Pl. X, p. 369.

6 Pl. III, pp. 656-657.

7 Illusions Perdus; Pl. IV, p. 482. Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 887.

8 "Leo X", "The Vision of Ezeiel", "The Madonna della Sedia", all at the Palazzo Pitti.

can, of course, be applied to all the artists whom Balzac cared for and wrote about; but it applies to Raphael with peculiar force, so intense was the admiration and so slender the critical apparatus of the time. Thus, the visual reminiscences of the young self-portraits ("où Raphaël s'est représenté lui-même attentif, penché, songeant à l'avenir" ¹), or the "allégories peintes... sur des fonds noirs" ², however effective the results in Balzac's novels, are based on defective criticism for which Balzac can in no way be blamed. Though Raphael has left a kind of self-portrait in "The School of Athens" (Stanza della Segnatura), he did not paint self-portraits as such; and the allegories to which Balzac refers are also no longer attributed to him. Balzac's enthusiasm for Raphael is, on the other hand, no senseless following of the crowd. Though he was not a critic, he allowed his analytical and imaginative faculties to play fully on the pictures whose merits had been partly suggested to him by fashion. How else would he have noticed the steep curvature of the Madonnas' eyebrows, or the ruffles worn by Joan of Aragon, Maddalena Doni and the "Donna Gravida" ³, whose style of dress he imitates in the portrait of Diane de Cadignan? ⁴

How do the asides compare with the visual reminiscences? Do they have a more solid grounding in critical fact? With few exceptions, they cluster in the latter half of Balzac's career. Before 1837, his work—despite many visual reminiscences from the "Madonnas"—hardly ventures a critical observation. The "facts" which he so confidently asseverates do not always conform to modern knowledge, but it would be rash to accuse Balzac of carelessness, though he can certainly be reproached—even towards the end of his life—with the occasional inaccuracy.

1 Pl. II, p. 790.

2 Pl. IX, p. 566.

3 It is not completely certain that Balzac saw the "Donna Gravida". "Je viens de voir quelques salles de la galerie Pitti", he informs Madame Hańska on 11 April 1837 (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 491). But he says in so many words that he has seen and enjoyed "Maddalena Doni".

4 Pl. VI, p. 29.

An interesting comment, sparked off by one of the Bellinis, relates to "The Madonna of Foligno" ("La Vierge au Donataire")¹. Balzac remarks in Massimilla Doni² that Gentile (or Jacopo? or Giovanni?) Bellini was the first artist to paint small angels, or cherubs, at the foot of his religious paintings, and that Raphael followed him in this practice by painting cherubs at the foot of the "Madonna of Foligno" and "The Sistine Madonna". When the passage in question was written, in 1837, Balzac had not, of course, seen "The Sistine Madonna", although he was familiar with it from J.F.W. von Müller's engraving³; in all probability, he had already gazed on "The Madonna of Foligno". The observation was presumably complete when, during his second Italian journey, he stayed in Venice and in Florence (where, at the Palazzo Pitti, he may have noticed the "Madonna of the Baldachin").

Massimilla Doni, in fact, represents the fusion of two of Balzac's deepest interests, Raphael and the Venetian school. In it he is coming to terms with the Venetians, whom somehow he must fit honourably into a scheme of things dominated by Raphael. And so, not only does it associate Raphael and one of the Bellinis, the novel also forges a link between Raphael and Bellini's pupil, Titian. Referring to the latter's "Assumption", Balzac—or rather, the French doctor into whose mouth the words are put—comments⁴ on the warm, golden atmosphere enveloping the figure of the Holy Virgin. This atmosphere, says the doctor, was first painted by Raphael in his "Transfiguration", and imitated by the Venetian artist.

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,140.

2 Pl. IX, p. 387.

3 César Bixetteau Pl. V, p. 381. Cf. infra, p. 292.

4 Pl. IX, p. 382.

Is the doctor's statement true? Almost certainly, Balzac had seen the two paintings in question (Titian's at the Frari church, Venice; Raphael's at the Louvre in 1815; he was certainly to see it in Rome in 1846). But the indebtedness of Titian to Raphael, or vice versa, is a matter for art historians, not connoisseurs or enthusiastic laymen. It seems improbable, to say the least, that Titian's "Assumption" can have borrowed from Raphael's "Transfiguration".

Irrespective of the fact that there does not appear to have been any close association between the two men, the dates themselves will hardly substantiate an indebtedness of Titian to Raphael. Whereas "The Assumption" was begun in 1516 and finished by 1518, "The Transfiguration" was not started before 1517, and remained unfinished at Raphael's death in 1520. Admittedly, Raphael had managed to complete the upper half of the canvas, so that only the lower, and less important, half had to be entrusted to Giulio Romano, a pupil. Equally, it is true that, at this late stage in his brief career, Raphael's work seemed to be entering a new phase: traces of Mannerism are evident in "The Transfiguration". Could it have been this Mannerism which so impressed Titian? Scarcely, for the Mannerism is less in the colouring—largely due, in any case, to Giulio—than in the draughtsmanship. (Even the draughtsmanship may owe more to Giulio than we suspect.) Balzac's intriguing assertion is more likely to be false than true.

But, on the evidence available to us, it can never be too strongly stressed that Balzac, the visionary novelist, was no visionary in matters of art history and critical attribution—though he may have been misinformed. (The only occasion on which he departs from critical accuracy is where his own property, such as the "meubles florentins"¹, is involved.) Until now it has proved impossible to trace any reference to Titian's alleged indebtedness to "The Transfiguration" from which Massimilla Doni might have borrowed (Stendhal, for instance, makes no such suggestion in his Histoire de la Peinture en Italie), yet it is most unlikely that Balzac imagined the alleged indebtedness, and more or less certain that on this count he is not guilty of a slip of memory.

A later instance of self-appointed art criticism (defective or otherwise) occurs in the fragmentary L'Hôpital et Le Peuple. Here, Balzac remarks² that there are, in fact, two types of Raphael Madonna. On the one hand, there are the graceful and ethereal Virgins whose humanity seems sublimated almost beyond recognition. These are the Madonnas customarily associated with Raphael. Clearly, such works as "La Belle Jardinière"³ and "The Virgin with the Veil"⁴ are implied, both of which Balzac could have seen as a young man. On the other hand, there are the unfamiliar Madonnas, painted—Balzac explains—in the frescoes and renderings of Bible stories. The full depth of Raphael's observation of earthly human nature is only revealed in these daughters of Adam, whom the artist noted amongst the inhabitants of Trastevere. The frescoes are those at the Farnesina; the "magnifiques pages bibliques" decorate the second storey of the Vatican Loggia. Balzac could judge both from personal observation after his fifth and last Italian journey, in 1846⁵.

1 Cf. supra, pp. 23-25.

2 Pl. X, p. 1,082.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,027.

4 Ibid., no. 1,029.

5 A similar thought is expressed by Stendhal in Promenades dans Rome, Dixième XXI (1), Paris 1931, p. 86.

Long before the visit to Rome, however, Italy had inspired him, from 1837, with an ever deepening enthusiasm for its various schools of painting, and with the insights afforded by wider knowledge. Though he had seen almost all Raphael's masterpieces as early as 1815, so that the portraits of Angelo and Maddalena Doni are the only important discoveries in 1837, the deepening insight is applied to Raphael no less than to the Venetians and other artists. His more mature reflexions stand him in good stead when, in July 1837, he revises Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu for republication in vol. XVII of the études Philosophiques. For not until then does he add to this story about art and artists the majority of the passages dealing with artistic theory. Amongst these late additions to the novel is an important passage concerning Raphael, who, we are told ¹, breaks through the tyrannous restrictions of Form in order to portray the Idea ². His figures are not outlines or stereotypes, like Porbus's, but convey the full delicacy of life itself. Porbus paints outward appearances, not the inward reality or the sensuousness of the mysterious union of soul and body.

It was not, however, until the very end of his career that Balzac attained a complete insight—or so he thought—into Raphael's art. Despite new artistic interests (in Spanish art ³, in Sebastiano del Piombo ⁴ and, to some extent, the earlier Florentines ⁵), and despite his increasing absorption in his writing during the 1840s, his appreciation of Raphael did not freeze into the mould of outlived experience. Both La Cousine Bette and Le Cousin Pons have much to tell us about him, offering a conspectus of his earliest idol's short but fertile career.

1 Pl. IX, p. 395.

2 Already in Massimilla Doni (*ibid.*, p. 369), Balzac had made the proud claim that "Raphaël seul a réuni la Forme et l'Idée".

3 Cf. infra, pp. 207-221.

4 Cf. infra, pp. 197-200.

5 Cf. infra, pp. 189-191.

In March and April 1846, Balzac had spent a month in Rome, his first (and last) visit to the Eternal City. Now at last he could complete his aesthetic education—but hardly in so far as Raphael was concerned, most of whose masterpieces he had almost certainly seen either as a young man in 1814 or 1815 or during his Italian journey of 1837 and his visit to Dresden in 1843. Nevertheless, he is impressed by the frescoes in the Stanze (though not all those he admired were actually by Raphael), and also certain other paintings, which Napoleon had allowed to remain in Rome, and most of which are nowadays attributed to lesser artists. These observations give rise to a memorable passage in La Cousine Bette¹, the fullest of all his comments on painting outside Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu.

In truly dithyrambic tones, Balzac affirms that, whilst all Raphael's works are imbued with a beauty that only genius can inspire, nevertheless some are more finely wrought and therefore more difficult to comprehend and enjoy. Into the category of paintings whose evident beauty appeals immediately to eye and heart he puts the following: "The Sistine Madonna", the Doni portraits, "Leo X", "The Vision of Ezekiel", the "Spesalizio", "The Entombment"², inaccurately referred to as "Christ Bearing His Cross"³, and "The Violin Player"⁴.

In the second category (of works to which long consideration must be given before the fulness of their beauty is evident) are: "The Transfiguration", "The Madonna of Foligno", the frescoes of the Stanze, "St Luke painting the Holy Virgin"⁵ and "St John the Baptist"⁶. Also into

1 Pl. VI, pp. 205-206.

2 At the Villa Borghese, Rome.

3 "Christ Bearing His Cross" ("Lo Spasimo di Sicilia"), at the Prado, was confiscated from Spain in 1810. For full information on "Lo Spasimo di Sicilia", cf. P. Mérimée: Ouvrages complètes, vol. X, Paris 1933, pp. 478-479.

4 At the Galleria Sciarra, Rome. This painting, later sold to Baron Alphonse de Rothschild, is now attributed to Sebastiano del Piombo.

5 At the Accademia Nazionale di S. Luca, Rome. In the Catalogue of the Accademia, this work is now ascribed to "Raphael and his assistants"; but it is doubtful whether Raphael had a hand in it, despite the tradition that he himself presented this painting to the chapel of the guild of Roman painters.

6 From 1589 to 1939 this painting hung in the Tribune of the Uffizi, where Balzac would have seen it in 1837. It is now in the Galleria dell'Accademia, Florence, and is attributed to the School of Raphael.

this second category Balzac puts "les camafaux et les trois tableaux de chevalet du Vatican"; by the "camafaux" he is implying Raphael's frescoes in the Vatican Loggia, about which he could have read much in both Vasari and Lanzi; by the "trois tableaux de chevalet" he means "Faith", "Hope" and "Charity", subjects forming the predella of "The Entombment"—a painting now (and in 1846¹) at the Galleria Borghese².

Such works as the "Sposalizio" do not, he says, demand that inner tension and profound reflective study necessary for a full understanding of, say, "The Transfiguration". The frescoes of the Stanze are not superficially and immediately appealing, but they will more than amply repay careful study, for—along with "The Transfiguration" and the various other paintings belonging to what I have called the second category—they are "le dernier degré du sublime et de la perfection".

Such is Balzac's valedictory comment on Raphael. Its message is surprising. Rome, which for so many years Balzac had neglected to visit (perhaps because he had already seen most of the great masterpieces of Raphael in the Louvre in 1815), is now seen as the culmination of a long connoisseurship. Its pictures belong to the second category, the category of the initiates. The pictures from the Palazzo Pitti, Milan, Dresden, on the other hand, are for everyone. But, a fact which demns Balzac's theorizing, the greatest of Raphael's easel paintings are not in Rome. Thus, apocryphal works ("St Luke painting the Holy Virgin", "St John the Baptist") are elevated above "The Vision of Ezekiel", "La Belle Jardinière", "Joan of Aragon"—all of which he probably saw as a young man, "Maddalena Doni" and the "Sposalizio". Nor do Balzac's preferences remain static. In Le Cousin Pons, a novel written more or less simultaneously with Le Cousine Bette, Raphael's sublimest works—"les plus immenses chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art", into the bargain—are no longer "The Transfiguration", "The Madonna of Foligno", etc., but two paintings³

1 A Handbook for Travellers in Central Italy..., London 1843, p. 440.

2 If, as seems almost certain, Balzac visited the Louvre in 1815, he would already have seen the predella (Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,141). This would provide further evidence of Balzac's obstinate fidelity to the preferences of his youth.

3 Pl. VI, p. 654.

with which he was certainly acquainted from his youth: "Baldassare Castiglione"¹ and "le petit camaféu", at the Louvre, by which is meant "L'Abondance; modèle pour une fontaine"². The preference for the unfamiliar, if apocryphal, delights of Rome is reversed in favour of the delights of his youth. But again the apocryphal creeps in, not to mar Balzac's enjoyment, but to mar his stature as a connoisseur. "L'Abondance" is no longer attributed to Raphael himself³.

Finally, there are in the Comédie Humaine a number of what might be termed biographical and iconographical references to Raphael. First, the Raphaels belonging to the collectors of the Comédie Humaine—but these we know are purely imaginary, and in any case there are no more than five (or possibly six or seven⁴). Two of these five Raphaels belong to the Antiquary⁵, two to Magus⁶ and one to Hélène d'Aiglemont and her husband, the Capitaine Parisien⁷. Too high a price is set on these masterpieces for them to be distributed indiscriminately throughout the Comédie Humaine. Not even Pons has one. Only the most magical collections can boast any: the weird pirate vessel, The Othello, with its ghostly inhabitants far removed from the solid reality of all the other novels of the Comédie Humaine set in a contemporary setting; the Antiquary, with his grotesque and seemingly limitless power; and Magus, for whom art collecting is a religion, almost a delirium.

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,021. Cf. supra, pp. 103, 167.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,031.

3 F. Villot (op.cit., no. 431) also attributes this grisaille to Raphael, but it is now thought to be a studio work (L. Hauteceur, Catalogue des peintures, Musée national du Louvre, vol. II, Paris 1926, no. 1,510).

4 Jean-Jacques Rouget owns "une copie d'un tableau du Pérugin faite par le Pérugin ou par Raphaël" (Pl. III, p. 965). Carabine is given a so-called Raphael for her part in convincing Montes of Valérie Marneffe's infidelities (Pl. VI, pp. 477, 480, 484, 492; cf. supra, pp. 36, 91). Rouget's picture may well have been a Raphael, but Carabine's is much more likely to have been a Mignard, raised to the dignity of a Raphael as an additional inducement.

5 La Peau de Chagrins Pl. IX, pp. 28, 33-34. A 177, vol. I, pp. 85, 103-106.

6 Le Cousin Pons Pl. VI, pp. 636-637.

7 La Femme de Trente Ans Pl. II, p. 822.

Secondly, what of the history of Raphael's life and works? Did he die of a surfeit of physical passion for his mistress, La Fornarina, as Balzac repeatedly alleges? ¹ Modern scholarship would dispute this, but Balzac is only following Vasari ² and Quatremère de Quincy ³. Did Raphael receive 100,000 ducats from Francis I as an expression of the King's spontaneous admiration and respect? ⁴ We do not know, nor do we know the source from which Balzac derived this story, twice told in the Prefaces. (Stendhal's *Écoles Italiennes de Peinture* was certainly not the source.) And did Raphael, in return, paint "The Transfiguration" ⁵, one of the few pictures—Balzac says—executed by Raphael without the assistance of his pupils? Here, Balzac is in error, for (as has already been noted) only the upper half of "The Transfiguration" was painted by Raphael, the lower half being the work of Giulio Romano. Balzac could not have derived this notion from Quatremère, who himself suggests a dual attribution ⁶:

plus d'une tradition ancienne, plus d'une observation des critiques modernes, ... semblent y constater des différences de manière, auxquelles on croit reconnaître celle de Jules Romain.

Vasari, admittedly, expresses a contrary view ⁷:

à sa mort on plaça derrière sa tête dans la salle où il travaillait le tableau de la "Transfiguration", qu'il avait terminé pour le cardinal de Médicis.

Yet, even if Balzac is following Vasari at all, he cannot be following him entirely. Contradicting Vasari, he states that "The Transfiguration" was painted for Francis I, whereas it was, in fact, commissioned by Giulio de' Medici, later Clement VII. Either Balzac's memory has failed him (a rare occurrence in any situation), or he is basing his statement on a source unknown to us.

1 Pl. IX, p. 152; Pl. V, p. 699; Pl. VI, p. 25.

2 Vies des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes les plus célèbres, vol. II, Paris 1804, pp. 115-116.

3 Op.cit., pp. 383-384.

4 Pl. XI, pp. 273, 356.

5 Ibid., p. 356.

6 Op.cit., p. 376.

7 Vies des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes les plus célèbres, vol. II, Paris 1804, pp. 116-117.

And is it true, as Balzac claims in Massimilla Doni¹, that the portrait of "Maddalena Doni" was also one of those very few paintings entirely due to the master himself? Again, the source of his comment is unknown, but the fact of the matter is as Balzac states it. In "Maddalena Doni" Raphael is exploring the art of portraiture and, under the influence of "Mona Lisa", evolving a new style. What of the statement in Le Cousin Pons², that two of Raphael's works were lost to posterity and avidly sought even as late as the nineteenth century by his students and admirers? The works to which Balzac is perhaps alluding are "The Virgin, St Jerome and the Archangel Raphael", formerly in the church of S. Domenico, Naples³, and "The Madonna with the Sleeping Child and St John", a copy of which belonged to the second Duke of Westminster⁴. In the fictive world of the Comédie Humaine, the originals of these two works already belong to Magus. Finally, did Raphael paint the matchless "Jesus Christ" which the Antiquary discloses to Raphaël de Valentin as one of the sublime achievements of the human mind?⁵ Again, we do not know, but it is certain that no such painting exists amongst Raphael's extant works, nor does it appear from the documents available to us that he ever painted an "Ecce Homo".

Balzac admires Raphael unreservedly, as did practically all art-lovers in the early nineteenth century; he has closely observed and remembered the pictures he prizes most. On the whole, his preference is for the paintings he first saw as a youth, though "Maddalena Doni" is a revelation in 1837 and not until 1846 does he fully appreciate "The Transfiguration" and "The Madonna of Foligno", which seem to have withheld their spell thirty-one years previously.

1 Pl. IX, p. 327.

2 Pl. VI, pp. 636-637.

3 G. Vasari: Vies des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes, vol. IV, Paris 1839, p. 230, n.

4 As recently as December 1969 a missing—but somewhat questionable—Raphael, "Eleonora della Rovere", was bought by the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. Bernhard Berenson does not record any of these "missing Raphaels" in his Homeless Paintings of the Renaissance (London 1969).

5 La Peau de Chagrin Pl. IX, pp. 33-34. A 177, vol. I, pp. 103-106.

Balzac discovered the full range of Titian's work much later than was the case with Raphael. Very few of Titian's paintings had been confiscated from Italy by the French. In 1816, the principal works by Titian which Balzac could have seen and admired at the Louvre (and probably did see, though whether he admired them is less certain) were: "The Entombment" (plate 26)¹, "The Young Man with a Glove"², "Francis I"³ and "Alfonso of Ferrara and Laura di Mantua"⁴. In 1815, he would also have been able to see "The Martyrdom of St Lawrence"⁵.

Not until his visit to Venice, Florence and Milan in 1837, however, did Balzac warmly respond to Titian's style of painting. The main reason for this failure of sensibility was, perhaps, that far from recoiling as a young man from Titian's Oriental voluptuousness (so sharp a contrast to the grace of Raphael's draughtsmanship and the seraphic quality of his Madonnas), he gained no clear impression of it from the examples of Titian's work displayed at the Louvre. At all events, the full revelation of Titian's richness and versatility was delayed for over twenty years.

This does not, of course, mean that Titian was entirely overlooked in the earlier novels. Balthazar Claës owns a Titian, a portrait of the founder of the Claës family's fortunes⁶. Facino Cane, after his condemnation by the Grand Council of Venice and the sequestration of his property, manages to escape to Milan with five Titians, and gold and diamonds⁷. Otherwise, there is no significant reference to Titian in any of the novels published before 1837.

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,083.

2 Ibid., no. 1,080.

3 Ibid., no. 1,072.

4 Ibid., no. 1,071.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,205.

6 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 483. Cf. A 201, fol. 9.

7 Pl. VI, p. 73.

The situation changes, however, after the tireless sightseeing in Venice. The revised third edition of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu (July 1837) has much to say about Titian that was not to be found in the earlier versions. Titian is one of the models held up to Porbus (and, of course, Poussin) by the sublime though unfulfilled Frenhofer. Porbus's "Marie Égyptienne" only catches the outward appearance of life; it fails to seize and convey the deep fulness, "son trop-plein qui déborde", the very aspect of life itself such as is conveyed by Titian and Raphael¹. Layer by layer, Frenhofer has analysed Titian's method of painting in an endeavour to learn how best to convey the effects of light—shadows being, he believes, no more than an accident². Not that Porbus has disregarded Titian's supreme merits, but he has put the rich, golden colouring of the Venetians into outlines incapable of containing these colours³. There can be no doubt that Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu embodies the essentials of Balzac's theory of painting, and that Frenhofer faithfully expresses the novelist's own point of view. The Impressionism towards which Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu is tending, in which the harshness of drawn outlines and shadows would be swept away, seems to derive from Titian himself, "ce peintre souverain", as Balzac calls him, "ce roi de la lumière"².

Massimilla Doni, with its many memories of the first great visit to Italy and especially of the glories of Venice, is imbued with a sense of the opulence of Venetian life and art that evidently owes much to Titian. The heroine's palace contains several of his works⁴ and Titians decorate the walls of the Memmi family's chapel in what is, in all probability, the Frari church⁵. Genovese recalls Titian's paintings of martyrs⁶ (here, Balzac is probably thinking of "The Death of St Peter Martyr", a painting

1 Pl. IX, p. 395. Cf. pp. 122, 306.

2 Pl. IX, p. 400.

3 Ibid., p. 393.

4 Ibid., p. 313.

5 Ibid., p. 318.

6 Ibid., p. 384.

destroyed by fire in 1867 but which Balzac must almost undoubtedly have seen, thirty years earlier, in the Frari church; or else, perhaps, he is thinking of Titian's "Martyrdom of St Lawrence", at the Gesuiti in Venice, but confiscated by Napoleon). Emilio Memmi passes his hand through a shock of dark brown hair¹, a fleeting glimpse of "The Young Man with a Glove"; this hand is "digne d'être peinte par Titien". And finally, a matter which has already been considered², there is the suggestion³ that Titian's "Assumption", a painting also seen in the Frari church, owes much to Raphael's "Transfiguration".

Véronique Graslin, as a very young girl, reincarnates "la sublime petite Vierge de Titien dans son grand tableau de "la Présentation au Temple" "⁴, a memory of the Accademia. Jean-François Tascheron's father resembles one of Titian's apostles⁵, a possible reminiscence of "The Pilgrims at Emmaus"⁶ or "The Entombment" (plate 26)⁷, both at the Louvre. Illusions Perdues goes further⁸ in its use of images derived from painting. The money-lender Samanon, than whom Balzac says no Hoffmann character, no sinister miser in The Waverley Novels is more fearsome to behold, recalls a Titian or a Veronese—not in the aspect of their paintings when viewed from a distance, but in the brushwork itself: his skin, like one of Titian's or Veronese's canvases examined under a magnifying glass, is blotched with green and yellow. Suzanne du Val-Noble is as lovely⁹ as any of the courtesans in Titian's poesie. Flore

1 Ibid., p. 319.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 170-171.

3 Pl. IX, p. 382.

4 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 543.

5 Ibid., p. 618.

6 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,084.

7 Ibid., no. 1,083.

8 Pl. IV, p. 837. Cf. infra, p. 201.

9 La Vieille Filles; Pl. IV, p. 220.

Brazier, too, recalls Titian's paintings of Venus ¹. Indeed, perhaps more than anything else, Titian is associated in Balzac's mind with the portraiture of gorgeously appealing women whose morals were no doubt as accommodating as Suzanne's and Flore's ². In both Venice and Florence, he had had many opportunities of admiring Titian's "Venuses".

But he has equally carefully noted the Madonnas, again in both Venice and Florence. He remarks in Honorine ³ on the golden nimbus with which Titian, like Raphael but no other painter, encircles his paintings of the Holy Virgin. "The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple", at the Accademia, Venice, "The Madonna and Child with St Catherine and St John", at the Palazzo Pitti, and the "Mater Doloresa" at the Uffizi have given rise to this observation.

The last phase of Balzac's career marks a strong revival of his interest in Titian. Not only is one of his paintings included in Josépha Mirah's collection ⁴, but there are many references to him in Le Cousin Pons. A painting which Balzac calls Titian's "Portrait of his Mistress", and to which, in fact, he had already alluded in Esther ou les amours d'un vieux banquier ⁵, is said to be one of the "plus immenses chefs-d'oeuvre de l'art" ⁶.

1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 1,010, 1,011.

2 Cf. Pl. I, p. 531.

3 Pl. II, p. 284. Cf. A 101, fol. 24.

4 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

5 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 717, where Esther Gobseck is said to be as beautiful as Titian's portrait.

6 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 654. There is a gap in the MS of the novel at the point where this reference occurs (A 47, fol. 40).

Here, it seems, Balzac is thinking of the "Portrait of Alfonso of Ferrara and Laura di Mantua"¹, at the Louvre, which until 1815² was known as the "Portrait du Titien et de sa Maîtresse". He had probably admired it for as long as "The Young Man with a Glove", also mentioned in Le Cousin Pons³. Indeed, in this novel Élie Magus, Balzac's wealthiest though not quite his shrewdest collector (for Pons is that), actually owns a painting of "The Entombment"⁴, allegedly unrivalled in the whole range of Titian's art.

This "Entombment" is almost certainly⁵ transferred to Magus's collection from the Louvre, where, of the several versions of the subject by Titian in European galleries, the young Balzac must have seen the earliest version⁶, painted in 1523 and formerly in Charles I's collection at Whitehall⁷. Or perhaps Magus's "Entombment" is none of these versions at all, but a sort of archetype uniting all the qualities of the "Entombments" painted by Titian during the space of over thirty years? For there is yet another Titian in Magus's ownership, a portrait of "Philip II" which Balzac clearly tells us⁴ is the original⁸ from

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,071.

2 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 1,185. F. Villot (op.cit., no. 502) reverts to the hallowed tradition that this painting is of the artist and his mistress.

3 Pl. VI, p. 651.

4 Ibid., p. 637.

5 According to Miss Scott (op.cit., p. 105), Magus's "Entombment" may in fact be modelled on a similar painting by Titian in the Mantua Gallery, Venice, "which claimed to be the original". She overlooks what seems to be Balzac's principal intention: to confer on Magus an ideal archetype predating even the Mantua "Entombment".

6 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,083.

7 A. van der Doort: Catalogue of the Collections of Charles I, Glasgow 1960, p. 15. It was bought by the banker Jabach in 1649, but by 1667 it had been acquired by Louis XIV.

8 Miss Scott (op.cit., p. 106, n.) states that the "original" portrait of Philip II of Spain was formerly in the Pinacoteca Barbarigo—ignoring, once again, the probability that Balzac is referring to an archetypal painting, rather than an actual original. Balzac would have been able to see a portrait of "Philip II", by Titian, in the Galerie Espagnole (Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, no. 441).

which all Titian's other portraits of the King were taken. Archetype or not, Magus's specimen is said to be the one sent by Titian to Charles V (Holy Roman Emperor in 1523)

accompagné d'une lettre écrite tout entière de la main du Titien, et cette lettre est collée au bas de la toile ¹.

Until now, however, it has proved impossible to establish whether Titian addressed a MS letter to Charles V when sending him one of the versions of "The Entombment". As if to emphasize the primal quality of Magus's "Entombment", the MS letter was most probably a figment of Balzac's imagination.

Apart from these two great works in Magus's collection, there are Titians in other g28 collections in the Comédie Humaine. As has been pointed out, the Memmi chapel, Facino Cane, Balthazar Claës, Massimilla Cataneo and Josépha Mirah own examples of his work, and others belong to Frenhofer ², Louise de Macumer ³ and Jean-Jacques Rouget ⁴. Rouget's Titian, a "Christ Bearing His Cross", is particularly interesting. It is, of course, one of the pictures which have come down to him from his Descoings grandparents, who themselves acquired it when religious foundations in the neighbourhood of Issoudun were despoiled in 1790. Balzac gives us the history of this painting: it came, he tells us ⁴, from the collection of the Marquis de Bélâbre, "celui qui soutint un siège et eut la tête tranchée sous Louis XIII". Once again, the precise reference is as yet unidentified ⁵. And, almost inevitably, Vervelle's

1 Pl. VI, p. 637.

2 Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 407.

3 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 291.

4 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. In the MS and galley-sheets of the novel, however, this "Christ Bearing His Cross" had been assigned to Poussin (A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67). Poussin is not known to have painted any such subject; indeed, it is a subject which it is difficult to imagine Poussin painting.

5 The Marquis de Bélâbre is not mentioned, for instance, in Vigny's Cinq-Mars, a novel dealing with the latter years of Louis XIII's reign, the third edition of which Balzac printed in 1827.

collection includes one (spurious) Titian¹, for which he has paid Magus the outrageous price of 40,000 francs².

But, whilst Titian and Raphael are esteemed by Balzac in the highest degree (for him, both have the authentic mark of genius³, both embody the "beau idéal" of Italian art⁴), it is clear that Raphael—no doubt because of Balzac's youthful veneration—holds pride of place in the Comédie Humaine, and indeed in Balzac's hierarchy of values generally. Two other artists, Leonardo and Michelangelo, fulfil a rôle hardly less important than Titian's.

The "Mona Lisa"—more so, even, than Girodet's "Endymion" or Raphael's "Transfiguration"—is the picture to which Balzac refers ofteneast in the Comédie Humaine. It is, he tells us in Le Cousin Pons⁵, one of the most "immense" of all works of art. But other than "Mona Lisa", and the fresco of "The Last Supper" ("la reine des fresques"⁶), there are no other works by Leonardo with which Balzac is deeply familiar. True, he speaks⁷ of a portrait of "Charles VIII"⁸ of France, which he considers a masterpiece equal to Raphael's "Baldassare Castiglione" or Titian's "Young Man with a Glove". But this painting has been reattributed to a pupil of Leonardo, Andrea Solario⁹, and is today known as the portrait of Charles d'Amboise—who was a mere subject of Charles VIII.

1 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 127.

2 Ibid., p. 131.

3 Pl. VII, p. 114.

4 Pl. I, p. 388.

5 Pl. VI, p. 654.

6 Preface to La Femme Supérieure (Les Employés); Pl. XI, p. 358.

7 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 651.

8 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 928.

9 L. Hautecœur; op. cit., no. 1,531.

Perhaps the main reason for Balsac's slender personal knowledge of Leonardo is the fact that his paintings, few in number, are so widely scattered. Some, such as the later version of "The Virgin of the Rocks" (then in the possession of Lord Suffolk), the "Portrait of Cecilia Gallerani" (then in the possession of Prince Adam Czartoryski) and the "Virgin and Child" in the Budapest Gallery, Balsac could not have seen. Even so, the earlier Florentine version of "The Virgin of the Rocks" was at the Louvre in his own day, as were "The Virgin, the Infant Christ and St Anne" and the pastel portrait of Isabella d'Este. At the Liechtenstein Gallery in Vienna, the Uffizi, the Pinakothek at Munich, and the Hermitage, Balsac could have seen other works by Leonardo. Strange that, of all these, he should especially praise a Solario!

Balsac, indeed, does not seem to have been aware of the extreme rarity of Leonardo's paintings. (His total opus amounts to only fifteen paintings in oils.) But then, in the early nineteenth century the attribution of works to Leonardo was generously imprecise. Still, it is disconcerting to note that Massimilla Cataneo owns several of his works ¹ and that there is even one (a "Virgin") at Issoudun, in Rouget's neglected collection ²—if collection is the word. As far as the Issoudun painting is concerned, Balsac is perhaps recalling that the last three years of Leonardo's life were spent at the Clos-Lucé, outside Amboise, and only fifty miles from Issoudun.

1 Massimilla Doni; Pl. IX, p. 313.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. This priceless Leonardo is already present in the MS and galley-sheets of the novel (A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67).

Wann-Chlore ¹, Massimilla Cataneo ², Diane de Cadignan ³ and Francesca d'Argaiolo ⁴ all have "Mona Lisa"'s smile. Esther Gobseck ⁵ is probably even more beautiful than that "head upon which all the ends of the world are come" ⁶. Modeste Mignon ⁷ is reminiscent of an unnamed Leonardo; her frail, milkwhite neck recalls the vanishing lines of such paintings as—no doubt—"Mona Lisa" or "The Virgin, the Infant Christ and St Anne". Anastasie de Restaud, "semblable à l'une de ces Hérodiades dues au pinceau de Léonard de Vinci...., ... était magnifique de vie et de force" ⁸. As with *R* "Charles d'Amboise", Balzac is alluding in this instance to pictures falsely attributed to Leonardo, who (so far as is known) never painted a "Herodias". Even in Balzac's own day, the "Herodias"—or rather, "Salome"—which he attributes to Leonardo was considered to be the work of Leonardo's pupil, Andrea Solario ⁹. Though Balzac much admires him, Leonardo's subtle and enigmatic art and the fact that there is little variety in his subject-matter mean that the Comédie Humaine bears small trace of his influence, except for the influence of "Mona Lisa".

With Michelangelo, the situation is rather similar. Balzac holds him in high esteem, more so than the traces of his inspiration in the Comédie Humaine and apprentice novels ¹⁰ would suggest. Like Leonardo, Michelangelo was an uomo universale, whose long life was engrossed in

1 Wann-Chlore, Paris 1963, vol. IV, p. 94. This reference dates from 1825.

2 Massimilla Doni; Pl. IX, p. 319.

3 Pl. VI, p. 21.

4 Albert Savarus; Pl. I, p. 787.

5 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 717.

6 W.H. Pater: Studies in the History of the Renaissance, London 1873, p. 118.

7 Pl. I, p. 370.

8 Gobseck; Pl. II, p. 633.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,055. This picture is now attributed to Bernardino Luini (L. Hauteceur: op.cit., no. 1,355). Balzac may also have seen another "Salome", by Guercino (Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 886; L. Hauteceur: op.cit., no. 1,140). There was a third "Salome" at the Louvre, supposedly by Giorgione (Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 875), but now attributed to Polidoro Lanzani. These and other "Salomes" exerted the greatest possible influence upon Le Rouge et le Noir, La Chartreuse de Parme and Lucien Leuwen.

10 In Clotilde de Lusignan (1822) Michel-l'Ange is a mercenary plotting to depose the heroine's father from the throne of Cyprus.

the numerous commissions of Julius II, Leo X, Paul III and other patrons. There are few paintings by Michelangelo in public galleries and private collections, and none therefore in any of the collections of the Comédie Humaine, except for the almost magical Frenhofer's¹. Balzac admires his indomitable energy, the versatility with which he turned at will from painting to sculpture, and from sculpture to poetry, and his preeminence in every department of art which he touched. But, like Leonardo's, Michelangelo's inspiration of the Comédie Humaine is necessarily limited—so different are his and Balzac's objectives.

Nevertheless, Michelangelo has left some marks on the Comédie Humaine, but principally by his work as a sculptor², to which we shall return³. Raphaël de Valentin's desperate vision⁴ owes something to the Sistine Ceiling, and in Le Cousin Pons⁵—though here information, not inspiration is in question—Balzac helps perpetuate a myth concerning Michelangelo's jealous rivalry with Raphael, and his encouragement of the young Sebastiano del Piombo⁶. In short, Michelangelo the painter, as distinct from Michelangelo the sculptor, has exerted only a tangential influence upon the Comédie Humaine. Had Balzac visited Rome earlier, however, this might not have been the case.

1 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 407.

2 Pl. IX, pp. 387-388; Pl. II, pp. 251-252.

3 Cf. infra, pp. 237-243.

4 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 177. A 177, vol. II, pp. 140-141.

5 Pl. VI, p. 651. Cf. Pl. IV, p. 393.

6 Cf. infra, pp. 199-200.

Turning now to the other painters of the Florentine school, from Cimabue to Carlo Dolce, it is clear that Balzac's interest lies principally in the direction of Fra Bartolomeo della Porta and Andrea del Sarto. The early Florentines are as unfamiliar to him as to most others of his generation; the influence of A.-F. Artaud de Montor¹ and J.-B.-L.-G. Seroux d'Agincourt² has scarcely, if at all, impinged upon the Comédie Humaine. And what is true of the early Florentines applies equally to the school of Umbria; more so, indeed, for no reference is ever made to Piero della Francesca, and Perugino himself³ is only perfunctorily mentioned.

Amongst the early Florentines, from Cimabue to Ghirlandaio, Balzac does not appear to have heard of Cimabue, Fra Angelico, Masaccio (whom Stendhal had thrust into prominence⁴), Botticelli or Ghirlandaio (the latter also venerated by Stendhal⁵); at all events, he does not mention them. The omission of Botticelli is by no means surprising, however, because until Ruskin reinstated him in the 1870s⁶ his work languished in obscurity. But Balzac is aware of Giotto and Orcagna (he is less hostile than Stendhal in his appreciation of the Trecento), and there are also numerous references in the Comédie Humaine⁷ to the "vieux maîtres italiens" or the "peintres antérieurs au Pérugin", and even (in Modeste Mignon⁸) to the Angelic School, by which Cimabue, Giotto and Fra Angelico are implied—perhaps even Gentile da Fabriano or Gozzoli (whose frescoes in the Palazzo Medici, Florence, and the Galleria Brera Balzac very probably saw).

1 Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie, dans les quatre siècles qui ont précédé celui de Raphaël, Paris 1808.

2 Histoire de l'art par les monuments, depuis sa décadence au IV^e siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVI^e, 6 vols., Paris 1823.

3 Pl. I, p. 762; Pl. III, pp. 965, 1,018.

4 "Masaccio est plutôt le créateur que le rénovateur de la peinture", Histoire de la Peinture en Italie, Divan XII-(1), p. 15.

5 Ibid., pp. 180-184.

6 Walter Pater (op.cit., pp. 39-40) states that Botticelli was still "a comparatively unknown artist", "quietly becoming important", in 1870.

7 Miss Scott (op.cit., p. 94) claims that the novels contain "only a dozen references to the early Italian painters"; but there are more.

8 Pl. I, p. 370.

Thus, amongst the generic references to the early painters we have three which have definitely inspired portraits. In Le Père Goriot¹, Victorine Taillefer "ressemblait à l'une de ces naïves peintures du moyen âge", in which all accessories—even the background—are neglected and only the face is emphasized, its golden tint reflecting the light of Heaven. In Albert Savarus², Rosalie de Watteville's face has the same fulness, yet thinness, the same ecstatic delicacy and confident simplicity as those invented by Perugino's predecessors. At the very end of Balzac's career, in L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine³, Halpersohn's face recalls the "St Josephs" of the Italian primitives. Here, it is to be assumed that Balzac has various versions of "The Adoration of the Magi" in mind: Lorenzo Monaco's (plate 18), perhaps, or Gentile da Fabriano's, both of them at the Uffizi, a gallery particularly rich in the art of the Trecento and quattrocento. (He had visited the Uffizi in April 1837.)

The references to Giotto and Orcagna are less precise. From the memorable last paragraph of Massimilla Doni⁴ it is clear that, during his visit to Florence in April 1837, Balzac went round the church of Or S. Michele. He comments on "les délicieuses filles d'Orcagna" at Or S. Michele, implying the famous scenes from the life of the Virgin, hexagonal reliefs in the tabernacle of the guild oratory. But, although aware of Orcagna the sculptor, Balzac does not seem to have been attracted by his painted altarpiece in the Strozzi chapel of S. Maria Novella, Florence. On the other hand, he must have seen—and remembered—the finest of Giotto's paintings during this same visit to Florence, though

1 Pl. II, p. 1,001.

2 Pl. I, p. 762.

3 Pl. VII, p. 387.

4 Pl. IX, pp. 387-388.

not until over nine years later, in 1846, is there any meaningful reference to him. With her black hair and harsh eyes, and in the rigidity of her features and dryness of her complexion, Lisbeth Fischer is truly "une figure du Giotto"¹. This comparison may refer to a Giotto seen at the Louvre, the painting of "Saint François recevant les Stigmates"², first put on display in the mid-1830s. But more probably Balzac was awakened to the beauties of Giotto by the numerous specimens of his work in the Uffizi, especially his "Madonna and Child enthroned with Angels and Saints" (plate 11).

As for the collectors of these early masters, none—not even Pons—is to be found in the Comédie Humaine. Indeed, the only painting of the quattrocento which we know was in one of the Comédie Humaine's collections is an Umbrian, rather than Florentine, work by Perugino³, but Balzac does not seem to have apprehended this distinction between the schools. The passage already quoted from Albert Savarus⁴ implies that, so far as he is concerned, Perugino—Raphael's master—marks the watershed between early and modern art, and that Piero della Francesca is no less a Primitive than Paolo Uccello or Fra Lippo Lippi.

1 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 165. This metaphor occurs forty-five years before Hardy's well known comparison of Angel Clare and his wife Tess to Giotto's "Two Apostles" (Tess of the D'Urbervilles, London 1891, vol. III, p. 275).

2 Notice des tableaux... exposés dans le Musée Royal, Paris 1836, no. 1,031. L. Hautecœur: op. cit., no. 1,312.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 965, 1,018. This Perugino is already present in the galley-sheets of La Rabouilleuse (A 199, fol. 68), where Balzac writes: "une copie d'un Pérugin", before altering it in the margin to read: "une copie d'un tableau du Pérugin par le Pérugin, ou faite par Raphaël".

4 Pl. I, p. 762. Cf. supra, p. 122.

Of the later Florentines, Fra Bartolomeo and Andrea del Sarto are the ones for whom Balzac has the greatest affection. Andrea is first mentioned in Une Double Famille¹, where we read that Roger de Granville's father has prevented the madly religious Madame Bontems from giving away an Andrea del Sarto to the Church. Another painting by Andrea belongs to Jean-Jacques Rouget², and at least one portrait in the Comédie Humaine--that of Massimilla Doni³--is inspired by him. (Balzac's portraits are often composite. Massimilla's smile recalls "Mona Lisa"⁴.) The calmness and delicacy of her features, her broad forehead and dark plaited hair bring to mind Andrea's "tendre noblesse". Perhaps Balzac was thinking of "The Holy Family", which he frequently saw at the Louvre⁵ and which is, he believes⁶, one of the greatest masterpieces in the history of painting, or else of Andrea's "Virgin with Four Saints", which he could have noticed at the Palazzo Pitti. As for Fra Bartolomeo, his "Holy Family" (unlikely to have been inspired by "The Mystic Marriage of St Catherine", which Balzac may have viewed at the Louvre, even perhaps as a young man⁷), is one of the four great works in Pons's collection⁸, placed on a level with Dürer, Hobbema and Sebastiano del Piombo. Indeed, the Fra Bartolomeo "eût été pris pour un tableau de Raphaël par beaucoup de connaisseurs"⁹. On the evidence of Le Cousin Pons, Balzac in his later years came to form an opinion of the later Florentines which was extremely (in fact, inordinately) high, but the touchstone of comparison is still Raphael.

1 Pl. I, p. 959.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. This Andrea was an afterthought. It is not mentioned in the MS or galley-sheets of the novel (A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 68).

3 Pl. IX, p. 338.

4 Cf. supra, p. 187.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 726.

6 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 654. At the Louvre, there are in fact two paintings of "The Holy Family" by Andrea (L. Hautecœur; op.cit., nos. 1,515, 1,516). Balzac is probably thinking of the larger one (ibid., no. 1,515).

7 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 858. L. Hautecœur; op.cit., no. 1,154. It was more probably inspired by a Fra Bartolomeo seen in Italy.

8 Pl. VI, p. 651.

9 Ibid., p. 652.

Other late Florentines in whom Balzac shows interest are Pontorno (?), Cristofano Allori and Carlo Dolci. The scene with Véronique Graslin contemplating her vast scheme of philanthropy at Montégnaac recalls—or is said to recall—Pontorno's "Chasteté chrétienne caressant la céleste Licorne" ¹, a picture which neither Miss Scott ² nor I have been able to trace. But Balzac himself thinks he has made no mistake about the title, or subject-matter, of the painting. Referring to the supposed extinction of the unicorn, he remarks, in his letter to Madame Hańska dated 15 May 1840 ³: "le sublime peintre de "la Chasteté", Pontorno, a mis une licorne auprès de sa belle figure emblématique". Presumably he was basing himself on a false attribution (the picture may be by Moretto), but the important aspect of this borrowing is the fact that the unicorn symbolizes virginity: and though Madame Graslin is far from having led a blameless life of Christian chastity in the past (she is a Mary Magdalene rather than a Justina), chastity is a predominant feature of her saintliness and redemption.

Balzac's acquaintance with Cristofano Allori and Carlo Dolci was probably formed about the time when he mentions Pontorno/Moretto. He alludes to them in his dedication of Une Fille d'Ève to Eugenia Bolognini-Vimercati ⁴, to whom he had been introduced in Milan in 1838 and who lived in a palace filled with Raphaels, Titians, Dolcis and Alloris. This dedication dates from 1839, but not until 1846, in La Cousine Bette ⁵, is there any mention of Cristofano Allori in the actual novels. Balzac confuses Cristofano with his great-uncle Agnolo Allori, commonly known as Bronzino. The "Bianca Capella" ⁶ which he says is one of Bronzino's masterpieces is Cristofano Allori's "Bianca Capello", which

1 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 747. Only in Balzac's corrected personal copy of the Furne edition, however, is the artist's name given as Pontorno. In the feuilleton (La Presse, 30 July 1839) and in the Souverain edition of 1841 (vol. II, p. 318), the picture is attributed to Panormo.

2 Op.cit., p. 114.

3 Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 677. Reading the MS of A 301, fol. 524 as "le sublime peintre de "la Chasteté", Panormo", M. Pierrot suggests that Balzac may have had in mind Moretto's "St Justina with a Donor", at the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (loc.cit., n. 2).

4 Pl. II, p. 60.

5 Pl. VI, pp. 154, 452-453.

6 Ibid., p. 154.

he saw at the Uffizi in 1837. Josépha Mirah calls to mind a portrait of "Judith" ¹; Balzac himself had just bought a sketch of "Judith", by a Florentine painter, and had also purchased a portrait of a woman by Allori, alias Il Bronzino ². In La Cousine Bette itself, he is more specific in his attribution of "Judith". The picture to which Josépha Mirah bears a resemblance is the work of "le neveu du Bronzino" ³—but for "nephew" we should read "great-nephew", because it was Cristofano (1577-1621), not Alessandro Allori (1535-1607), who painted the "Judith and Holofernes" in the Palazzo Pitti. Just as Balzac is relatively unimpressed by Bernardino Luini ⁴, one of the most powerful of imaginative influences on Stendhal ⁴, so he is less impressed than Stendhal by the work of Bronzino and Allori. Allori's "Judith and Holofernes" had been confiscated by the French ⁵, but it is not until the end of his life that Balzac utilizes his knowledge of Allori creatively.

Finally, Balzac is also aware of the very late Florentine artist Carlo Dolci. Jeanne d'Hérouville, in L'Enfant Maudit ⁶, recalls one of his

madones au teint d'ivoire, qui semblent près d'expirer sous les atteintes de la douleur physique.

Pauline de Witschnau, exalted by music, strikingly resembles "la belle et noble tête par laquelle Carlo Dolci a voulu représenter la Poésie ou l'Italie" ⁷. The ivory-complexioned Madonnas are probably Dolci's "Mater Dolorosas"; his symbolic figure of "Poetry" used to hang at the Palazzo Corsini ⁸. In the fictional world of the Comédie Humaine, several of his paintings adorn Massimilla Cataneo's palace ⁹.

1 Ibid., pp. 452-453.

2 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

3 Pl. VI, p. 453.

4 Cf. supra, p. 187.

5 Notice des tableaux... du Musée, Paris 1815, no. 781.

6 Pl. IX, p. 659.

7 La Peau de Chagrin; A 177, vol. I, p. 288. Cf. Pl. IX, p. 98.

8 Cf. L.A. Langzi: Histoire de la Peinture en Italie..., Paris 1824, vol. I, p. 364: "il ne reste du Dolci que très peu de grands tableaux... Ses grands sujets profanes sont encore plus rares; mais on trouve quelques-uns de ses portraits, et sa célèbre figure de la poésie dans le palais des princes Corsini".

9 Massimilla Donis; Pl. IX, p. 313.

The Venetian school, even excluding Titian, offers the most continuous level of high creative production of all Italian schools. From the time of the Bellinis to Canaletto, Guardi and Bellotto, there is hardly an intermission; and, by whatever standard artists are judged, Giovanni Bellini, Giorgione, Tintoretto, Veronese, Tiepolo and Guardi—leaving Titian himself out of account—all attained the very highest quality of achievement. Yet Balzac seems totally ignorant of Tiepolo and Guardi, and is certainly unaware of the greatness of Tintoretto and Giovanni Bellini.

Giovanni Bellini's importance is, however, only now becoming clear; and it says something for Balzac that, whilst in Italy in 1837¹, he at least noted the Bellinis' paintings. But the overall impression he retains from the three artists—from such works as, perhaps, Giovanni's "Virgin between St Paul and St George", at the Accademia, Venice—is not one of exalted greatness. The point that repeatedly strikes his attention, so much so that he refers to it twice in the Comédie Humaine², is that one of the Bellinis (Giovanni, Gentile or Jacopo?) was the first artist—or so he believes—to place small angels, or cherubs, beneath his figures of the Virgin Mary: a practice which Raphael imitated in, for example, "The Sistine Madonna" and "The Madonna of the Baldachin". As yet it has been impossible to identify the paintings in which the Bellinis allegedly make use of this conceit. Could the "Virgin and Child", said to be by Giovanni, and which he probably saw in 1837 at the Palazzo Galvagna, in Venice³, have been in Balzac's mind?

1 Balzac could not have seen any of Giovanni's works at the Louvre. The earliest bequest of a Giovanni Bellini was made in 1902. None were sequestered from Italy by Napoleon.

2 Pl. IX, p. 387; Pl. V, p. 669. Cf. supra, p. 170.

3 H. Prior: "Balzac à Venise (1837)", Revue de France, 1 December 1927, p. 391. According to Prior, Giovanni's "Virgin and Child" was "une des plus belles oeuvres que l'on connaît de ce maître incomparable".

Lucien and Esther, at the masked ball, recall these angels ¹, and as for the presence of Bellinis in the collections of the Comédie Humaine, a "Head of Christ", or "Ecce Homo", belongs to Jean-Jacques Rouget ², and other Bellinis adorn Emilio Memmi's ancestral chapel in Venice ³. Yet even one of these Bellinis is an afterthought. In the MS and galley-sheets of La Rabouilleuse ⁴, Titian—not Giovanni Bellini—is said to have painted the "Ecce Homo".

Bellini's pupil Palma Vecchio, and Vecchio's great-nephew Palma Giovine are also represented in the Memmi chapel ³. This mention of them dates from 1837, and is also a reminiscence of the second Italian journey. In 1846 Balzac was to buy a Palma Vecchio ⁵, a "Portrait of the Artist's Wife". Notwithstanding this, there are no references to Vecchio, or obvious visual borrowings, in either Batta or Pons.

Giorgione, another of Giovanni Bellini's pupils, adumbrates Frenhofer ⁶ in the brilliance of his colouring and in his supreme tactile qualities. The young Poussin greatly admires ⁷ the "Portrait of a Woman", one of Frenhofer's very early works, which he mistakes for a Giorgione. Another aspect of Giorgione's work praised by Balzac is his fondness for painting his subjects in a calm, even cold, attitude ⁸—as witness the "Concert Champêtre" ⁹ or his "Holy Family" ¹⁰. The admiration for Giorgione continues unabated to the end of Balzac's life. Pons owns one of his works ¹¹ and Magus has the original of

1 Solennités et Misères des Courtisanes Pl. V, p. 669.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965.

3 Massimilla Doni; Pl. IX, p. 318.

4 A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67.

5 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

6 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 399.

7 Ibid., pp. 399, 410.

8 Sarrasines; Pl. VI, p. 97.

9 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 877.

10 Ibid., no. 876.

11 Pl. VI, p. 593.

Giorgione's "Portrait of his Mistress",

cette femme pour laquelle ce peintre est mort, et les prétendus originaux sont des copies de cette toile illustre qui vaut cinq cent mille francs, à l'estimation de Magus¹.

The portraits of Giorgione's mistress of which Magus's is said to be the original are no doubt those in the Galleria Borghese, Rome (which Balzac perhaps saw nine months or so before writing the above passage) and at the Palazzo Pitti. The legend that Giorgione's premature death was due to his catching the plague from his mistress comes from Vasari².

As with Titian's "Entombment" and "Philip II"³, Magus's prestigious and mysterious gallery contains the original or archetype of a masterpiece. Nor is the connexion with Titian fortuitous, for between them Titian and Giorgione can be considered the founders of modern painting, and it is indeed a moot point whether Titian was as much of an innovator as his collaborator in the frescoes of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi. Balzac seems to have sensed the epoch-making qualities of such works as the "Concert Champêtre" and "The Tempest" (at the Accademia, Venice) when, in Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu, the charismatic Frenhofer is shown to have inherited Giorgione's aura.

With Sebastiano del Piombo, we face a critical problem. From 1846 Balzac's reverence for him is enormous. In April of that year he himself had bought a so-called Sebastiano in Rome⁴. This picture, known as "Le Chevalier de Malte en Prières"⁵, occupies a prominent place in the correspondence with Madame Hańska for the year 1846. But until then Balzac had never mentioned Sebastiano either in the novels or the letters. The "Chevalier de Malte", he explains to Georges Mnischek⁶, is "un de ces

1 Ibid., p. 637. This estimate is immensely higher than any price fetched by a Giorgione in the nineteenth century (G.R. Reitlinger: op.cit., p. 328).

2 G. Vasari: Vies des peintres, sculpteurs et architectes, vol. IV, Paris 1839, pp. 37-38.

3 Cf. supra, pp. 183-184.

4 Correspondence V, p. 112; Balzac to Laure Surville, 21 April 1846.

5 There is a "Knight of Malta", by Sebastiano, at the Accademia Musicale Chigiana, Siena (plate 24). But this knight is pictured standing full face; he is not in prayer. Another "Knight of Malta", by Pinturicchio, hangs in Siena Cathedral.

6 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, p. 312; 29 July 1846.

lumineux chefs-d'oeuvre qui sont, comme "le Joueur de Violon"¹, le soleil d'une galerie", "un des plus grands chefs-d'oeuvre de la peinture, et plus complet que ce que faisait Raphaël"². "Tu ne te figures pas ce que c'est que l'habit de soie du "Chev. d. M."... ", he assures a doubting Madame Hańska. "C'est sublime"³. Pons's "Chevalier de Malte" is one of his four greatest paintings⁴. On what qualities is this unbounded enthusiasm for Sebastiano founded? The "Chevalier de Malte" does not automatically become one of Pons's gems simply because it is in Balzac's collection. There were well over twenty other paintings at the Chartreuse Beaujon from which an outstanding masterpiece could have been selected. Moret, the picture-restorer, had much to do with this glowing fanaticism. "Il a trouvé le "Chevalier de Malte" une des plus grandes choses de la peinture", we read in the letter of 22 July 1846⁵, a week or more before the jubilant letters to Georges Wnieszek and Madame Hańska. In July 1846, Balzac was still paying careful attention to Moret's opinions.

Firstly, and invaluable from a collector's point of view, there was Sebastiano's rarity.

quant au "Christ portant sa Croix", de Sébastien del Piombo, le nom seul du peintre dit assez haut que c'est là un tableau unique dans une collection particulière et dont il serait impossible de rencontrer ailleurs l'équivalent,

we read in the catalogue of the sale which took place in Paris in May 1852 on Marshal Soult's death⁶.

Ce chef-d'oeuvre du plus rare de tous les grands maîtres échappe à toute analyse... Il est inutile de faire remarquer que le passage d'un pareil chef-d'oeuvre de Sébastien dans une vente publique est une de ces occasions uniques qui ne se reproduisent peut-être pas deux fois dans le cours d'un siècle⁷.

1 Curiously enough, "The Violin Player", which Balzac had just seen at the Galleria Sciarra in Rome, is now attributed to Sebastiano. His comparison was prophetic!

2 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, p. 314; 29 July 1846.

3 Ibid., p. 286; 19 July 1846.

4 Pl. VI, pp. 651-652. Originally (A 47, fol. 38) this picture was said to be painted "sur marbre"—not "sur ardoise", as in the text of the feuilleton.

5 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, pp. 288-289.

6 Catalogue Soult, Paris 1852, p. vi.

7 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

Secondly, there were his Titianesque qualities: the superbly rich colouring, the barely concealed fervour, the majestic conceptions. And in this assessment Balzac was by no means alone. Sebastiano's vogue was to remain potent until as late as the present century¹. The world's richest collectors vied for his works as, very occasionally, they came on to the market. Nor, indeed, is Sebastiano lacking in the qualities of greatness. A man who was entrusted with the task of completing most of Giorgione's unfinished works and whom Michelangelo looked to as a second Raphael could scarcely be lacking in ability and inspiration!

Balzac has much to say in Le Cousin Pons about Sebastiano's life. He puts forward the view² that the young and enthusiastic Venetian was warmly encouraged by Michelangelo in his rivalry with the artist, hardly older than himself, who towered over them all—Raphael. For in 1512, when Sebastiano was twenty-seven, Raphael barely twenty-nine and Michelangelo thirty-seven, perhaps the two greatest artists who have ever lived were both busy in the Vatican, fulfilling the commissions of Julius II. Michelangelo had just completed the Sistine Ceiling, and the precocious Raphael was still painting the new rooms (or Stanze) which Julius had had constructed, and which more or less monopolized Raphael's time from 1509 to 1515. Sebastiano had arrived in Rome the previous year (1511) to work for Raphael, but soon quarrelled with his master and worked for Michelangelo instead.

That there was rivalry between Sebastiano's masters no one can deny (the Stanza d'Eliodoro bears obvious traces of the inspiration of the Sistine Ceiling); but it is doubtful whether there was the animosity

1 Cf. G.R. Reitlinger: op.cit., pp. 409-410.

2 Pl. VI, pp. 651-652.

between Michelangelo and Raphael which Balzac supposes. Balzac is a child of his age in the vast superiority he assigns to Raphael over Michelangelo¹. The older man must, he believes, have been jealous of Raphael's virtuosity and meteoric rise to fame; besides which we know that Michelangelo was responsible for the drawing in several of Sebastiano's paintings, notably "The Flagellation" in S. Pietro in Montorio, Rome. What was more natural than to assume from this that Michelangelo was setting up Sebastiano in opposition to Raphael, from whose techniques the young man had already learned? and what is more natural—even today—than to see in Sebastiano a union or synthesis of the two rival schools of painting, the Venetian and the Florentine, with the addition of Raphael's prestigious merits?

Of Tintoretto's mannerism Balzac apparently knows nothing (though he almost certainly saw the Scuola di S. Rocco in 1837), the only references to him—in Massimilla Dani²—being to the presence of some of his works in Massimilla's palace and the Memmi chapel. It was left to Ruskin³ to rescue Tintoretto from obscurity. Yet, quite apart from the Scuola di S. Rocco, Balzac must have seen a representative sample of his works, at the Louvre and in Vienna and Venice. Veronese, on the other hand, is more closely observed. The hounds in a sixteenth-century hunting-scene, evoked in Les Paysans⁴, come from such paintings as Rubens's "Diana resting after the Hunt" (Pinakothek,

1 Pl. IV, p. 393: "Michel-Ange admirait Raphaël, in netto". Pl. VI, p. 651: Raphael, "ce souverain pontife de l'Art".

2 Pl. IX, pp. 313, 318.

3 Modern Painters, vol. II (3rd edn.), London 1851, pp. 168-178. The Stones of Venice, London 1853, vol. III, pp. 321-353.

4 Pl. VIII, pp. 125-126. Cf. supra, pp. 112-113.

Munich) and Veronese's "Pilgrims at Emmaus"¹. Samanon, the money-lender, terrifies Lucien de Rubempré with his Hoffmannesque appearance; the patches of green and yellow on his skin recall the a layers of colour applied by Veronese and Titian to their canvases, layers which are only visible when examined at close hand². For Balzac, and for Frenhofer³, Veronese symbolizes the Colourist school, as against those artists (Frenhofer names Holbein and Dürer) who have laid the principal emphasis on drawing. The Memmi chapel contains Veroneses⁴, and Rouget owns one of his works, "The Raising of Lazarus"⁵. Although nothing of what Balzac says points to a deep appreciation, Veronese's virtuosity and brio evidently did not escape him.

Perhaps Balzac is nowhere more typical of his age—not even in his admiration of Sebastiano or Raphael—than in the vast importance he ascribes to the school of Bologna, and especially to the works of Domenichino and Francesco Albani. He is totally unaware, it seems, of Guercino, to whom Stendhal is indebted for basic features in the portrait of Julien Sorel⁶. He is equally ignorant of Primaticcio, and the Carraccis have made little impression upon him. Only in the very early novels, La Vendetta⁷ and La Peau de Chagrin⁸, are there in fact any references to the Carraccis at all. The grave expression and flowing hair of Bertholomé di Piembe recall the Carraccis (Balzac is perhaps thinking of the portraits of St Joseph in Annibale Carracci's two

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 107. L. Hauteceuri op.cit., no. 1,196.

2 Illusions Perdus; Pl. IV, p. 837. Cf. supra, p. 181.

3 Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 393.

4 Massimilla Doni; Pl. IX, p. 318.

5 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. In the MS and galley-sheets (A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67), however, Balzac assigned this picture to one of the Jouvenets, most probably Jean-Baptiste Jouvenet (1644-1717).

6 Cf. J.-J. Seznec: "Stendhal et les peintres bolonais", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, March 1959, pp. 173-175.

7 Pl. I, p. 859.

8 Pl. IX, p. 66. A 177, vol. I, p. 191.

paintings of "The Nativity"¹ and in his "Virgin and Child"²), as do the arms and fully developed bust of the kept woman Aquilina, for which Annibale's "Concert sur l'Eau"³ may have served as an inspiration.

Guido Reni, probably the most outstanding exponent of this decadent school, and a painter who enjoyed great influence and popularity⁴ between 1750 and 1850, seems to have held less interest for Balzac than for many of his contemporaries. Balzac did, however, own a painting of "Aurora", by Guido⁵; and, regardless of the accuracy of the attribution, there is no better index of his personal preferences than his own collection. Even so, such admiration as he feels for Guido's work is founded less on the versions of "Aurora" which he may have seen at Ajaccio (in March 1838) and Dresden than on the painting of "Beatrice Cenci", at the Palazzo Barberini, which inspired a whole generation of Romantic artists. Pierrette's sufferings recall Beatrice's⁶, and in La Femme de Trente Ans⁷ Julie d'Aiglemont's appearance is said to be as striking as Guido's portrait. But Balzac did not visit the Palazzo Barberini until March or April 1846, if even then, and his knowledge of "Beatrice Cenci" is therefore largely derived from the many popular engravings of the painting⁸, and from the general interest of Romantic writers and painters in this family tragedy. Of all the collections in the Comédie Humaine, only Balthazar Claës's (so far as we know) contains any of Guido's works⁹.

1 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, nos. 781, 782.

2 Ibid., no. 783.

3 Ibid., no. 796.

4 G. R. Reitlinger: op. cit., pp. 426-427.

5 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

6 Pl. III, p. 782.

7 Pl. II, p. 837. Cf. A 77, folios 22-23, 41. This passage dates from 1842.

8 Though deeply admired in the early years of the nineteenth century, "Beatrice Cenci" was not confiscated by Napoleon, who respected private property but mulcted governments. "Beatrice Cenci" belonged to Prince Barberini.

9 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 559. A 201, fol. 84.

Albani and Domenichino, on the other hand, receive rather more than their due of praise. Balzac himself owned (or thought he owned) a Domenichino, "The Establishment of the Feast of Corpus Christi by Pope Urban IV"¹; there was also a copy of "The Rape of Europa" in his collection². Indeed, "The Feast of Corpus Christi" was one of his greatest treasures. But he never laid claim to an Albani.

In the Comédie Humaine, however, masterpieces of the school of Bologna are more easily come by. Albani's "Holy Family" adorns Rouget's collection³ and is highly admired by Joseph Bridau⁴. Rouget also owns a painting of "The Last Communion of St Jerome" by Domenichino⁵, evidently inspired by Domenichino's masterpiece at the Vatican (plate 7), and this most prolific of artists (Balzac is aware of his prodigious output and persevering energy⁵) is also represented in Madame Bontems's collection⁶. And Balzac considers Domenichino's "Triumph of Love"⁷ one of the masterpieces of the Louvre and of art generally. An Albani "Madonna" is rescued by Diard, an officer in the Peninsular Wars, as it is about to be riddled with gunshot by infantrymen ignorant of its value⁸. Balzac's high opinion of the Bolognese school is certainly exaggerated, particularly his estimate of Domenichino, although some of Guido's lesser known works at Bologna are powerful works of art, still unjustly overlooked; however, in worshipping the school of Bologna, Balzac is doing no more than echo the feeling of his time. He pays no attention to Caravaggio.

1 This may well be the picture catalogued as item no. 53, Domenichino's "La Communion (composition importante)", in the prospectus of Madame Hańska's sale in Paris, 17-22 April 1832.

2 A 329, fol. 22, recto.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965. Cf. A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67.

4 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 1,017.

5 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 122.

6 Une Double Famille; Pl. I, p. 959.

7 La Cousine Pons; Pl. VI, p. 654, where it is referred to as "les enfants entourés de fleurs". Hautecœur, however, claims that the wreath of flowers was separated in 1685 from the central panel depicting children, and only restored to the tondo in 1858 (op.cit., p. 143).

8 Les Marquis; Pl. IX, p. 796.

Other than Strozzi ¹ and Piola ² (both scarcely more than names), Correggio and Salvator Rosa are the two remaining Italian artists in whom Balzac shows evident interest. Salvator is admired not only for the poetic sentimentality he shares with the school of Bologna, but for his artistic versatility. (This painter, poet, actor and presumed musician also inspired such varied tributes as a tale by Hoffmann and Liszt's "Canzonetta del Salvator Rosa" ³.) Balzac, indeed, seems to admire Salvator rather less than his contemporaries did. It was certainly a taste he grew quickly out of. Les Chouans, his first acknowledged novel, contains a portrait of the heroine Marie de Verneuil and her servant Francine, shortly after her marriage to Montsuran and before a wedding night which—with Republican troops encircling their place of refuge—she knows will be her last on earth; a scene, Balzac comments, "où l'extravagant pinceau de Salvator Rosa aurait représenté la vie et la mort se tenant par la main" ⁴. Luigi Porta is as handsome as any male portrait by Salvator ⁵, who is represented in the antiquary's collection by a battle scene ⁶. That Balzac continued to admire him until at least 1839 (without mentioning him, or apparently borrowing from him, in later novels) is shown, however, by his letter to Stendhal praising the description of the Battle of Waterloo serialized in the Constitutionnel before La Chartreuse de Parme was published: "c'est fait comme Borgognone et Vouvermans, Salvator Rosa et Walter Scott" ⁷. It was Salvator's battle scenes he most cared for.

1 Pl. IX, p. 313; Pl. III, p. 965. The reference to Strozzi's "Sposalizio" is already present in the MS and galley-sheets of La Rabouilleuse (A 198, fol. 100; A 199, fol. 67).

2 Pl. IV, p. 384; Pl. II, p. 399.

3 Années de néerlandais (1837), Book II.

4 Pl. VII, p. 1,066. Les Chouans, Paris 1834, vol. II, pp. 353-354.

5 La Vendetta Pl. I, pp. 876-877. Salvator's name is not present in the MS (A 239, fol. 15), but is added to the Béchét edition of 1835.

6 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 27. This picture must have been suggested to Balzac by Salvator's "Battle Scene", formerly in Louis XIV's collection (Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 1,042). It is already mentioned in the first edition of the novel (vol. I, p. 81).

7 Correspondance III, p. 584; March 1839.

As for Correggio, Balzac's interest is of a respectful, continuous, but undiscerning kind. He senses, however, some connexion with Raphael. What separates Raphael from his contemporary at Parma is the apparently unbridgeable gulf dividing genius from talent¹. Yet talent there undoubtedly is, for "Baldassare Castiglione" unites all Raphael's customary perfections with, we are told², the additional perfection of Correggio. It is this perfection that entitles us to consider Correggio's "Antiope" one of the greatest of all paintings³. (Balzac is implying the "Jupiter and Antiope" which he had doubtless seen at the Louvre from his earliest visits as a youth⁴.) Examples of Correggio's work are to be found in the collections of the Antiquary⁵, Frenhofer⁶, Rouget⁷ and Madame Bontems⁸, whilst the Zwinger, at Dresden, contains the finest and most representative collection of his actual works, as beautiful to the flesh-and-blood beholder as in the imaginary vision⁹. How different is this attitude from Stendhal's! Balzac pays lip-service to Correggio, but nothing more. He is even stinting in his lip-service, for whereas one of the four masterpieces in Pons's collection was originally meant to be a Correggio, the name is crossed out as soon as it is written, and Fra Bartolomeo's put in its place¹⁰. Yet for Stendhal the first acquaintance with Correggio, at Parma in 1811, had been unique and ineffable: no artist was ever more successful in conveying grace and voluptuousness¹¹, none more skilful in the blending of colour, or the juxtaposition of light and shade¹²; "Raphaël lui-même a été surpassé par le Corrège"¹³, to whom the literary art of La Chartreuse de Parme is so deeply indebted. Yet, from an

1 Les Petite Bourgeoises Pl. VII, p. 114.

2 Le Cousin Pons Pl. VI, p. 651.

3 Ibid., p. 654.

4 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 816.

5 La Peau de Chagrin Pl. IX, p. 28. This reference is present in the first edition (vol. I, p. 85).

6 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu Pl. IX, p. 407.

7 La Rabouilleuse Pl. III, p. 965. These Correggios are an afterthought.

8 Une Doubla Esquille Pl. I, p. 959.

9 Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 266; 19 October 1843.

10 A 47, fol. 37.

11 Écoles Italiennes de Peinture, Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne XXII (2), Paris 1932, p. 24.

12 Ibid., p. 8.

13 Histoire de la Peinture en Italie, Bibliothèque de la Sorbonne XII (1), Paris 1929, p. 291.

art-historical point of view, Stendhal's taste for Correggio is a throwback to the eighteenth century, whilst Balzac, though scarcely ahead of current fashion, never lags behind.

His views are those of the broad stratum of his cultivated contemporaries. Ignoring the school of Siena (yet, in Balzac's delirious year of acquisitions, 1846, the Prince Consort bought Ruccio's "Crucifixion"¹), and with small patience for the Umbrian school (yet Perugino attracted his attention, no doubt as the master of Raphael), he showed unqualified enthusiasm for Raphael and Titian, but less enthusiasm for Leonardo and Michelangelo—though "Mona Lisa" impressed him deeply. The Venetians, on the whole, were preferred to the Florentines, despite Balzac's feelings for Raphael. Botticelli was unknown, Giotto received scant attention, yet great store was set by Sebastiano del Piombo and even Veronese. Tintoretto made the most transient of impressions, but for the school of Bologna—and especially Guido Reni and Domenichino—Balzac preserved an undying loyalty. Salvator Rosa was rated more highly than we would rate him today; Mantegna, Caravaggio and the late Venetians Tiepolo, Canaletto, Guardi and Bellotto were—in the novels, at any rate—entirely overlooked. Nevertheless, we should not belittle Balzac too hastily, even as a connoisseur. He sensed the real importance of Giorgione, showed a keen, if imperfect, appreciation of Raphael, and noted the Bellinis. However inadequate the critical equipment (and Balzac's was not inadequate through any lack of interest or diligence), genius understands and interprets genius in unrivalled, unexpected ways.

1 F.C. Davis: Victorian Patrons of the Arts. Twelve Famous Collections and their Owners, London 1963, p. 22. For a fuller account of the Prince Consort's taste, cf. Winslow Ames: Prince Albert and Victorian Taste, London 1967.

IX: SPANISH PAINTING

Balzac never visited Spain, but nevertheless had ample opportunity to gain a good insight into Spanish art. The vogue for Spanish painting (mentioned in Chapter II ¹) did not really begin until the 1830s, when Louis-Philippe sent Justin Taylor, author of the Voyage pittoresque en Espagne (1826), Blanchard and the landscapist and genre-painter Adrien Dauzats to Spain with a view to acquiring, on his behalf, a representative gallery of Spanish art. The Peninsular Wars had opened up Spain's unsuspected beauty and mystery: Hugo, whose father had commanded a brigade in the Spanish wars and whose Harzani (1830) and Ruy Blas (1838) both had Spanish themes, writes in his Préface de Cromwell (1827) of "ce génie, tout moderne, tout nourri du moyen-âge et de l'Espagne" ², the genius of Corneille, who was the true precursor of the Romantic playwrights, two centuries before his time.

Long before the opening of Louis-Philippe's "Galerie Espagnole" (the fruits of Taylor's two-year-long ransacking of Spain ³, finally placed on permanent exhibition at the Louvre in January 1838), Spanish painting was making a slow but gradual impact upon French taste. During Napoleon's reign many paintings had been confiscated from their Spanish owners, royal or religious, and displayed in Paris ⁴. Although principally works of the Italian school (such as Raphael's "Spasimo di Sicilia" ⁵), there were also Murillos. Soult, like Wellington, appropriated priceless examples of Spanish art during his campaigns in the Peninsula, the most notorious of

1 Cf. supra, p. 20.

2 Théâtre complet, vol. I, Paris 1963, p. 432.

3 In his letter of 14 May 1837, Balzac remarks to Madame Hańska: "j'ai rencontré Taylor, le commissaire royal près le Théâtre-Français, qui vient de rapporter pour un million 400 tableaux d'Espagne, et des plus beaux" (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 500). Their conversation had taken place the previous day.

4 Cf. I.H. Lipschütz: "El Despojo de Obras de arte en España durante la Guerra de la Independencia", Arte Español, 3rd quarter 1961, pp. 215-270.

5 C. Saunier: op.cit., p. 71. Cf. supra, p. 174, n. 3.

his confiscations being Murillo's "Immaculate Conception", formerly in the Hospicio de Venerables Sacerdotes, at Seville. After the final defeat of France in 1815, Soult was not compelled to surrender his gallery of paintings to their rightful owners and until his death in 1852 they remained either at his Paris home (57 Rue de l'Université¹) or at the castle of Soultberg, in the department of Tarn—the choicest, of course, being in Paris. Delacroix records a visit to the Paris collection as early as 3 May 1824², and although there is no mention of it in Balzac's correspondence, there is, as we have seen³, strong reason to suppose that Balzac also visited the gallery in the Rue de l'Université during the early 1820s.

Junot, whose widow the Duchesse d'Abantès was Balzac's mistress later in the same decade, was another intrepid despoiler of monasteries, convents and palaces, but it is highly unlikely that Madame d'Abantès—who experienced the direst poverty under the restored Bourbons⁴—had any of these paintings when Balzac knew her.

The years from 1820 to 1835 were the time when Goya's work was coming to be appreciated—if only by the young Romantic poets and painters. Not, however, "Los Desastros de la Guerra", with their biting realism: like the works of Velázquez, these engravings did not come into their own until some thirty or forty years later. For the young generation of Romantic artists, Goya was simply the engraver of the "Caprichos", in which the trappings of Hoffmann's, Goethe's and Delacroix's Romanticism were paramount⁵. Balzac's contemporaries admired the chiaroscuro effects of these engravings, the telling contrasts of colour, and the avoidance of sharp outline and

1 The actual house was demolished in 1867 (P. Guinard: Zurbarán et les peintres espagnols de la vie monastique, Paris 1960, p. 12, n. 46).

2 Journal, Paris 1932, vol. I, p. 91.

3 Cf. supra, p. 8.

4 M.-L.-V. Ancelot: op.cit., pp. 86-87, 90-94.

5 Cf. supra, p. 55.

definition which itself foreshadowed Impressionism. Even the dispassionately objective portraits of the Spanish royalty and nobility were neglected, so great was the enthusiasm (but only amongst the young Romantics) for the "féconde union du type grotesque au type sublime" ¹.

D.-V. Denon awakened an interest in the "Caprichos" when he brought a first edition of them from Spain in 1809 ². In 1824, if not earlier ³, Delacroix consulted and admired another copy of the "Caprichos" (probably the one belonging to Ferdinand Guillemardet ⁴); Musset, wavering between painting and poetry, copied one of its plates in 1828 ⁵; and Gavarni's "Lorettes" ⁶ recall the maïas who adorn its brighter pages. From its gloomier ones, Delacroix derived much inspiration for his series of seventeen lithographs illustrating Goethe's Faust ⁷. The "Caprichos" were regarded with almost frenetic admiration by the young poets and painters of around 1830 ⁸.

Goya's paintings were rather longer in gaining attention. In 1834, six years after his father's death, don Javier Goya began to dispose of some of the very many paintings inherited from the artist's studio. Louis Viardot's Études sur l'histoire des institutions, de la littérature, du théâtre et des beaux-arts en Espagne (1835) and Notices sur les principaux peintres de l'Espagne (1839) familiarized the French public with these works. Taylor, Blanchard and Daugats bought eight Goyas ⁹ in Spain, which however were all relegated to obscure corners of the Galerie Espagnole ¹⁰—so backward was the general taste of the time.

1 V.-M. Hugo: Théâtre complet, vol. I, Paris 1963, p. 417.

2 J. Adhémar: "Essai sur les débuts de l'influence de Goya en France au XIXe siècle", Catalogue de l'exposition Goya, Paris 1935, p. xxii.

3 M. Florisoone: "Comment Delacroix a-t-il connu les "Caprices" de Goya?", Bulletin de la Société de l'Histoire de l'Art Français, 1957, pp. 131-133.

4 Ibid., pp. 138-142.

5 Ibid., p. 143.

6 Cf. supra, p. 76.

7 Cf. supra, p. 54.

8 Cf. I.H. Lipschütz: "El Pintor y los poetas, Goya y las imágenes del Romanticismo francés", Arte Español, 1963-1967, pp. 134-153.

9 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, nos. 97-104.

10 C.-P. Baudelaire: op.cit., p. 1,020 n.

The fact that Goya's name is only once mentioned in the Comédie Humaine (unflatteringly, Pons bequeaths a painting of a "Monkey's Head" to his cousin Camusot de Marville ¹) does not entitle us to suppose that Balzac was almost entirely ignorant of him. He could scarcely have escaped Delacroix's, Boulanger's, Hugo's, Musset's or Gavarni's infectious enthusiasms. Gautier, perhaps the most fervent of all Goya's admirers in that circle, must often have discoursed to Balzac on the engravings and paintings. Yet Balzac did not learn to share his friends' pleasure, nor would he acknowledge anything of the disconcerting beauty of Goya's work. His sense of the grotesque was nourished visually by Rembrandt, Rubens and Delacroix.

In any case, though certainly aware of the "Caprichos" and of some of the oil paintings, Balzac seems to have become familiar with them too late to have translated their influence into the writing of the Comédie Humaine. After all, he did not meet Gautier until 1835. Gautier himself did not refer to Goya until 1832, in Albertus ². Victor Hugo had only the sketchiest knowledge of Goya in 1831. The Romantic painters became aware of him a considerable time earlier than the Romantic writers: Delacroix's familiarity with him dated back, as has been noted, to at least 1824, and Balzac had met Delacroix at the turn of the decade, but he and Delacroix were never friends. Thus, Balzac may not have been introduced in any depth to Goya before the late 1830s. By then, about half the novels of the Comédie Humaine were already behind him; and no scenes or characters from César Birotteau onwards seem to have been derived from Goya—nor are any to be found in the novels prior to 1837.

1 Pl. VI, p. 746.

2 T. Gautier: Poésies complètes, Paris 1932, vol. I, p. 180.

But Murillo is, in Balzac's eyes, a much greater artist than Goya, a preference which, like the admiration for the school of Bologna, Balzac shares with most connoisseurs of that period. That this should be so is scarcely surprising when we recall that his tastes, like Stendhal's, were formed in the Classical mould. Though welcoming the "règne du laid" (as Delécluze called the reaction against neo-Classicism¹), Balzac directed his worship towards the Dutch genre-painters, rather than Goya. The veneration of Murillo, on the other hand, is in harmony with his abiding admiration of Raphael: like Raphael, Murillo is a "sublime" painter, yet with a strong admixture of sentimentality and pathos by no means displeasing to Balzac. More so than any other artist, Murillo conveyed moods of mystical exaltation, with unparalleled boldness and warmth². In Massimilla Doni, describing the lovesick tenor Genovese, Balzac tells of his "figure exaltée et sublime d'expression"³, such as can only be found in the portraits of martyrs painted by Murillo, Zurbarán and Titian. And, elsewhere in the same novel⁴, referring to the lovers Massimilla Cataneo and Emilio di Varese, Balzac again thinks in artistic terms. So pure is their love that its celestial radiance can only be portrayed by a Murillo, a Raphael or a Titian. In her lover's arms, "deux âmes enflammées et conjointes dans la lumière céleste"⁴, Massimilla becomes

une de ces vierges célestes entrevues dans les rêves, que le chant du coq fait disparaître, mais que vous reconnaissez au sein de leur sphère lumineuse dans quelques œuvres des glorieux peintres du ciel⁵.

1 É.-J. Delécluze: op.cit., p. 256.

2 Les Marquis Pl. IX, p. 800. Cf. A 127, fol. 7. Revue de Paris, 23 December 1832, pp. 271-272.

3 Pl. IX, p. 384.

4 Ibid., p. 334.

5 Ibid., p. 335.

These are revealing words, for we should note the repeated juxtaposition of the names of Murillo, Raphael and Titian, all three of whom (in Balzac's eyes) are those who best convey purity of emotion, sublimity, the angelic: the sublimity of Murillo's "Martyrdom of St Peter Arbues" (at the Hermitage, Leningrad), the angelic purity of his "Madonna with the Infant Christ standing", at the Palazzo Pitti; and when he speaks of the "glorieux peintres du ciel", we may be quite sure that Balzac is not only thinking of Müller's engraving of "The Sistine Madonna", or of Titian's "Assumption of the Virgin", in S. Maria dei Frari, Venice. Murillo is also in the forefront of his mind.

Particularly, of course, "The Immaculate Conception", which Balzac even refers to by name in the first edition of La Peau de Chagrin¹. Certain airs by Rossini, says Raphaël de Valentin, "la Madone du Murillo que possède le maréchal Soult, ... ont pu seuls me transporter dans les divines régions de mon amour".

Balzac's appreciation of Murillo is not confined, however, to the angelic aspects of his art, important as these are. For, in a very curious way, he sees Murillo as combining the celestial purity of Raphael with the powerful evocation of passion and suffering which, as in the etymological sense, are in his paintings very nearly identical. For Murillo is, after all, "[le] plus hardi, [le] plus chaud des peintres". And this evocation of passion can even include, though not invariably so, portrayals of the Virgin Mary herself. Juana Mancini

était, non pas la Vierge de l'Italie, mais la Vierge de l'Espagne, celle du Murillo, le seul artiste assez osé pour l'avoir peinte enivrée de bonheur par la conception du Christ².

1 A 177, vol. I, pp. 315-316. Cf. Pl. IX, p. 107.

2 Les Maranas; Pl. IX, p. 800. Cf. A 127, fol. 7. Revue de Paris, 23 December 1832, p. 271.

Thus, although Murillo is the painter of Virgins of angelic purity, he is also the painter who introduces human passion into his delineation of Heaven. In La Femme de Trente Ans¹, Balzac remarks that Julie d'Aiglemont is one of those people who immediately attract attention:

comme, entre les mille tableaux d'un Musée, vous êtes fortement impressionné... par la tête sublime où Murillo peignit la douleur maternelle...

There can be no doubt that here Balzac is referring not to a human mother, but to the Mother of God; and yet, at the same time, he claims, into this portrait of the Virgin human emotions, human suffering are projected.

Which painting, or paintings, does Balzac allude to when he speaks of human sorrow in the face of the Blessed Virgin? Not the "Immaculate Conception", which he--through Raphaël de Valentin--associates with the chaste ecstasy of the Virgin Birth. Most probably, he is thinking of the "Madre Dolorosa" (plate 20), perhaps Murillo's finest achievement--a painting which at that time was in Soult's collection², and is now at the Prado. Balzac may have seen this picture in Soult's gallery in the Rue de l'Université, or else in an engraving. (It was not one of the works abortively sold to the French Government in 1835³, which may have been on show at the Louvre.) Understandably, he had been less impressed by Veronese's picture of the sorrowing Mother, in his "Crucifixion"⁴, or by Annibale Carracci's "Pietà"⁵, both of which were at the Louvre in his youth.

All in all, one is led to suspect an accretion, or--as Stendhal would have said--crystallization, of varying perceptions to form a curious amalgam of what Murillo really painted (if such a thing can

1 Pl. II, p. 837. This reference dates from 1842 (A 77, fol. 41).

2 Catalogue Soult, no. 71.

3 C.B. Curtis: Velázquez and Murillo, London 1883, pp. 129, 192-193, 263.

4 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 994.

5 Ibid., no. 787.

actually be perceived) and what Balzac projects, in the way of personal thoughts and emotions, on to Murillo's canvases. In the portrait of Juana Mancini ¹, an aside of Balzac's is deceptively significant. To the man who will shortly seduce her, she has "la sublime exaltation de la sainte Thérèse espagnole"—evidence that Balzac's notion of Spanish exaltation owes as much to St Theresa of Avila as to any painting; indeed, that Balzac may even have viewed Murillo's Virgins with eyes already seeking the sublimity associated (in George Eliot's phrase ²) with that "passionate, ideal nature", with her "rapturous consciousness of life beyond self".

quite apart from his paintings of the Virgin Mary and the Holy Family, Murillo—in Balzac's eyes—is the painter of beggar boys and young peasants. And indeed, he has left a large number of genre-paintings devoted to the humbler side of peasant life. Nevertheless, it is more than likely that some of Balzac's "peasant scenes by Murillo" were, in actual fact, by Ribera or even Herrera, though falsely attributed at the time. Murillo is one of the artists who have inspired the terrifying scene in Les Paysans ³ where Montcornet, the owner of Les Aigues, is visiting his estate with Micheud, and comes across a sordidly naturalistic harvesting scene. Only Murillo and Teniers, says Balzac, could have done it full justice, and even their "plus hideuses conceptions" would have been left far behind by the horror of the actual reality. It need hardly be stated that Balzac is not, of course, thinking of any harvesting scene by Murillo or Teniers; for him, these artists are the archetypal genre-painters. Their work most closely approximates to the sordid penury of humble life, as lived in bygone centuries.

1 Les Marana; Pl. IX, p. 800.

2 Middlemarch, vol. I, Edinburgh 1871, pp. v-vi.

3 Pl. VIII, p. 288. Cf. pp. 135-136, 288.

Again, in one of the most memorable passages in La Rabouilleuse¹, Balzac describes the abject poverty of Philippe Bridau, whom his mother happens to notice walking along the Seine embankment. As so often in the Comédie Humaine², this sight provokes a reflexion on the varying degrees of human wretchedness which Paris can offer the disinterested observer. Philippe's plight is not that of the young man with a bright future ahead of him, despite present discontents, nor that of the artist, nor that of the "gens du monde momentanément atteints". It is more akin to the destitution of the aging rentier living on inadequate means—and hardly superior to the very lowest level of hardships:

la misère en haillons, la misère du peuple, la plus poétique d'ailleurs, et que Callot, qu'Hogarth, que Murillo, Charlet, Raffet, Gavarni, Meissonier, que l'Art adore et cultive, au carnaval surtout!

"The Young Beggar Boy", at the Louvre³, or the even more remarkable "Young Boys eating Cakes", at the Pinakothek in Munich, come immediately to mind; and in dwelling on this aspect of Murillo's work, Balzac is only emphasizing a characteristic very familiar to his contemporaries. A generation idolizing Teniers and Ostade was bound to see much of the genre-painter in Murillo: bound also, perhaps, to over-emphasize this aspect and to attribute genre-paintings to him which were not actually his work. More to Balzac's credit than his appreciation of these fulsomely sentimental peasant scenes was his sensitive awareness of the religious painter.

Twice, at least, in the Comédie Humaine Balzac creates a portrait under Murillo's inspiration. In El Verdugo⁴, we have the portrait of the Marquis de Léganès:

le vieux marquis avait une tête couverte de cheveux blancs qui semblait échappés d'un tableau de Murillo;

and, in La Muse du Département⁵, the Spanish grandee and his wife, a

1 Pl. III, p. 929. Cf. supra, p. 155.

2 Cf. Pl. IX, p. 141; Pl. VIII, p. 288; Pl. VI, p. 664; Pl. II, p. 852.

3 Notice des tableaux... du Musée Royal, Paris 1816, no. 967.

4 Pl. IX, p. 872.

5 Pl. IV, pp. 113-114.

Murillo portrait to the life:

sous des orbites creusées et noircies, l'homme montrait des yeux de feu qui restaient fixes; sa face était desséchée, son crâne sans cheveux offrait des tons ardents, et son corps effrayait le regard, tant il était maigre. La femme... avait cette admirable taille qui a fait créer ce mot de menéha dans la langue espagnole; quoique pâle, elle était belle encore; son teint, par un privilège inouï pour une Espagnole, éclatait de blancheur; mais son regard, plein du soleil de l'Espagne, tombait sur vous comme un jet de plomb fondu.

But it must be admitted that both these portraits owe as much to Velázquez as to Murillo.

Most of the collections in the Comédie Humaine are handsomely endowed with Murillos. Inevitably, several fine examples of his work are part of Joséphine van Tenninck's wedding portion, on her marriage to Balthazar Claës¹ (as if to emphasize the union of Spain and the Netherlands, Madame Claës's mother being a Casa-Réal²). In the upper room of the Antiquary's shop³, there are Murillos in abundance, alongside Poussins, Claudes, Velázquez and Rembrandts. Josépha Mirah owns one Murillo⁴, and Sylvain Pons, in his sagacity, is prepared to buy a Murillo if it costs no more than a mere fifty francs!⁵ (We are not told that Pons actually did own a Murillo, although not all his pictures are identified⁶. Considering that Soult's "Immaculate Conception" was sold for no less than 586,000 francs in May 1852, it would hardly be surprising if Pons's rigid economy had priced him out of the market.)

1 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, pp. 495-496. A 201, fol. 22.

2 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 497.

3 La Poésu de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 28. A 177, vol. I, p. 84.

4 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

5 Pl. VI, p. 531.

6 Cf. supra, p. 140, n. 6.

And finally, of course, there is the inevitable counterfeit Murillo in Verville's gallery of forgeries¹. "Les tableaux espagnols étaient alors à la mode", Balzac explains. But it is, to say the least, very doubtful whether in 1832 (the year in which the action of Pierre Grassou takes place) Verville, never a leader of fashion, would have been prepared to buy a Murillo, or indeed, whether Magus would have been rash enough to commission imitation Murillos from Grassou and Joseph Bridau. It is much more likely that Verville would have acquired his Murillo towards the end of the decade--when, in fact, Pierre Grassou was written.

In the main, we are left with an impression of sensitive appreciation. Besides the Velázquez-like portraits which he singles out, Balzac is conscious of Murillo's great facility as a genre-painter and of the artist's subtlety in his presentation of religious subjects. For Chaudet², Murillo is one of those precocious geniuses like Titian and Rubens; for Modeste Mignon³, he embodies the "beau idéal" in Spanish art.

Velázquez, nevertheless, receives some measure of appreciation, although Balzac--like almost all connoisseurs before 1860 or 1870⁴--failed to recognize the full merit of a painter who has always been especially appreciated by fellow artists. Balzac's greatest tribute to Velázquez comes in an important, and fairly late, passage in La Femme de Trente Ans⁵, where three works of art (by Murillo, Guido Reni and Velázquez) are said to be so striking as to stand out amongst a thousand

1 Pierre Grassou; Pl. VI, p. 130.

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 870.

3 Pl. I, p. 388.

4 W. Stirling-Maxwell: Velazquez et ses oeuvres, Paris 1865, is the first important study, with a catalogue raisonné compiled by Théophile Thoré. Cf. P. Guinard: "Velázquez et les romantiques français", Varia Velazqueña, Madrid 1960, vol. I, pp. 561-573.

5 Pl. II, p. 837. Cf. A 77, folios 41-42. Balzac wrote this passage in 1842.

others. In "la sombre face de Philippe II", Balzac remarks (meaning, of course, Philip IV; it was Titian who painted a whole series of portraits of Philip II¹), "Vélasquez a pour toujours imprimé la majestueuse terreur que doit inspirer la royauté". As Court painter to Philip IV, Velázquez was responsible for many portraits of the King and his family. Most probably, Balzac is thinking of the portrait then on display in the Galerie Espagnole², but perhaps also of the two portraits of Philip in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, or even of the one in Florence.

As for the collectors of Velázquez in the Comédie Humaine, Mlle de Temninck's dowry had included one or two of his works³ and the old Antiquary, in La Peau de Chagrin⁴, owns examples of his work that are "sombres et colorés comme un poème de lord Byron". Here, Balzac's failure to comprehend the full depth of Velázquez is, it would seem, conclusively demonstrated; for this is a Romantic view. Admittedly, many of the artist's best and brightest works ("The Surrender of Breda" and "The Triumph of Bacchus", for example) are, and have always been, at the Prado in Madrid, but even in paintings accessible to Balzac--and there were nineteen allegedly by him in Louis-Philippe's collection⁵, and an even greater number in Vienna--it might have been apparent to him that here was one of the greatest and most candid of all realists. The fact that the comparison with Lord Byron belongs to a novel that is strongly Romantic in tone⁶ does not palliate Balzac's failure, throughout his life, to realize Velázquez's true stature.

1 Cf. supra, pp. 183-184.

2 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, no. 292.

3 La Recherche de l'Absolu; A 201, fol. 22. Cf. Pl. IX, p. 496.

4 Pl. IX, p. 28.

5 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, nos. 282-300.

6 Note, however, that the first edition of La Peau de Chagrin had read: "des Rembrandt, des Murillo, sombres et colorés comme un poème de lord Byron" (A 177, vol. I, pp. 84-85), whereas the final text reads: "des Rembrandt, des Murillo, des Velasquez sombres et colorés..." Velázquez did not come so easily to mind in 1831.

With Zurbarán, we discover no greater reaction from Balzac than the reference—already quoted from Massimilla Doni¹—to the sublimity of martyrdom, as painted by him, and the further reference, in Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes², at the point where Vautrin strives to win Esther back to an affirmation of life after her attempt to commit suicide:

le ton et les manières de ce prêtre, qui semblait échappé d'une toile de Zurbarán, parurent si hostiles à cette pauvre fille... qu'elle se crut moins l'objet d'une sollicitude que le sujet nécessaire d'un plan.

The portraits of martyrs alluded to in Massimilla Doni are, perhaps, some of the many female saints in Soult's collection: "St Agatha"³ (a painting particularly admired by Delacroix⁴), "St Euphemia"⁵, "St Lucy"⁶, "St Ursula"⁷, etc. As has already been noted⁸, it is practically certain that Balzac visited Soult's gallery in Paris some time in the 1820s. Alternatively, Balzac may have the "St Agnes"⁹ or "St Justina"¹⁰ of the Galerie Espagnole in mind.

As for the priests whom Vautrin resembles, these seem quite definitely to have been in the Soult gallery. In all likelihood, Balzac is referring to the martyred saint, "St Lawrence"¹¹, and the painting of two martyrs, "St Romanus and St Barulas"¹², which joins in one confession of faith and witness a middle-aged priest of Antioch and a boy of seven. Both St Lawrence and St Romanus are dressed in their priestly vestments: the former wearing an alb and chasuble, the latter a richly embroidered cope. Both men are of the same age and stocky build as Vautrin. But it is surely a double-edged compliment, for a painter whose scenes of martyrdom evoked Balzac's deepest admiration, (or else a mark of Zurbarán's penetrating social criticism?) that his "St Romanus and St Barulas" should have inspired the portrait of a sham priest, paederast and escaped convict.

1 Pl. IX, p. 384. Cf. supra, pp. 180-181.

2 Pl. V, p. 680.

3 Catalogue Soult, no. 34. P. Guinards op.cit., p. 235, no. 230.

4 Op.cit., vol. I, p. 91.

5 Catalogue Soult, no. 30. P. Guinards op.cit., p. 239, no. 264.

6 Catalogue Soult, no. 31. P. Guinards op.cit., pp. 239-240, no. 270.

7 Catalogue Soult, no. 33. P. Guinards op.cit., p. 242, no. 291.

8 Cf. supra, pp. 8, 208.

9 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, no. 391.

10 Ibid., no. 393.

11 Catalogue Soult, no. 27. P. Guinards op.cit., p. 234, no. 225.

12 Catalogue Soult, no. 28. P. Guinards op.cit., pp. 234-235, no. 228.

As for El Greco, there is not one mention of him to be found anywhere in the Comédie Humaine, or for that matter in Balzac's correspondence. But then, in Balzac's day El Greco's name was virtually unknown; and what was known of him was viewed with disfavour. "On pourrait s'étonner", Viardot observes, by way of introduction to his short chapter on El Greco ¹,

que nous eussions donné place dans ces notices à un homme qui n'était pas Espagnol, et qui ne fut pas un grand peintre. Et pourtant, si l'on prend garde qu'il passa en Espagne toute sa vie d'artiste, et que, malgré ses bizarreries extravagantes, il eut un sentiment de l'art très vif, très élevé, qu'il acquit une réputation considérable, qu'il fit une école et des élèves meilleurs que lui, l'on conviendra qu'il était impossible de le passer sous silence. D'ailleurs, le talent qui s'égare n'est peut-être pas moins utile à étudier que le génie qui marche droit au but.

And Gautier, whose opinions about painting Balzac undoubtedly prized ², complains of

des abus de blanc et de noir, des oppositions violentes, des teintes singulières, des attitudes strapassées, des draperies cassées et chiffonnées à plaisir ³,

and of "des lueurs minces et acérées qui traversent les ombres comme des lames de sabre" ⁴.

Balzac must certainly have noticed El Greco; not, however, in Marshal Soult's collection, which did not contain any, but in

1 Notices sur les principaux peintres de l'Espagne, Paris 1839, pp. 107-111.

2 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 621; 15 October 1838.

3 Tra los Montes, Paris 1843, vol. I, p. 307.

4 Ibid., p. 74.

Louis-Philippe's Galerie Espagnole ¹, where there were nine. The fact that he failed to recognize El Greco's genius is no more a condemnation of him than the same failure is of his contemporaries. It was not until the end of the nineteenth century that El Greco came to be appreciated outside Spain ².

The Spanish school, "discovered" by French connoisseurs and collectors in the 1820s and 1830s, was warmly and spontaneously admired by the young Romantics, Balzac amongst them. Painters, poets and novelists alike saw in Goya's "Caprichos" proof of their contention that deformity can, and ought to, be an ingredient of art; Murillo was considered a second Raphael. Balzac, delighted even as a young man by Raphael's seraphic beauty, responded to Murillo with almost equal warmth. He was less favourably disposed towards Goya, whose pictures of the grotesque he rated much below Hoffmann's, Nodier's and the minor Dutch masters'. This coolness towards one of the two greatest of Spanish painters was probably occasioned by his late discovery of the "Caprichos". He had come across the Dutch masters at least ten years earlier (his first reference to Rembrandt dating from 1822), and for him they—not Goya—symbolized the grotesque. Velázquez's true greatness escaped him, as it escaped almost all connoisseurs in the nineteenth century. Spanish art does not seem to have exerted any profound influence upon the visual world of the Comédie Humaine, despite Balzac's cult of Murillo.

1 Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole..., Paris 1838, nos. 253-260, 450. Despite his lukewarmness towards El Greco, Gautier did admire his portrait of his daughter (ibid., no. 259), "magnifique tête que ne désavouerait aucun maître" (Tra los Montes, Paris 1843, vol. I, p. 74).

2 G.R. Reitlinger: op.cit., pp. 333-334.

From at least the first quarter of the quattrocento, Greek sculpture fascinated artists like Mantegna, Popes like Paul II and magnates such as the Medicis¹. As early as 2 July 1440 Giacomo Bracelli writes to Andreolo Giustiniani asking if he will obtain him a statue by Pheidias or Praxiteles². In 1495 the "Apollo Belvedere" was discovered at Antium, and soon purchased by Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, who, as Julius II, also acquired the "Laocoon" (March 1506)³. On the opposite bank of the Tiber, the Farneses boasted the "Farnese Bull" (restored by Michelangelo), the "Callipyge Venus" and the "Farnese Hercules", all of which passed by female descent to the Kings of Naples⁴. For mysterious reasons, possibly connected with the intervention of Canova⁵, Napoleon allowed the collection at Naples to remain virtually intact, although it had originally been planned to confiscate the "Farnese Hercules".

In France the " Diane Chasseresse"⁶ somehow found its way to Meudon as early as the reign of Francis I, and eventually into the Louvre (1798). Napoleon's enforced purchases from individuals and confiscations from heads of state added further splendour to the national collection. The Grand Duke of Tuscany surrendered the "Venus de' Medici"⁷. Pius VII⁸ was deprived of the "Apollo Belvedere"⁹, the "Belvedere Antinoüs" (plate 27)¹⁰, the "Laocoon"¹¹ and the "Melpomene"¹². Napoleon bought from his

1 Cf. R. Weiss: The Renaissance Discovery of Classical Antiquity, Oxford 1969, pp. 180-202.

2 Ibid., p. 184.

3 Ibid., p. 192.

4 The "Farnese Hercules" and "Farnese Bull" were transferred from Rome to Naples in 1787 and 1788 respectively; the "Callipyge Venus" was removed from the Farnesina in 1800.

5 C.H.M. Gould: op.cit., pp. 47-48. "Napoleone, Canova e l'Ercole Farnese", Napoli Nobilissima, 1923, p. 175.

6 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 2.

7 Ibid., no. 123. Cf. J. Duchesne: Musée de peinture et de sculpture, vol. II, Paris 1828, no. 402.

8 C.H.M. Gould: op.cit., p. 59.

9 Cf. J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 126.

10 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 129.

11 Ibid., no. 111.

12 Ibid., no. 23.

brother-in-law, Prince Camillo Borghese, many of the greatest masterpieces in his collection of ancient sculpture¹, including the "Polyhymnia"². Most of the confiscations were returned to their rightful owners after 1815, though "Melpomene"³ was not returned to the Pope. But purchases from individuals remained in France, even where the original owners had parted with their works of art under duress. As a young man, Balzac's interest in sculpture⁴ was almost entirely confined to the great statues—often wrongly attributed to Pheidias, Praxiteles, Polycletus, etc.—which he most probably saw in the Galerie des Antiques of the Louvre during the final year of Napoleon's rule. But if (as is unlikely) he first visited the collection after Napoleon's downfall, there would still have been masterpieces of sculpture to admire—few of which could have been seen in Paris at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Egypt, too, was ransacked for its treasures both during the period of French suzerainty (1798-1801) and in succeeding years; some of the finest Egyptian artefacts found a permanent resting-place in Paris. In Greece, Italy and Egypt French scholars and collectors were amongst the earliest and most eminent. A team of scholars accompanied Napoleon during his Egyptian campaigns and published their findings⁵. J.-F. Champollion deciphered the hieroglyphs. As collectors, Vivant Denon and the Duc de Rivière were every inch a match for Elgin, Charles Towneley and Henry Blundell.

1 Cf. F. Boyer: Le Monde des Arts en Italie et la France de la Révolution et de l'Empire, Turin 1970, pp. 197-202.

2 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 363. Catalogue sommaire des marbres antiques du Musée du Louvre, Paris 1898, no. 472.

3 Ibid., no. 411.

4 Cf. P. Leubriet: "Balzac et la sculpture", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, May-June 1961, pp. 331-358.

5 Description de l'Égypte... 20 vols. in-fol., Paris 1809-1828.

Early instances of what is evidently a topical acquaintance with the sculpture of Greece and Egypt are to be found in the apprentice novels. In Clotilde de Lusignan (1822) the heroine is compared to the Colossus of Memnon, "cette admirable statue égyptienne qui, pour résonner, attendait une caresse du soleil"¹, just as (in Le Centenaire, also published in 1822) Béringheld-le-Centenaire is said to resemble, in his monumental stillness, an Egyptian pyramid². In the first of these instances, Balzac looks to the south for an image with which to compare the Princess of Cyprus; in the second, the millennial silence of the pyramids conveys Béringheld's age and inscrutability. Clotilde admires Nephthaly Jaffa, "couché dans une position pleine de tant de grâce, qu'on l'aurait crue un effet médité par Phidias"³ (rather than Girodet!⁴); later in the novel, the motionlessness of Nephthaly's pose recalls⁵ "Niobe". The Marquise de Ravendsi's neck "semblait tourné par Myron, et posé sur ses épaules par Phidias"⁶. Also in 1822, Balzac refers⁷ to Pheidias's alleged statue of "Jupiter". Two Greek or Graeco-Roman masterpieces are drawn on in the following year: Abel Osterwald's hair is as curly as Antinous's (plate 27)⁸; and he is the living image of "cette fameuse statue de la Grèce, sur laquelle on a rassemblé toutes les perfections humaines"⁹—an unnamed work of sculpture, presumably the "Apollon" or the "Antinous".

1 Clotilde de Lusignan ou le beau juif, Paris 1962, vol. I, p. 29.

2 Le Centenaire ou les deux Béringheld, Paris 1962, vol. I, p. 78.

3 Clotilde de Lusignan ou le beau juif, Paris 1962, vol. I, p. 103.

4 Cf. supra, p. 37. Thus, when wishing to refer to a paragon of male beauty, Balzac thought of Pheidias's work seven or eight years earlier than Girodet's.

5 Clotilde de Lusignan ou le beau juif, Paris 1962, vol. II, p. 41.

6 Le Centenaire ou les deux Béringheld, Paris 1962, vol. II, p. 165.

7 Jean-Louis ou la fille trouvée, Paris 1961, vol. III, p. 102.

8 La Dernière fée ou la nouvelle lame merveilleuse, Paris 1963, vol. I, p. 91.

9 Ibid., vol. II, pp. 232-233.

In the apprentice novels the only references to Renaissance and modern sculpture are incidental: the fragmentary novel Ealthurna (written in 1820, but not published in Balzac's lifetime) informs us that Michelangelo and Raphael were enemies¹, a view to which Balzac returns in his penultimate novel²; and only a Canova or a Girodet could do full justice to the scene in which Nephthaly and Clotilde silently avow their love³. La Physiologie du Mariage also refers⁴ to Michelangelo: most sleeping people resemble "ces jeunes diables que Michel-Ange a sculptés, tirant la langue pour se moquer des passants"—possibly an allusion to the Bargello.

The sculpture of Graeco-Roman antiquity continues to dominate Balzac's mind, and also influences him most in the delineation of characters, once he enters the world of the Comédie Humaine. In Sarrasine (1830) Filippo de Lentz is said⁵ to be the living image of the "Antinoüs", very probably a reference to the great "Belvedere Antinoüs"⁶—though it could also refer to the Louvre's own notable version of the same subject, which (because it had not been pilfered) it retained after 1815. In La Peau de Chagrin (1831) Fedora's shoulders are "dignes de la Vénus de Milo"⁷; all who know Madame Birotteau are reminded of the same statue⁸; some time after its installation in the Louvre in 1821⁹, Balzac had been to see this sculpture in its commanding position overlooking the Corridor de Pan.

1 Ealthurna, Société des Études Balzaciennes edn., vol. XXV, Paris 1962, p. 48.

2 Le Cousin Pons Pl. VI, pp. 651-652. Cf. supra, pp. 199-200.

3 Clotilde de Lucignan ou le beau juif, Paris 1962, vol. III, p. 282.

4 Pl. X, p. 755. Though this "analytical" novel was largely written between 1824 and 1826, the reference to Michelangelo dates from 1829. Cf. M. Bardèche: La Physiologie du mariage préoriginale, Paris 1940.

5 Pl. VI, p. 81. Cf. Revue de Paris, vol. XX, 21 November 1830, p. 154.

6 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 129. Cf. J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 48.

7 A 177, vol. I, p. 308. Cf. Pl. IX, p. 105.

8 Pl. V, p. 366.

9 Cf. S. Reinach: "La Vénus de Milo", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, 1 May 1890, pp. 376-394.

Certainly, none of these similes and allusions reveals any particularly original appreciation, but they are valuable for what they are, a kind of visual or impressionistic shorthand, conveying what is meant and establishing a simple yet effective bond of understanding between Balzac and his readers. His borrowings from sculpture, as from art generally, are in the nature of asides elucidating some aspect or other of his own imaginative world; yet they are not just epiphenomena, so deeply imbued is his imagination with impressions from the visual arts. On the other hand, to expect a detailed knowledge of sculpture from Balzac would be asking too much of any novelist, even Proust; nor does every creative artist have that same responsiveness to plastic beauty as prompted Heine to rise from the deathbed on which he was destined, half-paralysed and half-blind, to linger for eight years, so as to gaze on the "Venus de' Milo" for the last time¹. Gautier's assessments are sometimes questionable, but in his opinion Balzac "regardait la Vénus de Milo sans grande extase"².

References to medieval art, in the early novels of the Comédie Humaine, are much fewer in number than Classical allusions (Marche-à-Terre's hair recalls that of "ces statues du moyen âge qu'on voit encore dans quelques cathédrales"³), and of any deep acquaintance with Renaissance and post-Renaissance sculpture there is no evidence at all. This is despite the fact that between 1828 and 1837 Balzac was meeting Bra, Puttinati, David d'Angers, etc., and seeing their work.

Séraphita, however, written in the spring of 1834, offers a striking instance of the inspiration of sculpture, the most remarkable in the whole of the Comédie Humaine, because—judging, at least, from what Balzac himself tells us—the very core of this most mystical of his novels was suggested to him by a piece of sculpture which he happened to

1 Epilogue to Romanzero (Sämtliche Werke, vol. I, Leipzig 1887, p. 487).

2 Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1859, p. 130.

3 Les Chouans; Pl. VII, p. 775. This reference dates from Le Dernier Chouan of 1828, where the MS reads: "plates et luisantes comme les chevelures..." (A 13, fol. 12).

see in his friend Bra's studio on 17 November 1833¹. He writes to Madame Hańska a few days later²:

j'ai été dimanche chez Bra le sculpteur, j'y ai vu le plus beau chef-d'oeuvre qui existe... C'est "Marie tenant le Christ Enfant adoré par deux Anges"... Là j'ai conçu le plus beau livre, un petit volume dont Louis Lambert serait la préface, une oeuvre intitulée Séraphita.

There has been difficulty in identifying the precise work of Théophile Bra which originated Balzac's theosophical novel. No "Virgin and Child worshipped by Angels" is known to have been sculpted by him. Yet Balzac is adamant on the subject. In his album Pensées. Sujets. Fragmens he has jotted down a note concerning the story's origin: "Séraphita conçue en voyant... le Séraphin de Bra"³, and the same provenance of the idea is attested in Balzac's letter to his mysterious correspondent Louise, dated 20 March 1836⁴:

si vous voulez voir la réalisation de cette figure, il faut aller dans l'atelier de M. Bra et demander à voir sa madone, et rester quelque temps devant l'ange de droite, là est Séraphita.

Thus, an angel worshipping the Holy Mother and Child inspires a counterpart to Louis Lambert which, whilst imparting the same illuminist philosophy as Lambert, couches much of its action in a supra-terrestrial world. What is this piece of sculpture to which Balzac so often refers, and from which came the seminal idea of a novel which, even at his death, he may still have considered his finest achievement?⁵ As M. Leubriet has remarked⁶, the visual inspiration of Séraphita may derive from the accidental juxtaposition of two separate statues in Bra's studio. The "Virgin and Child" we know to be one of Bra's works: a

1 Cf. supra, p. 16.

2 Lettres à Madame Hańska I, pp. 127-128; 20 November 1833.

3 Pensées. Sujets. Fragmens, Paris 1910, p. 125.

4 Correspondance III, p. 54.

5 "On peut faire Goriot tous les jours; on ne fait Séraphita qu'une fois dans sa vie" (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 311; 11 March 1835).

6 "Balzac et la sculpture", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, May-June 1961, p. 358 n.

plaster replica of it can still be seen in the south aisle of the collegiate church of St.-Pierre, Douai. Near the original "Virgin and Child", which had been shown earlier in the year at the Salon of 1833¹, Bra may for some reason have placed two statues of angels, an entirely distinct commission. (M. Laubriet suggests that these angels are perhaps at the Chartreuse de Douai.) But, in the absence of other evidence, we should not lightly assume that Balzac was so superficial in his examination of works of art. There could also have been a statue of "The Virgin and Child worshipped by Angels", one of the many works by Bra lost to posterity.

Astonishing though it may seem, Bra's statue (or statues) are the catalyst by means of which the illuminism and Swedenborgian convictions derived from his mother² and already expressed in Louis Lambert are transformed yet again into the substance of a novel. The ideas themselves did not come from Bra, although Bra shared them³; the working-out of the incidents of Séraphita owes nothing to the statue; but the exposition of the ideas undoubtedly owes much to Bra. The prevailing inspiration of both statue(s) and novel is the worship of the transcendent unity of God and Man, and the fact that Séraphita is invested with an angelic quality lacking in Louis Lambert arises, however fortuitously, from the serenity of Bra's statue. Except for Balzac's interest, this statue would have been long forgotten: to what extent he invested it with serenity, rather than the reverse, is a moot point, but at all events Bra stirred a deep response in his psychology.

1 1833 Salon, no. 2,471: "Le Christ enfant, dans les bras de la Vierge, découvre lui-même le voile qui cachait au monde l'éclat de sa lumière".

2 Cf. T. Gautier: Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1859, p. 143.

3 Bra was also a believer in occultism. "Il a été conduit au mysticisme", Balzac explains to Madame Hańska, "par la perte d'une femme qu'il aimait... il a été pendant deux mois l'évoquer sur sa tombe, et... il m'a dit l'avoir vue tous les soirs" (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, pp. 298-299; 16 January 1835).

After the Italian visit of 1837, Balzac's acquaintance with sculpture becomes wider and more discerning. (So also does his knowledge of great architecture.) In Milan, his statue is sculpted by Alessandro Puttinati. In Venice, he praises the bas-reliefs in the Lady Chapel of SS. Pietro e Paolo¹. But Florence is the triumphant culmination of the visit: in the chapel of S. Lorenzo, erected by Clement VII to the memory of his uncle Lorenzo the Magnificent, Balzac is profoundly impressed by Michelangelo's statues of Giuliano and Lorenzo II de' Medici, raised above "Day", "Night", "Dawn" and "Evening", symbols of the transitoriness of human life and the nothingness of human achievement. The monument to Lorenzo, "Il Pensieroso", compels his reverence², as shortly afterwards it was to compel Liszt's³. At the Uffizi he now sees at first hand the "Niobe" to which he had already referred fifteen years earlier in Clotilde de Lusignan⁴--and which was to exert so powerful an influence on Leconte de Lisle⁵.

Now the allusions to Classical sculpture become clearer than was possible before he had been to Italy. The memorable paragraph⁶ which closes Massimilla Doni announces in a playfully satirical manner the pregnancy of Massimilla di Varese: figures from painting, sculpture and legend symbolic of chastity, purity and innocence gather round the matrimonial bed and weep. Amongst them are "Day" and "Night", and also

1 Correspondance III, p. 270; letter to Clara Maffei, 19 March 1837.

2 Lettres à Madame Hańska I, pp. 491-492; 11 April 1837: "j'ai vu... "le Pensieroso", et j'ai compris votre admiration". Madame Hańska had seen the "Pensieroso" three years previously. M. Laubriet is unfair to Balzac in suggesting that, in admiring this statue, Balzac was merely following his mistress's tastes (art.cit., p. 334). He bases his suggestion on a false premise. Balzac's remark, "j'aime beaucoup vos jugements sur Florence et sur les oeuvres d'art" (Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 209; 28 April 1834), means quite simply that in the journey to Rome planned for the summer of 1834 he would rely on her guidance--she was something of a connoisseur--as to the principal works of art he should make a point of seeing; he had neither the time nor the money to see everything. In the event, this journey was cancelled, and twelve years elapsed before Balzac finally saw Rome, guided round it by Madame Hańska and her cousin, the Principe di Teano.

3 S. Sitwell: Liszt, London 1934, p. 68.

4 Cf. supra, p. 224. J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 198.

5 Poèmes antiques, Paris 1852, pp. 171-204.

6 Pl. IX, pp. 387-388.

"quelques vierges du Duomo de Milan" (we are not told whether these Virgins are paintings or sculptures). The marble virgins in the chapel of the Charterhouse of Pavia are also evoked. Balzac had evidently visited the Charterhouse either on an excursion from Milan or on the journey between Milan and Florence, no doubt because of its connexion with the Viscontis. Massimilla Cataneo reminds the French doctor of "Niobé qu'il venait d'admirer à Florence: même noblesse dans la douleur, même impassibilité physique"¹. This is an obvious reference to "Niobé et sa Fille", at the Uffizi². Suzanne du Val-Noble, in La Vieille Fille, is so abounding in vitality and sex appeal as to deserve the Farnese Hercules for a husband:

c'était la beauté normande, fraîche, éclatante, rebondie, la chair de Rubens qu'il faudrait marier avec les muscles de l'Hercule-Farnèse, et non la Vénus de Médicis, cette gracieuse femme d'Apollon³;

a small gallery of sculptures in itself, and characteristic of Balzac's eclectic, if conventional, taste! The "Venus de' Medici" he had just seen in the Tribune of the Uffizi, and most probably also at the Louvre in 1815⁴. Glykon's "Farnese Hercules", at Naples, he was not destined to see until November 1845⁵, but it was doubtless already familiar to him from such engravings as Hogarth's⁶. As for the "Apollo", several statues of this name could be implied, or none at all; it is likely that Balzac had the "Apollo Belvedere" in mind, which he could well have seen at the Louvre in 1815⁷ or else in É.-A. Réveil's engraving⁸, and which he must certainly have noted at the Vatican in 1846, during his final visit to Italy.

1 Ibid., p. 356.

2 Napoleon did not confiscate any of the statues of Niobe and the Niobides. "Niobé et sa Fille" was, perhaps, the best known of the fourteen, and was engraved both in Duchesne (op.cit., no. 198) and in Clarac's Musée de sculpture antique et moderne (no. 1,260).

3 Pl. IV, p. 220. Cf. supra, p. 109.

4 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 123. The "Venus de' Medici" was held at the Louvre from 1803 to 1815 (C.H.M. Gould: op.cit., p. 64).

5 M. Leubriet is in error in stating (art.cit., p. 334) that Balzac saw the "Farnese Hercules" in 1837.

6 Strange to say, the Louvre did not even have a copy of the "Farnese Hercules".

7 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 137.

8 J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 126.

The description of Suzanne du Val-Noble is not the only one, in the 1830s, to contain reminiscences of the Greek masterpieces expropriated from Italy. Borrowings from the (temporarily alienated) treasures of the Vatican Museum are fairly regular from the inception of the Comédie Humaine to the time when Balzac actually visited Rome. Maximilien de Longueville is an Apollo ("sa taille svelte et dégagée rappelait les belles proportions de l'Apollon" ¹), presumably an Apollo Belvedere. The surname of Don Juan Belvidéro ² can scarcely be a coincidence. The "Belvedere Antinous" inspires the portraits of Filippo de Lentz ³ and Colonel Franchessini ⁴. Lucien de Rubespré is both an Apollo Belvedere ⁵ and an Antinous ⁶. Georges de Maufrigneuse ⁷ and the young Charles Mignon ⁸ are further incarnations of the "Antinous". Modeste Mignon, written almost thirty years after Balzac's arrival in Paris and only two years before his first and only visit to Rome, expresses a more soured view of the "Apollo Belvedere" when the poet Canalis—the most disagreeable of all the Comédie Humaine's artists—calls it "un élégant poitrinaire qui doit se ménager" ⁹. Whether this is Balzac's own view or merely the view of an unpleasant poet is uncertain—and, in a sense, immaterial. What is certain is that reminiscences of the "Apollo" and the "Antinous" tail off after 1840, and are not even revived by Balzac's renewed contact with the originals.

1 Le Bal de Sceaux; Pl. I, p. 97. This reference is already present in the MS (A 5, fol. 24) and dates from the autumn or winter of 1829.

2 L'Élixir de Longue Vie; Pl. X, p. 318.

3 Sarrasins; Pl. VI, p. 81.

4 In earlier versions of La Père Goriot, Madame de Beauséant's last ball was attended by Franchessini, "un Antinous vivant", and his mistress Lady Brandon (Oeuvres complètes, Société des Études Balzaciennes edn., vol. IV, Paris 1957, pp. 665-666).

5 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, pp. 598, 710. Cf. A 106, fol. 10, verso; A 107, fol. 46. The first of these metaphors is not present in the MS (A 103, fol. 73), but is added by Balzac to the proof-sheet A 105, fol. 237, recto: "Habillez l'Apollon du Belvédère ou l'Antinous en porteur d'eau. Reconnaissez-vous la divine création du ciseau grec et romain?"

6 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 598. Cf. A 105, fol. 237, recto and also A 107, fol. 57, where Étienne Lousteau says to Lucien: "Votre beauté digne du Bacchus indien, de l'Antinous, fait un ravage inouï".

7 Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan; Pl. VI, p. 13.

8 Pl. I, p. 372.

9 Ibid., p. 409.

Meanwhile, at about the same time as his discovery of the treasures of Florence, Venice and Milan, the statues of "Mnemosyne", the "Indian Bacchus" and "Polyhymnia" enter Balzac's literary vision for the first time. The "Mnemosyne" is as yet unidentified; the (bearded) "Indian Bacchus"—which is certainly not the "Sardanapale"¹—must have been one of several busts of this name at the Louvre²; the "Polyhymnia"³ had been acquired from Prince Borghese. Balzac could have seen the latter two statues in the national collection (and perhaps also the "Mnemosyne"), either before or after Napoleon's downfall. Yet almost twenty years elapse before any of them leaves its impress upon the Comédie Humaine. In January 1834 the folds in "Mnemosyne"'s veil⁴, later destined to become "Polyhymnia"'s veil⁵, inspire similar folds in Séraphita's dress. In Illusions Perdues⁶, the "Indian Bacchus" conveys Lucien de Rubempré's ambiguous sexuality. In Béatrix⁷, the same statue gives rise to one of the two portraits in the Comédie Humaine in which there are important sculptural overtones—that of Camille Maupin.

"quand un statuaire voudra faire une admirable statue de la Bretagne, il peut copier mademoiselle des Touches"⁸; but it is on Greek and Egyptian models that Balzac relies to convey Camille Maupin's appearance and poise. This woman masquerading (like George Sand) as a man has more affinity with the paragons of male beauty than with female archetypes. The smell of her back again recalls the "Indian Bacchus", and Balzac is at pains to stress that the "Callipyge Venus"—a statue he had not yet seen in the original⁹—is further removed from than the "Indian

1 J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 504.

2 Probably Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 43.

3 Ibid., no. 363. The "Polyhymnia" engraved by É.-A. Réveil (J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 330) is not in Paris, but at the Pio-Clementine Museum, Rome.

4 A 211, fol. 55.

5 A 211, fol. 136, varae (proofs of the text of Séraphita published in La Revue de Paris in June-July 1834). Cf. Pl. X, p. 484.

6 Pl. IV, p. 485.

7 Pl. II, pp. 375-378. Cf. A 6, folios 7-10.

8 Pl. II, p. 378.

9 Like the "Farnese Hercules", the "Callipyge Venus" is at the Museo Nazionale, Naples, and Balzac did not see it until November 1845. But it had been engraved by É.-A. Réveil (J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 810), and there was a copy of it in the park at Versailles.

Bacchus" from Camille's particular kind of beauty. The gentle voluptuousness of her lower lip brings to mind some statue by Pheidias (whether of a man or a woman, we are not informed), it is so like "le bord d'une grenade ouverte, dont elle a la couleur" ¹.

Much more remarkable than the borrowings from Pheidias and the "Diane Chasseresse" ², however, is the great indebtedness of this portrait to Egyptian archaeology:

Vous diriez la pureté des têtes de sphinx, polies par le feu des déserts, caressées par la flamme du soleil égyptien ³.

Les cheveux noirs et abondants descendent en nattes le long du col comme la coiffe à double bandelette rayée des statues de Memphis, et continuent admirablement la sévérité générale de la forme ⁴.

Le tour des yeux n'a pas la moindre flétrissure ni la moindre ride. Là encore, vous retrouverez le granit de la statue égyptienne adouci par le temps ⁵.

Where has Balzac derived this knowledge? Serious Egyptian archaeology ⁶ had begun thirty or forty years later than the excavations at Pompeii, Herculaneum and Pozzuoli. But from the turn of the century, the discovery and charting of the pyramids of Rameses II, the temples of Isis and Serapis and the sphinx of Gizeh aroused intense curiosity not only in France but throughout the civilized world; in 1826, a sphinx carved in red granite, and twenty-two feet long (plate 29), was solemnly installed in the Louvre, where at some time or other Balzac must presumably have seen it. From this personal confrontation, and from such books as Vivant Denon's Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute Égypte (1802)

1 Pl. II, p. 376.

2 A 6, fol. 8. This could be one of two statues: either the celebrated Classical sculpture (Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 2) or a statue of the French Renaissance, carved by Goujon. Cf. infra, p. 246. It is probably the former.

3 Pl. II, p. 375. A 6, fol. 7.

4 Pl. II, p. 375. A 6, folios 7-8.

5 Pl. II, p. 376. A 6, fol. 8.

6 Cf. E. Iversen: The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition, Copenhagen 1961, pp. 126-145. For the mythology of Egypt in earlier centuries, cf. J. Beltrusaitis: La quête d'Isis. Introduction à l'Égyptomanie..., Paris 1967, passim. L. Greenor: The Discovery of Egypt, London 1966, pp. 88-102, 140-153.

Balzac has derived the information adapted to such good use in Béatrix. The sphinx serves very much the same purpose as Giotto's paintings do, seven years later, when Balzac portrays Cousin Bette¹; it conveys swarthy and sharpness of bodily outline, even suggesting some rigidity in her features. But the sphinx symbolism is more replete with meaning than are Giotto's paintings of saints and madonnas. Passion (foreshadowing Camille's unfulfilled attachment to Calyste) is indicated by the sphinx's exposure to the burning rays of the Egyptian sun. The sphinx also suggests inscrutability—an inscrutability so profound, in Camille's case, that only ~~XXXX~~ Claude Vignon can understand her.

Why should the "Indian Bacchus" and "Polyhymnia" have been so slow to influence the Comédie Humaine, if (as is most probable) Balzac had seen them as early as 1815, and since that influence—when it came—was to prove so decisive? At any time between 1815 and 1834 Balzac could have renewed his acquaintance with them. Visual enrichment by the "Indian Bacchus" implies a more sophisticated taste than references, in earlier novels, to the "Apollo" and "Antinous". Perhaps here we should look for the influence of an artistic friend—Gautier, who deeply admired "Polyhymnia"².

By the time he eventually visited Rome, in the spring of 1846, Balzac already knew most of what he ever needed or wanted to know about sculpture. Even the visit to Naples, in the preceding November, when at long last he saw the original "Farnese Hercules" and the original "Callipyge Venus", had come too late in his career to confer on him any great literary benefit. Besides, in the Belvedere Gallery of the Vatican he was almost

1 Pl. VI, p. 165. Cf. supra, p. 191.

2 Grand Dictionnaire Universel du XIXe Siècle (ed. P. Larousse), vol. XII, Paris 1874, p. 1,339.

certainly reviving distant memories of adolescent visits to the Louvre, at the apogee of its fame. All that he derives from Naples and Rome is compounded in a few pages of the three ultimate masterpieces, Bette, Pons and La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin.

Schmucke... était à Pons ce que la "Nourrice de Niobé", la fameuse statue du Vatican, est à la "Vénus de la Tribune" ¹.

Vautrin is the "Hercule Farnèse" de Naples sans sa colossale exagération" ². In La Cousine Bette the discourse on veiled and unveiled sculpture ³ may well have derived some substance from the galleries of sculpture in Rome. Balzac denies that nude statues have a monopoly of beauty. Both partially and fully clothed statues can be just as striking as the celebrated nudes, and (nuancing his earlier remark about the Apollo Belvedere dressed as a water-carrier ⁴) statues in modern dress are in no way inferior to the statues of antiquity. Although the "Polyhymnia" ⁵ and "Julia" ⁶, which Balzac cites in his own support, were at the Louvre, not in Rome, other clothed statues in Naples and at the Vatican seem to have confirmed him in his idea. His attitudes have changed little since 1834—only the fresh impact stimulates a somewhat declining interest. This passage from La Cousine Bette is Balzac's final word on the art of sculpture, in which he no longer assigns unquestioned superiority to the ancients but acknowledges that more modern sculptors can achieve equal success, and within the field of Classical sculpture itself challenges the supremacy of his earlier idols.

As for medieval sculpture, the often anonymous Virgins, the pietà, the saints and Trees of Jesse which in Balzac's day were almost exclusively to be found in the great churches and cathedrals, occasionally in marble but much oftener in flint, granite and wood, Balzac has also seen many of them. Allusions to medieval sculpture become more plentiful once he makes

1 Pl. VI, p. 540. The "Venus" referred to is, of course, the "Venus de Medici".

2 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 969. This sentence, from part IV of the novel, dates from 1847.

3 Pl. VI, p. 322.

4 Cf. supra, p. 231, n. 5.

5 Galerie des Antiques, Paris 1814-1815, no. 363.

6 Most probably, Balzac is alluding to "Julie en Cérès". Cf. J. Duchesne: op.cit., no. 18. Catalogue sommaire des marbres antiques du Musée du Louvre, Paris 1898, no. 930.

a regular habit of foreign travel, and are now richer in meaning than at the time of Falthurac, La Physiologie du Mariage and Les Chouans. Madeleine de Mortsauif¹ and Flore Brazier² recall the delicacy of line of medieval statues; the rigidity of the features and gait of Jean-François Tascheron's grandparents³, Vautrin⁴ and Clotilde de Grandlieu⁵ is economically suggested by the brief reference to statues in Gothic cathedrals and the caryatids of medieval Italian palaces. As a means of communicating with the reader, such references have become a subtle visual language, apart (of course) from the strong probability—disputed by P. Abraham⁶—that they have sometimes inspired portraits, characters, expressions and gestures.

But where did Balzac obtain the idea that Albrecht Dürer was a sculptor? According to La Cousine Bette⁷, Dürer was the creator of an ebony statue of the Virgin Mary, in Mainz Cathedral⁸,

une femme vivante sous ses triples robes, et la chevelure la plus ondoyante, la plus maniable que jamais femme de chambre ait peignée.

No present-day writer on Dürer suggests that he added statuary to his many accomplishments, still less that he carved a statue of the Virgin Mary in Mainz Cathedral. Émile Galichon, however, reflected the ideas of Balzac's contemporaries in his book on Dürer published in 1860⁹. A century ago, many sculptures of the German Gothic type were thought to be by Dürer, because of their rough similarity to some of his best known paintings and drawings of religious subjects¹⁰. Galichon shares this view, admittedly with some diffidence. In point of fact, the ebony statue admired by Balzac is now known to be an outstanding example of late Gothic art, sometimes

1 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, p. 957. This passage is not present in the MS of the novel (A-116, fol. 87).

2 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 962. This simile is present in the MS and galley-sheets of the novel (A 198, fol. 98; A 199, fol. 64).

3 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 613.

4 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 680.

5 Ibid., p. 734.

6 Op.cit., p. 300.

7 Pl. VI, pp. 322, 321. Cf. supra, p. 121.

8 It may be surmised that Balzac visited Mainz Cathedral on 25 October 1843 (Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 269; 7 November 1843).

9 Cf. É. Galichon: Albert Dürer, sa vie et ses œuvres, Paris 1860, pp. 60-61. The text of this book was first published in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts in May, July and October 1860.

10 This valuable suggestion was first put to me by Sir Trenchard Cox.

attributed to Mathis Grünewald, but more probably the work of an unknown Frankish master ¹. It can still be seen today on the altar of the Lady Chapel in Mainz Cathedral (plate 28).

With the sculpture of modern times Balzac seems better acquainted than with medieval sculpture, to which his attention was perhaps partly drawn by such books as Notre-Dame de Paris, George Sand's La Comtesse du Tour de France, and Nodier's and Taylor's Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France ². He is attracted to the work of Michelangelo, Antonio Canova and Théophile Bra, but his interest in their work is less keen than in the eurhythmic sculptures of Classical Greece.

Once Balzac has had an opportunity of seeing the tombs of Giuliano and Lorenzo de' Medici, the statue of "David" and the various "pietà" in Florence, Milan and Rome (none of which were carried off to the Louvre), Michelangelo at least vies with the Greek sculptors in the hold exerted over his imagination. For Balzac, he is indeed primarily a sculptor, not a painter. Before 1837, references to the sculptures are perfunctory. La Physiologie du Mariage refers ³ to the statues of young devils impudently sticking out their tongues at passers-by. In La Peau de Chagrin ⁴, the old Antiquary possesses "une sublime statue de Michel-Ange", one of the treasures in the upper room of his collection—but no details of the sublime statue are given. Would Balzac have known enough about Michelangelo at this time to enter into details?

1 This information has been kindly supplied by the Curator of the Bischöfliches Dom- und Diözesanmuseum, Mainz, Dr Wilhelm Jung.

2 Cf. infra, p. 291.

3 Pl. X, p. 755. As noted on p. 225, this is perhaps a reference to the Bargello, which Balzac had certainly not seen at the time of writing La Physiologie du Mariage. On the other hand, it may conceivably refer to the leering grotesques that run in a long, narrow frieze behind the dukes' sarcophagi in the Medici chapel, a building which Balzac had also not seen in 1829; perhaps this is why he writes of "des passants", not yet having been seized with amazement by the tombs of Giuliano and Lorenzo.

4 Pl. IX, p. 28. This reference dates from 1831 (A 177, vol. I, p. 84).

The situation changes in Massimilla Doni, a novel which, though it was published in 1839, was written in 1837¹, with many direct visual borrowings from the Italian visit. By now Balzac may have had the added advantage of knowing, or knowing of, A.-C. Quatremère de Quincy's Histoire de la vie et des ouvrages de Michel-Ange (1835), published eleven years later than his popularizing study of Raphael. Amongst the reminiscences of Italian art in the final paragraph of Massimilla Doni is an allusion to the Medici tombs at S. Lorenzo, Florence: "le "Jour" et la "Nuit" de Michel-Ange... accoururent autour du lit de Massimilla, et y pleurèrent!"² To this we shall return presently. Shortly after writing Massimilla Doni, Balzac returns to Michelangelo in Une Fille d'Ève³, referring in detail to an alleged work of his, a copy of which is said to be in Florine's possession, whilst the original allegedly belongs to the Kaiserlicher Schatz in Vienna:

sur la cheminée en bois délicieusement sculpté, rien qu'une étrange et florentine statue d'ivoire attribuée à Michel-Ange, qui représentait un Égipen trouvant une femme sous la peau d'un jeune pâtre, et dont l'original est au trésor de Vienne.

The reference here has still not been fully elucidated, but it is a fact that there is no such statuette in the Kaiserlicher Schatz⁴, nor is any ivory carving of a satyr with a woman disguised as a young shepherd recorded in the catalogues of Michelangelo's work. This does not necessarily mean, however, that Balzac's memory has played him false: when he visited the collection with Princess Melanie Metternich on 28 May 1835, he may well have seen some statuette of this kind, but if so, it has been either removed or destroyed.

1 Cf. SURRAS, p. 163, n. 1.

2 Pl. IX, pp. 387-388.

3 Pl. II, pp. 101-102.

4 I am most grateful to Dr Ernst Schuselka for this assurance.

But the great debt to Michelangelo comes in Honorina, where once again Balzac resorts to imagery from the Medici chapel in S. Lorenzo, this time to describe Onorina Pedrotti:

rappelez-vous donc "la Nuit" que Michel-Ange a clouée sous "le Penseur", affublez-la du vêtement moderne, tordez ces beaux cheveux si longs autour de cette magnifique tête un peu brune de ton, mettez une paillette de feu dans ces yeux rêveurs, entortillez cette puissante poitrine dans une écharpe, voyez la longue robe blanche brodée de fleurs, supposez que la statue redressée s'est assise et s'est croisé les bras, semblables à ceux de mademoiselle Georges, et vous aurez sous les yeux la concubine avec un enfant de six ans..., et une petite fille de quatre ans sur les genoux...

However peripheral it may be to a study of Balzac's creative indebtedness to painting and sculpture, it must certainly be of interest to the art historian that Honorina confuses the names of some of the statues in the Medici chapel. "Rappelez-vous donc "la Nuit" que Michel-Ange a clouée sous "le Penseur"... "; but beneath the "Pensieroso", or Lorenzo de' Medici, lie "Dawn" and "Evening", a woman and a man respectively; the female figure of "Night" reclines on Giuliano's tomb. The fact that Balzac endows Onorina with long hair, dreamy eyes and a brownish complexion suggests that he is, in fact, thinking of "Night", not of the statue of "Dawn" beneath the "Pensieroso". His text should, therefore, have read: "rappelez-vous donc "la Nuit" que Michel-Ange a clouée sous la statue de Julien de Médicis".

Nor is this the only confusion arising from the six interrelated statues in the chapel of S. Lorenzo. It has already been briefly stated ² that Massimilla Doni alludes to "le "Jour" et "la Nuit" de Michel-Ange". In the final paragraph of this novel all the figures crowding round Massimilla's bed are meant to be female; but though "Night" is a woman,

1 Pl. II, pp. 251-252.

2 Cf. Massimilla, pp. 229, 238.

"Day" is depicted by Michelangelo as an inchoate man. "Night" and "Dawn" are the two female nudes in the Medici chapel, and somehow Balzac has mistakenly inverted "Day" and "Dawn".

Far more important than these errors of nomenclature, however, is Balzac's imaginative use of the impressions gained at S. Lorenzo. It is hard to resist the conviction that, once in a while, Balzac's control of artistic reference has failed him. The picture of the naked statue of "Night" being clothed in a long white dress, with a shawl thrown round her shoulders, and her long pigtail unplaited and twisted in curls over her head, is nothing short of ridiculous, and reaches the zenith of absurdity when it sits up, folds its arms and has a girl placed on its lap. Irrespective of the fact that it is an unusual posture for any mother to fold her arms whilst cradling her daughter on her knees, the picture of Onorina and her children would have had everything to gain from being self-sufficient; and why not have introduced the familiar image of the Virgin and Child, with perhaps the infant St John, if it had been imperative to transpose some sublime work of art? Of course, Balzac's children (aged six and four) are older than Raphael's, and one is a girl; but more germane to the issue is the fact that "Raphaël est le peintre qui a le plus étudié, le mieux rendu la beauté juive"¹, whereas Onorina comes from Genoa--and so, apparently, did the models of "Dawn" and "Night":

pour le tombeau de Julien, Michel-Ange prit ses modèles à Gênes. De là... cette amplitude, cette curieuse disposition du sein dans les figures du "Jour"² et de "la Nuit", ... particulières aux femmes de la Ligurie².

As elsewhere in the Comédie Humaine, Balzac uses sculpture and painting to convey regional or national types of human beauty.

¹ Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, p. 688. Cf. supra, p. 164.

² Honorine; Pl. II, p. 251.

Both as sculptor and painter, Michelangelo always seemed to Balzac one of the most powerful of creative minds¹. Yet it is a puzzling fact that Balzac does not appear to have appreciated the terribilità which is Michelangelo's most conspicuous characteristic and by which he is strikingly differentiated from Raphael. The reason for this is, I think, that he preferred Raphael to any other exponent of the visual arts—and the qualities he admires in him (seraphic calm, meditative beauty, nostalgic melancholy) are also those which he singles out in Michelangelo's gigantic and profound achievement. The wistful, idealized gravity of the "Pensieroso", the graceful but sombre figure of "Night" recumbent beneath Giuliano's effigy—these are the things to which Balzac's admiration is spontaneously given. Even the Bargello's devils, to which he humorously refers in La Physiologie du Mariage², appeal to the streak of badinage in his character which was to find its fullest expression in the Contes drôlatiques and which—so far as his artistic tastes are concerned—culminates in the late 1840s in his (avowed) predilection for the gentle eroticism of Watteau, Greuze and Boucher³.

Only once does Balzac indicate any profound sense of the intense struggles so well described by Michelangelo in his sonnet Al cor di solfo. Writing in the fragmentary L'Hôpital et le peuple of the earthy type of Madonna painted by Raphael in his frescoes at the Farnesina⁴, Balzac employs a striking phrase to characterize them:

grosses, fortes filles vigoureusement dessinées qui trouvent leurs robes par des chairs de marbre, par des formes aussi prononcées que si Michel-Ange les avait contournées⁵.

But this was written late in his career (in 1845), and—so far as we can tell from a study of the Comédie Humaine and miscellaneous writings—

1 Pl. I, p. 407; Pl. II, p. 27; Pl. VI, pp. 94, 321, etc.

2 Cf. supra, p. 225.

3 Cf. supra, pp. 27-28, 93-98.

4 Cf. supra, p. 172.

5 Pl. X, p. 1,082.

he does not seem to have been otherwise aware of Michelangelo's tragic immensity. It cannot be too strongly emphasized, however, that the novels and miscellaneous writings are an imperfect index of his artistic appreciation (unlike Stendhal, he wrote no art criticism as such), that besides his writings there was his conversation and private thought, and that, like a true eclectic, he takes from other artists what he most needs them to give him: the tragic immensities of the Comédie Humaine found their own modes of expression (in Le Père Goriot, Illusions Perdus, Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes and, above all, Le Cousin Pons), which were not those of the Sistine Ceiling and the Last Judgment, deeply as Balzac may have admired these murals.

Not even Le Cousin Pons refers to Michelangelo, yet by this time Balzac had actually visited Rome and (we may surmise) the Sistine Chapel. What is more, no novel in the Comédie Humaine is more extreme in its picture of tragic, suffering humanity, unceasingly assailed by the heartless mechanism of self-interest. At one of its most poignant moments, when Pons rises from his deathbed to discover the theft of his eight choicest paintings, the very heart of his gallery, and then falls senseless to the floor, Schmucke lovingly brings him back to life:

il baisa son ami sur les yeux comme ces Marie que les grands sculpteurs italiens ont sculptées dans leurs bas-reliefs appelés "Pietà", baisant le Christ. Ces efforts divins, cette effusion d'une vie dans une autre, cette oeuvre de mère et d'amante fut couronnée d'un plein succès...

Balzac had presumably seen Michelangelo's "Pietà" at St Peter's, Rome, the supreme achievement of the sculptor's youth. Yet it cannot be this "Pietà" that he has in mind when describing Pons and Schmucke. Michelangelo's earliest "Pietà" displays the corpse of the Redeemer lying

1 Pl. VI, p. 723.

across His mother's knees. She cradles Him in her right arm, gazing at Him in tranquil resignation. But her lips come nowhere near His eyes: indeed, had this been so, the work's subtle proportions would have been destroyed. Likewise (if not even more so) with the Rondanini "Pietà", in the Castello at Milan, where the Virgin and Jesus are depicted standing upright, the Son leaning backwards against His mother. Nor could Balzac have been thinking of the "Deposition" (Florence Cathedral), in which once again the heads of Jesus and His mother are depicted in almost parallel planes.

In our quest for the visual prototype of Balzac's own "pietà" we must turn aside from Michelangelo, looking instead to the work of lesser Italian artists of the Quattrocento and Cinquecento: conscious, too, that the "pietà" was not an art form in which these other Italian sculptors particularly excelled—it had flourished amongst the wood-carvers of Germany and the Netherlands, before Michelangelo transmuted it almost beyond recognition. This is a subject in which further painstaking research will need to be undertaken, for as yet it has proved impossible to identify the elusive prototype. Was Balzac a serious amateur of sculpture? When transposing paintings and statues into his own particular alchemy, how faithful was he to the original visual impression? Pending an exhaustive search of the churches, cathedrals and galleries of Rome, Naples, Genoa, and even Florence, Venice and Milan, a large question-mark must remain beside this aspect of Balzac's competence as a connoisseur. Not that he could wilfully have distorted the image on this occasion; but perhaps, through the very intensity of his own imaginative power, his memory could have deceived him? It is precisely this type of question, in the hazy empire of Mnemosyne, which most demands elucidation—and with its elucidation will come, I suspect, a complete endorsement of the reliability of Balzac's memory.

"Eh! bien, si nous n'avons pas la gloire de Michel-Ange, nous aurons celle de Benvenuto Cellini!" is the thought with which Hortense Steinbock consoles herself¹ as it dawns on her that her husband is not destined to attain the highest flights of genius. Not only is Cellini the most outstanding of all goldsmiths², he is an artist whose delicate, fastidious work is of a kind that especially appeals to Balzac. Balzac himself owns "une Vénus en ivoire attribuée à Benvenuto Cellini"³, bought in 1836, and in the "musée Pons" there is "un groupe en argent attribué à Benvenuto Cellini"⁴—the latter, of course, being a reflexion of the former. But even before Balzac had actually bought any of his (alleged) work, statuettes and carvings by Cellini are already featuring in the Comédie Humaine's collections⁵. And Vautrin deeply admires the autobiography, a school of instruction in itself in everything appertaining to intrigue, crime and debauchery⁶. More than this: Vautrin is a fervent admirer of the Beautiful, whether it be the beauty of a man's body or the pellucid simplicity of some criminal plan (the same simplicity that attracts a mathematician in the neat solution of an algebraic problem, but Vautrin's problem is how to make the largest possible fortune in the shortest possible time without falling foul of the law): "j'ai lu les Mémoires de Benvenuto Cellini... " he tells Eugène. "J'ai appris de cet homme-là... à aimer le beau partout où il se trouve"⁶. Hence the appeal of big crimes: not the crude forgery of a

1 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 342.

2 Pl. II, pp. 583-584; Pl. VI, p. 169; Pl. VII, p. 66; Pl. IX, p. 720.

3 A 329, fol. 17, x voix.

4 Pl. VI, p. 544.

5 Pl. II, p. 548; Pl. IX, p. 25 (A 177, vol. I, p. 78); Pl. X, pp. 213, 266.

6 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 932.

Lucien de Rubempré, but killing one's adversary in a duel, or stealing and destroying a will: legalized murder or undetectable larceny. It is the economical beauty of big crimes which stirs his poetic soul: "mes poésies, je ne les écris pas: elles consistent en actions et en sentiments" ¹. He is the artist in criminality, no more capable than Cellini or any other artist of attaining the "ultima ratio mundi" ².

Other than Benvenuto Cellini, there is little awareness of the sculptors of the Italian Renaissance. Brunelleschi Balsac is mainly aware of as an architect: the wild scenery of Le Croisic recalls ³ some arch or vault of Brunelleschi probably seen by Balsac in Florence (perhaps in S. Maria dei Fiori). The now grievously damaged doors of the Baptistery at Florence are what we know Balsac has noted of Ghiberti ⁴ (other works, such as the Reliquary of St Zenobius, in Florence Cathedral, may also have impressed him, although the written word offers no evidence of it). Donatello, by far the greatest Renaissance sculptor before Michelangelo, seems almost completely to have escaped Balsac's attention ⁵, not that the great works by Donatello in the Baptistery, Bargello and Cathedral of Florence were unprized even in the 1830s.

As for the sculptors of the later French Renaissance--Michel Colombe, Jean Goujon, Jean Bologne and Germain Pilon--neither Colombe ⁶, a precursor rather than an exponent of the Renaissance style, nor Bologne ⁵ seems to have been noticed by Balsac at all, except for the most fleeting of references: not even Dinah de La Baudraye has heard of

1 Ibid., p. 938.

2 Ibid., p. 914. Cf. infra, pp. 307-308.

3 Béatrix Pl. II, p. 486. Cf. A 6, fol. 120.

4 Massimilla Doni; Pl. IX, p. 322.

5 Except for La Cousine Bettie; Pl. VI, p. 169.

6 Except for ibid., p. 321.

them! But Pilon and Goujon are frequently the subjects of long tirades from this provincial bluestocking¹, so keen to unburden herself on any fashionable intellectual topic, and Goujon is mentioned as early as 1831 in La Fausse de Chagrin², where an ebony table designed by him, "véritable idole d'artiste", is amongst the Antiquary's treasures. For Balzac, Goujon is primarily the sculptor of the "Diane au Cerf", or "Venus" as he prefers to call it³, the model of which was Henri II's mistress Diane de Poitiers, and which stood until 1800⁴ in a courtyard of her Château d'Anet before being removed to the desecrated monastery of the Petits-Augustins (now the École des Beaux-Arts), and thence to the Louvre. Balzac knows very little about Goujon. His first reference to the "Diane Chasserresse" dates from 1837, yet it was on exhibition at the Louvre from 1816; he even refers to it as "la Vénus du moyen âge"⁵, yet it was sculpted about the year 1550; it does however inspire his portrait of Célestine Rabourdin⁶—the only known instance of such an inspiration in the whole of Renaissance sculpture. Michelangelo apart, whose sublime pathos strikes a familiar tonality in Balzac's own universe, we are left with the distinct impression that the sculpture of the Renaissance means less to him than either the Classical or medieval schools. Once indeed, in La Recherche de l'Absolu⁷, Balzac goes so far as to say that one of the greatest of Flemish sculptors was "le célèbre sculpteur en bois Van Huysium de Bruges"; yet there is no trace of this Van Huysium in any of the reference books⁸.

1 La Muse du Département; Pl. IV, p. 64.

2 Pl. IX, p. 27. Cf. A 177, vol. I, p. 81.

3 Pl. VI, pp. 911, 154. These references, in Les Employés and La Cousine Bette (A 48, fol. 11) respectively, date from 1837 (La Presse, 5 July 1837) and 1846. Cf. Pl. II, p. 375.

4 R. Lister: Jean Goujon, his Life and Work, London 1903, p. 36.

5 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 911.

6 Ibid., pp. 910-911.

7 Pl. IX, p. 483. Cf. Pl. IV, p. 64.

8 M. Laubriet states (art.cit., p. 335) that this Van Huysium is "d'ailleurs plus connu comme peintre que comme sculpteur", overlooking the fact that Jan van Huysum, the greatest of the Dutch flower painters apart from van Heem (cf. supra, p. 141), must have lived more than 150 years later than the fictitious wood sculptor.

Of the sculptors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Balzac knows little and what he knows is (with the solitary exception of the Italian Andrea Brustolone) entirely confined to the French school. Edme Bouchardon appears in person in the early novel Sarrasine¹, as the master of the young sculptor, one of whose friends is C.-G. Allegrain². Chaudet's studio inspires Joseph Bridau with a sense of his artistic vocation³. Thomas Germain is merely referred to—late in Balzac's career⁴—as a silversmith, not as a sculptor or architect. Dinah de La Baudraye loves to discourse⁵ on Brustolone and Clodion—and any other sculptor, enamellist and engraver at the height of fashion. Balzac had bought a frame by Brustolone at Turin in 1836⁶. Three years after writing La Muse du Département, he bestows a similar frame on Sylvain Pons:

Pons, plus heureux que les conservateurs des Trésors de Dresde et de Vienne, possédait un cadre du fameux Brustolone, le Michel-Ange du bois⁷.

Balzac, who had visited the Kaiserlicher Schatz in Vienna before going to Turin, had noticed that Brustolone was not represented in the Hofburg before he acquired his own Brustolone frame: his interest in this artist goes back many years, to the time of the awakening of his independent appreciation of art. Coysevox, we are informed in Modeste Mignon⁸, sculpted a "Sunrise" for the Château de Rosenbray. Puget, at the very end of Balzac's career, in La Cousine Bette⁹, is included with

1 Pl. VI, pp. 93-95, 100.

2 Ibid., p. 107.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 866-871.

4 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, p. 225. This mention of Thomas Germain dates from 1844.

5 La Muse du Département; Pl. IV, pp. 64-65.

6 A 329, fol. 18, verso. A 326, fol. 1, recto: "En 1835, à Turin un cadre dit de Brustolone, prix 300 fr." In point of fact, Balzac did not visit Turin until 1836.

7 Pl. VI, p. 594.

8 Pl. I, p. 581. This reference dates from 1844.

9 Pl. VI, p. 321.

Michelangelo, Pheidias, Michel Colombe and Jean Goujon in a list of the most eminent sculptors. Houdon is only mentioned¹ with reference to the charges of immorality laid against his "Diana", which Balzac mistakenly calls a statue of "Venus"—mistakenly, but with some justification for the slip of memory². François Girardon, one of whose wooden crucifixes Balzac owned³ and bequeathed to his illegitimate daughter Marie du Fresnay, is not referred to at all in the final Comédie Humaine, although the gift with which Pons tries to propitiate Madame de Marville was originally intended⁴ to be a "crucifix en bois sculpté", a pearwood crucifix which Girardon had carved. (This gift is later transformed into the Watteau fan⁵.) Of no period in the history of sculpture does Balzac have a hazier knowledge, or less evident appreciation, than the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—largely, of course, because he confined his vision to France. The great age of the Baroque, of which he must have seen abundant examples during his visits to Vienna, Switzerland and Milan (not to mention the later journeys in his career),

1 Pl. XI, p. 318, a reference which dates from 1836.

2 This statue was purchased by Catherine the Great in 1784, and remained in Russia until the Bolshevik Revolution. It is now at the Museu Calouste Gulbenkian, Lisbon. There is a terracotta replica of it in the Frick Collection, New York, and a bronze replica at the Louvre. It caused an outcry when first seen by the public. Intended as a statue of the goddess of chastity, its eroticism recalled Venus rather than Diana. Cf. A.-C. Quatremère de Quincy: "Notice historique sur la vie et les ouvrages de M. Houdon", Séance publique de l'Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts, du 3 octobre 1829, Paris 1829, pp. 5-6: "Nous ne saurions dire ce qui put porter l'artiste à représenter, comme il le fit, la chaste déesse des forêts d'une manière tout au plus convenable à une des suivantes de Vénus".

3 A 329, fol. 18. This crucifix stood in the Brustolone frame. Balzac also owned a pearwood carving of "Loth et ses Filles" (A 329, fol. 6, verso), which stood on a console-table in the dining-room of the Chartreuse Beaugon.

4 A 47, folios 132-133.

5 Cf. supra, pp. 94-95.

seems to have passed him by ¹. (Similarly, there is not one reference to Bernini's architecture in the whole range of the Comédia Humaine.) A narrow academicism, an imperfectly defined taste for the mannered sculptures of Rococo, a predilection for portrait sculpture mark Balzac's preferences in an age of sculpture the great achievements of which he entirely ignored.

Canova supplies every deficiency in Balzac's taste and admiration during the two preceding centuries. M. Ségu's suggestion ² that Balzac may have acquired his almost religious reverence for the master of neo-Classicism from Hyacinthe de Latouche should be discounted: Canova was the object of almost universal respect in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and Balzac conformed in this to the spirit of the age. Latouche and his contemporaries, equally fervent in their worship of Girodet ³, appreciated prettiness in art, rather than the astringency and tautness of questing self-expression. Prettiness is the very hallmark of Canova's adaptations of the Classical criteria of ideal beauty—and Balzac responded to it as warmly as did Stendhal ⁴. Canova's work invests the austerity of Vien and J.-L. David with the pathos and elegiac sentimentality of pre-Romanticism; in this way, neo-Classicism became much more acceptable to Balzac. Indeed, Balzac's great liking for the sculpture of Graeco-Roman antiquity is closely related to his early veneration of Canova. The earliest reference to Canova's work occurs in Les Marana (1832). Perez de Lagounia, the guardian of La Marana's

1 Cf. infra, p. 253.

2 F. Ségu: Un Journaliste dilettante. H. de Latouche et son intervention dans les arts, Paris 1931, pp. 59-80. In 1825 Latouche published a study of Canova, who had died three years previously.

3 Ibid., pp. 31-32, 109.

4 Journal, Département XXXII (5), pp. 21-22, Département XXXII (4), p. 332; Promenades dans Rome, Département XXI (1), p. 50. Cf. P. Jourdas "Stendhal et Canova", Revue des études italiennes, January-March 1937, pp. 1-16.

daughter Juana Mancini, sees her in the arms of her seducer Montefiore:

dans le cercle de lumière projeté sur la noire muraille de la cour intérieure, par la grande vitre ovale de la cellule, il aperçut la silhouette d'un groupe que, jusqu'au gracieux Canova, nul autre sculpteur n'aurait su deviner¹.

Here, no doubt, Balzac is thinking of such sculptures as "Amour et Psyché" (plate 2), formerly at the Château de Compiègne and which had been engraved by Pietro Fontana, or "Venus and Adonis", engraved by Angelo Bertini. Gracefulness remains the quality he most prizes in Canova. Diane de Maufrigneuse recalls "la Vénus de Canova"², and Wenceslas Steinbock's sculpture "Samson et Dalila" his "Madeleine pénitente"³— either the version that had belonged to Lord Liverpool, at Coombe Wood, Kingston-upon-Thames, and which Giovanni Balestra had engraved, or else the other version which until his death on 18 January 1838 belonged to Bernard-Gaetan de Sommariva, 4 rue Basse-du-Rempart, Paris⁴. Balzac's familiarity with this master of neo-Classicism extends intermittently throughout his literary career, and was probably renewed during the visit to Rome in 1846, when he would not only have been able to see "Pauline Borghese" but also the monuments to Clement XIII and the exiled Stuarts. As for any unacknowledged borrowings from Canova, these in any case would be impossible to dissociate from the reminiscences of Girodet.

1 Pl. IX, p. 817. Nothing in the MS of Les Marana (A 127) corresponds to this passage, the middle folios of the MS having been lost. But the reference to Canova is present in the first published version (Revue de Paris, 23 December 1832, p. 291).

2 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes; Pl. V, pp. 1,092-1,093. Here, Balzac could have several statues in mind. In 1805 Pauline Bonaparte was depicted by Canova as "Venere vincitrice"; this statue is in the Galleria Borghese, Rome, and was engraved by Domenico Marchetti, Angelo Bertini and É.-A. Réveil (J. Duchesne: op.cit., vol. IV, Paris 1829, no. 786). Canova's "Vénus sortant du Bain" is at the Palazzo Pitti, to which it was transferred from the Uffizi in 1816. It, too, was engraved by Marchetti.

3 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 337.

4 Sommariva also patronized Prud'hon, whose portrait of him (1814 Salon, no. 772) now hangs at the Brera. Stendhal knew the Sommariva collection (Mélanges d'art..., Divan XXV, pp. 129, 173), and Balzac almost certainly did (cf. supra, p. 8).

The sculptors who were Balzac's own contemporaries seem scarcely to have attracted his notice--except, of course, for Théophile Bra and his "Mother and Child with two Angels" ¹. To Alessandro Puttinati, who had sculpted a statuette of him at Milan in 1837, he dedicated La Vendetta in 1842. Chantrey's "Byron" allegedly inspires ² a favourite pose of Charles Grandet; however, no bust or statue of Byron is known to have been undertaken by Chantrey ³, and even if one does exist, it does not appear to have been reproduced in engravings.

The abbé Dutheil recalls the simple severity of Thorvaldsen's apostles ⁴; here, presumably, Balzac is alluding to the statues of Christ and the Twelve Apostles in the Vor Frue Kirke, Copenhagen. The wood sculptor Elschödt, the friend and eventual lover and husband of Balzac's housekeeper at Passy, Madame de Brugnol, is mentioned twice around the years 1839-1841: an autograph letter from Byron to Byron's mistress Lady Caroline Lamb, now in Florine's possession, is in a frame which Elschödt has sculpted ⁵; Elschödt and the goldsmith Klagmann decorate the fireplaces and door-lintels of Clémentine Laginska's Paris home ⁶. A plaster sculpture of an angel holding a holy-water stoup is given to Florine by Antonin Moine ⁵. The Rogrons' lawn is adorned with a plaster cast of Foyatier's "Spartacus", "peint en bronze" ⁷. Madame Laginska has

1 Cf. supra, pp. 16, 227-228.

2 Pl. III, p. 515. Cf. supra, p. 75.

3 There is no reference to any in A.J. Raymond's Sir Francis Chantrey (London 1904) or R. Gunnis's Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851. Mr I.H. Lowe has pointed out to me that Chantrey's ledger (at the Royal Academy) also contains no mention of Byron. Thorvaldsen's statue of the poet (in the Library of Trinity College, Cambridge) cannot be implied, as Byron's pose in this statue does not correspond to the one Grandet adopts. The association of Chantrey's name with Byron's may have been determined by Stendhal (Mélanges d'art..., Divan XXV, pp. 134-135).

4 Le Curé de Village; Pl. VIII, p. 570.

5 Une Fille d'Ève; Pl. II, p. 101.

6 La Femme Maîtresse; Pl. II, p. 16.

7 Pierrottes; Pl. III, p. 679. "Spartacus" was exhibited at the Salon of 1827 (no. 1,125), and was later displayed in the Jardins des Tuileries. Cf. supra, p. 8, n. 8.

a whip with a handle carved by Félicie de Fauveau ¹, who—Balzac assures us in La Cousine Bette ²—is, with Jeanest and J.M. Wagner ³, one of the sculptors who have greatly advanced the art of Benvenuto Cellini. David d'Angers is the sculptor for whom Balzac seems to have the highest regard amongst those of his own time. Le Curé de Tours was dedicated to him in 1843. Balzac also offered him the MS and proofs of La Femme Supérieure (now Les Employés). In 1844 David finished his celebrated bust of Balzac. About the same time a sculpture of David's ⁴ inspired the portrait of Maurice de l'Hostal's daughter, in Honorine ⁵, whilst in Les Paysans ⁶ Catherine Tonsard's fierce expression and snarling smile owe as much to David ⁷ as to Delacroix's "Liberté guidant le Peuple". As for Pradier, there is only one incidental reference to him, in the preface to La Lya dans la Vallée ⁸, in connexion with a charge of immorality once brought against his "Vénus". And there is no reference at all to Rude, Étex or Barye, or any self-evident reminiscence from their work. The bearing of modern sculpture on Balzac's novels is indeed minimal.

Balzac is impressed by the pathos and grandeur of Michelangelo's statuary, and by the gracefulness of Canova. The sculpture of Classical antiquity holds an even higher place in his hierarchy of values, corresponding as it does to the canons of Ideal beauty. Egyptian art intrigues him from the time of the apprentice novels to the year of La Cousine Bette. The peak of Balzac's interest in the "Antinous", the "Apollo Belvedere" and the "Venus de' Medici" came, however, at a point when ~~XXXXXX~~ he could only have seen these statues in engravings or during their temporary confiscation at the Louvre. Donatello and medieval sculpture barely kindle a response.

1 La Fausse Maîtresse; Pl. II, p. 18.

2 Pl. VI, p. 169.

3 Balzac actually refers to "les Wagner". He is also thinking of Theodor Wagner (1800-1880), a pupil of J.H. von Dannecker.

4 In 1842 David d'Angers sculpted a bas-relief for the tomb of Joseph Pavie, who had died aged three (H. Jouin; David d'Angers, sa vie, son oeuvre, ses écrits et ses contemporains, Paris 1878, vol. II, p. 495). It depicted an angel carrying the child into Heaven.

5 Pl. II, p. 252.

6 Pl. VIII, p. 171.

7 Here, Balzac seems to have David's "La Liberté" in mind, which had been sculpted in 1839 (H. Jouin; op.cit., p. 490).

8 Pl. XI, p. 318.

Balsac's involvement with the art of architecture is of a totally different order. Architecture's essentially functional character means, by and large, that it is less of a fine art than a technique. The castles, houses and churches in the Comédie Humaine derive more from all the purpose-built buildings seen by Balsac during his lifetime than from the imaginative conceptions of Bernini (never, indeed, mentioned in the Comédie Humaine¹), Bramante², Jacques Du Cerceau³, the Mansards⁴, Percier⁵ and Fontaine⁶. Moreover, it is scarcely in the nature of architecture to inspire portraits, characters or gestures; nor is it easy for whole plots, situations and views of the world to be inspired by

1 Balsac, like Stendhal, was indifferent to the complexities of Baroque architecture—though his adult life was lived in close proximity to some of its greatest masterpieces: the Louvre, the Institut and the Hôtel des Invalides. Abroad, he must also have seen many of the finest Baroque buildings. Though still ignorant of the architecture of Rome at the beginning of 1846, he had seen the Karlskirche, Vienna, as early as May 1835, and could easily have visited Ottobeuren and Bilingen on the return journey from Austria, had he so pleased. But nothing he had seen of Baroque architecture in Paris inspired him to look further afield. Cf. supra, p. 249.

2 Cursorily mentioned in Le Curé de Village (Pl. VIII, p. 700) as a man of genius.

3 Only mentioned in his capacity of engraver and author of Les Plus Excellents Bâtimens de France (Pl. IV, p. 836).

4 François Mansard (1598-1666), the architect of the Hôtel de La Vrillière and the Château de Maisons-sur-Seine, is several times referred to in the Comédie Humaine: as the architect of the Val-de-Grâce, in Les Petits Bourgeois (Pl. VII, p. 167), and of the mythical Château de Gondreville, in Une Ténébreuse Affaire (ibid., pp. 449, 451). His better known great-nephew Jules Mansard (1646-1708), the architect of the palace of Versailles, the Grand Trianon, the chapel and dome of the Hôtel des Invalides, etc., is referred to in Les Paysans (Pl. VIII, p. 219) as the architect of the equally mythical Château de Soulanges, but—strangely enough—is not mentioned elsewhere. Cf. infra, p. 255.

5 Mentioned briefly in César Birotteau (Pl. V, p. 384).

6 Also cursorily mentioned in César Birotteau (ibid.) and as the destroyer of the Galeries de Bois (Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 692. Cf. infra, p. 261).

architecture—as Gavarni and Monnier help to shape the young novelist's view of Paris ¹, or Metgu contributes to La Recherche de l'Absolu ², or Théophile Bra inspires Séraphita ³. Even the five-tier hierarchy in Paris, of Workman, Clerk, Business Man, Artist and Aristocrat ⁴, owes more to Dante ⁵ than to, say, any of the works of Du Cerceau or François Mansard: the dynamic movement alone of the social classes in Paris guarantees that. Indeed, the very frozenness of architecture (to adapt Schelling's and Goethe's expressions ⁶) prevents it from ever giving a powerful visual impetus to the novels of the Comédie Humaine. Nevertheless, the art of architecture is present in the Comédie Humaine, both as an influence and as an object.

"Vous ne vous figurez pas ce que c'est que la Comédie humaine; c'est plus vaste, littérairement parlant, que la cathédrale de Bourges architecturalement", Balzac announces proudly to Zulma Carraud in January 1845 ⁷. In its own huge proportions and majestic size, Bourges Cathedral (which he must often have seen during his visits to the Carrauds at Issoudun) may perhaps have contributed to the vast concept of a system of interrelated novels—with the mystical Séraphita as the keystone of the chancel arch. Moreover, these novels contain many architectural metaphors and similes. In the earliest work in the Comédie Humaine, Les Chouans, Montauran's lower lip recalls "la courbe gracieuse de la feuille d'acanthé sous le chapiteau corinthien" ⁸. Again, in Béatrix, Sabine du Guénic's unwavering love for her husband

1 Cf. supra, pp. 70-77.

2 Cf. supra, p. 124.

3 Cf. supra, pp. 16, 227-228.

4 La Fille aux Yeux d'Or, Pl. V, pp. 255-267.

5 Cf. supra, p. 158.

6 F.W.J. von Schelling's Sämtliche Werke, vol. V, Stuttgart 1859, p. 577.

J.W. von Goethe: Werke. Briefe und Gespräche, vol. XXIV, Zurich 1948, p. 329 (Gespräche mit Eckermann, 23 March 1829).

7 Correspondance IV, p. 769.

8 Pl. VII, p. 834. This reference dates from 1828 (A 13, fol. 25, verso).

Calyste is described thus:

c'est un sublime où les forces du cœur et de l'intelligence
se versent comme les eaux des nymphes architecturales
jaillissent des urnes inclinées¹;

and this, perhaps, is a reminiscence of the palace of Versailles, a building which Balzac knew fairly well²—though we do not know when, or how often, he saw it. What is the value of such figures of speech? Preciosity is a grave threat to a novelist with ambitions and a temperament like Balzac's. It must be doubted whether this simile, less elaborate in the MS³ (incidentally) than in the final version of Béatrix, adds to our comprehension or enjoyment of the novel. Indeed, the spouting of water from an urn may well be considered an anticlimax, when describing a woman's self-sacrificing devotion. Even when not actually inspired by architecture, therefore, scenes and characters in the Comédie Humaine are sometimes made sharper in outline by architectural figures of speech; but the reference may seem contrived and inappropriate.

Secondly, architecture figures prominently in the social record of the Comédie Humaine. This rôle of architecture cannot be dissociated from its previous rôle of visual inspiration. Many of the great buildings in the Comédie Humaine are drawn from actual structures, all of which Balzac has seen. François Mansard's mythical Château de Gondreville⁴ bears some resemblance to the Château de Beauvais, near Toure, although Mansard himself had no hand in the building of this castle, which is substantially a Renaissance structure⁵. The Château

1 Pl. II, p. 554.

2 sur Catherine de Médicis; Pl. X, p. 81.

3 The MS (A 7, fol. 18) omits the nymphs from the simile: "... se versent comme les eaux jaillissent des urnes inclinées".

4 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, pp. 449-451.

5 For this information I am deeply indebted to Dr Jean Raust.

de La Vivetière, in Les Chouans¹, is modelled on the Château de Marigny, near Fougères²; the manor-house of Clochegourde³ is more or less a replica of the Château de La Chevière, near Saché; Grandet's Château de Froidfond⁴ is the Château de Saché itself⁵, where Balzac frequently stayed and where he wrote parts (if not all) of Louis Lambert, La Recherche de l'Absolu, Goriot and Le Lys dans la Vallée.

But much oftener the nature of the visual record is perfectly evident, because Balzac calls the buildings by their real names, not by fictional ones. The Château de Moncontour⁶, near Vouvray, is known by the same name on maps and in guide-books--and was, in fact, the home which Balzac (transforming the relationship of Grenville and Julie d'Aiglemont into wished-for actuality) hoped to buy for himself and Madame Hańska in the summer of 1846⁷.

Churches, which necessarily play a much smaller part in the novels than do castles and houses, are also called by their real names: Notre-Dame is sketchily described in Les Proscrites⁸, of which it might almost be called the backcloth and setting. At almost exactly the same time as Victor Hugo's Notre-Dame de Paris (1831), Balzac recreates the atmosphere of medieval Paris⁹--but without making the cathedral into the animating presence (both setting and participant) around which a whole story revolves. Balzac's view of the medieval capital of Philippe-Auguste is no doubt more accurate than Hugo's: "ce Paris chétif et pauvre", he writes¹⁰, "lequel suggère à l'imagination des poètes modernes tant de fausses merveilles".

1 Pl. VII, pp. 884-886.

2 Les Chouans (ed. M. Regard), Paris 1957, p. 167, n. 1.

3 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, pp. 792-793.

4 Pl. III, p. 491.

5 Eugénie Grandet (ed. H.J. Hunt), Oxford 1967, facing p. 48.

6 La Femme de Trente Ans; Pl. II, p. 719.

7 Cf. Lettres à Madame Hańska III, pp. 201, 202, 206, 236, 249, 324; 10, 12, 25, 30 June, 9 August 1846, etc.

8 Pl. X, pp. 322-328.

9 Cf. infra, p. 268.

10 Pl. X, p. 323. Cf. Pl. I, p. 926.

Many castles other than Moncontour are described by their actual names. A particularly important description is of the Château de Blois, in sur Catherine de Médicis¹. More fortunate than La Fontaine², Balzac evidently made a thorough inspection of the castle, which in 1784 had become a barracks. He climbed the staircase leading to the royal apartments, halted now and again to admire the Loire from its windows and the carvings of flowers, men and animals on its walls, paced the apartments, reception rooms and galleries—and regretted that whitewash had recently disfigured the walls of Catherine's private audience-chamber, blotting its golden salamanders from view³. Balzac relates the castle's history under the Comtes de Blois, Louis XII and Francis I: "trois genres d'architecture différents, trois époques, trois systèmes, trois dominations"⁴. He deploras the disrepair into which it was allowed to fall in the eighteenth century: "ces pierres éloquentes... n'existeront peut-être plus que dans ces pages!"⁵

Against the medieval hall where the States-General met during the reign of Henri III (and which is all that remains of the feudal castle), we see the severely beautiful architecture of Louis XII, a long monastery-like series of rooms with staircases at either end, and in addition to all this the more elaborate, though unfinished, construction of Louis's successor: finely decorated façades, towering storeys and hanging gardens separated by a ravine and connected by a stone bridge. This picture has come of long admiration and imaginative scrutiny.

1 Pl. X, pp. 78-85. I am indebted for much information on the castle to its curator, M. P. Robert-Houdin.

2 Ibid., p. 81. Cf. J. de La Fontaine: Ouvrages divers, Paris 1948, p. 544; 3 September 1663. Gaston d'Orléans had died on 2 February 1660, and the castle was unoccupied.

3 Pl. X, p. 83. The cholera epidemic to which Balzac refers lasted from the spring to the autumn of 1832.

4 Ibid., p. 79.

5 Ibid., p. 85. Restoration work was begun in 1846; cf. Edmond du Sommerard: "Une Visite au château de Blois", L'Artiste, 31 May 1846, pp. 200-201.

The action of Sur Catherine de Médicis takes place between 1560 and 1573. Cutting out Gaston d'Orléans's additions to the castle, Balzac has described it as laid out by Francis I. But, though the historical perspectives are foreshortened, his description is also a modern topographical account, for those of his readers who had never visited Blois themselves. It brilliantly fulfils two interrelated ambitions: to portray the Château de Blois as it looked in the 1830s, and perhaps before it became a ruin; and to record its evolution through history, as befitted the vestige of his original plan to write "une histoire de France pittoresque" ¹.

Private houses, as against castles, are of course rather more difficult to identify, though we may be quite sure that Balzac often has individual houses in mind ². In any case, they rarely come within the compass of architecture viewed as an art. But Balthazar Claës's ancestral home in Douai ³, M. du Guénic's at Guérande ⁴, Mlle Comon's at Alençon ⁵ may certainly be considered as partaking of some of the qualities, at least, of art. And again, Balzac has carefully noted the houses in question, although he naturally makes use of his prerogative as a novelist to build up a composite picture, with architectural features taken (as in La Recherche de l'Absolu ⁶) from a number of houses.

1 Illusions Perdus; Pl. IV, p. 650.

2 Cf., for example, P.-G. Castex's identification of the Maison Vauquer (Le Père Goriot, ed. Garnier, Paris 1960, pp. xxxviii-xli).

3 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, pp. 478-484.

4 Béatrix; Pl. II, pp. 325-331.

5 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, pp. 245-249.

6 Mlle M. Fargeaud (op.cit., pp. 395-405) even suggests that Balzac had a house at Tours in mind when describing the Claës home. Cf. supra, pp. 130-131.

And not only Douai, Guérande and Alençon, but many other provincial towns--Issoudun ¹, Angoulême ², Provins ³, Arcis ⁴, Nemours ⁵, Le Havre ⁶, etc.--have been described in the Comédie Humaine in greater or lesser detail, but only after Balzac has visited and scrutinized each town himself. Not that Balzac's visit to a town is always made with a view to utilizing the information gained from it immediately. His visit to Limoges, for example, made on or about 22 August 1832, deeply impresses him and is carefully memorized--but not utilized in a novel until over six years later, in Le Curé de Village ⁷. His interest in the beauty of these ancient towns owed much to Nodier's and Taylor's Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France ⁸, and something also to the genre-painting of Metzsu, Terborch, De Hooch, etc. ⁹ Prosper Mérimée, whom Balzac knew from at least 1828 ¹⁰, was professionally involved in the conservation of ancient monuments and may also have stirred his antiquarianism. In the lengthy description of Issoudun with which part II of La Rabouilleuse opens, Balzac deploras the recent demolition of the Church of Saint-Paterne--much as Mérimée or Nodier and Taylor might have done, though the Voyages pittoresques would have taken care to append an engraving.

Cette église, un des plus jolis specimens d'église romane que possédait la France, a péri sans que personne ait pris le dessin du portail, dont la conservation était parfaite ¹¹.

- 1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, pp. 934-942.
- 2 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, pp. 490-492.
- 3 Pierrette; Pl. III, pp. 650-651, 668-669.
- 4 Le Député d'Arcis; Pl. VII, pp. 680-683.
- 5 Ursule Mirouët; Pl. III, pp. 280-281, 265, 272.
- 6 Modeste Mignon; Pl. I, pp. 361-363.
- 7 Pl. VIII, pp. 536-538.
- 8 Cf. infra, p. 291.
- 9 Cf. supra, pp. 130-131.
- 10 Cf. supra, pp. 10-12.
- 11 Pl. III, p. 941.

No less meticulous than his description of provincial towns is Balzac's description of Paris, but of course Paris is described in quartiers, rather than as a whole. Balzac was describing the capital at a time when, because of the pressures of the Industrial Revolution, it was beginning to undergo the extensive changes which were to be completed, twenty years after Balzac's death, by G.-E. Haussmann¹. "L'auteur s'est entendu souvent reprocher quelques descriptions", he remarks² in his preface to Une Fille d'Ève:

mais... il veut peindre le pays tout en peignant les hommes, raconter les plus beaux sites et les principales villes de la France aux étrangers, constater l'état des constructions anciennes et modernes au XIXe siècle... Grâce au soin qu'il a eu, peut-être saura-t-on, en 1850, comment était le Paris de l'Empire.

Thus, he continues, the archaeologist can learn from the Comédie Humaine "la situation du tourniquet Saint-Jean et l'état du quartier adjacent", demolished in 1823; and indeed, we recall the description of this turnstile and its immediate vicinity in Une Double Famille³. Moreover, both in Paris and in the provinces houses are described whose existence no one reading the Comédie Humaine in 1850 (let alone 1971!) would ever have dreamed of, unless they had seen these houses for themselves; again, we recall such descriptions as the Maison Vauquer⁴, Molineux's squalid apartment in the Cour Batave⁵, the Guillaumes' shop⁶ and Judge Blondet's house at Alençon⁷.

1 Cf. D.H. Pinkney: Napoleon III and the Rebuilding of Paris, Princeton 1958, especially pp. 11, 17, 80.

2 Pl. XI, p. 376. This preface was written in 1839.

3 Pl. I, pp. 925-926.

4 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 848-855.

5 César Bistacou; Pl. V, pp. 393-394.

6 La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote; Pl. I, pp. 17-21.

7 Le Cabinet des Antiques; Pl. IV, pp. 433-434.

Balzac's descriptions of the districts of Paris are many and various ¹. In Illusions Perdues ², he recalls the so-called Galeries de Bois, which until 1828 stood adjacent to the Palais-Royal gardens, and whose

line

Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
Of all who had a purpose, or had not

had been a vivid memory of Wordsworth's stay in Paris in 1792:

toute cette infâme poésie est perdue... C'était horrible et gai... Ces monstrueux assemblages avaient je ne sais quoi de piquant, les hommes les plus insensibles étaient émus. Aussi tout Paris est-il venu là jusqu'au dernier moment... Des regrets immenses et unanimes ont accompagné la chute de ces ignobles morceaux de bois... ³

The same area, its gaming-houses and lottery-office are also evoked in Le Père Goriot ⁴ and La Rabouilleuse ⁵. La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote ⁶, Goriot ⁷ and Une Fille d'Ève ⁸ convey the elegance of the aristocratic Faubourg Saint-Germain; the more tawdry elegance of the new rich on the opposite side of the river, in the Chaussée d'Antin and its neighbourhood, also has a place in the Comédie Humaine ⁹. L'Interdiction describes ¹⁰ the squalor of the Rue de Fouarre, one of the most poverty-stricken areas in Paris; La Cousine Bette delineates the Place Delaborde ¹¹, and La Cousine Pons the horrors of the Cité Bordin ¹².

1 On this subject, M. Pierre Citron's La Poésie de Paris dans la littérature française de Rousseau à Claudel (Paris 1961, vol. II, pp. 181-237) should be consulted. Cf. also A. Bellesort: Balzac et son œuvre, Paris 1924, pp. 158-173.

2 Pl. IV, pp. 690-695.

3 Cf. L.-D. Véron: Mémoires d'un bourgeois de Paris, vol. I, Paris 1853, pp. 58-60.

4 Pl. II, p. 967.

5 Pl. III, pp. 914-915.

6 Pl. I, pp. 62-63.

7 Pl. II, pp. 900-901, 1,058-1,062.

8 Ibid., pp. 96-97.

9 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 964.

10 Pl. III, pp. 17-19, 24-28.

11 Pl. VI, pp. 510-511.

12 Ibid., pp. 788-790.

At this point, architecture has become the very opposite of art. Yet all must be described, for the sake of the documentary record and because a man's surroundings are the index of his character. Apropos of Madame Vauquer, Balzac writes: "toute sa personne explique la pension, comme la pension implique sa personne"¹. And again, in a sentence which summarizes both this chapter and the next:

l'animal a peu de mobilier, il n'a ni arts ni sciences;
tandis que l'homme, par une loi qui est à rechercher, tend à
représenter ses moeurs, sa pensée et sa vie dans tout ce qu'il
approprie à ses besoins².

Nevertheless, however valuable they may be from a historical--and even a sociological--point of view, Balzac's descriptions of architecture sometimes detract from the artistic merit of individual novels. From the standpoint of the Comédie Humaine, all may indeed be necessary, because all must be told--somewhere in the ninety-four novels--that needs to be told of the history of Balzac's own time. But in the novels in which many of these historical and sociological facts are related, a noticeable disproportion can result, when the documentary record, adequate for the Comédie Humaine as a whole, upsets the balance of a particular novel's constituent parts. However, this defect is less great where architectural descriptions are concerned than in the case of historical, juridical and other disquisitions.

The rôle of architecture as an inspirer of visual reminiscences is very much a secondary one in the Comédie Humaine. Its chief importance lies in the many descriptions of houses, castles and churches, not to mention shops, both in Paris and in the provinces. Many of these buildings were swept away during Balzac's own lifetime, many more under the Second Empire; the historical record of the Comédie Humaine is, as Balzac knew that it would be, as valuable from an architectural standpoint as from any other.

1 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 852.

2 Avant-Propos de la Comédie Humaine; Pl. I, p. 5.

XI: FURNISHINGS AND SETTINGS IN BALZAC'S NOVELS

Much of the furniture in the Comédie Humaine is of artistic merit, and young artists are employed in the decoration of wealthy homes. Hippolyte Schinner, for example, works on the ceilings and wall-paintings of the Comte de Sérizy's mansion at Presles¹; when he resigns the commission, his place is taken by Joseph Bridau², with Mistigris as the latter's assistant. But though we are told that Joseph is to paint murals, architraves and arabesques at the Château de Presles, we are never granted an actual description of the work carried out by these artists of genius. Balzac, incidentally, foreshadows the revival of mural painting in France. Only a year after the serialization of Un Début dans la Vie, and one year before its volume publication, Ingres started work on "The Golden Age" at the Château de Dampierre; later mural painters were Théodore Chassériau and Puvis de Chavannes. In the Comédie Humaine, however, we are left to imagine the prodigies its brilliant talents achieve, working to create a modern setting. The sumptuous décors in Balzac's novels are all of them set pieces dating from earlier centuries.

As far as furniture itself is concerned, a clear distinction must be drawn between present and past styles. Perhaps because he disliked contemporary furniture so much, Balzac never presents a detailed description of the ottomans, chaises-longues, lyre-back chairs and mahogany or rosewood work-tables that are now sought after as fine specimens of the age of Louis-Philippe. The modern

1 Un Début dans la Vie; Pl. I, pp. 653, 689.

2 Le Rabouilleux; Pl. III, pp. 894, 1,026, 1,028.

furniture in the Comédie Humaine is either vulgarly ostentatious, if it belongs to some philistine parvenu, or repulsively humdrum, if in an average household. Instances of parvenu vulgarity are the Hôtel de Nucingen, in the Chaussée-d'Antin, with its

colonnes minces, à portiques mesquins..., des stucs, des paliers d'escalier en mosaïque de marbre, ... un petit salon à peintures italiennes, dont le décor ressemblait à celui des cafés ¹,

and the refurbished Hôtel Cormon at Alençon:

la majesté bourgeoise du salon des Cormon n'exista plus quand il fut blanc et or, meublé d'ottomanes en acajou, et tendu de soie bleue... Ce fut le mauvais goût de l'agent de change: des colonnes de stuc, des portes en glace, des profils grecs, des moulures sèches, tous les styles mêlés, une magnificence hors de propos ².

The small town-house which Crevel equips for his mistress Valérie Marneffe is "un magnifique spécimen du luxe des sots" ³, though planned by Grindot, the Comédie Humaine's leading architect and interior designer. Elsewhere, in for example César Bixetteau's house ⁴, Grindot practises a feature of contemporary interior design greatly to Balzac's liking: the juxtaposition of contrasting colours in each room--red and white, blue and white, green and white, brown and green, etc. A similar taste in colour schemes had been shown by Balzac himself in his flat in the Rue des Batailles ⁵.

1 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 964.

2 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, pp. 320-321.

3 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 473.

4 Pl. V, pp. 452-454.

5 Cf. supra, p. 16.

Thus, though the colour schemes of the Restoration and July Monarchy have Balzac's approval, the furniture of these periods does not. None of the good furniture in the Comédie Humaine belongs to the time when Balzac was writing. It exists either in the museum-like collections of men like Pons or in the almost equally museum-like settings of bygone times. And these settings of bygone times fall into two categories: the settings of historical novels proper (as, for example, in Les Proscrites or Maître Cornélius), and those of novels whose action takes place in the modern era, but where old houses with old furnishings are depicted.

Like the collection of Alexandre du Sommerard, inaugurated in 1843 as the Musée de Cluny, Pons's collection is truly museum-like. Huddled together in two small rooms in a flat in the Rue de Normandie are 1,907 objects¹—including the sixty or so remarkable paintings that the old musician has acquired during a collecting life of some forty years. They also include Etruscan jewellery, Florentine bronzes, a silver epergne attributed to Benvenuto Cellini, sixteen Swiss stained-glass windows, enamels, ivories, wood-carvings, statues, pastel drawings, valuable picture-frames, goldsmith's work, copperware, a buhl clock, carved cupboards, ebony sideboards, porcelain, miniatures and gold and silver snuff-boxes². (It seems almost incredible that such objects plus many hundreds of others could fit into two rooms!) Even more similar to the "musée Pons" was the collection built up by another musician-connoisseur, Charles Sauvageot³; whilst Balzac's own collecting ambitions are reflected in every detail⁴. In their drab surroundings in a forgotten corner of the Marais, Pons's treasures

1 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 531.

2 Ibid., pp. 544, 568, 592, 593, 594, 651, 719.

3 Cf. my book, The Genesis of "Le Cousin Pons", Oxford 1966, pp. 107-110.

4 Ibid., pp. 119-126.

shine forth as richly as the Schatzkammern of Dresden and Vienna, which Balzac had visited. So much so that they can scarcely be considered as furniture at all. They add no glamour to their setting. Indeed, by emphasizing its dreariness, they detract from it.

By contrast, the old Antiquary's museum¹ is in perfect harmony with its magical setting. Its madreporas, stuffed crocodiles, tortoises, monkeys and boa constrictors, its Egyptian mummies, sphinx of Sesostris, Etruscan vases, mosaics from Herculaneum, statues from classical Greece, ancient bas-reliefs and Renaissance ebony, its monstrances, illuminated missals, stained-glass windows, onyxes, ivories, cameos, lacquerware, porphyry vases and agate bowls, its pistols, daggers, Milanese armour, Moorish yataghans, Red Indian tomahawks, scalping-knives and pipes of peace, its rebecks, locks, chibouks, Tahitian loin-cloths and Oriental idols, and its Chinese porcelain, stoves decorated by Bernard Palissy, Sèvres vases, Dresden plates and salt-cellar by Cellini (the latter an echo of Vienna!) reveal an exoticism in bric-à-brac which not only is unparalleled in the Comédie Humaine but admirably conveys the Antiquary's omniscience and fabulous power. In a novel that reminds one of The Arabian Nights, it is fitting that a collector more than a hundred years old should have this collection, particularly when he believes in "Savoir" rather than "Vouloir" or "Pouvoir"², and when the greatest of all his treasures is a magic talisman with (supposedly) Sanskrit lettering. "Tous les pays de la terre semblaient avoir apporté là quelques débris de leurs sciences, un échantillon de leurs arts"³.

1 Le Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, pp. 22-28.

2 Ibid., p. 40.

3 Ibid., p. 23.

Above all, Balzac confers on this lengthy description a sense of visionary movement only rivalled in the Comédie Humaine by the description, three years later, of Madame Vauquer's boarding-house¹, just as hallucinatory, but squalid rather than exotic. If the portrait of Sylvain Pons², at the very end of Balzac's career, has deserved praise³ for the richness and variety of its metaphors, then the richness and variety of Balzac's connoisseurship is still more deserving of praise—coming as it does at the very outset of the Comédie Humaine.

A third, and again very different, collection of art objects is that of Florine, in Une Fille d'Ève⁴. Only James de Rothschild's museum collection could equal it in point of sumptuousness and variety⁵. Like their picture collections, the bric-à-brac of the courtesans betokens the lavish wealth of aristocratic admirers, rather than any collector's shrewdness. It also places an accent on the eighteenth century: for Balzac, an era rich in amorous intrigue. Carved oak wainscoting patterned with thin streaks of gold leaf, and with oil paintings set in panels; a buhl clock on a tortoise-shell pedestal inlaid with brass; embossed porcelain; a magnificent display of silver on an étagère; statuettes rescued from some secularized abbey: such is the general quality of Florine's furnishings. On the other hand, Florine's house is less redolent of the eighteenth century than is Josépha's: her paintings are modern; her candelabra were made at the Renaissance; the ivory statue on her dining-room mantelpiece is supposed to be by Michelangelo. This interest in the Renaissance was as much a feature of Balzac's time as the newly developing interest in Rococo art: Balzac prided himself on his Florentine furniture⁶; Du Sommerard and Sauvageot mainly specialized in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

1 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 848-852.

2 Pl. VI, pp. 525-537.

3 A. Bellessort: op. cit., pp. 272-274.

4 Pl. II, pp. 101-102.

5 Ibid., p. 102.

6 Cf. supra, pp. 23-25.

The museum-like collections of Pons, Florine and the Antiquary are by no means the only such settings created by Balzac. All the other good furniture described in the Comédie Humaine is placed within a museum-like setting, so that museum and home are indistinguishable. How different from the discord between the "musée Pons" and its surroundings, or the visionary farrago of the Antiquary's shop! Only in Florine's house were the museum objects so arranged as to enhance the home; yet, though her collection was equal to the Rothschilds', we are shown less of it than of either Pons's or the Antiquary's--no doubt because the harmony between museum and home was so difficult to convey:

il y avait de la coquetterie et du laissez-aller, deux qualités qui ne se trouvent réunies que chez les artistes...; enfin le luxe exquis de l'artiste qui n'a d'autre capital que son mobilier.

Sometimes the museum-like setting that contains good furniture is placed in a truly historical novel: as witness Les Proscrits, whose action is set in early fourteenth-century Paris, and in which Dante appears; or Maître Cornélius, which describes Tours and its environs in the year 1479. Thus, in Les Proscrits¹, Tirechair's house has two guest-rooms with fine old armchairs in carved walnut, Flemish tapestries on the walls, ancient chests inlaid with pewter, and a table with turned legs. In Maître Cornélius², Louis XI's sick-room has high-warp Flemish tapestries, walnut panelling, and a bed and other furniture inlaid with pewter. Similar examples could be taken from Sur Catherine de Médicis³. So much for the furniture of the later Middle Ages and the Renaissance: "où les arts commençaient à produire tant de chefs-d'oeuvre"². Balzac's knowledge of these masterpieces is sketchy; his interest in them, like that of Hugo, George Sand and Nerval, is a reflexion of contemporary taste.

1 Pl. X, p. 323.

2 Pl. IX, p. 937.

3 Pl. X, pp. 125-126.

But more usually the tasteful furnishings of the Comédie Humaine are historical settings within modern novels. Just as it is possible for us today to sit in some elegant eighteenth-century drawing-room undeseccrated by time, so in Balzac's own day novels whose action was set in the first half of the nineteenth century could still depict houses and furniture of bygone eras. In La Recherche de l'Absolu, for example, medieval and Renaissance furniture is still in daily use in a house at Douai between the years 1812 and 1824. Balthazar Claës's home—its ebony wainscoting with sixty carved panels illustrating the life of Jakob van Artevelde¹, its oak dressers laden with ancestral porcelain², its purple leather wall-hangings embossed with gold ornamentation² (similar to the ones belonging to Baron Rutger von Essen at Skokloster)—is essentially a product of sixteenth-century skill and workmanship. It is, as we have seen³, quite possible that Balzac actually visited Douai and saw houses of a similar character (features of such houses still exist in Douai today⁴); on the other hand, he may—as Mlle Fargeaud has suggested⁵—have seen similar houses, with similar décors, in Tours and elsewhere. However, in the description of Claës's home Balzac's indebtedness to painting is as great as to any actual houses he may have visited⁶. Not only is the exterior of the house as carefully preserved as "un vieux tableau"⁷, the vidrecomes on the dining-room table are taken from some Dutch or Flemish still-life². What is more, even Raphael's "Madonna della Sedia" (at the Louvre in 1815⁸, but now in the Palazzo Pitti) has contributed to the Claës household: the chairs, with their rectangular frames, turned uprights and tasselled velvet backrests, are no different in design from the one in Raphael's tondo.

1 Pl. IX, p. 483.

2 Ibid., p. 523.

3 Cf. supra, p. 130.

4 Cf. supra, p. 258.

5 Op.cit., pp. 390-407.

6 Cf. supra, pp. 130-131.

7 La Recherche de l'Absolu Pl. IX, p. 481.

8 Cf. supra, p. 167, n. 2.

With the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Balzac is on much firmer ground—despite the apparently knowledgeable enthusiasm that had led him to write of the sixteenth century as "cette époque unique dans les fastes de l'Humanité"¹. The solid, dignified Louis XIV style is also to be found in Claës's home, where the parlour furniture (originally of the Renaissance) was replaced in the seventeenth century². In an even earlier novel, La Peau de Chagrin³, Foedora has "une pièce dorée où revivait le goût du siècle de Louis XIV". A modern imitation of this style is César Birotteau's dining-room, "avec la pendule de Boulle, les buffets de cuivre et d'écaille, les murs tendus en étoffe à clous dorés"⁴, buhl work that probably was not genuine. As we can infer from the Comédie Humaine itself⁵, there was a great deal of counterfeit buhl on the market. However, the buhl clock at the Château de Cinq-Cygne⁶ is certainly genuine, and so is Florine's⁷. There are buhl sideboards in Célestine Rabourdin's dining-room⁸, at Clochegourde⁹ and in the home of Dr Minoret¹⁰. The Saillards' buhl writing-desk¹¹ is equally genuine: it had been bought for a fraction of its real value at a time when buhl work had not yet come back into fashion. Although frequently an element in Balzac's furnishings, these buhl clocks, writing-desks, sideboards and pier-tables do not usually belong to a Louis XIV setting as such: generally placed in eighteenth-century settings, they also form a stylistic link between the Grand Siècle and the Age of Rococo.

- 1 Sur Catherine de Médicis; Pl. X, p. 104.
- 2 La Recherche de l'Absolu; Pl. IX, p. 483.
- 3 Pl. IX, p. 103.
- 4 Pl. V, p. 454.
- 5 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, pp. 235, 452.
- 6 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, p. 488.
- 7 Une Fille d'Ève; Pl. II, p. 102.
- 8 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 892.
- 9 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, p. 806.
- 10 Ursule Mirouët; Pl. III, p. 406.
- 11 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 901.

The Louis XV style of furnishing is the one which Balzac most likes, and in the description of which he excels. The Cosédie Humaine is rich in evocative pictures of eighteenth-century interiors: the changelessness of the Hochons' drawing-room at Issoudun,

dont tout le mobilier simple et presque sombre apparut à madame Bridau dans l'état où elle l'avait laissé. La Monarchie, la Révolution, l'Empire, la Restauration, qui respectèrent peu de chose, avaient respecté cette salle où leurs splendeurs et leurs désastres ne laissaient pas la moindre trace¹;

the grey-painted wainscoting of the Rougets' house opposite, with its fine marble fireplace and richly gilded wall-mirror, its ornate side-table with marble top supporting a huge Chinese vase, its carved oak armchairs covered in tapestry, "ce luxe tant prisé de nos jours, mais alors sans aucun prix à Issoudun"²; the small Parisian apartment of the Princesse de Vaurémont, its boudoir a harmony of vermilion and gold³, its drawing-room furnished in white and poppy-red, with Chinese inkstands on its console-tables and the frames of its wall-mirrors carved with garlands of flowers⁴, the Princess's bedroom a harmony of white and gold, its gilded furniture upholstered in yellow floral damask, its matching curtains lined with white moire, its fire-screen covered in Gobelins tapestry, and with the mellow tints of a Savonnerie carpet and the grandeur of a four-poster bed with an upholstered headboard⁵.

1 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 1,005.

2 Ibid., p. 965.

3 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 132.

4 Ibid., p. 135.

5 Ibid., pp. 133-134.

In Pierrette¹, Balzac contrasts the nouveau-riche vulgarity of the Rogrons' house at Provins with the mellow refinement of Madame Tiphaine's drawing-room in the same town. Admittedly, the actual contrast is expressed by Madame Tiphaine herself, who can naturally be expected to show a bias towards the furnishings in her own home; but her strictures on the Rogrons' house-furnishing accord with Balzac's own views². Both detest colour-schemes in which one colour predominates to the almost total exclusion of any other--such as the garish appearance of the Rogrons' drawing-room: red curtains, red wallpaper, red-upholstered furniture, red marble fireplace, clock, tea-table and candelabra! Balzac would have had little or no sympathy with the Red, Blue and Gold Drawing-Rooms which proliferated in those days in British mansions. Equally, he detested the dull, heavy bronzes of standardized design, the confusion of mock Greek and mock Roman motifs, and the ornamental lions, crudely painted porcelain, and mirror-frames moulded in plaster of Paris which call forth Madame Tiphaine's sharpest derision. Infinitely finer is the drawing-room which she and her husband have inherited unchanged from earlier Tiphaines: tapestried furniture, a Louis XV fireplace, no doubt in marble, a rococo chandelier possibly in crystal and porcelain like the one in Jean-Jacques Rouget's house³, a clock with floral decorations, green and white curtains in flowered silk, pier-glasses, and blue Sevres vases with brass mounts. A very similar setting (pier-glass decorated with shepherdesses, lampas-covered bergère, buhl clock and floral candelabra) is evoked in the description of the drawing-room at the Château de Cinq-Cygne⁴.

1 Pl. III, pp. 679-682.

2 Ibid., pp. 682-683.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 965.

4 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, pp. 487-488.

There is some acerbity, however, in Balzac's picture of the drawing-room in the Hôtel Cormon, at Alençon¹. Not that he has anything to say against the grey-painted wainscoting, the tapestry-upholstered furniture, the rock-crystal chandelier, green damask curtains, blue Sèvres vases or the pier-glass. But he confesses a healthy dislike for the more mythological aspects of Rococo: decorative allegories of the chariot of Day driven by the Hours, or Cupids harvesting, skating, sowing or garlanded with flowers according to the season. As in his account of the Rougets' neglected treasures, he stresses how unappreciated these objects were at the time of which he is writing (1816):

le cabinet de travail, entièrement lambrissé de vieux laque rouge, noir et or, devait avoir quelques années plus tard un prix fou dont ne se doutait point mademoiselle Cormon...

L'inutile boudoir était tendu de ce vieux perse après lequel courent aujourd'hui tous les amateurs du genre dit Pompadour.

Madame Tiphaine, like Dinah de La Beudraye², is a leader of public opinion in her appreciation of such treasures. After all, the Saillards'³, Grandets'⁴ and Rougets'⁵ eighteenth-century rarities were acquired only by accident; either they were included in another purchase, or they were cheaper than new. Balzac himself is both behind and ahead of public opinion in his enjoyment of "les merveilles de la France-Pompadour"⁶. Even at the time when he was writing his novels, Rococo furnishings were still largely out of fashion, though a few discerning collectors like Lord Hertford (and Sylvain Pons) had been discreetly collecting them—Pons even earlier than Hertford⁷.

- 1 La Vieille Femme Pl. IV, p. 247.
- 2 La Muse du Département Pl. IV, p. 64.
- 3 Les Employés Pl. VI, p. 901.
- 4 Pl. III, pp. 492-493.
- 5 La Rabouilleuse Pl. III, pp. 964-966.
- 6 Le Cousin Pons Pl. VI, p. 532.
- 7 Cf. supra, p. 28.

In his general attitude of laudator temporis acti, Balzac appreciated the timelessness of settings like the Hochons' drawing-room, the fact that such eighteenth-century furnishings as he knew (and these must have included Jean de Margonne's Château de Saché, the Pommercuils' at Fougères and Nodier's salon at the Arsenal) had traversed unscathed the tumultuous vicissitudes of Revolution and Empire. "quelle paix! quel calme!" he writes of the Hôtel Cormon ¹,

rien de pompeux, mais rien de transitoire: là, tout semble éternel... Là tout respirait la vieille, l'inaltérable province.

He shows no interest, however, in the furnishings of Louis XVI's reign, perhaps because they did represent transitoriness to him (transitional in style, and also symbolic of the end of an era), more probably because they had fallen into that trough of unpopularity which awaits all art a few decades after its initial acceptance. His opinion of the Empire style is hardly more favourable, despite that style's very real merits and despite Balzac's enormous admiration for the achievements of the Empire as represented in Napoleon. Naturally, Empire settings exist in some number in the Comédie Humaine, if only because so many of the novels are set during the Empire or shortly after it. Thus, we find the palatial residence of Madame de Carigliano, in La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote ², a novel whose action takes place largely before 1815; or the equally palatial residence of Madame de Beuséant, in Le Père Goriot ³, where the action is set in the years 1819-1820; or the Hôtel de Lanty, in Sarrasine ⁴.

1 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, p. 247.

2 Pl. I, pp. 62-63.

3 Pl. II, pp. 901, 903, 914.

4 Pl. VI, p. 79.

What is most remarkable about these descriptions, however, is not so much the splendour of the surroundings as the absence of much detail or precision. Partly, no doubt, because Balzac was not familiar with the Empire style of furnishing to any real degree, the only article of furniture mentioned in any of these fashionable residences is the green velvet ottoman on which the Duchesse de Carigliano reclines voluptuously like some antique statue¹—or like Canova's "Pauline Borghese", or David's "Madame Récamier". Significantly, the debt to both painting and sculpture is more visible here than any debt to the applied art of furniture-making.

Even Chaboisseau's Empire furnishings, in Illusions Perdues², are derived from painting rather than from the "real" world:

drapé par une étoffe teinte en pourpre et disposée à la grecque le long de la muraille comme le fond d'un tableau de David, le lit, d'une forme très pure, datait du temps de l'Empire où tout se fabriquait dans ce goût.

The visual origin of this description is David's "Amours de Paris et d'Hélène"³.

Just once in the Comédie Humaine, in the account of Crevel's visit to Adeline Hulot in the opening pages of La Cousine Bette, an Empire décor adds resonances of meaning independently of painting or sculpture. The symbolism of Adeline's Empire drawing-room in the Rue de l'Université—its red silk curtains faded by sunlight and threadbare at the folds, its carpet so faded as to have lost all its colour, its worn silk upholstery and the chipped gilt on its chairs and sofas⁴—only becomes apparent, however, when we remember the year (1838) in which the events of La Cousine Bette begin.

1 La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote; Pl. I, p. 63.

2 Pl. IV, p. 835.

3 Cf. supra, p. 47.

4 Pl. VI, p. 138.

Like the wedding-cake symbolism in Great Expectations, the faded drawing-room provides a contrast between past and present: the successful early career of the Napoleonic administrator, Hector Hulot, and the present, with its sense of having outlived one's usefulness--and with its financial stringency. All this is reflected in the Empire setting, so that Crevel and the reader are aware of Adeline Hulot's situation even before conversation begins; the sight of her drawing-room has been enough. Le Cousin Pons, twinned with La Cousine Bette to form Les Parents Pauvres, repeats the contrast between Empire and latter-day July Monarchy, laden with overtones of decadence. There, however, other means are used to convey a sense of futility and decay.

So little, in fact, is Balzac impressed by Empire furnishings that the name of Napoleon's leading cabinet-maker, Jacob Desmalters, appears only three times in the Comédie Humaine. In Adeline Hulot's bedroom are "de beaux meubles de Jacob" in bird's-eye mahogany¹. Pons's fastidiously out-of-date clothes have a kind of desiccation about them that recalls "les meubles grâces de Jacob"². The reference to him in La Rabouilleuse³ is positively hostile. In the drawing-room of the flat to which she moves after her husband's death Madame Bridau places

un de ces meubles communs, en acajou, à têtes égyptiennes, que Jacob Desmalters fabriquait par grosses en 1806, et garni d'une étoffe en soie verte à rosaces blanches.

All in all, we are left with the impression that Balzac did not welcome the impact of neo-Classicism upon furniture. He even rejects its ornaments, "ces bronzes qui ont trouvé le moyen d'être plus froids que les cuivres de Louis XVI"¹. A warmer style of furnishing is desirable, especially in middle-class homes.

1 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 279.

2 Pl. VI, p. 528.

3 Pl. III, p. 861.

Aristocratic houses, on the other hand, can afford to be more eccentric in interior decoration. They have many more rooms to contain their follies. The Gothic style of furnishing, which received such a powerful impetus from Scott and the "Gothic" novels of Beckford, Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, and was practised in England both by Horace Walpole at Twickenham and Beckford at Fonthill, holds a small place in Balzac's imaginative universe; it does, however, feature in one of the earlier novels, La Peau de Chagrin¹, where Fedora has a room entirely decorated in Gothic style.

Dans un boudoir gothique dont les portes étaient cachées par des rideaux en tapisserie, les encadrements de l'étoffe, la pendule, les dessins du tapis étaient gothiques; le plafond formé de solives brunes sculptées présentait à l'œil des caissons pleins de grâce et d'originalité, les boiseries étaient artistement travaillées, rien ne détruisait l'ensemble de cette jolie décoration, pas même les croisées dont les vitraux étaient colorés et précieux.

"In a house where there are so many rooms that some are entered only three or four times a year, such a fancy may pass", said Goethe², condemning—as Balzac essentially does—"the late fashion of arranging entire apartments in the old German and Gothic style". But the true Gothic style is sympathetically described by Balzac in his picture of the Hôtel du Guénic at Guérande³.

1 Pl. IX, p. 102.

2 J. W. von Goethe: op. cit., p. 207; 17 January 1827.

3 Réatrix Pl. II, pp. 325-331.

Tasteful elegance in furnishing is the quality most prized by Balzac himself. One has only to look at the plans and watercolour designs for the Chartreuse Beaujon ¹, drawn up by the architect Santi, Balzac's own Grindot, to realize that at the heart of mid-nineteenth century Paris a series of elegant eighteenth-century décors were being recreated. The house that had once belonged to the eighteenth-century financier Nicolas Beaujon, and which was to become the home of a woman who called herself the great-niece of that eighteenth-century queen of France Maria Leszczyńska ², was rich in Sèvres, Limoges and Mainz dinner services ³, Sèvres and Dresden vases ⁴, Chinese vases ⁵ (some with a celadon glaze ⁶, some with gilt-bronze mounts ⁷), enamel boxes ⁸, a tea service ³ and a cup ⁹ decorated by Watteau, buhl clocks ¹⁰ and buhl and Dresden chandeliers ¹¹. In the three drawing-rooms, the dining-room and various antechambers were numerous wall-mirrors and console-tables. The cupolas over the two antechambers by the private chapel were adorned with Rococo motifs by the young artists Hédouin and Buisson, who were at work on this assignment at the very time when, in a nearby room, Balzac was completing Le Cousin Pons ¹². For each principal room in the Chartreuse Beaujon Balzac and Santi worked out colour schemes with as much love and ingenuity as had previously been shown in the descriptions of imaginary settings

1 A 328; "Documents concernant l'hôtel de Balzac, rue Fortunée".

2 Cf. supra, pp. 25-26.

3 A 329, fol. 11.

4 Ibid., folios 3, 7, 14; fol. 11.

5 Ibid., folios 3, 4, 5.

6 Lettres à Madame Hanska II, p. 524; 21 October 1844.

7 A 329, fol. 10.

8 Ibid., fol. 4.

9 Ibid., fol. 17.

10 Ibid., folios 6, 17, 18.

11 Ibid., folios 2, 8.

12 H. de Chennevières: "Jules Buisson. Eaux-fortes à la pointe sur cuivre, eaux-fortes à la plume sur papier", L'Art, December 1903, p. 614. Cf. supra, p. 28.

in the Comédie Humaine: Montriveau's bedroom in La Duchesse de Langeais¹, the boudoir of Paquita Valdès in La Fille aux Yeux d'Or², the drawing-room, study, boudoir and other rooms in César Birotteau's redecorated house³, Florine's bedroom and drawing-room in Une Fille d'Eve⁴, Félicité's in Béatrix⁵. Everywhere, both in fiction and in reality, we find

cette suave harmonie que les artistes seuls savent établir en poursuivent un système⁶ de décoration jusque dans les plus petits accessoires ;

in both fiction and reality, the interior design is planned in a modern way to set off the beauty of choice antiques. It would have come as a great satisfaction to Balzac, who was unable to dispose of his "Florentine furniture" to James de Rothschild⁷, to know that the Chartreuse Beaujon and all its decorations were bought by Baroness Solomon de Rothschild on the death of Madame Hańska in 1882. By no means the least of Balzac's achievements, in his short period of twenty years' creativity, was his choice and refurbishment of a palace fit for a Rothschild.

His considerable knowledge in matters of bric-à-brac cannot be denied. It is easy to laugh at him for claiming to have found "un lustre qui vient d'un mobilier de l'Empereur d'Allemagne (car il a l'aigle à deux têtes à son faite)"⁸, or a sideboard and cabinet that once belonged to Marie de' Medici⁷, or a watch so fine that "ça ne serait pas extraordinaire que ce fût la montre d'Henriette d'Angleterre"⁹; here is the novelist's imagination at work; but such fancifulness does not in itself lessen the intrinsic quality of Balzac's purchases, nor does it detract from his knowledge.

1 Pl. V, pp. 209-210.

2 Ibid., pp. 301-303.

3 Ibid., pp. 452-454.

4 Pl. II, p. 102.

5 Ibid., pp. 385-386.

6 César Birotteau; Pl. V, p. 453.

7 Cf. supra, pp. 23-25.

8 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, p. 173; 15 February 1846.

9 Ibid., p. 113; 23 December 1845.

Porcelain constitutes an abiding interest throughout the 1840s, and never more so than at the time of Le Cousin Pons, when Balzac was actively engaged both in writing about it and in collecting it for the Chartreuse Beaujon. His own collection, as we have seen, consisted largely of Sèvres, in which he had shown an interest as early as 1831, when goblets at the Taillefer banquet were hand-painted with Poussin landscapes "copiés à Sèvres" ¹. Balzac's own preference is for the imposing dinner-service, and for fine vases that can stand on console-tables or ebony cabinets; it is perhaps a conventional preference, in that to most people Sèvres's claim to be the leading manufactory of French porcelain is even more irrefragable than Wedgwood's in England; but it is also a taste that fully accords with his general predilection for the eighteenth century. There is no limit to the presence of Sèvres porcelain in the Comédie Humaine; Madame Tiphaine's "vases de vieux Sèvres, en vieux bleu", with antique brass mounts ²; similar vases, "du premier bleu de Sèvres", in Camille Maupin's bedroom ³; others belonging to Mlle Cormon ⁴ and Ursule Mirouët ⁵; some, formerly in Marie-Antoinette's boudoir, bought from Auvergnat antique-dealers by the sordid money-lender Gigonnet ⁶; pieces of an eighteenth-century dinner service at the Château de Cinq-Cygne ⁷; small candelabra, "en vieux Sèvres comme il ne s'en fait plus", in Achille de Malvaux's apartment ⁸. There are even Sèvres bathroom tiles at the Château des Aigues ⁹.

1 La Peau de Chagrins; Pl. IX, p. 61.

2 Pierrette; Pl. III, p. 681.

3 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 386.

4 La Vieille Fille; Pl. IV, p. 248.

5 Pl. III, p. 331.

6 César Birotteau; Pl. V, pp. 539-540.

7 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, p. 492.

8 La Femme Adultère; Pl. XI, p. 108.

9 Les Ravens; Pl. VIII, p. 20.

Balzac does not seem to have the same interest in modern Sèvres, any more than he is interested in contemporary Dresdenware. His aim in his own home was to collect eighteenth-century porcelain from these two manufactories; his practice within the Comédie Humaine was to place it within eighteenth-century interiors. The Mortsaufs' dining-room, in Le Lys dans la Vallée¹, has a Dresden dinner service at a time (1814) when furnishings of the Ancien Régime had not yet come back into fashion; similarly, the Château de Cinq-Cygne, in 1803, boasts Dresden china². Explaining the finer points of porcelain-collecting to Madame de Marville, Pons stresses that eighteenth-century Dresdenware must be carefully distinguished from its nineteenth-century copies: artists of great merit painted the originals; the reproductions are infinitely less valuable³. Though in one passage of the Comédie Humaine¹ Balzac seems to imply that Dresden china was not a luxurious possession, Pons himself believes that "admirable things"⁴ came out of the porcelain-factories of Meissen and Dresden; so much so that the Antiquary boasts Dresden plates in his fabulous collection⁵.

Pons's lengthy explanation of the thrills and pitfalls of china-collecting is, in fact, a considerable tour de force. It is not only that the somewhat esoteric information he gives Madame de Marville is substantially accurate; to anyone other than his cousin Pons's language would have conveyed his infectious enthusiasm. Where did Balzac derive all his knowledge of marks, modern reproduction techniques and ancient prices? Partly, no doubt, from Armand Bertin, managing director of the Journal des Débats and a

1 Pl. VIII, p. 806.

2 Une Ténébreuse Affaire; Pl. VII, p. 492.

3 Pl. VI, p. 553.

4 Ibid., p. 552.

5 La Passé de Chagrins; Pl. IX, p. 23.

keen collector himself ¹; partly also from earnest discussions with antique-dealers, such as Lazard at Marseilles ² or Schwab at Mainz ³; partly because such matters were then in the air, with Champfleury about to start his collection of porcelain and faience just as Nerval's hobby was to be furniture. Although at times a garrulous extrovert, Balzac could also be an attentive listener. The digression on porcelain wells up in Le Cousin Pons from Balzac's own practical experience, just as the aside concerning the Château d'Aulnay ⁴ probably stemmed from an antique-collecting foray to Normandy which Balzac made on 26 December 1845 ⁵.

The one puzzling aspect of Balzac's interest in porcelain is that the Comédie Humaine—unlike the Chartreuse de Brujon—is comparatively devoid of Chinese and Japanese objects. Pons, echoing Bertin, admittedly has something to say on the reproduction of Grand Mandarin vases ⁶, but how rare in the actual settings of the novels are either they or their originals! There is just one in La Rabouilleuse ⁷—its merit totally unappreciated. A few Chinese cups are to be found in the Antiquary's collection ⁸. Camille Maupin has fine vases in Japanese porcelain ⁹. One of the Seilliards' most precious salvages from the wreckage of the Revolution is a magnificent set of Japanese dessert plates ¹⁰. Yet Balzac himself had an insatiable appetite for huge Chinese vases with Louis XV gilt-bronze mounts. A possible explanation is that he only developed this appetite around 1844: three years before the abrupt collapse of his career.

1 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, pp. 217-218; 17 June 1846. Cf. supra, p. 28.

2 Ibid., pp. 65, 90 and n. 1; 13 November, 8 December 1845.

3 Ibid., pp. 352, 408; 14 September, 2 October 1846.

4 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 552.

5 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 113; 27 December 1845.

6 Pl. VI, p. 553.

7 Pl. III, p. 965.

8 La Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 23.

9 Rastignac; Pl. II, p. 386.

10 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 901.

Carpets are another important feature in the settings of the Comédie Humaine. Often Balzac is only concerned with a carpet's place within the colour scheme of a room ¹; then he has no time to describe the particular kind of carpet, or to identify its place of origin. At other times, however, he is more explicit. Chinese and Indian carpets seem to hold no interest for him; but the quality which he ignores in the Far East is noted in full measure in the carpets of Turkey and Persia. Besides which the carpet industries of Brussels, Aubusson and Chaillot are given due mention in the Comédie Humaine. But Aubusson carpets, though undoubtedly of excellent quality (especially by the standards of today), receive less recognition from Balzac than they deserve: those egregious Philistines, the Rogrons, choose one for their drawing-room ²; Agathe Bridau also has one in her drawing-room, but it is in poor condition, having been discarded by the Ministry of the Interior when the offices were being refurnished ³; a third Aubusson is part of the simple furniture of Chapeloud's drawing-room ⁴. In French carpet-manufacture, Balzac infinitely prefers the Savonneries; but, fittingly enough (since Savonnerie carpets ceased to be made in 1826), they are a symbol of rococo elegance: the Princesse de Vaurémont's was given to her by Louis XV ⁵; Camille Maupin's is one of

les choses élégantes, riches, somptueuses, délicates, au milieu desquelles les jolies femmes du dix-huitième siècle faisaient l'amour .

1 E.g., Pl. II, pp. 385, 547; Pl. III, p. 330; Pl. V, p. 210; Pl. VII, p. 492; Pl. IX, p. 102.

2 Pierrotta; Pl. III, p. 682.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 861.

4 Le Curé de Tours; Pl. III, p. 788.

5 Mémoires de Deux Jeunes Mariées; Pl. I, p. 133.

6 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 386.

Amongst carpets of modern manufacture, those from Brussels far surpass Aubusson ones as symbols of extravagant elegance. The deep pile of the Brussels carpet in Du Tillet's study is the most sensuous indication of his "luxe effréné" ¹. Other Brussels carpets are amongst the expensive gewgaws lavished upon the kept woman, Hortense ². Not only, therefore, are they symbols of extravagant elegance; Brussels carpets also suggest parvenu showiness, and a deep-rooted unconcern for conventional morality.

If there are any magic carpets in the Comédie Humaine, they are from the Middle and Near East; not so much the Turkish carpets belonging to du Tillet ¹ and Célestine Rabourdin ² as the Persian carpets which Balzac invests with a thoroughly poetic quality. The one belonging to Paquita Valdès

ressemblait à un châle d'Orient, il en offrait les dessins et rappelait les poésies de la Perse, où des mains d'esclaves l'avaient travaillé ³.

Béatrix's "attestait une ancienne opulence dont les restes avaient été bien disposés" ⁴; adding a touch of magical glamour to her pitifully reduced circumstances. Her rival and perceptive critic Camille Maupin also has a carpet from Persia amongst the splendours of her drawing-room ⁵, a poetic object in harmony with the character of its owner. Another adds to the princely luxury of the Laginskis' house in the Rue de la Pépinière ⁶. Josépha Mirah, a courtesan far superior to Hortense in wealth and appeal, even surpasses her in the magic of Persian, rather than Brussels, carpets ⁷. Not to be outdone, Madame Moreau also boasts such extravagance ⁸; this vulgar social climber has somehow extracted it from the princely eighteenth-century mansion of the Comtes de

1 César Bixottaus; Pl. V, p. 500.

2 Un Homme d'Affaires; Pl. VI, p. 817.

3 La Fille aux Yeux d'Or; Pl. V, p. 302.

4 Pl. II, p. 548.

5 Ibid., p. 386.

6 La Femme Maîtresse; Pl. II, p. 18.

7 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 200.

8 Un Début dans la Vie; Pl. I, p. 675.

Sérisy. But in the agent's house at Presles the Persian carpet adds no magic, only mystification.

Thus the settings of upper-class houses in the Comédie Humaine closely reflect their creator's own taste and knowledge—particularly in his fondness of the eighteenth century, which to Balzac was the epitome of princely taste¹. Hence the furnishing of his own house in the manner of the eighteenth century. Whether or not all his Sèvres and Dresden porcelain, Chinese vases and buhl clocks, chandeliers and console-tables were authentic may be doubted. It is possible to smile at his emphatic assurance to Madame Hańska: "vous ne savez pas que j'emasse silencieusement un mobilier royal"². Here perhaps, as so often in Balzac's life and writing, is that peculiar blend of success and failure which meant that he sublimated his own worldly failures in the vicarious successes of fiction. Success there certainly was: however fancifully Balzac talked about his collecting sprees, his own home in the Avenue Fortunée was furnished with undeniable distinction; compared with so many houses of that time, the Chartreuse Beaujon impresses us with the skill with which furniture was displayed to its fullest advantage. This same skill is visible in his fictional settings. In the Comédie Humaine, as at the Chartreuse Beaujon, Balzac is a superb interior designer. The more closely they are examined, the Comédie Humaine's sixty or so settings of quality rank as one of the most outstanding of his achievements: not only as a social document of incomparable authority but as an exercise of the creative imagination.

1 La Femme Maîtresse; Pl. II, p. 17.

2 Lettres à Madame Hańska III, p. 100; 14 December 1845.

XII: THE PRESENCE OF ENGRAVINGS

Engravings are present in two ways in the Comédie Humaine: as influences and as objects. Their influence upon the characters and settings of Balzac's novels has been discussed in Chapter IV, where the impact of Gavarni, Monnier and others was suggested. Amongst engravers, the French caricaturists are in fact the principal imaginative influence upon the Comédie Humaine. In other words, the creative impact of engraving is largely limited to the quasi-journalistic ephemera of Balzac's contemporaries in Paris.

As for the great European masters of engraving, those who raised it into an independent art form, their impression is almost negligible. Mantegna; Dürer with his "Apocalypse" and "Melencolia" woodcuts, his "Adam and Eve" and "Death the Rider"¹; Lukas van Leyden; Van Dyck; Rembrandt; Goya's "Caprichos" and "Desastros de la Guerra"²; none of these really impinges upon the Comédie Humaine, nor is Balzac the man particularly responsive to them. He did, however, have a Dürer engraving representing "Christ", and also Dürer's portrait of Philip Melanchthon³. And he was fully aware of the early origins of engraving—even in sur Catharine de Médicis, some of whose descriptions may be indebted to Jacques Du Cerceau's Les Plus Excellents Bâtimens de France⁴, and where also he laments that no good visual record exists of Paris as it was in the mid-sixteenth century: "la gravure était dans l'enfance"⁵. Significantly,

1 Cf. supra, pp. 119-121.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 208-210.

3 A 329, fol. 9. Cf. supra, p. 121.

4 Cf. supra, p. 253, n. 3.

5 Pl. X, p. 50.

however, in this passage of sur Catharina de Médicis he couples engraving with genre-painting, and genre-painting seems in fact the rôle which Balzac chiefly assigns to engravings: an ancillary, even derivative art, not a substantial art form in itself.

Delacroix was not strictly an engraver, since lithography makes a surface rather than a relief impression; but amongst the artists in the closely related fields of engraving and lithography, he is perhaps foremost in his imaginative impact upon the Comédie Humaine. The influence of the Faust lithographs, especially the "Duel de Faust et de Valentin" (plate 6), has already been indicated in Chapter III ¹.

Only very rarely does Balzac's attention linger on traditional engraving. The importance of one of the greatest of all its practitioners, the seventeenth-century artist Jacques Callot, remained largely unrecognized until the 1820s; even then he was admired for somewhat adventitious reasons. Whereas today he is primarily remembered for his "Misères de la Guerre", a series of etchings (foreshadowing Goya) bitterly condemning Louis XIII's invasion of Lorraine, for Balzac and his contemporaries the genre portraits—etchings of beggar boys, old hags, hunchbacks—were more deserving of attention. Besides which there were the many "fantastic" scenes of demons, witches, broomsticks and witches' covens: precursors of Goethe's Faust, Part I and the tales of Hoffmann. Thus Victor Hugo, in Les Bayons et les Gibras ² (1839), writes of

les diables variés, vrais cauchemars de moine
Dont Callot en risait taquine saint Antoine,

comparing them with "les sorciers de Rembrandt, les gnomes de Goya". In the monumental Preface to his play Grosvenor (1827) Callot is presented as the "Michel-Ange burlesque" ³. Hoffmann himself, author of Phantasiestücke in Callots Manier (1814-1815), keenly appreciated his work.

1 Cf. supra, pp. 54-56.

2 Oeuvres poétiques, vol. I, Paris 1964, p. 1,064.

3 Théâtre complet, vol. I, Paris 1963, p. 418.

Callot's wide popularity is attested by Balzac in various ways. First, by the collector. One of Dutocq's ambitions is to assemble a complete collection of Callot's engravings¹. Then, by numerous incidental references in the novels, at moments when the medium of the written word can go no further and Balzac must draw on his reader's visual memory to convey adequately the vision before his own eyes. To describe the tortuous workings of the Civil Service, with its "fantaisies dignes de Callot"², calls for the etcher's burin in addition to the writer's pen. To describe Bianchon's and Granville's chance meeting, by night, in the Rue de Gaillon, a writer would need to have the pencil and burin of Charlet and Callot, the brush of Teniers and Rembrandt³. To describe the full depth of Philippe Bridau's wretchedness and destitution, "la misère en haillons, la misère du peuple, la plus poétique d'ailleurs"⁴, Callot would be called for again. In describing the abject poverty of the peasants on Montcornet's estate, "ce prince de la fantaisie des misères"⁵ would have been perfectly at home. Balzac shares Hugo's conviction that Callot does not merely portray horror, he invests it with beauty and fantasy (plate 1). "Le contact du difforme a donné au sublime moderne quelque chose de plus pur, de plus grand, de plus sublime enfin que le beau antique"⁶.

1 Les Employés; Pl. VI, p. 927.

2 Ibid., p. 920.

3 Une Double Famille; Pl. I, p. 989. Cf. supra, pp. 82, 104, 135.

4 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 929.

5 Les Paysans; Pl. VIII, p. 288. A marginal correction in the proof-sheets of the novel (A 175, fol. 73) shows that Balzac intended Callot to be called "ce poète de la fantaisie des misères", but this correction was not taken up.

6 V.-M. Hugo: Théâtre complet, vol. I, Paris 1963, pp. 419-420.

But Callot has influenced the Comédia Humaine, or more precisely what would have become the Comédia Humaine, in a still more fundamental way. The unfinished novel La Frelora owes much of its inspiration to him. To begin with, its action is set in the early part of the seventeenth century, in other words, when Callot himself was alive. Its subject-matter (a theme never treated methodically elsewhere in the Comédia Humaine) is the theatre, a world which Callot frequently and sympathetically described. One of his stock subjects, in the earlier part of his career, was the commedia dell'arte. Balzac explains at the outset of the story that his characters are drawn from such series of etchings, by Callot, as the "Gobbi" and the "Balli di Sfessania":

durant une cinquantaine d'années et jusqu'au jour où deux théâtres rivaux s'élevèrent à l'hôtel de Bourgogne et au Marais, il y eut en France un monde errant où vivaient ces singuliers personnages que Callot a merveilleusement gravés dans toutes les mémoires, et que dernièrement le style d'Hoffmann... a dépeints avec une bizarrerie digne de l'artiste lorrain¹.

Evidence enough of Callot's direct and close inspiration, when in 1839² Balzac conceived La Frelora and wrote the fragment which has come down to us. Just as Callot's etchings were partly to inspire Le Capitaine Fracasse, so—perhaps with some assistance from Gautier—they largely gave rise to Balzac's world of the travelling theatre. Further corroboration of this fact is to be seen in the portrait of Fleurance, the juvenile lead³:

ce costume était porté par le jeune premier dans le goût des héros de Callot qui vous offrent à l'esprit plusieurs personnages: un mendiant, un soldat, un brave, un matamore, un pleutre, et tous les détails sont si naturels que le personnage pourrait en réalité passer sous vos yeux sans trop vous effaroucher.

1 Pl. XI, p. 55.

2 Lettres à Madame Hanska I, p. 654; 30 October 1839.

3 Pl. XI, p. 64.

It is sad that Balzac wrote no more than a mere fifteen pages of this novel, with all its unusual possibilities. For though the underlying concept of La Féalora would appear to have had much in common with the themes of Massimilla Doni and Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu (the transmutation into art of deep emotional experience)¹, and so would have repeated yet again the basic lesson of the études Philosophiques², its potential significance within the Comédie Humaine is that as late as 1839 it—and Callot—turned Balzac's attention away from the Restoration and July Monarchy to earlier times.

On a totally different level of achievement two English engravers must now be mentioned: Richard Westall (1765-1836) and William Finden (1787-1852), the latter well known for his illustrations of Don quixote. Westall receives two mentions in the Comédie Humaine, the first in La Peau de Chagrin³, the second in Eugénie Grandet⁴. Pauline de Witschnau, Raphaël de Valentin's mistress, "charmante à voir en déshabillé, délicieuse comme les fantastiques figures de Westall"³, seems to have sprung from one of those innumerable keepsakes⁵ which were all the rage both in France and England when Balzac was a young man, and many of which were illustrated by Westall, and others by Finden.

When next Balzac recalls Westall's name, it is in conjunction with Finden's; and again he is referring to their delineations of graceful and fantastic women. The reference occurs in a description

1 T. Takayama: Les Oeuvres romanesques avortées de Balzac (1829-1842), Tokyo 1966, p. 90.

2 Pl. XI, pp. 218-219.

3 Pl. IX, pp. 189-190. Cf. A 177, vol. II, p. 179.

4 Pl. III, p. 511.

5 Cf. supra, p. 67.

of the cloistered Eugénie Grandet's boundless admiration for her young cousin, Charles, the Gavarni-like dandy newly arrived from Paris:

la vue de son cousin fit sourdre en son cœur les émotions de fine volupté que causent à un jeune homme les fantastiques figures de femmes dessinées par Westall dans les Keepsake anglais, et gravées par les Finden d'un burin si habile qu'on a peur, en soufflant sur le vélin, de faire envoler ces apparitions célestes¹.

In both instances, it seems, Balzac is alluding to the two men as if they were an inseparable partnership; and both instances occur early in the novelist's career. The young man about town in Balzac enjoyed these sylph-like engravings, even to the curious extent of describing Eugénie's feelings for Charles in terms of any young man's feelings for the celestial apparitions that were so regular a feature on the vellum pages of keepsakes.

Much more important as a secondary imaginative influence was the popularity in Balzac's early manhood of Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France², the collective project of Nodier, Taylor and Alphonse de Cailleux. The aim of this study of provincial France was to record, in volume after volume, the picturesque and fast disappearing attractions of Normandy, Auvergne, Franche-Comté, Languedoc and other regions. And the record was not merely in words but also in accompanying engravings. Innumerable descriptions in the Comédie Humaine fulfil the same purpose: the west door of the Church of Saint-Paterne at Issoudun³, the corner turrets of medieval houses such as Maître Cornélius's⁴, the "rows" (similar to those at Chester) which in medieval Paris ran alongside houses and shops⁵. To criticize Balzac for his topographical "digressions" is to overlook his very considerable ambition to create a verbal and imaginative counterpart to the Voyages pittoresques.

1 Pl. III, p. 511.

2 Cf. supra, p. 259.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 941.

4 Pl. IX, p. 909.

5 Sur Catherine de Médicis; Pl. X, p. 52.

There remains the second aspect of engravings: their presence in the Comédie Humaine as objects, but objects which rarely attain the status of imaginative art. The possession of such engravings is a distinguishing feature of the middle class, but within the middle class there are many gradations of taste. Dutocq, as has been noted, wished to collect all Callot's etchings; also all the engravings of Rembrandt, Dürer and Audran ¹. Madame de Rouville hangs (Audran) prints of Lebrun's "Batailles d'Alexandre" ² in her dining-room ³. N.-L. Vauquelin admires J.F.W. von Müller's engraving of "The Sistine Madonna" ⁴. Such people are in a class apart from the common run of Prudhommeque "épiciers", "rentiers" and Philistines whose taste lies in very different directions. But then Dutocq is an impassioned collector, Vauquelin—one of the pioneers of organic chemistry—was a distinguished intellectual, and Madame de Rouville is an impoverished aristocrat. César Birotteau, who gives Vauquelin a proof before all letters of Müller's "Sistine Madonna", cannot understand why anyone should hanker after a Raphael engraving, a shaft of heavy irony on Balzac's part—for Raphael impressed not only him but a whole generation as the paragon of artistic skill, and the novelist himself possessed an engraving of "The Vision of Ezekiel" ⁵.

The middle-class Philistine so cruelly derided by Heine, Monnier, Gavarni, Daumier and even Balzac usually sought other, very different engravings. Desiring both ornaments and status symbols, he chose a more or less contemporary subject-matter, not the distant

1 Les Employés Pl. VI, p. 927.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 90-91.

3 La Bourgeoise Pl. I, p. 336.

4 César Birotteau Pl. V, p. 381.

5 A 329, fol. 9.

masterpieces of Italy, Germany and Spain. Vigneron's "Convoi du Pauvre" had a particular attraction for him; Balzac specifically mentions this class-label in his Monographie du Rentier¹, and a print of the subject hangs in Phellion's drawing-room². How different it was, in its lachrymose sensationalism, from the treatments of the same theme in Le Père Goriot³ and Le Cousin Pons!⁴ Yet despite Balzac's almost naturalistic handling of pauper funerals, is there not in Le Père Goriot a straining after effect which at times brings the description close to Vigneron's sentimentality?

C'était la mort des pauvres, qui n'a ni faste, ni suivants, ni amis, ni parents... Quand le corbillard vint, Eugène fit remonter la bière, la décloua, et plaça religieusement sur la poitrine du bonhomme une image qui se rapportait à un temps où Delphine⁵ et Anastasie étaient jeunes, vierges et pures...

Another of Vigneron's bestsellers, so well known that Pinot uses it to chaff Philippe Bridau⁶, is his "Soldat Laboureur" (from which Balzac may even have derived the whole episode of Philippe's journey to America⁷); middle-class people in the Faubourg Saint-Denis proudly display this subject⁸.

Nor is "Le Soldat Laboureur" the only vestige of the Napoleonic saga to be found in La Rabouilleuse. Madame Bridau, a fanatical admirer of Napoleon, has a coloured engraving of "The Battle of Jena", Vernet's painting⁹. Madame Birotteau's staunch Republican uncle, Claude-Joseph Pillersault, owns equally tendentious engravings¹⁰; of John Trumbull's "Serment des Américains", as Balzac calls it¹¹, Lefebvre's (or Ingres's) portrait of Napoleon as

1 Ouvrages complètes, Société des Études Balzaciennes edn., vol. XXVIII, Paris 1963, p. 46.

2 Les Employés Pl. VI, p. 934.

3 Pl. II, pp. 1,084-1,085.

4 Pl. VI, pp. 773-774.

5 Pl. II, pp. 1,083-1,084.

6 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 889.

7 Cf. supra, p. 61.

8 César Birotteau; Pl. V, p. 457.

9 Pl. III, p. 862. Cf. supra, p. 61.

10 Pl. V, p. 405.

11 Cf. J. MacBride: "Le Serment des Américains", Année Balzacienne, 1966, pp. 378-379.

First Consul ¹, and Gérard's "Bataille d'Austerlitz" ². A print of Vernet's "Défense de la Barrière de Clichy" is one of five hanging in the Rogrons' dining-room, which Madame Tiphaine says should be banned by the Government ³; for not only was it ugly, it also depicted the Bonapartists' last stand against the invading Allies, before the First Restoration.

In instances like these, political allegiance and aesthetic taste become inextricably intertwined. The lachrymose, the sensational and the didactic are the hallmarks of non-political Philistine taste; as witness Vernet's "Masceppa à Cheval" ⁴. What better warning against unchastity than the sight of Byron's amorous page bound naked to a galloping horse?

The middle class's values are aped by their social inferiors. Topinard's garret is decorated with "affiches de spectacles et... gravures prises dans des journaux ou provenant des prospectus des livres illustrés" ⁵. Peasants cover their walls with garish pictures of such legendary heroes as Robert-le-Diable, the Wandering Jew and La Belle Maguelonne ⁶, or else with scenes from the Passion, "La Mort de Créteil" and "Les Grenadiers de la Garde Impériale" ⁷; all of them torn, no doubt, from cheap almanachs like Le Calendrier des Bergères or the ones printed for quick financial returns by Ève Séchard, and hawked by Kolb around the villages close to Angoulême.

1 Cf. supra, p. 63, n. 6.

2 Here, blinded by patriotic fervour, Pillersault allows his republican principles to slide into imperialism. Cf. supra, p. 44, n. 6.

3 Pierrette; Pl. III, p. 680. Cf. supra, p. 60, n. 5.

4 Pierrette; Pl. III, p. 680. Les Emplouvées; Pl. VI, p. 934.

5 Le Cousin Pons; Pl. VI, p. 790.

6 Illusions Perdues; Pl. IV, p. 892.

7 Le Peau de Chagrin; Pl. IX, p. 235.

Aristocratic houses, however, rarely display engravings—just as they hardly ever display watercolours¹. For the nobility, then as now, the place of engravings was within portfolios; and the portfolios were in the library. It is an eccentric action on Camille Maupin's part, quite in keeping with her wayward and artistic nature, that her precious engravings by Gérard Audran hang on the walls of her dining-room². She even frames them in mahogany. Even in such relatively small matters, Camille insists on breaking with convention.

As influences, therefore, engravings impinge upon the Comédie Humaine through the work of Gavarni, Monnier and Delacroix (previously discussed), through the illustrations in Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France and through the etchings of Callot. Voyages pittoresques are emulated by Balzac in his verbal descriptions of picturesque towns, houses and monuments. From Callot's pictures of human destitution he derives certain touches in his portraits of Philippe Bridau and the Burgundian peasants; "Balli di Sfessania", "Gobbi" and perhaps Gautier kindle or stimulate his interest in the commedia dell'arte; the starting-point of La Férèze. As objects within the home, prints are generally to be found amongst the middle class, whose Philistinism they reflect; only very occasionally, as with Vauquelin, do middle-class people show taste and discrimination in engravings. The gaudy prints of the working class do not deserve the name of art. Aristocratic families collect whole sheets of the best engravings, but underestimate their value as works of art—often possessing the Poussins, Le Sueurs and Lebruns from which Audran worked.

1 Béatrix; Pl. II, p. 548. Though Béatrix hangs watercolours in her drawing-room, it is for sentimental reasons; besides which the house where they hang is more middle-class than aristocratic.

2 Ibid., p. 385.

XIII: THE PRESENTATION OF THE ARTIST

True to the etymological meaning of the word, Balzac considers the artist to be a craftsman. But a craftsman inspired by some divine afflatus which makes him differ from ordinary artisans in that he no longer achieves his results merely by following the rules of his trade hallowed by the generations. On the contrary, the artist creates his own rules and works out his own style of self-expression. And it is important to emphasize that, in Balzac's eyes, Balthazar Claës (for example) is as much an artist as Joseph Bridau or Sarrasine. No artist can function without first having mastered the rules, or science, of his calling, whether it be the techniques of applying paint to canvas or the experimental methods of research to be followed by the natural scientist; but artists must not merely understand, as even Grassou in his unenlightened way understands, they must also seek.

Painters, writers, sculptors and scientists are joined in one mysterious calling, and are aware of their fraternity and always ready to help one another with money, encouragement or advice. Witness the Cénacle de la Rue des quatre-Vents ¹, and the repeated emphasis (inspired partly by Monnier ²) on the antagonism between artistic values and the values of bourgeois Philistinism. That theirs is a vocation they have no doubt; but their calling is more to the integrity of their own work than to any responsibilities towards society. By being true to their own imperious inspiration

1 Illusions Perdus Pl. IV, pp. 651-657.

2 Cf. supra, p. 73.

and by translating that inspiration into works of art, they are fulfilling their deepest social obligation. Thus, Balzac's artists cannot be called anti-social. But he does not share the high opinions of the artist's rôle as Philosopher King or "pasteur des esprits" (as Hugo called him¹), which led Lamartine to become one of the principal leaders of the opposition to Louis-Philippe, head of the provisional Government after the February Revolution and (in December 1848) a candidate for the Presidency of the French Republic; opinions which also led Victor Hugo into politics, and eventual exile. In Balzac's view, the artist's primary loyalty must be to his own craft²; so long as he is faithful to that, he will be fulfilling his duties towards the society in which he lives.

But art, like all callings, can cause heart-rending conflicts of loyalty. Balthazar Claës, in his search for the philosopher's stone, forswears his family and sells up his possessions, very nearly including his home. The conflict is stated in its acutest form in Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu, where young Nicolas Poussin is compelled to choose between his mistress, Gillette, and his art, in the person of Frenhofer. To learn the hermetic secrets of Frenhofer's art, Poussin must consent to his mistress being used as a model. Frenhofer paints her; Poussin receives the transmission of charismatic mysteries; but Gillette and he part, never to meet again. Just as religious martyrs forsook all ties of family affection, so Balzac's artists are prepared, if need be, to repudiate their duties towards family and friends; and in this sense—but this sense alone—their art is latently anti-social. Nor would it be true to say that

1 V.-M. Hugo: Ouvrages poétiques, vol. I, Paris 1964, p. 933 (Les Voix Intérieures).

2 Cf. G.R. Besser: Balzac's Concept of Genius, Geneva 1969, pp. 55-59. Whilst pointing out Balzac's occasional references to the artist's priestly functions and his "influence over men and society", Dr B.R. Tolley is in agreement with the views put forward by Mrs Besser ("The Social Rôle of Art and Literature according to the Saint-Simonians (1825-1833)", Oxford 1967, pp. 299-303).

these conflicts of loyalty, heart-rending to others, are particularly heart-rending to them. When faced with the dividing of the ways, Poussin and Clás have no doubt as to what they should do. They do not waste time in long and agonizing heartsearching. In this, of course, they resemble Corneille's heroes.

Repudiation of family ties and social duties has one simple cause: the fact that art, like any other human activity or condition (fatherhood, in the case of Goriot; thrift, in the case of Gobseck; even probity, for César Birotteau), can become a passion, or monomania. It is their passion for their calling, their undeviating intention to obey the dictates of their vocation wherever they may lead, that motivates such solemn acts of repudiation, with all their overtones of social irresponsibility. And once again, the parallel with Corneille is evident, for the young Horace is no emotionless automaton; it is the very intensity of his devotion to Rome which makes him comparatively insensitive to other ties and affections.

What, then, is the rôle of women in the life of the artist? Wenceslas Steinbock provides a perfect illustration of the helpful influence which some women can exert on the artist's life, and the pernicious influence of others. The small statue that Valérie Marneffe commissions from him¹ is the intended symbol of her disastrous power: she is a treacherous Delilah, sapping his creative strength. And she is a Delilah precisely because of the sexual relationship between Wenceslas and herself. With Lisbeth Fischer, on the other hand, there had been no sexual relationship of any kind—and she is an entirely beneficial influence, at least in so far as his creative work is concerned; for she allows him no respite from the treadmill of artistic creation. The influence of Wenceslas's own

1 La Cousine Estte; Pl. VI, pp. 335-336.

wife, Hortense, is as disastrous as Valérie's: even love within marriage is a threat to the artist's creative independence. In Illusions Perdus, Coralie's influence upon Lucien de Rubempré is equally lamentable: we are given the clear impression that Lucien should have left her and returned to Madame de Bargeton¹, whose impact on his worldly fortunes, and perhaps also on his literary achievement, would have been wholly for the good. The woman in an artist's life has a great duty to be a worthy companion; and, sad to relate in this era of women's liberation, Balzac definitely places her in a subservient rôle: finding the artist employment², attending to his material needs³, and generally ruling out anxieties.

The presence of children within an artist's family presents an even greater danger to the constant creative output. Balzac seems to share the notion of Henry James, expressed by Henry St George in The Lesson of the Master⁴, that children are "an incentive to damnation, artistically speaking". It is meant to be no coincidence that after a year of marriage Steinbock has produced a handsome baby son, but no new statue⁵. Similarly, Augustine de Sommervieux presents her husband with a son⁶, though otherwise her contribution to the Sommervieux household is utterly disastrous. None of the successful artists in the Comédie Humaine has children.

Chastity, it is implied, is the infinitely better course, though obviously it is "better to marry than to burn"—and perhaps better still to take a mistress. Balzac's view is the one denounced by Paul Overt in James's novel, that the artist should be a "disfranchised monk"⁷; he accepts the point of view advanced by Tolstoy in The

1 Pl. IV, p. 819.

2 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 191.

3 La Rabouilleuse; Pl. III, p. 922.

4 H. James: The Lesson of the Master, etc., London 1892, p. 30.

5 La Cousine Bette; Pl. VI, p. 320. Cf. ibid., p. 321.

6 La Maison du Chat-qui-Palote; Pl. I, p. 51.

7 H. James: op.cit., p. 64.

Kreutzer Sonata¹, that sexual passion is essentially destructive.

Théophile Gautier informs us that

selon lui la chasteté réelle développait au plus haut degré les puissances de l'esprit, et donnait à ceux qui la pratiquaient des facultés inconnues²,

and although Balzac was very far from practising complete chastity in real life, it is nevertheless true that his really strenuous periods of literary work made him act (and even dress!) like a "disfranchised monk", whether he liked it or not. This emphasis on complete sexual continence was much more than a question of intellectual hygiene (indeed, he himself admitted that it ran counter to hygiene); a strong feature of Rosicrucianism, it was related to the many occultist ideas derived from his parents.

Chastity is needed because of the prodigious and unremitting effort demanded of any artist. Success in painting, sculpture and writing is dearly and bitterly won. The expenditure of vital energy is enormous. But in this labour of Hercules the "main de fer de la nécessité pécuniaire"³ is nothing but a blessing. Perhaps because he himself was so stringent in his aesthetic standards, Balzac does not admit the possibility that financial need may induce an artist to give less than his best. For him, money is the best possible stimulus to creative effort (witness the examples of Géricault and Girodet⁴), and if the artist is worth his salt that effort must be of the best. The greatest threat to any artist is failure through sheer lack of application⁵.

1 Cf. my article, "Le Père Goriot: Notes Towards a Reassessment", Symposium, summer 1965, pp. 111, 114.

2 T. Gautier: Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1859, p. 56.

3 Lettres à Madame Hanska III, p. 530; 10 December 1846.

4 Cf. supra, p. 58 and n. 8.

5 Le Cousin Bette; Pl. VI, pp. 317-318.

The fact must be repeated: differing from many of the other Romantics¹, Balzac sees the artist's function as integrity to his artistic calling; nothing—not even family obligations—must be allowed to stand in the way of this; his daemonic inspiration does not qualify him to take an active part in political affairs².

Indeed, certain qualities in the character of a true artist would effectively debar him from playing any practical rôle in politics. To begin with, his naiveté, spontaneity and ingenuousness. Pierre Grassou is an infinitely better politician than Joseph Bridau, and Balzac knows it. Despite his mediocre ability, he obtains the cross of the Legion of Honour, many lucrative commissions and a rich wife. He is then able to buy the works of genius produced by his impecunious colleagues! Aware of their superiority as artists, and using such talents as he was born with to the very best of his ability, he becomes that very rarest of mortals: a rich patron full of sympathy, encouragement and discernment.

Contrast Joseph Bridau's behaviour in Grassou's studio, as Grassou is in the process of portraying the Vervelles. Balzac, in a passage only added to the proof-sheets of the story³, paints a vivid description of Bridau's irruption into the room. Hair dishevelled, lacking in all the customary politeness towards clients and patrons, shocking these respectable bourgeois with his slangy expressions, scathing in his comments on Virginie Vervelle's beauty, he seizes his friend's paintbrush and, in a few strokes such as all painters of genius know how to apply to mediocre canvases, retouches the portrait and gives it a life, sparkle and originality it would never otherwise have known. Balzac's afterthought in adding this passage to the proofs is full of significance: it shows that the true artist differs from the mediocre one not only in his technical virtuosity but in his disregard for all normal conventions and in the fact that the outside world will

1 G.R. Besser: op.cit., pp. 52-55.

2 At both the beginning and end of his literary career, Balzac tried to enter politics: in 1831, 1832 and 1848. In fact, in April 1848 he narrowly failed to be elected a deputy for Paris. In the world of the Comédie Humaine, however, the artist's position is unequivocally stated: Joseph Bridau, Hippolyte Schinner, Théodore de Sommervieux and Balthazar Claës have no ambition to enter Parliament.

3 A 190, folios 36-39; Pl. VI, pp. 127-128.

always view him with profound suspicion. "Si c'est un grand artiste", Madame Verville says to Grassou after Joseph has gone, "j'aime mieux un grand artiste qui vous ressemble" ¹. But Grassou knows that, so far as the portrait is concerned, Joseph has improved it beyond recognition: "il n'y a fait que du bien" ¹.

Or, as another instance of the true artist's naiveté and ingenuousness, take Joseph Bridau's activities in La Rabouilleuse. This novel provides a nice and manifold contrast between the artist (in the person of Joseph) and the man of the world (in the person of his elder brother Philippe). In the struggle for his uncle's inheritance Joseph is totally worsted by Flore Brazier and Maxence Gilet, and with his mother retires humiliated and dishonoured from Issoudun. When, on the other hand, Philippe enters the lists, the result is predictably more successful, at least for himself. The great artist—for Joseph is modelled on Delacroix ²—is not only mistrusted by the Vervilles as an artist (in which field he is indisputably pre-eminent), but is laughed to scorn and put to confusion on trying to enter the world of action ³. When eventually he becomes wealthy, it is only through an irony of fate ⁴.

In yet other ways, the artist's dedication and naiveté lead to a discordance with reality: a theme probably derived from Hoffmann ⁵. A story which Balzac thought of contributing to La Silhouette in 1830, but which he does not appear to have written ⁶, would have told how, during a coach journey, a young poet meets the ideal of womanhood. Within a few hours he has experienced "toute une vie d'espérances, d'illusions et d'angoisses"—only to find, on reaching the first posting-house, that the object of his devotion was an artist's dummy, daubed with paint and

1 Pl. VI, p. 129.

2 Cf. supra, p. 54.

3 Balzac's own conduct of the negotiations clearing up the Galvagna inheritance (at Turin, in August 1836) was, however, nothing less than masterly (H. Prier: "Balzac à Turin", Revue de Paris, 15 January 1924, p. 369). Only in the entrepreneurial ventures did success elude him. "Dans toutes ses spéculations, Balzac avait vu juste et failli dans l'exécution", A. Maurois remarks (op.cit., p. 377).

4 Pl. III, p. 1,115.

5 Der Artushof, Die Jesuitenkirche in G., Die Brautwehl, Signor Formica.

6 A.-C.-J. de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul: Histoire des oeuvres de H. de Balzac, Paris 1888, pp. 402-405: "Une oeuvre perdue de H. de Balzac".

smelling of turpentine. In stories completed and published in 1830, both *Sommervieux* and *Sarrasine* fall in love with pictures rather than human beings, and from this fact stem ruin and disaster ¹.

When *Sommervieux* sees *Augustine Guillaume* sitting at her window in the early morning light, and at once loses his heart to her, he is falling in love with a *Vermeer* or a *De Hooch* painting, rather than with a human being of flesh and blood. The evanescent beauty of this real-life work of art transfixes him, not the person of *Augustine Guillaume* herself, with her individuality, her own ways of thought and idiosyncrasies—her parochialism and narrow-mindedness inherited from long centuries of middle-class Philistinism. *Augustine* becomes his wife, but cannot adapt herself to his ways and the ways of the artistic milieu in which he lives. Inevitably, the marriage ends in grief. *Sommervieux* has tried to adapt the ideal to the real—as if the beauty of a *Vermeer* lay in the beautiful and elevated character of the lady sitting at the virginals or pouring a jug of milk!

Sarrasine, too, falls in love with a picture. His tragedy, though very different from *Sommervieux's* in its external circumstances, is essentially the same. A eunuch, *Zembinella*, who sings in the choir of the *Teatro di Argentina*, Rome, is so feminine in appearance as to fill the sculptor with a consuming passion. But not merely so feminine: so radiantly beautiful as well, with the dubious beauty of *Girodet's* "Endymion" ². The cause of *Sarrasine's* ruin is that the passion itself saps his creative energy, whilst his disclosure of passion causes him to be knifed to death on the orders of *Cardinal Cicognara*. The tragedy is more gruesome and melodramatic than in *La Maison du Chat-qui-Peleto*.

¹ There is an obvious parallel with *Madame Hańska* (and also with *Albert Savarus*). *Balzac*, too, fell in love with the ideal woman in *Madame Hańska*, the "chère madone à laquelle s'adressent tous mes vœux et mes prières" (*Lettres à Madame Hańska* II, p. 122; 11 November 1842).

² Cf. supra, pp. 35-37.

Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu presents much the same tragic disharmony, though in a different form. The plight of Poussin himself is pathetic rather than tragic. It is sad that he has to sacrifice his flesh-and-blood mistress, Gillette, for the furtherance of his artistic knowledge: no artist, it seems, can escape from the cruel dilemma of choosing between art and life. Yet for him the choice is clear, and sacrifice acceptable as part of life's scheme. With Frenhofer, on the other hand, the tragedy is total. Not that the disharmony in his situation arises from marriage, or love of a woman (as with Sommevilleux and Sarrasine); for him, "La Belle Noiseuse" is the equivalent of a wife: "voilà dix ans que je vis avec cette femme, elle est à moi, à moi seul, elle m'aime"¹. It is not an artist's human relationships that are at stake, but his relationship to his own art:

je suis plus amant encore que je ne suis peintre. Oui, j'aurai la force de brûler ma "Belle Noiseuse" à mon dernier soupir; mais lui faire supporter le regard d'un homme, d'un jeune homme, d'un peintre? non, non! Je tuerais le lendemain celui qui l'aurait souillée d'un regard!²

Eros, which had to be repressed by Poussin, and which blighted the lives of Sommevilleux and Sarrasine, also weighs heavily upon the creative life of Frenhofer. At first sight, this sole continuer of Mabuse would seem immune from its power: he is a bachelor, and a bachelor without a mistress. He is rich, and can therefore paint as he pleases; yet (unlike Géricault and Girodet) he still has the fullest determination to ply his art. Technically, he is a brilliant painter: the few brush strokes added to Porbus's "Marie Égyptienne" transform it from a mediocre daub into a graceful, if not absolutely outstanding, work of art. How then does it come about that his masterpiece, "La Belle Noiseuse", cannot be comprehended—not even by Poussin?

"Je suis plus amant encore que je ne suis peintre": this is the secret of Frenhofer's catastrophe. Incessantly adding, retouching, pushing towards the ultimate nuance, he lacks the brutality needed to break with a work of art. "La Belle Noisette", which presumably at one time was a miracle of representational portraiture, has over the years been so constantly modified that now only a foot remains as evidence of its creator's impressionistic skill: Perbus and Poussin

aperçurent dans un coin de la toile le bout d'un pied nu qui sortait de ce chaos de couleurs, de tons, de nuances indécises, espèce de brouillard sans forme; mais un pied délicieux, un pied vivant! Ils restèrent pétrifiés d'admiration devant ce fragment échappé, à une incroyable, à une lente et progressive destruction¹.

But the ten years Frenhofer has lavished on his would-be masterpiece have not only been spent in retouching and modifying. Much of the time has slipped by in unproductive thought—thought that is all the more nugatory because of his passionate attachment to the ideal beauty of his imagined model. In Balzac's own words, the aim of Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu, as of the complementary story Les Deux Sculpteurs (never even begun²), was to show

le désordre que la pensée arrivée à tout son développement produit dans l'âme de l'artiste, en expliquant par quelles lois arrive le suicide de l'Art³.

As an artist Perbus is limited and rather conventional in technique, but he has at least one advantage over Frenhofer: a realistic awareness of the limitations of the artistic medium. "Les peintres ne doivent méditer que les broches à la main"⁴ is the wise advice which Frenhofer ignores at tragic cost, but which Poussin accepts. Frenhofer dallies with his painting as with a mistress, or cohabits as with a wife. Poussin, who has the moral fibre to break with Gillette, will in future years have the courage to break with his "Funeral of Phocion", "Sacraments" and "Seasons". If Frenhofer had

1 Ibid., p. 412.

2 Les Deux Sculpteurs, mentioned in the preface to Une Fille d'Ève, was a project of the late 1830s (T. Takayama: op. cit., p. 91).

3 Pl. XI, p. 380.

4 Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu; Pl. IX, p. 403.

been less rich, he would, after all, have been more successful: not because he would have conformed to the dictates of artistic fashion, but because he would have needed to sell works of art, and consequently to part with them.

Financial necessity, so valuable for the Comédie Humaine itself in the long run, would then have masked the fact that the tragedy of Frenhofer's creative life is, at bottom, twofold. The "primrose path of dalliance" is not only with art viewed as a mistress, but with art viewed as an ultimate. In the opening pages of Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu we are shown that Frenhofer can paint intelligibly and well when the occasion demands. Porbus's simple and unquestioning view of his art, derived from rigid models, compels Frenhofer to paint in a style that can be understood both by Porbus and Poussin and also by connoisseurs, and to paint demonstrably better than Porbus in Porbus's own manner. When left to himself, however, Frenhofer realizes the inadequacy of Porbus's visual language: not simply his technical shortcomings (his emphasis on contour, awkwardness in composition, and excessive formalism) but the stark fact that, however ably one painted within the compass of Porbus's chosen style, the finished result would be disappointing. Frenhofer aims to transcend the narrowness of Porbus's range by substituting colour for draughtsmanship; which, Balzac seems to imply, leads straight in the direction of abstract art.

In fact, of course, the desire to break down contours and to replace drawing with colour need not result in any breakdown of representational expression--as witness the art of Giorgione, Titian and Veronese. Nor need abstract art go uncomprehended, least of all by artists of Poussin's magnitude. The interested layman of today is perfectly at home with the abstractions of Cubism and Expressionism. There are three reasons for Frenhofer's failure to communicate to Poussin. The story is set in the years 1612-1613; however brilliant and discerning the beholder, some styles of painting will be beyond him if they are too far in advance of their own age. This is a possible reason for Frenhofer's failure. Moreover, "La Belle Noiseuse" is treated too lovingly; too much care

and attention are lavished on it; Frenhofer lacks the ruthlessness to break with "La Belle Noiseuse" and move on. Even more fundamental than this is the third reason for his disaster: he is grasping towards the ideal. And at whatever time and in whatever circumstances a man, Prometheus-like, grasps towards the ideal, he will pay the penalty of unintelligibility and fiasco if he reaches too far. This is as true of Frenhofer, the painter, as it is of Gambara, the musician, and Claës, the natural scientist. Frenhofer, a visionary artist of brilliant technical accomplishments, cannot communicate to others his vision of an ideal world. He cannot, in other words, synthesize the ideal and the real. Obeying the dictates of his private vision, he advances beyond human comprehensibility. Rather than accept the necessary imperfection of all created things, he wishes to usurp the place of God Himself.

Vautrin considers himself an artist. "Mes poésies, je ne les écris pas: elles consistent en actions et en sentiments", he tells Eugène¹. W. Troy implies that Vautrin, "the artist functioning in the realm of action"², is the supreme artist in the Comédie Humaine. Through Rastignac and Rubempré Vautrin intends to conquer the world. He has visions of the young and handsome Eugène storming the citadels of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, or of Lucien winning beautiful mistresses and marrying a rich, aristocratic wife. In exactly the same way, the artist revels in his own creations, which—once created—take on a life independent of himself. Yet Vautrin is still not the supreme artist in the Comédie Humaine, for the simple reason that his plans depend for their fulfilment on the human instruments of his own will.

Eugène succeeds admirably in the world, where Lucien fails. A calculateur prepared to exploit men and particularly women in the furtherance of his career, Eugène uses Vautrin and, when he has done

1 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 938.

2 "On rereading Balzac: the artist as scapegoat", Kenyon Review, summer 1940, p. 338.

with him, unhesitatingly breaks off their acquaintance (though it would seem ¹ that he cannot entirely sever his ties). Lucien, an artist, cannot exploit Vautrin in this way. Eugène succeeds despite his protector; Lucien fails despite everything Vautrin does to help him. This is the tragedy of the artist who wishes his artistry to consist of actions, not of words or brushstrokes.

Vautrin too is a would-be God, though not the God of Love. Seemingly omniscient, lucidly aware of the hypocrisies of law and convention, strong with the hidden might of a vast underworld, the human embodiment of Satan in his rebellion against the Christian God, he aims to manipulate human beings in a Révolte ² against the established order. An admirer of Cellini ³, he aims at artistry in crime: the neat, economical solution to a complex problem. An intellectual who has pondered Rousseau, he believes that careful analysis has brought him to an ultimate, though cynical, understanding of the world: money is the ultima ratio mundi ⁴, the hidden basis of the Social Contract. Yet although right in his analysis (within the limits of his fierce, uncharitable intellect), and so confident of the rightness of his proposed solution that he refuses to exploit Eugène ⁵, that solution still proves to be inadequate. Trying to translate the ultimate analysis into human terms, he fails hardly less miserably than Frenhofer.

As in the Frenhofer and Vautrin whom it depicts, the Comédie Humaine itself is an assault on the Ultimate. Balzac too thought of himself as a kind of God, manipulating the instruments of his own

1 Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes Pl. V, pp. 659-670.

2 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, pp. 933, 935, 1,057.

3 Cf. supra, pp. 244-245.

4 Le Père Goriot; Pl. II, p. 914.

5 Ibid., p. 980.

imaginative will. "Créer, toujours créer!" we find in his letter to Madame Hańska dated 29 April 1842¹; "Dieu n'a créé que pendant six jours!" In a supreme effort of human creativity he would bring a whole fictional world into being. The task which Napoleon had begun with the sword, it was his purpose to accomplish with the pen. "Napoléon n'avait pas montré tant de vouloir, ni tant de courage"². But how much smaller than his ambition was Napoleon's final achievement! Even Balzac has to admit that "nous avons sacrifié sans profit toute une génération"³. Vautrin and Napoleon cannot be considered the supreme artists in the realm of action, since the ambitions of both ultimately collapsed. Frenhofer likewise is the very opposite of a supreme artist, for though his painting may indeed have been the precursor of Cubism three centuries or so before its time (on this question Balzac is enigmatic, but Picasso and Cézanne both admired Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu), no supreme artist would voluntarily destroy his own created universe. Thus, Balzac's work transcends that of Frenhofer, Vautrin and Napoleon in that it will surely rank to all posterity as an abiding success.

1 Lettres à Madame Hańska II, p. 76.

2 Lettres à Madame Hańska I, p. 209; 28 April 1834.

3 Pensées, Sujets, Fragments, Paris 1910, p. 41.

XIV: CONCLUSION

It will, I think, be conceded that the visual arts occupy a great place within the Comédie Humaine. As influences, they help to shape Balzac's vision of the world and guide him to some extent in his choice of subject-matter. As objects, they are part of his vast inventory of France, an important feature of the social dossier.

But what exactly is meant by the word "influence"? Clearly, to guide any novelist in the choice of his subject-matter is a most crucial and direct influence. But to what extent can it be said that the visual arts affect Balzac's vision of the world? The fact, for example, that Lucien de Rubempré resembles an "Antinous Belvedere"¹ does not in any sense mean that the "Antinous" influenced itself to be there; far from imposing upon Balzac the creation of a particular young man, half noble and half middle-class, in the Angoulême of 1819, the reference to the "Antinous" is a form of visual notation—but nothing more.

Every novelist faces the difficulty of describing the physical appearance of his characters. It is a difficulty which is really insuperable. When all is said and done, the appearance of Valérie Marneffe, Lucien Leuwen, Heathcliff or Mrs Proudie must be left to the reader's imagination. On the other hand, the description of Gustave d'Aiglemont by reference to Parmigianino's "Young Man"², or of Dinah de La Baudraye by reference to Raphael's "Jean of Aragon"³,

1 Cf. supra, p. 231.

2 Cf. supra, p. 162.

3 Cf. supra, p. 166.

is a perfectly valid recourse to the visual arts—though not a method that would be adopted so readily today. Such references images are, however, only valid within two limitations. First, since no two human faces are ever alike, the fact that not only Lucien de Rubens but also Filippo de Lanty, Colonel Franchessini, Georges de Maufriageuse and Charles Mignon are Antinouses¹ must mean that they have only a poetic resemblance to the statue. There is no identity of image; indeed, Lucien is both an Antinous and an Apollo¹. Secondly, by far the most telling of these parallels are those where no tight correlation is suggested: as when Lisbeth Fischer is likened to a Giotto figure², or Césarine Biretteau to "des Flamandes de Rubens"³, or even Agathe Bridau to "une tête de Raphaël"⁴. Yet even such references are perfunctory, compared with the suggestive picture of Samanon derived from Titian⁵. Such is the range of Balzac's visual notation, sometimes based upon a cluster of reference images, sometimes upon a single image (viewed either superficially or in depth).

If the method of visual notation by reference to painting and sculpture is now so little used, why was it a stock literary device not only of Balzac, but of Stendhal, Victor Hugo and Gautier? One of the striking aspects of the artistic life of that time was the strong conviction of the confraternity of all artists. Painters were prominent amongst the supporters of Hernani on its tumultuous first night (25 February 1830). Balzac reviewed lithographs, and even at times transposed them into words⁶. The seventeenth century, he not

1 Cf. supra, p. 231.

2 Cf. supra, p. 191.

3 Cf. supra, p. 108.

4 Cf. supra, p. 165.

5 Cf. supra, p. 181.

6 Cf. supra, pp. 13, 70.

in Sur Catherine de Médicis¹, was

une époque où la littérature ne se mariait pas aussi étroitement que de nos jours avec l'art.

How unlike the nineteenth century, with its astonishing degree of cross-fertilization and interaction between the arts! As early as 1823 Balzac records his conviction that the link between painting and literature is particularly strong:

nos peintres font souvent dans leurs admirables tableaux, des intérieurs séduisants: pourquoi l'humble prose ne pourrait-elle pas approcher de l'effet produit par le pinceau, et tracer des lignes que l'œil de l'âme colorerait des plus vives teintes? Les muses sont sœurs et par conséquent rivales²,

a conviction that was to remain with Balzac throughout the years of the Comédie Humaine. Thus, "un peintre" would have been bound to paint the chaotic picture of the dying Gobseck's room³, or the portrait of M. du Guénic, with his soldierly hands⁴, or the nymphlike beauty of Flore Brazier as a girl⁵, or the village of Pent-de-Ruan⁶, or the "tableaux" of evening prayers at Clochegourde⁷ and Juana Diard reading Cervantes to her sons⁸—the verbal effect is so like a painting, whether or not Balzac had an actual canvas in mind.

Turning now to the second aspect of visual influence (Balzac's choice of subject-matter), it is the second main tenet of this thesis that painting, sculpture and engraving strongly mould Balzac's vision of the world: not the personal vision of Balzac the man (about which

1 Pl. X, p. 78.

2 La Dernière Fée, Paris 1963, vol. II, pp. 59-60.

3 Pl. II, p. 632.

4 Béatrix Pl. II, p. 334.

5 La Babouillonne; Pl. III, p. 962.

6 Le Lys dans la Vallée; Pl. VIII, p. 790.

7 Ibid., pp. 907-908.

8 Les Marais; Pl. IX, p. 844.

no conclusions are advanced) but the imaginative vision of Balzac the writer. Take, for example, the image of the androgyne Endymion. Its influence upon the creation of Lucien de Rubempré is seemingly quite different from that of the "Antinous Belvedere". The latter merely assists in visual notation, whereas Girodet's "Endymion" has a formative effect not only in Illusions Perdue but also in Sarrasine, La Vendetta--and even, in a sense, Séraphita. Girodet's painting stirs a deep response within Balzac's mind, and Bra's sculpture evokes a similarly ambivalent reaction.

The Faustian duel, a theme stimulated by Delacroix and Goethe, is another imaginative concept so powerful and deep-rooted that it not only adds to Balzac's view of the world but (far more important) enriches his narrative possibilities. The view of the world that law and convention are the hypocrisies which the wealthy use to their own advantage against the poor, and that the only adequate response to this hypocrisy is the audacious crime, was probably a feature of Balzac's intellectual outlook long before he saw the "Faust" lithographs in 1828; but his narrative skill was augmented as he came to realize the uses to which the theme of the duel could be put, in La Peau de Chagrin, Le Père Goriot and La Rabouilleuse.

Similarly with the money-lenders, grisettes, dandies, lorettas, crass bourgeois and masked balls which are so much a part of the work of Gavarni, Monnier and Charlet: before starting to write Gobseck, Farragut, Le Père Goriot and César Birotteau Balzac had no doubt come across money-lenders, grisettes, dandies and stupid Philistines; lithography revealed to him their narrative possibilities. How devoid of such elements were the novels of Balzac's predecessors!

Not only was Balzac's subject-matter strongly affected by the caricaturists; by causing him to linger in description, thereby creating suspense and even mystery, they also diversify his narrative technique. But whether in subject-matter or technique, their impact is confined to the Parisian novels. Except when such characters as Désiré Minoret-Levrault or Charles Grandet turn up in Nemours or Saumur, Gavarni's influence does not extend to the provinces, perhaps because Balzac (a provincial by birth and at heart) understood the provinces in a more intimate sense than he understood Paris. There are, however, two respects in which the visual arts seem to have inspired Balzac's description of the provinces. Dutch and Flemish genre-painting have probably left some mark on the picture of Douai¹, and probably also upon the pictures of such other towns as Guérande, Tours, Alençon and Bayeux in the sense that here Balzac sets out to be the genre-painter working within the medium of the novel. Secondly, a great influence is exerted upon the Comédie Humaine by the Voyages pittoresques et romantiques dans l'ancienne France of Hodier, Taylor and Cailleux². And here too engraving helps to shape Balzac's narrative technique: descriptions of Issoudun, Angoulême and the Château de Blois form weighty interludes in the story-line of La Rabouilleuse, Illusions Perdues and sur Catherine de Médicis³. Indeed, in his ambition to record the things as well as the people of French history Balzac describes not only the archaeological attractions of Issoudun, Douai, Nemours, Le Havre etc. but those of Paris itself (both past, as in sur Catherine de Médicis⁴, and present as in Une Double Famille⁵). So much for the visual arts as imaginative influences.

1 Cf. supra, pp. 130, 269.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 259, 291.

3 Pl. III, pp. 934-942; Pl. IV, pp. 490-492; Pl. X, pp. 77-85.

4 Pl. X, pp. 49-54.

5 Pl. I, pp. 925-926. Cf. supra, p. 260.

As objects, however, their rôle is no less important. Not only must archaeology feature in the social dossier, so must furnishings and art collections. These furnishings are of many kinds and periods sometimes placed in the century to which they originally belonged (as in Les Proscrites¹), sometimes collected as museum-pieces in a contemporary house², sometimes there by accident, more usually a bygone style of furnishing within a house still inhabited in the present. Besides being a feature of the social dossier, such objects are often symbolic of their owners: the Antiquary's magic, the fact that with Pons art has been exalted into a religion. They are not always symbolic, however. Gigonnet has Sèvres vases precisely because art objects in the Comédie Humaine are presented against a background of historical flux. In all his descriptions of furnishings and collections Balzac reveals the skill of a painter or interior designer in juxtaposing colours and forms; he also shows considerable knowledge and enthusiasm. It is quite untrue to suggest, as Gautier does³, that Balzac was "peu sensible à la beauté plastique": though at times his response to artists may seem unjustifiably emphatic, it was basically strong and controlled. To quote Gautier again, writers in the early 1830s liked to pepper their writing with the names of celebrated painters⁴; but in the Comédie Humaine the use of such names is rarely ostentatious. A cryptic page of notes in the Collection Lovenjoul reveals the fascination that even such relatively obscure artists as Lukas van Leyden and Bonifazio held for Balzac⁵.

1 Cf. supra, p. 268.

2 Cf. supra, pp. 265-268.

3 Honoré de Balzac, Paris 1859, p. 130.

4 Les Jeunes Français: romans saturniens, Paris 1833, p. 147.

5 A 146, fol. 12.

If art objects are often symbolic of their owners, artists themselves—and especially painters—are symbolic of the creative process. To Balzac this process was very much alike in all the arts, both visual and otherwise; his understanding of it basically introspective. Execution is always more arduous than conception, and always liable to be shunned by the creative artist, on whom the beneficial influence both of financial necessity and of an understanding woman can be considerable. But laziness and distraction are not the greatest dangers besetting the artist. From Hoffmann and others, and from his own introspection, Balzac realized the danger in all artistic temperaments of mistaking the Ideal for the Real. Each thinking he loves a woman, both *Sommervieux* and *Sarrasine* really love a picture. *Vautrin*, the would-be artist in crime, triumphs in analysis but is conquered in action. *Frenhofer* moves beyond the confines of ordinary painting towards an unintelligible Ideal. Yet in this antithesis between Idealism and Reality the defeat meted out to the artist is always merely a defeat in human terms: defeat with regard to *Augustine*, *Zambinella*, *Eugène*, *Lucien*, *Poussin* and *Perbus*. The essence of Art itself, as distinct from the artist's life, is that it is intelligible in terms of the Ideal. *Vautrin* the man of action returns to the established Order; his analysis remains valid. The *Comédie Humaine* is one of the supreme testaments of the human mind, despite Balzac's failures both as business man and politician. Perhaps *Frenhofer's* only failure was that he burned his paintings and committed suicide: his work may, after all, have been the earliest triumph of non-representational art.

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- A 101: "Honorine", MS., 53 ff.
- A 103: "Illusions Perdues", MSS. and wordet proof-sheets, 192 ff.
- A 105-A 106: "Illusions Perdues", proof-sheets, 261 ff., 195 ff.
- A 107: "Un Grand homme de province à Paris", MS., 164 ff.
- A 116: "Le Lys dans la Vallée", MS., 140 ff.
- A 127: "Les Mémoires", MS., 29 ff.
- A 146: "Les Méfaits d'un Procureur du Roi. Scène de la Vie de Province".
etc., MSS., 12 ff.
- A 175: "Les Paysans", MSS. and proof-sheets, 244 ff.
- A 177: "La Peau de Chagrin; exemplaire corrigé par Balzac (Paris, Gosselin et Canel, 1831, deux volumes in-8o)", 393 pp., 354 pp.
- A 184: "Petites Misères de la Vie Conjugale", proof-sheets, 124 ff.
- A 190: "Pierre Grassou", MS. and proof-sheets, 88 ff.
- A 191: "Pierrette", MS., 99 ff.
- A 198: "La Rabouilleuse", MS., 205 ff.
- A 199: "La Rabouilleuse", proof-sheets, 341 ff.

- A 201: "La Recherche de l'Absolu", MS., 178 ff.
 A 211: "Falturno. Sărăphita", MSS. and proof-sheets, 167 ff.
 A 239: "La Vendetta", MS., 56 ff.

Miscellaneous MSS.

- A 301: "Lettres d'Honoré de Balzac à Madame de Hanska", vol. I, 610 ff.
 A 312: "Lettres autographes adressées à H. de Balzac", vol. I, 396 ff.
 A 326: "Registre des acquisitions faites, depuis 1834, des meubles ou curiosités achetés dans le but d'orner ma maison, y compris les choses données", 55 ff.
 A 328: "Documents concernant l'hôtel de Balzac, rue Fortunée. Plans et vues. Aquarelles originales exécutées par Santi, architecte de la maison, avant 1848", 35 ff.
 A 329, folios 1-24: "Inventaire dressé par Balzac, en 1847 ou 1848, du mobilier de son hôtel de la rue Fortunée. En partie de sa main ou corrigé par lui".
 A 329, folios 31-35: "Inventaire présumé du mobilier du même hôtel à la mort de Mme Vve de Balzac en 1882".
 A 340: "Comptes, factures, lettres, mémoires, notes de fournisseurs de H. de Balzac", 579 ff.
 A 343: "Antiquaires et marchands de curiosités. Notes d'objets divers fournis à H. de Balzac", 59 ff.
 A 352: "Dernière maladie, mort, funérailles et testament d'Honoré de Balzac", 58 ff.

B. UNPUBLISHED THESES OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE

James, David: "Gavarni and his Literary Friends", University of Harvard 1942.

Scott, Mary Wingfield: "Art and Artists in Balzac's Comédie Humaine", University of Chicago 1936.

Tolley, Bruce Richard: "The Social Role of Art and Literature according to the Saint-Simonians (1825-1833)", University of Oxford 1967.

C. EDITIONS OF THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE CONSULTED

The edition generally used has been the Pléiade edition, 10 vols. in-16o, Paris 1935-1937, with the supplementary volumes XI (in-16o, 1,724 pp., Paris 1959) and XII (Album Balzac, in-16o, x-341 pp., Paris 1962).

But the "Furne corrigé" text (16 vols. in-8o, Paris 1842-1846, Chantilly A 17-A 32) has also been consulted, together with the other standard editions:

Oeuvres complètes (Conard edn.), 40 vols. in-8o, Paris 1912-1940.

L'Oeuvre de Balzac (Formes et Reflets edn.), 16 vols. in-8o, Paris 1949-1955.

Oeuvres complètes de Balzac (Société des Études Balzaciennes edn.), 28 vols. in-8o, Paris 1956-1963.

D. INDIVIDUAL NOVELS BY BALZAC IN PRE-DEFINITIVE EDITIONS

La Peau de Chagrin (1st edn.), Paris 1831, vol. I.

Romans et Contes philosophiques, Paris 1831.

Études de Mœurs au XIXe siècle, Paris 1834.

Les Chouans, Paris 1834, vol. II.

La Vendetta, published by Béchot, Paris 1835.

Le Curé de Village, published by Souverain, Paris 1841, vol. II.

Furne edition of the Comédie Humaine, vols. V (1843) and XVII (1848).

E. MODERN EDITIONS OF INDIVIDUAL NOVELS WITH DEFINITIVE TEXTS

Amongst modern editions the various Garnier texts are particularly useful, of which the following are cited in this thesis:

Le Père Goriot (ed. P.-G. Castex), in-16o, lii-483 pp., Paris 1960.

Les Chouans (ed. M. Regard), in-16o, xlviii-563 pp., Paris 1957.

Réatrix (ed. M. Regard), in-16o, lxii-535 pp., Paris 1962.

The following edition of Buzonia Grandet is also referred to:

Buzonia Grandet (ed. H.J. Hunt), in-8o, 273 pp., Oxford 1967.

F. BALZAC'S APPRENTICE NOVELS

The reissue of the original texts of 1822-1825, published by the Bibliophiles de l'Originale, contains such valuable source-material:

L'Héritière de Birague, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1961 (facsimile of the first edition published by Hubert in 1822).

Jean-Louis ou la Fille Trouvée, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1961 (facsimile of the first edition published by Hubert in 1822).

Clotilde de Lucignan ou le Beau Juif, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1962 (facsimile of the first edition published by Hubert in 1822).

Le Vicaire des Ardennes, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1962 (facsimile of the first edition published by Pollet in 1822).

Le Centenaire ou les Deux Bérinsheld, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1962 (facsimile of the first edition published by Pollet in 1822).

La Dernière Née ou la Nouvelle Femme Merveilleuse, in-16o, Paris 1963 (facsimile of the first edition published by Barba and Hubert in 1823).

Annette et le Criminel, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1963 (facsimile of the first edition published by Ruissot in 1824).

Hann-Chloris, 2 vols. in-16o, Paris 1963 (facsimile of the first edition published by Canel and Delongchamps in 1825).

G. BALZAC'S CORRESPONDENCE

For Balzac's correspondence with Madame Hańska, the new and as yet incomplete edition has been mainly referred to:

Lettres à Madame Hańska, vol. I, in-8o, xiii-752 pp., Paris 1967.

Lettres à Madame Hańska, vol. II, in-8o, ii-666 pp., Paris 1968.

Lettres à Madame Hańska, vol. III, in-8o, ii-709 pp., Paris 1969.

Vol. III does not extend beyond March 1847.

Consequently, Balzac's subsequent letters to Madame Hańska are quoted from

Lettres à l'étranger, vol. IV, in-8o, 383 pp., Paris 1950.

The following volumes of Balzac's general correspondence have been utilized:

Correspondance, vol. I, ed. R. Pierrot, in-16o, xxvi-851 pp., Paris 1960.

Correspondance, vol. II, ed. R. Pierrot, in-16o, iv-896 pp., Paris 1962.

Correspondance, vol. III, ed. R. Pierrot, in-16o, v-927 pp., Paris 1964.

Correspondance, vol. IV, ed. R. Pierrot, in-16o, iv-930 pp., Paris 1966.

Correspondance, vol. V, ed. R. Pierrot, in-16o, iv-1,009 pp., Paris 1969.

Lettres à sa Famille, ed. W.S. Hastings, in-8o, xl-559 pp., Paris 1950.

H. BALZAC'S MISCELLANEOUS WRITINGS

with the exception of Pensées, Sujets, Fragments, the last six volumes of Balzac's Ouvrages complètes, in the Société des Études Balzaciennes edition, have been referred to for the miscellaneous writings.

The following volumes have been cited:

Pensées, Sujets, Fragments, in-8o, xxix-167 pp., Paris 1910.

Ouvrages complètes, vol. XXV (Falthurne, Sténie, La seconde Falthurne, Traité de la prière, Du Droit d'aînesse, Histoire impartiale des Jésuites, Code des Gens honnêtes), in-8o, 624 pp., Paris 1962.

Ouvrages complètes, vol. XXVI (Vie de Molière, Vie de La Fontaine, Souvenirs d'un Paris, articles in La Silhouette, articles in La Mode, articles in Le Voleur, articles in La Caricature, Lettres sur Paris, Les Deux Amis), in-8o, 704 pp., Paris 1962.

Ouvrages complètes, vol. XXVIII (articles in Les Français peints par eux-mêmes and La Revue parisienne, monographs and articles published in collective anthologies, Les Fantaisies de la Gina and other isolated stories and articles, Lettre à Himmelyte Castilla, Lettre sur Kiev, Profession de Foi politique de Balzac en 1848 and his Lettre sur le Travail), in-8o, 792 pp., Paris 1963.

I. CATALOGUES SPECIALLY RELEVANT TO THE SUBJECT

1) Catalogues of the Louvre pictures:

Notice des tableaux exposés dans la Galerie du Musée, in-12o, 152 pp.,
Paris 1815.

Notice des tableaux exposés dans la Galerie du Musée Royal, in-12o, 239 pp.,
Paris 1816.

Notice des tableaux exposés dans la Galerie du Musée Royal, in-12o, 242 pp.,
Paris 1825.

Notice des tableaux exposés dans le Musée Royal, in-12o, 250 pp., Paris
1836.

Villot, Frédéric: Notice des tableaux exposés dans les galeries du Musée
national du Louvre. Vol. I: écoles d'Italie, in-12o, xi-212 pp., Paris
1849.

Villot, Frédéric: Notice des tableaux exposés dans les galeries du Musée
national du Louvre. Vol. II: écoles allemande, flamande et hollandaise,
in-12o, vii-345 pp., Paris 1852.

Villot, Frédéric: Notice des tableaux exposés dans les galeries du Musée
impérial du Louvre. Vol. III: école française, in-12o, x-455 pp., Paris
1855.

Brière, Gaston: Musée national du Louvre. Catalogue des peintures exposées
dans les galeries. Vol. I: école française, in-16o, xvi-316 pp., Paris
1924.

Heuteccœur, Louis: Musée national du Louvre. Catalogue des peintures exposées dans les galeries. Vol. II: École italienne et école espagnole. in-8o, xiv-203 pp., Paris 1926.

Dumonts, Louis: Musée national du Louvre. Catalogue des peintures exposées dans les galeries. Vol. III: Écoles flamande, hollandaise, allemande et anglaise. in-8o, xiii-228 pp., Paris 1922.

ii) Catalogues of the Louvre marbles

Notice des statues, bustes et bas-reliefs, de la Galerie des Antiques du Musée, ouverte pour la première fois le 18 brumaire an IX (9 November 1800), 2 vols. in-12o, Paris 1814-1815.

Catalogue sommaire des marbres antiques du Musée du Louvre, in-8o, 244 pp., Paris 1898.

iii) Catalogues of the Luxembourg collections

Explication des ouvrages de peinture et sculpture, de l'école moderne de France, exposés le 24 avril 1818, dans le Musée Royal du Luxembourg, in-12o, 88 pp., Paris 1818.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture et sculpture, de l'école moderne de France, exposés depuis le 25 mai 1823, dans le Musée Royal du Luxembourg, destiné aux artistes vivants, in-12o, 84 pp., Paris 1824.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture et sculpture de l'école moderne de France, exposés depuis le 1er mars 1825, dans le Musée Royal du Luxembourg, in-12o, 77 pp., Paris 1825.

iv) Catalogues of the Salons

Explication des peintures, sculptures et gravures, de Messieurs de l'Académie Royale, in-12o, 60 pp., Paris 1785.

Explication des peintures, sculptures et gravures, de Messieurs de l'Académie Royale, in-12o, 64 pp., Paris 1789.

Ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, et architecture, gravures, dessins, modèles, etc., exposés au Louvre par ordre de l'Assemblée Nationale, au mois de septembre 1791, l'an III de la Liberté, in-12o, 72 pp., Paris 1791.

Description des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravures, exposés au Salon du Louvre, par les artistes composant la Commune générale des Arts, le 10 août 1793, in-12o, 96 pp., Paris 1793.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Napoléon, le 1er jour complémentaire, an XII de la République française (18 September 1804), in-12o, 120 pp., Paris 1804.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Napoléon, le 15 septembre 1806, in-12o, 128 pp., Paris 1806.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Napoléon, le 14 octobre 1808, in-12o, 120 pp., Paris 1808.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Napoléon, le 5 novembre 1810, in-12o, 138 pp., Paris 1810.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Napoléon, le 1er novembre 1812, in-12o, 140 pp., Paris 1812.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 1er novembre 1814, in-12o, 140 pp., Paris 1814.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 24 avril 1817, in-12o, 125 pp., Paris 1817.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 25 août 1819, in-12o, 180 pp., Paris 1819.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 24 avril 1822, in-12o, 186 pp., Paris 1822.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie et architecture des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 25 août 1824, in-12o, 231 pp., Paris 1824.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie et architecture des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal des Arts, le 4 novembre 1827, in-12o, 264 pp., Paris 1827.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, gravure, lithographie et architecture des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal le 1er mai 1831, in-12o, 278 pp., Paris 1831.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure, et lithographie des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal, le 1er mars 1834, in-12o, xxii-216 pp., Paris 1834.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal, le 1er mars 1835, in-12o, 247 pp., Paris 1835.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal, le 1er mars 1837, in-12o, 226 pp., Paris 1837.

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture, gravure et lithographie des artistes vivants, exposés au Musée Royal, le 1er mars 1839, in-12o, 261 pp., Paris 1839.

v) Catalogues of other French galleries:

Explication des ouvrages de peinture, sculpture, architecture et gravure, exposés à la Galerie du Musée Colbert, le 6 mai 1832, in-12o, 66 pp., Paris 1832.

Notice des tableaux de la Galerie Espagnole exposés dans les salles du Musée Royal au Louvre, in-12o, 117 pp., Paris 1838.

vi) Catalogues of foreign galleries:

Verzeichnis der königlichen Gemäldegalerie zu Dresden, in-8o, 228 pp., Dresden 1843.

Kunsthistorisches Museum, Katalog der Gemäldegalerie, 2 vols. in-8o, Vienna 1963-1965.

Mańkowski, Tadeusz: Galeria Stanisława Augusta, in-fol., xviii-528 pp., 155 pl., Lwów 1932.

Réau, Louis (ed.): "Catalogue des oeuvres d'art français de la collection du roi de Pologne Stanislas-Auguste", Archives de l'Art français, 1932, pp. 225-248.

vii) Sale catalogues

Catalogue raisonné des tableaux de la galerie de feu M. le Maréchal-
Général Soult... dont la vente aura lieu à Paris... 19... 21... 22 mai
1852, in-8o, vii-51 pp., Paris 1852.

Catalogue des objets d'art et d'ameublement, tableaux anciens, livres,
meubles modernes appartenant à Mme Veuve Honoré de Balzac au château de
Beauregard (5 March 1882), in-8o, 31 pp., Paris 1882.

Catalogue de la vente de Madame Veuve Honoré de Balzac... 17-22 avril
1882... Tableaux anciens, objets d'art et de curiosité... appartenant
à Madame Veuve Honoré de Balzac, in-8o, 16 pp., Paris 1882.

Catalogue de tableaux anciens, portraits... objets d'art et
d'ameublement... du Comte Léon Mniasch (9-11 April 1902), in-4o,
125 pp., Paris 1902.

Catalogue des tableaux anciens, portraits du XVIIIe siècle, pastels...
objets d'art et d'ameublement... de Madame la Comtesse André Mniasch
(9-10 May 1910), in-4o, 76 pp., Paris 1910.

viii) Catalogue of the Balzac Exhibitions

Honoré de Balzac, 1799-1850, exposition organisée pour commémorer le
centenaire de sa mort, edited by R. Pierrot, J. Adhémar and J. Lethève,
in-8o, xvi-198 pp., Paris 1950.

J. OTHER SOURCES

At the head of this section is a compendium of background reading-matter arranged in accordance with the chapters of the thesis. It is followed by lists of other books and articles, to which direct reference has been made.

1) Background reading-matter:Chapter I:

Adhémar, Jean: "Balzac et les images", Arts, 26 January 1951.

Adhémar, Jean: "Balzac et la peinture", Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-June 1953, pp. 149-162.

Bonard, Olivier: La Peinture dans la création balzacienne. Invention et vision picturales de "La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote" au "Père Goriot", in-8o, 190 pp., Geneva 1969.

Fosca, François: De Diderot à Valéry. Les écrivains et les arts visuels, in-16o, 301 pp., Paris 1960.

Hatzfeld, Helmut A.: Literature through Art. a New Approach to French Literature, in-8o, xiv-247 pp., New York 1952.

Hauteceur, Louis: Littérature et peinture en France du XVIIe au XIXe siècle, in-8o, 327 pp., Paris 1942.

Laubriet, Pierre: L'Intelligence de l'art chez Balzac. D'Une Esthétique balzacienne, in-8o, 579 pp., Paris 1961.

Laubriet, Pierre: Un Catéchisme esthétique. "Le Chef-d'oeuvre inconnu" de Balzac, in-8o, 259 pp., Paris 1961.

Matoré, Georges: "Les Notions d'art et d'artiste à l'époque romantique", Revue des Sciences Humaines, April-September 1951, pp. 120-137.

Moreau, Pierre: "Le Romantisme littéraire dans ses rapports avec les arts plastiques", Actes du cinquième Congrès international des Langues et Littératures Modernes. Les Langues et Littératures Modernes dans leurs relations avec les Beaux-Arts. Florence. 27-31 mars 1951, pp. 341-351.

Segnac, Jean-Joseph: Literature and the Visual Arts in Nineteenth Century France, in-8o, 15 pp., Hull 1963.

Chapter II

Ancelet, Marguerite-Louise-Virginie: Les Salons de Paris. Moeur éteinte, in-12o, 245 pp., Paris 1858.

Arrigon, Louis-Jules: Les Débuts littéraires d'Honoré de Balzac, in-8o, 275 pp., Paris 1924.

Chesneau, Ernest: Peintres et statuaires romantiques, in-18o, xi-336 pp., Paris 1880.

Delécluze, Étienne-Jean: Souvenirs de soixante années, in-18o, 555 pp., Paris 1862.

Gautier, Théophile: Honoré de Balzac, in-12o, 177 pp., Paris 1859.

Gautier, Théophile: Portraits contemporains. littérateurs, peintres, sculpteurs, artistes dramatiques, in-18o, 464 pp., Paris 1874.

Gigoux, Jean: Causeries sur les artistes de mon temps, in-18o, iii-297 pp., Paris 1885.

Gozlan, Léon: Balzac en pantoufles (3rd edn.), in-18o, 292 pp., Paris 1865.

Verdet, Edmond: Souvenirs de la vie littéraire. Portraits intimes, in-12o, 315 pp., Paris 1879.

Chapter III:

Easton, Malcolm Fyfe: Artists and Writers in Paris. The Bohemian Idea. 1801-1867, in-8o, viii-205 pp., 6 pl., London 1964.

Focillon, Henri: La Peinture au XIXe siècle. Le Retour de l'Antique. Le Romantisme, in-8o, 476 pp., Paris 1927.

Landon, Charles-Paul: Annales du Musée et de l'École Moderne des Beaux-Arts, 42 vols. in-8o, Paris 1800-1822.

Marcel, Henry: La Peinture française au XIXe siècle, in-8o, 358 pp., Paris 1905.

Robiquet, Jacques: L'Art et le goût sous la Restauration. 1814 à 1830, in-8o, 221 pp., Paris 1928.

Rosenthal, Léon: La Peinture romantique. Essai sur l'évolution de la peinture française de 1815 à 1830, in-4o, x-336 pp., Paris 1900.

Rosenthal, Léon: "Du Romantisme au réalisme: les conditions sociales de la peinture sous la Monarchie de Juillet", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, February 1910, pp. 93-114, March 1910, pp. 217-241, April 1910, pp. 332-354.

Schneider, René-Gabriel: L'Esthétique classique chez Quatremère de Quincy (1805-1823), in-8o, viii-168 pp., Paris 1910.

Chapter IV:

Focillon, Henri: "Visionnaires: Balzac et Daumier", Essays in Honor of Albert Feuillerat, New Haven 1943, pp. 195-209.

Meininger, Anne-Marie: "Balzac et Henry Monnier", Année Balzacienne, 1966, pp. 217-244.

Melcher, Edith: The Life and Times of Henry Monnier. 1799-1877, in-8o, xiv-253 pp., Cambridge (Massachusetts) 1950.

Mespoulet, Marguerite: Images et romans. Parenté des estampes et du roman réaliste de 1815 à 1865, in-16o, 139 pp., Paris 1939.

Pierrot, Roger: "Balzac et Gavarni. Documents inédits", Études Balzaciennes, December 1958, pp. 153-159.

Chapter V:

Gault de Saint-Germain, Pierre-Marie: Les Trois siècles de la peinture en France, ou Galerie des peintres français, depuis François Ier jusqu'au règne de Napoléon, in-8o, xiv-349 pp., Paris 1808.

Simches, Seymour Oliver: Le Romantisme et le goût esthétique du XVIIIe siècle, in-8o, 158 pp., 20 pl., Paris 1964.

Chapter VI:

van der Tuin, Hendrik: Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la critique artistique en France de la première moitié du XIXe siècle, in-8o, 256 pp., Paris 1948.

van der Tuin, Hendrik: Les Vieux peintres des Pays-Bas et la littérature en France dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle, in-16o, 143 pp., Paris 1953.

Chapter VII:

Seznec, Jean-Joseph: John Martin en France, in-8o, 53 pp., London 1964.

Chapter VIII,

Artaud de Montor, Alexis-François: Considérations sur l'état de la peinture en Italie, dans les quatre siècles qui ont précédé celui de Raphaël, in-8o, 43 pp., Paris 1808.

Gault de Saint-Germain, Pierre-Marie: École italienne (et espagnole). Guide des amateurs de peinture, ou histoire et procès-verbaux des amateurs, des collections (revd. edn.), in-8o, 403 pp., Paris 1835.

Gould, Cecil Hilton Monk: Trophy of Conquest. The Musée Napoléon and the Creation of the Louvre, in-8o, 151 pp., London 1965.

Guise, René: "Balzac et l'Italie", Année Balzacienne, 1962, pp. 245-275.

Saunier, Charles: Les Conquêtes artistiques de la Révolution et de l'Empire, reprises et abandons des alliés en 1815, leurs conséquences sur les musées d'Europe, in-8o, viii-189 pp., Paris 1902.

Chapter IX,

Adhémar, Jean: "Essai sur les débuts de l'influence de Goya en France au XIXe siècle", Catalogue de l'exposition Goya, Paris 1935, pp. xx-xxxiv.

Guinard, Paul: "Zurbarán et la découverte de la peinture espagnole en France sous Louis-Philippe", Hommage à Ernest Martinenche, Paris 1939, pp. 23-33.

Guinard, Paul: "Velázquez et les romantiques français", Varia Velásqueña, Madrid 1960, vol. I, pp. 561-573.

Hoffmann, Léon-François: Romantisme Espagne. l'image de l'Espagne en France entre 1800 et 1850, in-8o, 204 pp., Paris 1961.

Lipschütz, Ilse Hempel: "El Despojo de Obras de arte en España durante la Guerra de la Independencia", Arte Español, 3rd quarter 1961, pp. 215-270.

- Lipschütz, Ilse Hempel: "El Pintor y los poetas, Goya y las imágenes del Romanticismo francés", Arte Español, 1963-1967, pp. 134-153.
- Rouchès, Gabriel: "Les Premières publications françaises sur la peinture espagnole", Bulletin de la Société de l'histoire de l'Art Français, 1930, pp. 35-48.

Chapter X:

- de Clarac, Charles-Othon: Musee de sculpture antique et moderne, 6 vols. in-8o, Paris 1826-1841.
- Duchesne, Jean: Musée de peinture et de sculpture, ou Recueil des principaux tableaux, statues et bas-reliefs des collections publiques et particulières de l'Europe, 16 vols. in-12o, Paris 1829-1834.
- Iversen, Erik: The Myth of Egypt and its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition, in-fol., 177 pp., 23 pl., Copenhagen 1961.
- Laubriet, Pierre: "Balzac et la sculpture", Gazette des Beaux-Arts, May-June 1961, pp. 331-358.
- Seroux d'Agincourt, Jean-Baptiste: Histoire de l'art par les monuments, depuis sa décadence au IVe siècle jusqu'à son renouvellement au XVIe, 6 vols. in-fol., Paris 1823.

Chapter XI:

- Dowen, Ray Preston: "Balzac's Interior Descriptions as an Element in Characterization", Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, 1925, pp. 289-301.
- Clouzot, Henri: "L'Ameublement dans la Comédie humaine d'Honoré de Balzac", Revue de la Semaine, 2 December 1921, pp. 25-52.

- Meuvret, Jean and others: Les Ébénistes du XVIIIe siècle français, in-fol., 344 pp., 530 pl., Paris 1963.
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