its frame. Writing is the trace of an encounter which will never know its object in absolute terms, but which will continue for as long as the image can circulate within society; for as long as the image remains alive.

Chapter Five

The Gaze and the Glance

The persistence, even within the present century, of a natural attitude riddled with error and contradiction might well seem mysterious or 'epistemic', might seem clear proof of the narcotic power of naturalisation, were the metaphysic of presence not embedded in the concrete practice of representational painting, in the actual craft: if the natural attitude is bewitched by a false logic, the spell is first cast by material technique. Investigation of that technique is by no means easy; not that we are short of terms in which to discuss studio practice – rather, our vocabulary of practice has developed in the absence of a theory of practice: its origins lie in the technical manuals of the Enlightenment,[1] and have passed from there into the institution of connoisseurship, with its traditional disdain for theory. Moreover, theoretical interest in the image, over the last few decades, has been largely preoccupied with the new order of the image represented by the Photograph: though the assumptions of photography and of cinemaphotography are constantly examined and re-examined, both in the institutions and in the journals devoted to the photograph, painting remains that which the photograph has eclipsed and rendered obsolete; *its* assumptions are explored only rarely; its status has become that of a *deposed* order of the image. Investigation of the painterly sign must deal with effects of spatiality and temporality, and with conceptions of the body, that are without counterpart in the study of the photographic image; effects and conceptions that are in themselves highly elusive, logically devious, and resistant to most of the prevailing critical vocabularies: finding even essential terms is a struggle.

In linguistics a specialised category is reserved for utterances that contain information concerning the locus of utterance, to which linguistics attaches the label *deictic* (from *deiknonei*, to show). In the analysis of painting the concept of deixis is indispensable.

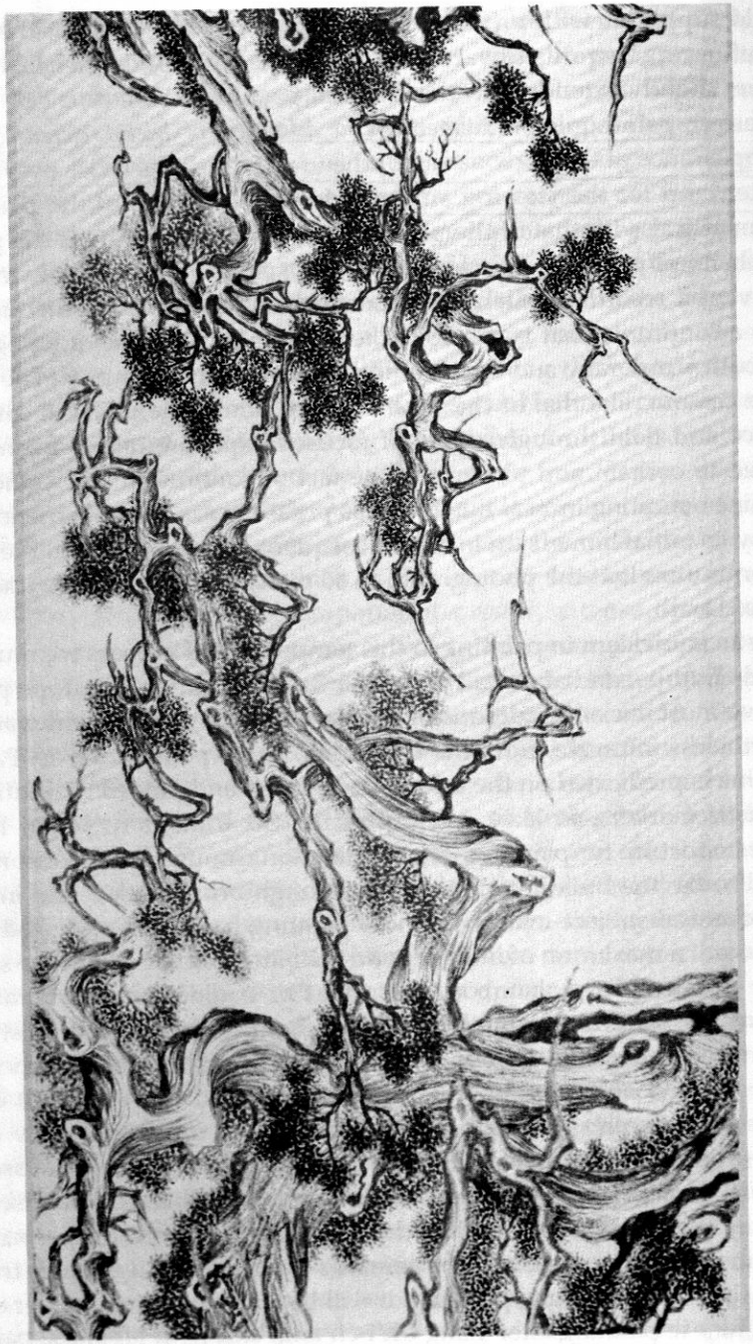
Its scope is best indicated by example.[2] Although the division of time

into three great periods, of past, present, and future, seems at first sight to correspond to the traditional division of the verb into past, present, and future tenses, in natural languages there are many tenses which on this basis alone one would not be able to place with certainty. The distinction, for instance, between *he ran* and *he has run* is not a question of 'when' the running took place, still less of a temporal remoteness of 'the running' greater in one case than in the other: it is not a matter of reference to an event less or more recent, but rather of the relation between the event and the circumstances of the utterance: *he ran* describes only the past event, and nothing further; *he has run* supplies the same information about the event, but adds to it further information concerning the relation between the event and its description. (*Amatus est*, in school Latin, is conventionally analysed into 'he is in a state of having been loved' ('. . . but is not loved at the moment' is a possible inference); in the same way, *he has run* can be analysed into 'he is now, at this moment of speaking, in a state of having run'). French makes a similar distinction between the tense known as the aorist or preterite (*il courut*), which in this century has become an exclusively literary tense, and the compound *il a couru*, a tense of vernacular speech. The aorist presents an action which came to completion at a certain time before the utterance; and it describes that action without involvement or engagement on the part of the speaker recounting the action. The compound past *il a couru* not only describes the completed action, but adds a comment from the speaker's own perspective – he is now, from this viewpoint of my speech, in a state of having run, of having been loved. The aoristic tenses (simple past, imperfect, pluperfect) are characteristically those of the historian, reciting the events of the past impersonally and without reference to his own position. The events, since presented neutrally, in 'bardic' disengagement, essentially have no narrator; having no narrator they address no present or nearby audience, and it is only by abrupt change of gear into a deictic mode that an aoristic narrative finds its addressee ('dear reader'). The deictic tenses (the present, and all compounds of the present) by contrast create and refer to their own perspective. The wider class of deixis therefore includes all those particles and forms of speech where the utterance incorporates into itself information about its own spatial position relative to its content (here, there, near, far off), and its own relative temporality (yesterday, today, tomorrow, sooner, later, long ago). Deixis is utterance in carnal form and points back directly (deiknonei) to the body of the speaker; self-reflexive, it marks the moment at which rhetoric becomes oratory: were we to visualise deixis, Quintilian

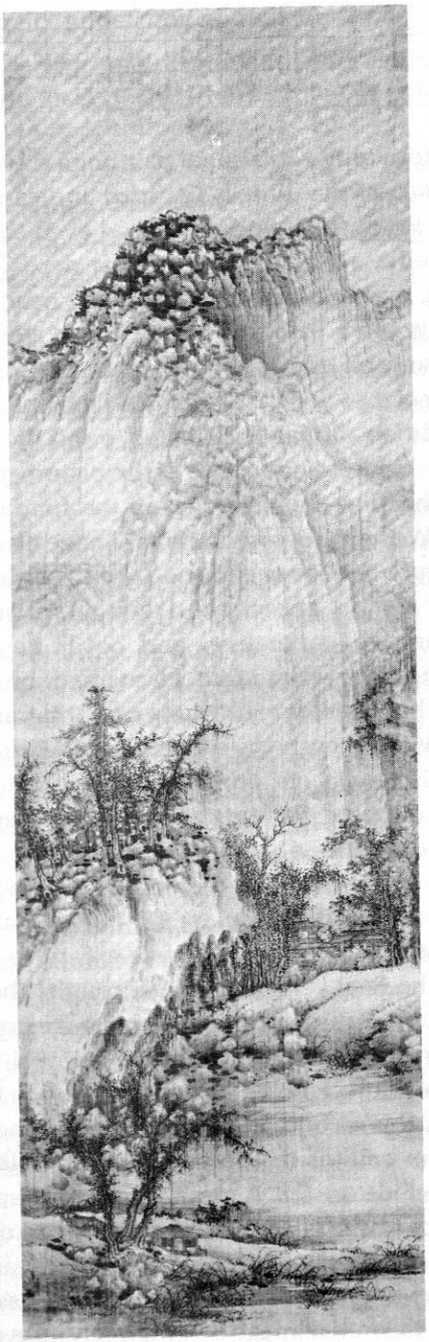
would supply us with a vivid and exact picture – the *hands* of the rhetor, the left facing inwards towards the body, the right outstretched with the fingers slightly extended, in the classical posture of *eloquentia*.[3]

Western painting is predicated on *the disavowal of deictic reference*, on the disappearance of the body as site of the image; and this twice over: for the painter, and for the viewing subject. Here the position of the painting is asymmetrical with that of the photograph, for photography is the product of a chemical process occurring in *the same* spatial and temporal vicinity as the event it records: the silver crystals react continuously to the luminous field; a continuity that is controlled temporally in the case of holography, and both temporally and spatially in the case of photography. The design of the camera, like that of the *camera obscura*, limits the physical contact of surface and field through a gate of focused exposure; all its ingenuity is exerted to contain and to harness the fact of continuum: the camera is a machine operating in 'real time' (as this phrase is used in cybernetics); and it is by its initial immersion in and subsequent withdrawal from the physical continuum that the photograph, in so many analyses, comes under the sign of Death.

For an equivalent in painting to this temporality of process we must look outside Europe, and above all to the Far East: if China and Europe possess the two most ancient traditions of representational painting, the traditions nevertheless bifurcate, from the beginning, at the point of deixis. Painting in China is predicated on the acknowledgement and indeed the cultivation of deictic markers: at least as early as the Six Canons of Hsieh Ho the greatest stricture for painting, after 'animation through spirit consonance', is said to be 'the building of structure through brushwork';[4] and in terms of its classical subject-matter, Chinese painting has always selected forms that permit a maximum of integrity and visibility to the constitutive strokes of the brush: foliage, bamboo, the ridges of boulder and mountain formations, the patterns of fur, feathers, reeds, branches, in the 'boned' styles of the image; and forms whose lack of outline (mist, aerial distance, the themes of still and moving water, of the pool and the waterfall) allows the brush to express to the full the liquidity and immediate flow of the ink, in the 'boneless' styles.[5] In such a work as the Cleveland Museum's *Buddhist Monastery in Stream and Mountain Landscape* (Illus. 15), landscape is certainly the subject, but equally the subject is the work of the brush in 'real time' and as extension of the painter's own body; and if that is true for this early, Northern Sung painting, it will be true to an even greater extent with Chinese painting after Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, and with Japanese painting



14 Wen Cheng-ming, *Seven Juniper Trees* (detail



15 Attributed to Chu Jan, *Buddhist Monastery in Stream and Mountain Landscape*

after Sesshu.[6] The work of production is constantly displayed in the wake of its traces; in this tradition the body of labour is on constant display, just as it is judged in terms which, in the West, would apply only to a *performing* art.

The temporality of Western representational painting is rarely the deictic time of the painting as process; that time is usurped and cancelled by the aoristic time of the event. Productive work is effaced even though Europe has always employed media which in fact permit deixis considerable scope: encaustic, tempera, and oil paint are potentially even more deictically expressive than calligraphic painting, in that their work consists of moulding and modelling as well as painting: the variable viscosity of the pigment opens up a parameter of the trace unavailable to ink. Yet through much of the Western tradition oil paint is treated primarily as an *erasive* medium. What it must first erase is the surface of the picture-plane: visibility of the surface would threaten the coherence of the fundamental technique through which the Western representational image classically *works* the trace, of ground-to-figure relations: 'ground', the absence of figure, is never accorded parity, is always a *subtractive* term. The pigment must equally obey a second erasive imperative, and cover its own tracks: whereas with ink-painting everything that is marked on the surface remains visible, save for those preliminaries or errors that are not considered part of the image, with oil even the whites and the ground-colours are opaque: stroke conceals canvas, as stroke conceals stroke.

The individual history of the oil-painting is therefore largely irretrievable, for although the visible surface has been worked, and worked as a total expanse, the viewer cannot ascertain the degree to which other surfaces lie concealed beneath the planar display: the image that suppresses deixis has no interest in its own genesis or past, except to bury it in a palimpsest of which only the final version shows through, above an indeterminable débris of revisions. Picasso's technique of image-construction is only the extreme statement of what is in fact the habitual, the ancient process: a first image is placed on canvas in order to induce in the painter a reaction that will replace it; this second image in turn will generate a third, a twentieth image; yet at no point is the durational temporality of performance preserved or respected: on the contrary, each increment of durational time is referred back towards its predecessor only to efface it, and referred forward to an as yet uncreated future of the image in which the present, deictic increment will have ceased to exist.[7] For Picasso, the work of erasure stops only when the initial image is completely subverted, when

the viewer can no longer work out by what route the image on canvas has been reached; and from one point of view, this emphasis on improvisation involves a heightened and thoroughly un-classical activation of deictic work.[8]

Yet in its presentation of an image whose transitional phases no one is able to reconstruct, Picasso only repeats the classical mystification of opaque pigment handled always under erasure. Like the stylus in the mystic writing pad, the brush traces *obliteratively*, as indelible effacement; and whatever may have been the improvisational logic of the painting's construction, this existence of the image in its own time, of duration, of practice, of the body, is negated by never referring the marks on canvas to their place in the vanished sequence of local inspirations, but only to the twin axes of a temporality outside *durée*: on the one hand, the moment of origin, of the founding perception; and on the other, the moment of closure, of receptive passivity: to a transcendent temporality of the Gaze.

This we must approach as technical term. Both in English and in French, vision is portrayed under two aspects: one vigilant, masterful, 'spiritual', and the other subversive, random, disorderly. The etymology of the word *regard* points to far more than the rudimentary act of looking: the prefix, with its implication of an act that is always repeated, already indicates an impatient pressure within vision, a persevering drive which looks outward with mistrust (*reprendre sous garde*, to re-arrest) and actively seeks to confine what is always on the point of escaping or slipping out of bounds.[9] The *regard* attempts to extract the enduring form from fleeting process; its epithets tend towards a certain violence (penetrating, piercing, fixing), and its overall purpose seems to be the discovery of a second (re-) surface standing behind the first, the mask of appearances. Built into the *regard* is an undoubted strain or anxiety in the transactions between the self and the world, and in this effortful scansion it is opposed to the *coup d'oeil*, which preserves and intensifies the violent aspect, the 'attack' (in the musical sense) of *regard*, yet by the same token creates an intermittence of vision, a series of peaks traversed by valleys of inattentiveness when the self, recuperating after the outburst of its activity and with its resources temporarily depleted, withdraws from the external world into an apartness alluded to yet lacking in firm definition. An unmistakable hierarchy operates across the two terms, as though one came from the diction of an aristocracy and the other from the plebs, as though *regard* belonged to the protocols of the court and were formally reversible, the *regard* of the self becoming visible to the *regard* of others, of the Other; while *coup d'oeil* is

vision off-duty and retired from visibility, its brief raid into the outer world earning immediate return to a natural intransitiveness and repose.

In English, a similar division separates the activity of the *gaze*, prolonged, contemplative, yet regarding the field of vision with a certain aloofness and disengagement, across a tranquil interval, from that of the *glance*, a furtive or sideways look whose attention is always elsewhere, which shifts to conceal its own existence, and which is capable of carrying unofficial, *sub rosa* messages of hostility, collusion, rebellion, and lust. Setting to one side the complexity of the French terms in their passage through a long and rich intellectual development, let us stay with the broad, vernacular division of the English terms and elaborate one connotational strand: the implied dualism of the Gaze and the Glance. Painting of the glance addresses vision in the durational temporality of the viewing subject; it does not seek to bracket out the process of viewing, nor in its own techniques does it exclude the traces of the body of labour. The calligraphic work of Chu Jan or Sesshu cannot be taken in all at once, *tota simul*, since it has itself unfolded within the *durée* of process; it consists serially, in the somatic time of its construction (a more precise translation of the First Canon of Hsieh Ho suggests the gloss 'consonance of the body with the object the body is to represent': it is from the body of labour that the animation of the representation emerges).[10] Suppression of deixis in the West operates by abstracting from the physical practice of painting and of viewing a valorised moment when the eye contemplates the world alone, in severance from the material body of labour: the body is reduced (as much in Gombrich as in Alberti or in Leonardo) to its optical anatomy, the minimal diagram of monocular perspective. In the Founding Perception, the gaze of the painter arrests the flux of phenomena, contemplates the visual field from a vantage-point outside the mobility of duration, in an eternal moment of disclosed presence; while in the moment of viewing, the viewing subject unites his gaze with the Founding Perception, in a perfect recreation of that first epiphany. Elimination of the diachronic movement of deixis creates, or at least seeks, a synchronic instant of viewing that will eclipse the body, and the glance, in an infinitely extended Gaze of the image as pure idea: the image as *eidolon*.

One example must stand for many. Against the *Buddhist Monastery in Stream and Mountain Landscape*, let us juxtapose the Titian *Bacchus and Ariadne* (Illus. 15 and 16).[11] Where the landscape in the hanging scroll was motionless and all motion resided in the brush, here everything is subject to a fundamental figure of Arrest (the time of the painting is that of the

enounced, not the enunciation). What is removed from the world is its duration: the bodily postures and gestures are frozen at points which normal vision is unable to immobilise, which can never be seen by the glance; a maximum of distance is introduced between the disorderly, rhythmical, dionysian vision of the dancers, of Bacchus, of Ariadne, and the cold, synchronic, omniscient gaze of the painting's founding perception. The term shed in that separation is precisely the body, as source of a possible troubling of the panoptic, split-second clarity the image seeks: vision as it unfolds before the participants in the scene is the corporeal, spasmodic vibrancy of flux; vision as it is presented to the viewer is that of the Gaze victorious over the Glance, vision disembodied, vision decarnalised. The mode of the image is emphatically aoristic. Where in deixis the utterance is continuous, temporally, with the event it describes, here the image aims at a discontinuity between itself and the scene it represents, discontinuity so extreme that the origin of the image (this is its fascination) in fact becomes irrational. Just as the aorist presents action that is now over, action seen from the viewpoint of history, so the aoristic gaze contemplates the drama of Ariadne's encounter with Bacchus from the perspective of the last act, when Ariadne will be honoured after her death by translation into the constellation Corona, in memory of the jewels that had guided Theseus through the Labyrinth. The action is over as it happens: the viewpoint is that of an all-knowing eternity beyond sublunary change. In its root form, the word *consideration* refers to exactly this transcendent operation of vision, where the stars (*sidera*) are seen together, the constellations made and named by subduing the random configurations of the night sky to the order of celestial geometry: the constellation is that which just exceeds the boundary of the empirical glance. Vision as it scans the night sky can never take in the constellation all at once, *im Augenblick*: Corona is formed by an abstraction from the limited focuses of the glance, a surpassing of the intermittent, shifting field of practical vision into the theoretical eidos of an oval that nocturnal vision will never see. Presented in the full light of day, Titian's constellation reveals the contradiction – the impossibility of the considerating Gaze, at the same time that the painting of the Gaze reaches what must be its technical zenith.

Where the painting attributed to Chu Jan, or the *Seven Juniper Trees* of Wen Cheng-ming (Illus. 14), had incorporated and impersonated flux in the flow of its inks on the silk, here the mastery of the stroke lies in painting out the traces that have brought the strokes into being: the easel-paintings of the West are autochthonous, self-created; partheno-

geneses, virgin-births. On one side, process has been eliminated from the world: everything that was in rhythm is arrested and everything that had been mobile is petrified. On the other, process has been eliminated from the painting: the stroke does not exist in itself, except to transmit the perception alleged to precede it; the oil-medium does not exist, except to erase its own production. The logic of the Gaze is therefore subject to two great laws: the body (of the painter, of the viewer) is reduced to a single point, the *macula* of the retinal surface; and the moment of the Gaze (for the painter, for the viewer) is placed outside duration. Spatially and temporally, the act of viewing is constructed as the removal of the dimensions of space and time, as the disappearance of the body: the construction of an *acies mentis*, the punctual viewing subject.

The *Bacchus and Ariadne* lies at the end of a development which begins in a quite different semiotic and somatic regime. Prior to the Renaissance neither the mosaic art of the South nor the glass-painting of the North radically questions the archaic dispensation that had legitimated the image as a place of textual *relay*. After the close of the Iconoclastic period, the image in Europe is issued a precise and limited command: *illiterati quod per scripturam non possunt intueri, hoc per quaedam licturae lineamenta contemplatur*.[12] Since the overriding mandate of glass and mosaic is to present scripture without further elaboration beyond that which is required to disseminate the pre-formed corpus of denotation (the minimal schema of recognition), there is no requirement that the text be articulated from the viewpoint of the individual craftsman or be received by an individuated spectator: just the reverse – for the schema to be guaranteed precise recognition, it must keep to its minimal form. The viewing subject is addressed liturgically, as a member of the faith, and communally, as a generalised choric presence. The image is part of a whole architectural *Umwelt* where the body is enclosed on all sides and addressed in all dimensions: the space of the Byzantine image is dramatic, a theatre of religious ceremonial; and, like the space of the mosque, it is also acoustic, for the image is only the liturgy in another and more accessible form. The spectator at Hosias Loukas, at Hagia Sophia, at Canterbury and Chartres, is constructed as a physical, ambient witness to the Sacred Word; he is not yet the optically specified and disembodied presence he will later become, since the body in its totality is the focus of the visual, as of the hieratic regime: the Church will baptise, marry, punish, bless, and give its final rites to this body of the Incarnation where spirit and matter fuse.



16 Titian, *Bacchus and Ariadne*

Within this *architectural* dispensation of the image, not even those narrative structures which will later be used to address the spectator as unique observer of *this* sacred episode detain and isolate viewing attention, since the capacious space of the edifice has been charged with maintaining the entire corpus of texts: in the glass cycles of Canterbury, the Sacrifice of Isaac is not separated out from the corpus and proferred for exclusive inspection, but is accompanied by the Passover, the story of the Grapes of Eschol, Moses in the Desert, the Crucifixion; the individual act of viewing is interwoven with its related types and anti-types, in a narrative synthesis of both Testaments.[13] Since liturgical temporality embraces the whole year and not the particular moment of viewing time, the textual dynamic is rotational, each component episode part of a turning wheel of scripture in which the individual instance and the total repertory are subject to no

particular dissociation, but on the contrary participate in each other's nature. So far from being a spatial or temporal point, the viewer of the ecclesiastical image is an embodied presence in motion through a circular temporality of text and a choreographic (in the full sense) space of vision; the substance and mobility of his physique are fully involved in the work of receiving the images, as he receives the Eucharist, the Doxology, the Word. *The body does not see itself*; the gaze under which it moves is not yet the introjected gaze of the Other, but of God (Illus. 17).[14]

The crisis of this visual regime is precipitated by expansion beyond the minimal schema. Once information oversteps the threshold of recognition, a principle of fissure is introduced into the unity of the liturgical *rota*: as the viewer moves from one connotationally expanded image to the next, he confronts each time a new scene, one which has broken free of its sequence, has renounced its place in the choric cycle, and asks to be viewed in increasing isolation both from its physical neighbourhood and from the global *langue*. The intensity both of the fissure itself and of the painter's efforts to anneal the fissure is clearly evident in the Giotto and Giottesque fresco cycles at Assisi and Padua, where the surface area *between* scenes is worked in two contradictory styles: both as *band*, joining the seceding episodes back together in a spatial coherence of mural space, to counterbalance the increasing fracture of the narrative space; and at the same time as *interval*, pulling the scenes apart and reinforcing their individuation by transforming the space of the wall into that of the frame. The mural space, formerly the most powerful assertion of the primacy of architecture in the visual economy, is now suppressed as plastic form, and becomes neutralised into a kind of non-space, neither part of the three-dimensional surround of the edifice, nor clearly affiliated to the individual episode: a sort of categorial scandal in which the *langue/parole* divisions of the narrative order (the cycle, the episode) and the double set of instructions to the spectator (to see the space as scaffold/as surround) confusedly elide.

Connotation and *frame* are interdependent terms. In so far as the image exceeds its denotative function, it has already broken from its matrix, from the cyclical banding of the *langue*; it no longer invokes, *in absentia*, the corpus from which it is derived. Taken now *in praesentia*, it thus creates for the viewer a space and indeed a metaphysic of presence, since the viewer is correspondingly singled out from the liturgical chorus and specified ostensively, as the recipient of this particular narrative segment, a segment that less and less implies the original circle from which it is taken. The consequence of an individuated viewing subject derives in the first place



17 *Christ Pantocrator*

from the internal ratio of denotation to connotation within the visual sign: the relation of excess brings into being both the concept of a cordon round the image, and a spectator who is addressed as *thou*, a singular subject the image proposes and assumes. What is interesting is the independence of this configuration of frame, connotation, and individuated subject, from the elaboration of the codes of perspective. The configuration is already established in Cimabue whose presentation of three-dimensional space is, to say the least, rudimentary: the specificity that derives from narrative structure and the specificity that derives from spatial structure are *separate* evolutions, mutually out of phase. Indeed, in the Giotto fresco cycle they tend to conflict: at Padua, each individual panel visibly struggles against



18 Master of the Barberini Panels, *Annunciation*

the fracturing effect of recessional space.[15] The *Betrayal*, for example, is noticeably bi-dimensional and seems actively to resist that massive separation from its mural banding which the image would suffer if it were to include the perspectival depth we know Giotto was certainly capable of introducing into it: the disposition of the weapons takes the form of a frontal semicircle, the heads glimpsed between Judas and Christ cluster in fan-like formation round the picture plane, and Christ's halo permits only slight, somewhat incoherent accommodation to three-dimensional space. Here, the handling of space works to *contain* the secessionist tendency of connotation.

Again, in the *Annunciation* by the Master of the Barberini Panels, in Washington, two separate modes of specification are rather raggedly superimposed (Illus. 18). At the level of information, the *Annunciation* refers not only to the general *langue* of Gospel schemata, but to a specialised set of subdivisions within the Annunciation topos. Working only with the codes of iconography, the contemporary viewer would have been able to place this particular Annunciation against a set of variations established largely through the positions of the Virgin's hands, and corresponding to five distinct states or phases of the episode: Disquiet, Reflection, Inquiry, Submission, Merit; he or she would have recognised the image as the schema corresponding to the second of these phases.[16] This kind of fine-tuning in the reading of symbols constructs the viewer firmly, and independently of whatever may be happening within the spatial construction of the image, as the receiver of *this*, this single and highly particularised schema. The Kress *Annunciation* is not to be viewed against a whole cyclic movement of sacred history, but rather as part of a locally delimited set of minor variations on the Annunciation theme, of which four (Disquiet, Inquiry, Submission, Merit) are currently being excluded. The viewer who is to supply these excluded terms is asked to perform a minute and almost optional interpretative act which even in the year of the painting's appearance may well have been beyond many viewers' competence. The narrative address is thus far more singularly vocative than it is, for example, in the Giotto *Betrayal*, where the proposed viewer is still a comparatively non-individuated liturgical participant, called on to view the *Betrayal* against a vast Passion cycle; a more intimate address asks at this point for fine discriminations amongst Annunciations; it assumes a viewing subject who can be relied on to perform immediate scansion of this 'unique' Annunciation, and who is accordingly being treated more as a connoisseur than as a choric worshipper.

In addition, the Annunciation is portrayed as taking place in, or rather in front of, a precisely triangulated recessional space. The codes of perspective require that the viewer take up a position opposite the vanishing point indicated by the plunging arcades, cornices and flagstones; this second construction of a viewer who must have assumed an exact point in space is *then* superadded to the first. But the two constructions, in the Kress *Annunciation*, do not quite synchronise. In the iconographic subdivision of the Annunciation into 'stations' the relationship between 'fixed' and 'moving' parts has something of the quality of a shadow puppet or marionette, while the frontal, frieze-like space of Angel, Virgin, and urn is not articulated smoothly enough into the architectural background, which seems to hang behind the figures in the manner of a backcloth. In this faulty alignment we can see that the construction of the viewing subject is in fact multiply determined; the desired homophony devolves into the polyphonic zigzag of voices mutually out of phase.

It is not until Alberti's *De Pictura* that the problems of unified space, unified information, and their correct relative alignment are fully theorised, and in a single term: *compositio*. Although we are used to thinking of pictorial composition as a matter of the relationships between different areas of the picture plane, its original meaning is rhetorical and approximates more closely the modern term 'syntax':

> It is indeed usually the case that, when the spectator spends time examining the painting, then the plenitude of the image gains favour. But this plenitude should be elaborated according to controlled variation, and subdued and modified by nobility of subject-matter, as well as by its verisimilitude. I greatly condemn those painters who, merely because they wish their work to seem abundant in detail, or because they cannot bear to leave any area of the image unfilled, on that account fail to practice *composition*, and instead scatter everything about in a confused and haphazard fashion, so that the narrative seems rather to be disordered, than enacted.
>
> Fit enim ut, cum spectantes lustrandis rebus morentur, tunc picturis copia gratiam asquetatur. Sed hanc copiam velim cum varietate quadam esse ornatum, tum dignitate et verecundia gravem atque moderatur. Improbo quidem eos pictores qui, quo videri copiosi, quove nihil vacuum relictum volant, eo nullam sequuntur compositionem. Sed confuse et dissolute omnia disseminant, ex quo non rem agere sed tumultuare historia videtur.[17]

Composition here is conceived as a unity of theme and of information, rather than a unity of space, or a balancing of surface areas. The crucial terms – *copia*, *dissolutus*, *varietas* – are taken from humanist rhetoric, and in particular from the rhetoric of the Ciceronian periodic sentence, with its careful priorities of main- and sub-clauses, central and peripheral emphases.[18] Alberti is recommending that the painters co-ordinate their data in the unified hierarchical formations exemplified by Ciceronian Latin, and by Alberti's own Ciceronian prose; it is likely that he is also criticising particular painters whose styles value *copia* over *compositio*, and episode over unitary theme – painters such as Pisanello and Benozzo Gozzoli. At the same time, the coherent field of information must be organised spatially, around a single axis.

> I beg studious painters to listen to me . . . they should understand that, when they draw lines across a surface, and fill the parts they have drawn with colours, their sole object is the representation on this one surface of many different forms of surfaces, just as though this surface which they colour were so transparent, so like glass, that the visual pyramid passed right through it from a certain distance and within a certain radius of the centric ray . . .
>
> Quare obsecro nos audiant studiosi pictores . . . ac discant quidem dum lineis circumeunt superficiem, dumque descriptos locos implent coloribus, nihil magis queri quam ut in hac una superficia plures superficierum formae repraesentur, non secus ac si superficies haec, quam coloribus operiunt, esset admodum vitres et perlucida huiusmodi ut per eam tota pyramis visiva permearet certo intervallo certaque centrici radii et luminis positione cominus in aere suis locis constitutis.[19]

Perhaps some clarification is needed: the visual 'pyramid' is the cone of light passing through the lens of the eye onto the retina; the centric ray is a theoretical axis extending from the convergent point of the cone, the *fovea centralis*, to a point on the surface around which the image is to cohere – what is usually known as the vanishing point. Now, it would seem that in this rigorously perceptualist account of representation, the body of the painter is reduced to the 'interior' arc between retina and brush, and that the body of the viewer is correspondingly simplified into a punctual site of reception; that Alberti's conception of the subject is already Cartesian in its reduction of the space of painting to dimensionless punctuality.

There can be little doubt that in its theoretical form, as presented by *De Pictura*, this is indeed the reduction Alberti intends: the eye of the viewer is to take up a position in relation to the scene that is identical to the position originally occupied by the painter, as though both painter and viewer looked through the same viewfinder on to a world unified spatially around the centric ray, the line running from viewpoint to vanishing point (it is probable that Alberti has in mind the model of the *camera obscura*); unified spatially, but also informationally, since all the data presented by the image are to cohere around a core narrative structure. Yet curiously, the construction of a punctual and disembodied subject is precisely what painting organised around a single vanishing point fails to achieve.

In the first epoch of perspective, dominated by the Albertian 'box' or *costruzione legittima*, the image provides an avenue of approach that directly addresses the *physique* of the spectator.

Let us say that the Raphael *Marriage of the Virgin* succeeds where the *Annunciation* by the Master of the Barberini Panels failed, and that the two aspects of unification proposed by *De Pictura*, of information and of space, are not simply superimposed but fully integrated; that the 'back-cloth effect' has been overcome (Illus. 19). Nevertheless, because the Albertian concept of the centric ray – the line between the viewpoint and the vanishing point – is *axial*, the viewer proposed and assumed by the image is in fact given no *single* point from which the image is to be seen. Alberti's conception of pictorial syntax is in fact far more delimiting to the subject than his doctrine of space. In the Ciceronian sentence, the organisation of information into strict hierarchies of priority affords the reader little room for manoeuvre: the subject-position is mapped out in advance, by imbrication of blocks of information into an ascending series of importance; through the use of units capable of shifting information from a higher to a lower level (e.g. relative particles), Ciceronian rhetoric imposes a gubernatorial perspective on the information it purveys, and this in turn fixes the subject in a unitary position of submission before that ruling perspective.[20] At this level, the Raphael successfully meets Alberti's requirement: the *compositio* of the *Marriage of the Virgin*, as a narrative structure, specifies precisely which zones of the image are of primary, of secondary, and of tertiary status.

Yet spatially, the address is not to a *punctual* subject, but to a viewer who is physically embodied: the characteristic forms of the *veduta*, in the Albertian epoch of painting, are architectural: flagstones, arcades, cornices, windows, porticoes; the space they habitually recreate is that of the



19 Raphael, *Marriage of the Virgin*

piazza. The architecture of the *veduta* proposes a spectating body accustomed to defining itself as one among many in a vast array of precise, bounded, minutely located physical forms; the streets like canyons, the open expanses of the square, all these cues of urban movement describe a body tracked along a mobile path, a body always advancing and retreating, measuring and quantifying.[21] In its production of the centric ray between viewpoint and vanishing point, the Albertian regime assumes the viewer not simply as an ambient witness, in the manner of Canterbury or Hosias Loukas, but as a physical presence; and in this sense the vanishing point is the anchor of a system which *incarnates* the viewer, renders him tangible and corporeal, a measurable, and above all a visible object in a world of absolute visibility. The centric ray constitutes a return of the gaze upon itself: the cone of lines emanating from the Albertian eye is redoubled in its opposite, a cone radiating towards it out of that point from which all the architectonic lines radiate: in the Raphael, from the blank opening at the centre of the temple. At the picture plane, the two cones intersect; which is to say that the single vanishing point marks the installation within the painting of a principle of radical alterity, since its gaze returns that of the viewer as its own object: something is looking at my looking: a gaze whose position I can never occupy, and whose vista I can imagine only by reversing my own, by inverting the perspective before me, and by imagining my own gaze as the new, palindromic point of disappearance on the horizon.

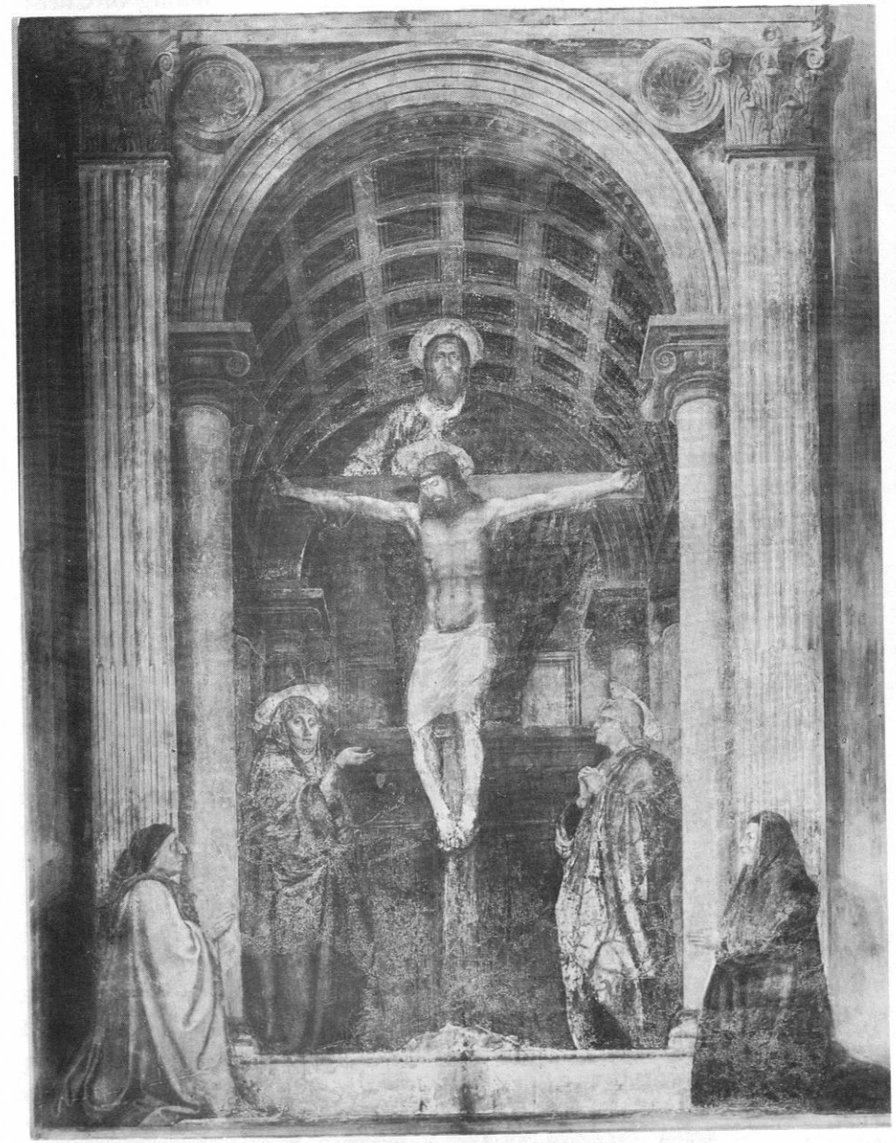
Despite the dyadic reversibility of the two gazes, there is nothing interpersonal about this vision that sees itself seeing: if the implacable God of Hosias Loukas could be appeased by prayer, as an invisible place towards which the stream of public and private liturgy was directed, now the subject lacks its divine partner: no other gaze is actually confronting mine, except that of a rectangular, luminous void on the horizon. A third factor has been introduced, a viewpoint which is not that of a separate creature or personality, but of an impersonal arrangement, a *logic* of representation which changes the viewer himself into a representation, an object or spectacle before his own vision. In operating the codes of monocular perspective the viewing subject creates a self-definition as *this* body approaching the image in *this* space: where the space of Byzantium had been physical, had been somatic, yet the body was never individually interpellated and never saw itself, Albertian space returns the body to itself in its own image, as a measurable, visible, objectified unit. From the generalised ambience or atmosphere of religious witness, it solidifies a form which will provide the viewing subject with the first of its 'objective' identities.

What we are really observing, in this first geological age of perspective, the epoch of the vanishing point, is the transformation of the subject into object: like the camera, the painting of perspective clears away the diffuse, non-localised nebula of imaginary definitions and substitutes a definition from the outside. In its final form, which we will emblematically indicate through Titian and Vermeer, the only position for the viewing subject proposed and assumed by the image will be that of the Gaze, a transcendent point of vision that has discarded the body of labour and exists only as a disembodied *punctum*. Yet what is fascinating about Albertian space is the persistence of the body as the privileged term in its visual economy. The crucial difficulty raised yet left unresolved by *De Pictura* concerns the puzzle of the relation between these three vertices: the point from which the scene was observed by the painter (the Founding Perception); the point from which the viewer is to look at the image (Viewpoint); and the point on the horizon towards which the perspective lines converge (Vanishing Point). With the *camera obscura*, which provides the conceptual framework for *De Pictura*, alignment of the three is simple: the Founding Perception is gathered at the aperture of the chamber (lens, iris), and perfect viewing is achieved by placing the Viewpoint of the spectator at the same aperture, looking towards the screen; in terms of the painting practice Alberti advocates, the viewer finds a position in relation to the image from which the field before him exactly corresponds to the Founding Perception, a position existing at some point along the centric ray.[22] Yet there is an ambiguity here: is the centric ray an empirical entity, matching the physical experience of gazing across the space of an orthogonal piazza, towards an actual vanishing point on the horizon; or is the centric ray a theoretical entity around which the space of the image is to be organised in simply mathematical terms?

What even the most 'Albertian' painters are unable to resolve is the relation between a purely *fictional* vanishing point, and the position *physically* to be occupied by the viewer. In the work of Piero, for example, the impression of monumentality, of superhuman scale, derives largely from a portrayal of the figures in a new perspective that is exaggeratedly low: as the spectator 'moves into' the viewpoint that corresponds, across the centric ray, to the vanishing point of the image, there is a crushing sense of diminution of the spectator's own scale, an alteration of the customary ratio between bodies in the visual field: in normal viewing experience, human beings are seen in this way only if the viewer's body is lowered – in

fact, is kneeling in prayer. The effect assumes, still, that the viewer will want to align his own body in relation to the image before him, if not in actuality, at least in the mental accommodations he makes between the viewpoint proposed by the painting, and his own physique. To this extent, Piero is activating a notion of 'correct' bodily disposition that reveals the extent to which the Gaze is still theorised physically, with the body as its central support.[23] Again, in the Masaccio *Trinity*, the viewer is to occupy a space at ground level, directly opposite the illusionistic sarcophagus; his eye level corresponds roughly to the level of the outer stage on which the patrons kneel (Illus. 20). Calculating for this angle of vision, the image then welds together the vanishing point of its own perspective with the point actually occupied by the observer, across a centric ray perpendicular to the picture plane. Examining the surface, the viewer will find most of the fresco to cohere about this anticipated position: the plunging perspective of the sarcophagus is well below eye level, the heads of the donors are slightly above, the lines of the coffered ceiling duly protract inward and downward to the centric ray, and the figure of God-the-Father seems to tilt backward, as though seen from far beneath. Moreover, the scale of the figures within the image is consonant with the scale of the viewer's body, as though the ground plan of the viewer's physical environment were continuous with the ground plan of the painting; and since the centric ray is unnaturally low in relation to the figures, the scale seems magnified or monumental, as in Piero.

These spatial effects assume the viewing subject as an actual bodily presence, reacting to scale within the image as though to the scale of normal experience: the vocative address of the image is directly somatic. That is, so to speak, the Albertian side of the Masaccio *Trinity*: it posits continuity of ground plan from the exterior to the interior of the image; its natural tendency is towards *trompe l'oeil*; and it anticipates the kinaesthetic, 'muscular' response of a viewer who, from comparison with his own experience of scale, will interpret the height of the figures as magnified even when their dimensions do not exceed life size. Yet at the same time, there emerges within the image a quite different conception of the viewing subject, in which the centric ray is thought through not as a physical axis, but as a set of non-empirical co-ordinates: a *second* vanishing point is included in the image, roughly at the height indicated by the Madonna's extended right hand.[24] It is around this separate, post-Albertian point that the schema of the Crucifixion coheres, *in a zone the body of the viewer cannot occupy*: whereas the head and shoulders of God-the-Father tilt backwards,



20 Masaccio, *Trinity*

to be seen from a position in real space, the body of Christ remains in parallel with the picture plane; the foreshortened modelling of Christ's face, legs, arms and torso presumes a viewpoint that is spatially elevated far above the viewer's own body. The image thus divides into zones of empirical and of theoretic perspective; a division it refuses to acknowledge, except in one key area: the head of the Madonna (Illus. 21). Looking at the detail of the face from the position of the viewer, we find the left side of the face coherent about the second and theoretical vanishing point (if we were to cover the right side, this would be a frontally posed three-quarter portrait): the right side, by contrast, coheres about the empirical and embodied viewpoint of the spectator. The conflict is in the first place spatial, a clash between dimensional systems that warps and distorts the features of the Madonna, as though the space of Einstein were displacing the space of Euclid; yet in the wider sense it is a clash between contradictory definitions of the viewing-subject: as *this* body in *this* space; and as a non-empirical *punctum* of observation.

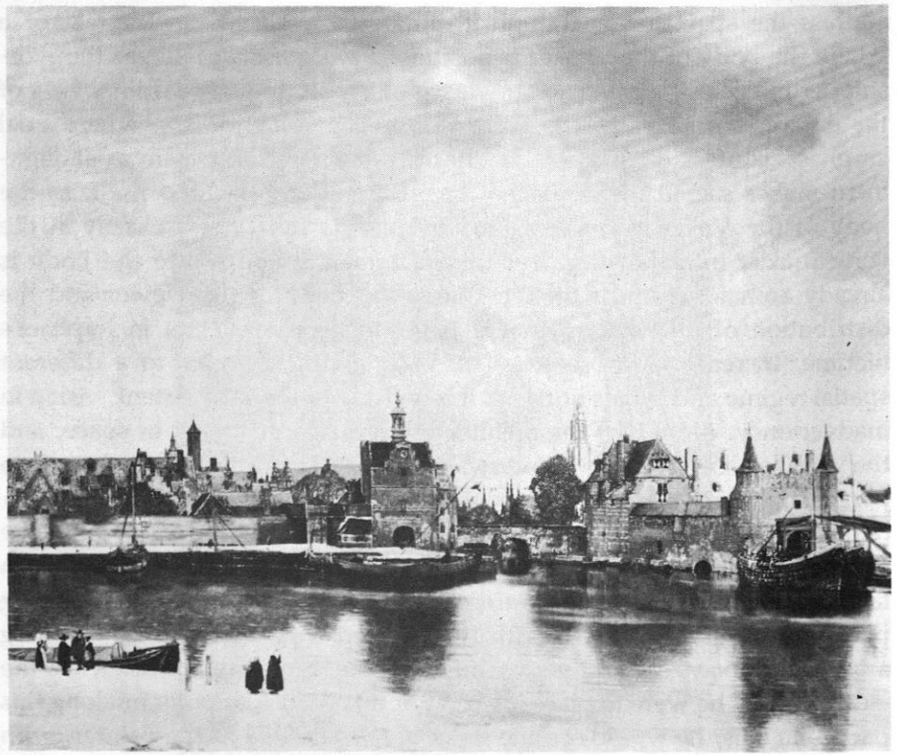


21 Masaccio, *Trinity* (detail)

The difference between the first, Albertian epoch of perspective, and its second and culminatory epoch can be seen by comparing the Raphael *Marriage of the Virgin* with two paintings by Vermeer: the *View of Delft* (Illus. 22) and *The Artist in his Studio* (Illus. 23). In the Raphael, both the architecture of the scene, and the gestures, postures and facial expressions of the figures turn towards the spectator in direct invocation: the spectator is the absent focus of these glances and walls, and of this whole dramatic action, mounted, one might say, for his particular benefit. The figures are *advertent*, fully aware of the presence of an unseen witness towards whom they direct their physical stances; the space in which the figures are disposed is conceived theatrically, as a spectacular arena where the body exists only as far as it is *seen*. In turn, the viewer enters the particular axial zone where he has to stand if the symmetry of that scenic space is to be perceived non-astigmatically, without lateral distortion – the image may have freed itself from the architecture of the Church, yet it continues to address the spectator as though it embodied a plastic, sculptural space where the body of the viewer is positioned *processionally*: just as the worshipper in ecclesiastical space orients himself around the cardinal axes of the edifice, so the viewer is placed in a space of priorities, where axial emphasis confers on space a quality of the sacred and where axial alignment makes sacred the body that incorporates the axis into itself, as the body of the Virgin is made sacred by placing her finger, exactly at the vertical axis, into the ring. Yet this sacramental address to the body is already archaic; co-ordination between the body of the viewer and the distribution of information in the painting becomes, even in Raphael's lifetime, increasingly obsolete. The *View of Delft* belongs to a different spatial regime and stages nothing: it is a vision of the inadvertent, vision in inadvertency. Now that the architecture is disposed freely in space, and the parallels of cornices, windows, and porticoes bend according to a perspective system that has dispensed with the vanishing point, the spectator is an unexpected presence, not a theatrical audience; nothing in the scene arranges itself around his act of inspection, or asks him, in Albertian fashion, to place his body at *this* particular point at which the founding perception was 'gathered'. Both Alberti and Vermeer theorise painting around the *camera obscura*, yet with Alberti the 'centric ray' indicates to the viewer that if he were to place his body at this particular point or along this particular axis, he would see the scene *in the same way* as the painter, with everything on the same scale as the scale of the real world, and an implied continuity (the theme of the flagstone) between the ground-plan of the

founding perception, and the ground-plan of viewing. The Vermeer records the perception with unprecedented accuracy, but the perception is presented to the viewer to examine from his own position – he is not being invited to move up to a viewfinder, or to step inside the perception; there is an asymmetry between the original perception, recorded in the image, and the act of viewing. *Trompe l'oeil* is in fact renounced: the bond with the viewer's physique is broken and the viewing subject is now proposed and assumed as a notional point, a non-empirical Gaze.

An analogy from computer-based video display may help to clarify this difficult spatial transformation. When sectional drawings are 'rotated' on a television screen, the space through which the images turn is wholly virtual – perhaps the purest virtual space so far devised: no one has actually seen this space in the real world; ultimately its only 'real' location is within the distribution of data in the computer program. It is this abstraction of



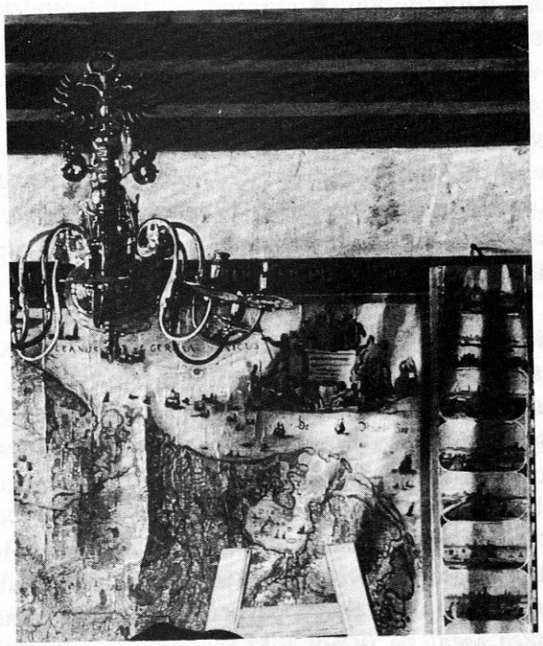
22 Vermeer, *View of Delft*



23 Vermeer, *The Artist in his Studio*

virtual from empirical space that the Albertian *camera obscura* prevents: Piero anticipates a translation of visual data into the terms known by the bodily hexis; Masaccio turns the virtual face of the Madonna downwards, to meet the embodied, empathetic, kinaesthetic response of a viewer placed in three 'real' dimensions. In Vermeer, the viewer and the painter no longer cohabit the same continuum, and so far from entering into the inner perceptual field of the painter's body, the viewer sees that body from the outside, from behind. What the turning of the artist's back indicates (Illus. 23) is the exclusion of the viewer as physical presence; he is not introduced, as a courtier, to figures who ceremoniously welcome his advance; he is not given this place to stand in, this privileged focus of a spectacular moment. Nor does the image cohere around a single point of observation. *The Artist in his Studio* states and restates, through a gamut of instances, the theme of the adorned surface: in the map, the three surface areas of cartography, of rubric, and of the topographic views; the woven design of the curtain; the meticulously veined marble of the tiles; the convex reflections of the chandelier; the varying luminosity of the wall; and, recapitulating all of these, the unfinished canvas on the easel.

In the hands of Metsu, each surface would be subject to a law of single viewpoint: if an object close to the viewpoint is presented in sharp focus, the objects behind it are in haze: if we see clearly the written characters of a letter read in the light of a window, the picture on the wall behind is blurred. But in Vermeer the surfaces are presented as existing on *different levels of transposition* into the painting. Whereas the map is painted through meticulous transcriptions, with each detail of the map reproduced on canvas by a direct one-to-one isomorphism, the reflections of the chandelier are handled through the broad strokes of a brush loaded with liquid pigment: with the map the work of the brush is assiduously concealed; with the chandelier it is advertised, as an *elliptical* technique at odds with the careful one-to-one correspondences and precise transcriptions of the map (Illus. 24). Again, as we pass from the cartographic area of the map to the topographic views at its borders, we move from high-fidelity transcription of perceptions that are, perhaps, slightly out of focus, to views whose simplification we cannot place with certainty: the topographic views seem drained of content and not simply unfocused; their outlines are bleached and rudimentary, as though a whole stage of pictorial finish had been left out; their information has not merely been blurred, but filtered, indicating a level of transcription discontinuous with that employed in the 'faithful' registration of the map's cartography.



24 Vermeer, *The Artist in his Studio* (detail)

The longer one looks at a Metsu the more one is impressed by the consistency with which focus is arranged; in Vermeer, what seems at first to be uncertainty of focus gradually reveals *notation*, rather than focus or perception, as the main organising principle in the image. While the ribbons of the artist's tunic are clearly delimited and hard-edged, the folds of the figure's stockings are transcribed in a notation whose grid is much broader and less differentiated: the conflict of grid cannot be recuperated by appeal to focus – the difference in planar depth between tunic and stockings is insufficient to cause the disparity between high- and low-fidelity transcription; and as the eye attempts to bind the areas into unity of focus and to read the Vermeer as though it were a Metsu, what emerges more and more strongly is the uncanny perceptual incoherence of the image. Each area of the Vermeer juxtaposes a precise, isomorphic level of transcription and a loose, laconic level of omission, simplification, latitude. With the curtain to the left of the scene, it becomes impossible to determine whether the simplification of the woven design is to be assigned to high-fidelity registration of perceptions that are out of focus, or to a sweep-

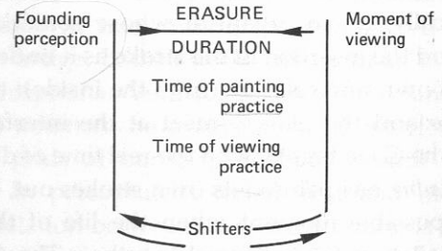
ing, generalised transcription of perceptions 'originally' in sharp focus; nor, with the strokes of the brush on the unfinished canvas, can the viewer determine to what degree the simplification of form is to be attributed to the painter at his easel, and to what degree attributed to Vermeer. It is as though Vermeer had discovered a universal principle of duplication: the ideal structure of the map is represented, but in addition the image also presents, as something almost separate or separable, the accidental history of the map as a physical surface striated by light; the image presents the convex reflections of the chandelier, yet also it presents and dramatises the notation from which the illusion of reflection is constructed; the curtain is depicted, yet in addition the image displays, announces, exaggerates, the work of the signifier in transcribing the curtain. At no point are we allowed a Zeuxian image, bathed in the luxury of an evident *eidos*: where Metsu records perceptions, Vermeer notates them, and then dramatises (paints) the act of notation; he exaggerates the interference-patterns between conflicting grids of transcriptive fidelity until we can no longer accept the image in perceptualist terms: text and meta-text are given together, and the relation between them is uncertain, is troubling, because although the viewer can see that a particular gauge of transcription governs each surface area, he is not told the precise nature of the gauge: *viewing* the image becomes impossible. At no single distance from the painting will the spectator discover its global intelligibility, for the painting is not conceived in the model of a physical transaction, but non-empirically, as a plurality of local transcriptions which nowhere melt in the fusion of a simultaneous disclosure. The viewing subject assumed by the image has no existence in tangible space: just as the painting has been painted by no one (which artist, in which studio, has created what is seen?), and lacks an empirical origin (what is the 'real time' of the image?), so it is to be received as notional, notational, as a mathematical fiction: the viewer can try any number of points and distances away from the canvas, but the image will never cohere, singly or serially, around them.

If Albertian space took away from the viewer one dimension, the space of the Gaze takes two: when viewing has broken free of the bodily template, the subject it proposes is a point, a vertex. Let us remind ourselves of the temporality of real-time process: calligraphy unfolds in duration and is the product of gesture. The temporality of a Sesshu is a *distension* of normal time: skills it has taken the body many years to acquire are mobilised and expanded in a performance that shows itself as both headlong and perfectly deliberate: since the power of decision has been transferred (we are

speaking of ideal conditions, of a myth of mastery) away from codex and from *langue* to the body itself, the inertia of consultation with the codex, of choice and hesitation, has been by-passed; skill here consists in leaving the brush in the hands of a muscular intelligence. The viewing subject proposed by calligraphy must approach the image kinaesthetically: 'The power intent was suggested by conceiving a stroke outside the paper, continuing through the drawing space to project beyond, so that the included part possessed both power origin and insertion.'[25] The aesthetic value of the trace resides precisely in what can be inferred about the body from the *course* of the trace: the brush strikes the paper *in media res*, and as it lifts from the paper its energy is not yet spent; the viewing subject is constructed gymnastically, as an organism whose somatic memory understands the origin and the insertion of the stroke as it understands the origin and insertion of its own musculature (from the inside): two real-time processes, of the trace and the glance, meet at the interface of the picture plane. Painting of the Gaze breaks with the real time of durational practice: the *Bacchus and Ariadne* has painted its own strokes out, as it has recorded an empirically impossible moment when the life of the dance and the death of the constellation are collapsed together; *The Artist in his Studio* dissolves the bodily address of Albertian space in the computative space of a notional point outside duration and extension. Unique, discontinuous, discarnate bodies, move in spatial apartness, under the gaze of the Other: perhaps it is Giacometti who has the last word on what it is to be in a gallery.

The image under realism must not only provide the world with its Zeuxian reflection: it must structure the temporality of the image according to two vertical moments, twin revelations, one in the mind of its creator for whom the image is there fully armed from the beginning, the other mirrored in the mind of the viewer; two epiphanies welded together in a single moment of presence. For the painter, the irregular and unfolding discoveries of the glance are collected and fused into a single surface whose every square inch is in focus, as though the fovea of central vision had expanded and filled the entire retinal bowl; for the viewer, the serial or intermittent time of the glance is once more robbed of its duration, taken out of real or somatic time, and compressed into an instant of consideration; just as, spatially, the shifting or ambulant mobility of the glance is taken out of the musculature and suspended at a point in non-empirical space. Clearly this temporal myth of the image can only function for as long as no interval between the moment of origin and the moment of

reception is allowed to appear: there can be no *time* for the image itself. Outside practice, and in disconnection from the body, it has no duration, since nothing may intervene between the twin disclosures of the World; performing a massive labour over what may be years, the traces of labour are nevertheless always disowned. We know that between the synchronic axes of disclosure there has been a period of construction, yet this knowledge will be disavowed by the painting's own technique: from the trecento on, the Western tradition develops complex liminal carriers whose function is to *bind* the two axes into one, harmonic devices belonging equally to both 'vertical' moments.



Our understanding of composition, for example, even now hovers uncertainly between tri-dimensional and bi-dimensional loyalties: the same term is used to describe the surface-relations between the rectangles of a Mondrian, as the depth-relations between figures in pyramidal space. Indeed, in the present century it is probably difficult to understand these two senses at once, to hold them together in the mind without tending towards a Berensonian extreme of deploring flatness and valorising depth, or a modernist extreme of analysing all three-dimensional images into the flatness of the picture-plane; and while twentieth-century taste is highly sensitive to the spatial schism of painting split between the spaces of surface and depth, and tends to find aesthetic value even in the schism itself (we are now able to place in a single category, and without discomfort, Ingres, Picasso and Vasarély) it is perhaps no longer easy to follow the subtlety of work created in consistent loyalty both to the plane and to recessional space (it is easier, at present, to understand the space of Ingres, Picasso, or Vasarély, than it is to understand that of Raphael). Yet the harmonic device that plays simultaneously on the three dimensions of the founding perception and the two dimensions of the canvas and the moment of viewing, this pattern of two against three is *the* underlying

compositional figure of the realist tradition: composition under realism *is* this shifting of forms between two and three dimensions, subject always to the Gaze, the fused epiphanies, in which both sets of dimension equally participate: in the Gaze, the image is both the depth of the founding perception, and the flatness of the picture plane.

As with composition, so with the colour-circle: the palette is similarly divided between registration of the random array of colours in the (alleged) perceptual origin of the image; and the internal chromatic harmony of colours on surface, within the four sides of the frame. The image under realism must strike a balance between those *refusals* of obvious internal colour-relationships which are needed to insure the 'formalist' effect of the real, and the chromatic disorder which would result if the refusals went too far. Composition and colour in the West act as *shifters*, terms which seem to migrate from the moment of foundation to the moment of reception, though in fact carrying out a mission of much greater subtlety: it is precisely the appearance of *oscillation* between the axes that supplies the axes with definition. Out of the indefinitely large number of hues in a given image, certain among them will be privileged, whether by overstatement or understatement, repetition or isolation, concord or discord with the chromatic neighbourhood. The exaltation of certain privileged hues establishes an internal boundary and enclosed order for the image, a unity which is there not from the moment of origin (or this is how the effect asks to be interpreted), but for the viewing subject, for the moment of reception. At the same time, this ennobling of certain hues establishes the chromatic background from which they have been raised as undistinguished, as having no consciousness of display, as subject to no distortion by expectation of witness; the remoteness of such colours from the internal and privileged order can then, according to the formalist axiom, be read as moving away from the moment of viewing towards the moment of origin: remoteness from the internal order which revolves around the viewer establishes and reinforces, on the far side, the myth of the founding perception.

As with composition and colour, so also with perspective. In Albertian space, the image is divided evenly between the three dimensions shown by the *camera obscura*, and the two dimensions of the painting's surface: the centric ray lies *between the two and the three*, and the distinctive architecture of Albertian space is at once the sculptural, rotational environment of the surrounding city, and the flat, axial backdrop of a proscenium stage. In the case of the post-Albertian spatial dispensation, composition divides again:

the space of Vermeer lies dimensionally *between the two and the one*, between the planar logic of the picture surface (no problem in discovering Mondrian, when looking at Vermeer), and the mathematical logic of the notional viewpoint. Space, colour, and composition are handled by the Gaze as so many kinds of interference pattern, evenly distributed between the moment of origin and the moment of viewing: their action is simultaneously to establish the twin moments of the Gaze as separate axes, and to bind the axes together in epiphanic fusion. Their temporality is therefore never in the present, never in the durational time of painting practice: retrospective, they look back to the three-dimensional, randomly coloured world disclosed by the founding perception; prospective, they look forward to the bi-dimensionality and the internal chromatic logic of the surface, the cartouche enclosed by the four sides of the frame. Technically each stroke of the painting must align itself, *as it is being made*, according to that vertical orchestration of the Gaze; the stroke's temporality is there, in the aorist and the future of the Gaze, and never in the deictic present of practice, of the body: the body itself is that which our painting always erases.

In the traditional analysis, all operations of the sign involve at least two aspects, of combination, and of selection; there is no sign that does not join together independent elements, and exclude others: let us call this a *minimal precondition* of information.[26] Language consists at least in the successive or 'horizontal' relations between words as they unfold in the sentence (grammar); and in the simultaneous or 'vertical' relations a word enters into with others in its semantic neighbourhood (*topos*). The structure of painting is not so dissimilar to that of language: it, too, unfolds in duration, indeed twice over – once in painting practice, and once again in the activity of viewing; and it, too, possesses a repertoire of iconographic forms which the viewer needs to know if he is to assign the individual painting to its appropriate semantic neighbourhood. Yet in the tradition of painting we are examining here, both combination and selection are disavowed: the painting is not sign, but percept; and the minimal precondition of information is obscured.

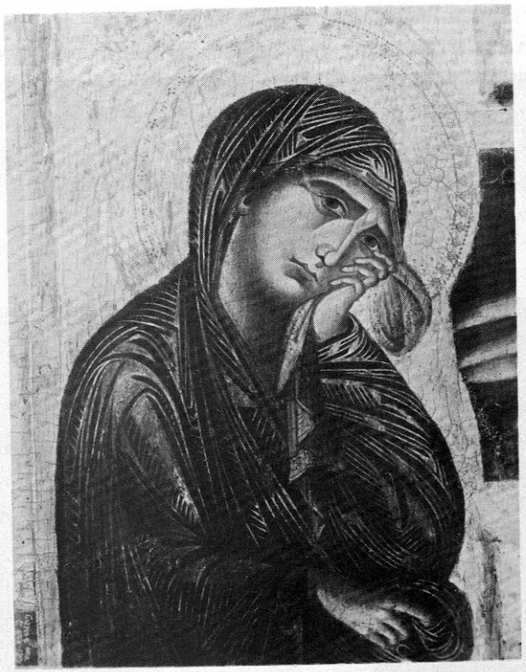
Western painting denies syntagmatic movement: it addresses visuality in an impossible and mythical guise, of stasis. The unattainability of the Gaze is clearly evident in the conventions of pictorial composition: the great forms of composition, whether the pyramidal structures of the High Renaissance, the bas-reliefs of Neo-Classicism, or the vortices of Turner and of Delacroix, so exceed in scale the limited, local discoveries of the

Glance that their existence cannot be apprehended within experience. As the eye traverses the canvas, the path of its movement is irregular, unpredictable, and intermittent; and though, through its traversals, the Glance will gradually build up a conceptual version of the compositional structures, these cannot be taken in *by* the Glance; they are not disclosed during the actual time of the Glance, but exist on either side, before the Glance and after it: before, in that information yielded to the present Glance is back-projected into the sum of inferences concerning composition which has accumulated so far; after, in that the process of accumulation means that full apprehension of the compositional order is always postponed, until more information from the work of the Glance will have been admitted. Although composition addresses itself to a gaze of Argus, with a thousand foveae held motionless to a thousand points on the canvas, the practice of viewing must necessarily approach such simultaneous knowledge through deferral: the material construction of the eye permits only one area of the image to clarify at each moment, while its acute mobility precludes regularity of scansion. As a result, composition splits the image into two temporal registers: the instantaneous, duration-free time of the compositional structure (which is also, given the assiduous efforts of the 'shifters', the alleged instant of the founding perception); and a protracted, fragmented *durée* of viewing, which labours to build an eventually total scheme of the image and to apprehend the composition *im Augenblick*, but which cannot achieve this scheme through the limited empirical means at its disposal. Composition drives a wedge between a moment of full presence, when the abundance of the image is released in complete effusion; and a series of partial and provisional views closer to the labours of Sisyphus, than the splendours of Argus: however avid for total possession, the Glance can never be sated.

For as long as the dream of an instantaneous and timeless painting – the Essential Copy – rules in the art of the West, the Glance takes on the role of saboteur, trickster, for the Glance is not simply intermingled with the Gaze, as it is with the Byzantine or the high-deixis image, but is separated out, repressed, and as it is repressed, is also constructed as the hidden term on whose disavowal the whole system depends. The flickering, ungovernable mobility of the Glance strikes at the very roots of rationalism, for what it can never apprehend is the geometric order which is rationalism's true ensign: faced with the geometry of the Ionian temple, the Glance finds in itself no counterpart to the enduring, motionless and august logic of architectural form, since all it can take in is the fragment,

the collage, and unable to participate in the unitary mysteries of reason, the Glance is relegated to the category of the profane, of that which is outside the temple.[27] Before the geometric order of pictorial composition, the Glance finds itself marginalised and declared legally absent, for this celebration of a faculty of mind to step outside the flux of sensations and to call into being a realm of transcendent forms, this ceremony of higher logic which the Glance is ordered to witness, is beyond the scope of its comprehension: all it knows is dispersal – the disjointed rhythm of the retinal field; yet it is rhythm which painting of the Gaze seeks to bracket out. Against the Gaze, the Glance proposes desire, proposes the body, in the *durée* of its practical activity: in the freezing of syntagmatic motion, desire, and the body, the desire of the body, are exactly the terms which the tradition seeks to suppress.

If on one side of the sign the movement of the syntagm is arrested, on the other the presence of paradigm is equally denied. In linguistic analysis, 'paradigm' refers to relations of substitution between words: two words are said to be paradigmatically associated if they can be substituted for the other without disturbing (according to Jakobson) the grammatical coherence of the utterance; or (according to the present argument) without disturbing the topological contour of the discourse. The equivalent within the image to paradigm in language is the schema: through the interchange of the visual schema with terms operating in the codes of recognition, the image is identified. In the post-Byzantine dispensation of the image, the mode in which the schema is presented to the viewing subject is one of *perpetual transgression.* When the viewer is faced with overt repetition of a traditional formula, there is scant possibility of his doubting or failing to perceive that the image before him issues from a *coded* signifying practice, with a limited repertoire of forms and limited resources of permutation. It is this acknowledgment of the *work* of representation that realism obscures. Just as deictic allusion to durational temporality is removed from the trace, so the co-presence *in absentia* of the repertoire is apparently withdrawn from recognition. When the viewer discovers no transgression of the schema, but finds instead the patent repetition of a stereotype, the 'here' of presence is taken from him, since the image is not only this one, in this place, but the others, in many places: other representations of this scene, and the other representations of the other scenes within the global repertoire of forms. When the schema appears under the guise of transgression, however, the degree of departure from precedent and norm may be read as pressure on the schema from the outside (from perception),

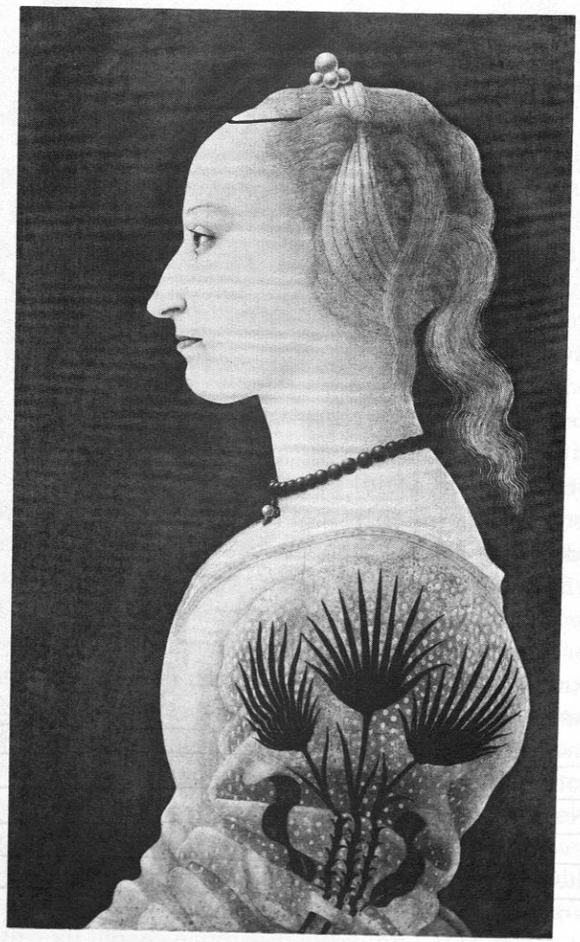


25 Cimabue, *Lamentation of the Virgin*

forcing it to bend, move, yield.

In its most dramatic moments of acceleration 'towards the real', the Western tradition is openly iconoclastic. When the stiff, diagrammatic schemata of Byzantium 'begin to move', when the image starts to treat as variables the postures, gestures, and expressions which in the icon had been more or less unchanging, the means of variation may well, for all the viewer can know, have been improvisational, that is, accomplished on the surface of the image for the first time. But since the surface of the image is declared nonexistent by the disavowal and effacement of deictic markers, since the process of building the image on the surface has been bracketed out, transgression of schematic design must be attributed to the pressure of an origin outside the image and outside the body (the musculature) of labour: to the force of perception, moulding the schema to its prior shape. The figures of Lamentation on the Cimabue Crucifix at Arezzo may even now intimate some of the powerful disruptive charge they must first have had, if we consider them against the repertoire of inflexible Byzantine

formulae they so violently alter (Illus. 25). Again, in the portraiture of Baldovinetti and of Pollaiuolo, the basic schema on which the 'markers of individuality' are placed is starkly visible, as a harsh profile which, though enabling the statement of a considerable quantity of information concerning the unique physiognomy of the sitter, nevertheless threatens the structure of presence by allowing the repetitiveness of the formula (the profile-stencil) to show through (Illus. 26, 27).[28]



26 Baldovinetti, *Profile Portrait of a Lady*



27 Pollaiuolo, *Profile Portrait of a Lady*

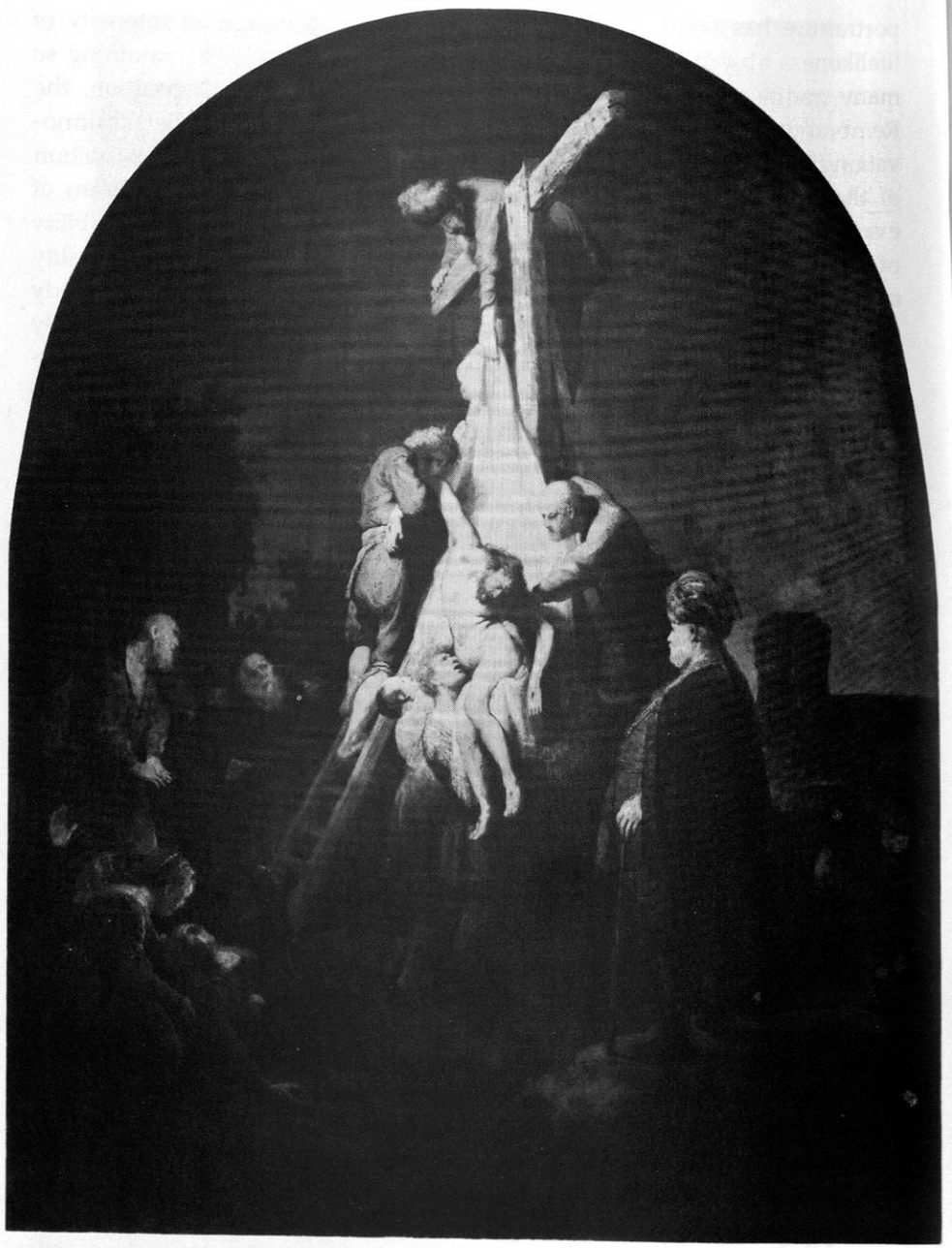


28 Leonardo, *Portrait of Ginevra de'Benci*

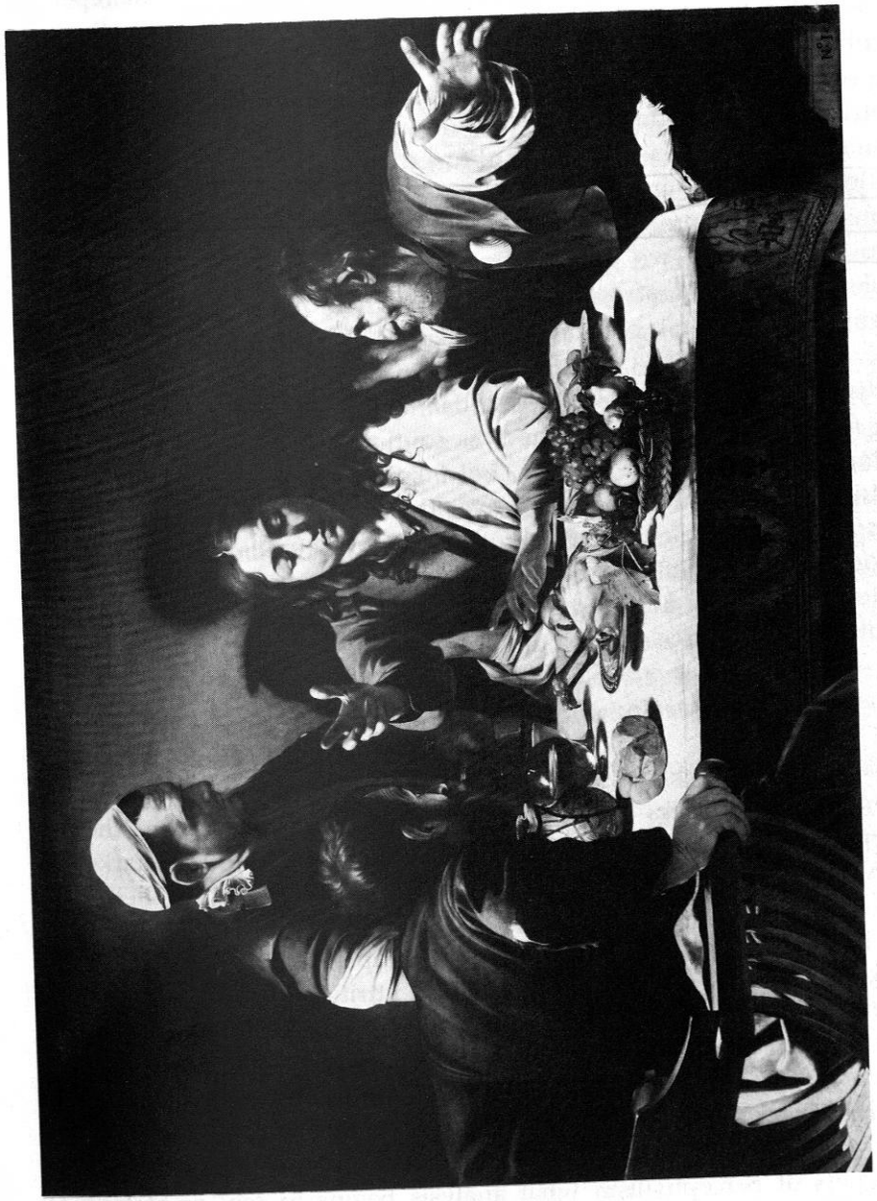
By contrast, in the heads of Verrocchio and of Leonardo a massive increase of information concerning evanescent conditions of lighting effectively conceals the underlying portrait-schema or stencil, *even though* that information is entirely contingent to the purpose of recording the sitter's facial characteristics. The portraits of Leonardo tend in fact to use the information concerning lighting to *conceal* the singularity of the sitter's countenance: the salient points of the face (the corners of the lips, of the eyes, and the end-points of the eyebrows) which, for example in Antonello da Messina, are still regularly used as the key sites on which to place the cues of the sitter's physiognomic singularity, in Leonardo are literally obscured by the lighting, blurred, so that although from one point of view there has actually been a decline in *vraisemblance* (we end up with less information about the sitter), the fact that the inherited schema of

portraiture has been hidden from view gives the image an intensity of lifelikeness absent from Antonello (Illus. 28).[29] Similarly, by retaining so many traditional iconographic features of the schema of Deposition, the Rembrandt *Descent from the Cross* casts into the harshest relief its innovations in the presentation of Christ's body, and the cruelty of its destruction of the classical schema: the traditional schema becomes the emblem of everything this particular image rejects – the dignity of death, the nobility of suffering, the security of the body's contours and boundaries; the reality of death is conceived exactly as the destruction of the *recognisable* body (Illus. 29). Or once more, to choose only from examples imprinted firmly in the reader's mind, the Caravaggio *Supper at Emmaus* achieves the scandal of its Realism by refusing the legibility of the body which had come to type the bodies of Christ and of the Disciples through schemata of masculinity, gravity, grace: the central figure is cast in terms of schematic inversion, of effeminacy, hedonism, vulgarity, while the disciples bear the attributes of an ignorant, and above all of a hardened suffering (Illus. 30).

Complementary to this continuous iconoclastic history, the tradition *requires* a perduring matrix of schemata: without a consensually agreed and more or less permanently installed iconography, realism would have nothing to prevent itself from becoming a deteriorating, a degenerative system. Manipulation of paradigm is subject to a strategic paradox: even as the schema is presented as though for the first time, *e nihilo*, it must also appear as *citation* from an invariant repertoire of classic forms. From this perspective, it is the body itself that provides resolution of the paradox, the unchanging law against which transgression reacts; provides indeed the master-term of the iconographic codes: if the paradox is so easily resolved – resolved anew with each painting – it is because the body recommends itself as *the* privileged site of articulation between the general and the specific. On the one hand, the nude is developed anatomically, through a quasi-objective science of medical vision that tends towards the non-individuated, the diagrammatic, towards deliverance of the body's *typicality*; on the other, it is developed through accumulation of epithet, through anecdote: the forms disclosed and legitimated by the 'clinical' gaze afford almost limitless opportunity for the transgression of their own generality. The outright clashes between schema and individuation that occur, crucially, in the work of Vesalius, and in the Anatomy Lessons of Rembrandt, are only particularly harsh or explicit moments in a collision which, in the double movement of stating and of withdrawing or obscuring the bodily schema, is constantly taking place.



29 Rembrandt, *Descent from the Cross*



30 Caravaggio, *Supper at Emmaus*

If the founding axiom of Jakobson's semiology is true – that all sign-systems can be analysed into a vertical axis of selection from the repertory of available forms, and a horizontal axis along which the selections are combined – then in the case of the painting both axes of the sign are *veiled*: the schema is invoked only in order to be transgressed, taken out of the matrix of selection; the *durée* of painting is systematically disavowed. The result of this double assault on or obfuscation of the painting is its eventual unthinkability as sign – the impossibility of theorising the image except in terms of its own propaganda, as the re-presentation of perception, as the Zeuxian mirage. Two quotations, from the Goncourts, are helpful in achieving the kind of reorientation of theory the present argument is attempting. The first, on Fragonard:

> His effects suggest that he used a chalk without a holder, that he rubbed it flat for the masses, that he was continually turning it between his thumb and forefinger in risky, but inspired, wheelings and twistings; that he rolled and contorted it over the branches of his trees, that he broke it on the zigzags of his foliage. Every irregularity of the chalk's point, which he left unsharpened, was pressed into his service: when it blunted, he drew fully and broadly; when it sharpened, he turned to the subtleties, the lines and the lights.[30]

The second, on Chardin:

> Look at [his work] for some time, then move back a few paces; the contour of the glass solidifies, it is real glass. In one corner there is apparently nothing more than a mud-coloured texture, the marks of a dry brush, then, suddenly, a walnut appears, curling in its shell . . .[31]

The image is produced, produces itself, irrupts, as the spectacle of the subject in process: the chalk's friction and attrition visible *across* the signifieds of tree and branch, the Chardin still-life emergent, intermittent, as form breaking the enclosure of meaning and legibility; the picture plane is the scene of interruption, punctuation, a sensuous materiality turning and re-turning on itself. In describing the image, what the Goncourts sense is something other than the diffusion of percepts, just as in deconstructing the tenets of perceptualism what analysis begins to see, or at least to glimpse, is a shadowy activity *behind* the image, manipulation of the sign as plastic substance, interpretation of the sign as a material work, *practice*

of painting and of viewing; production, productivity. The question now to be pursued is this: what is the provenance of that productive work? Against perceptualism, and the natural attitude, we have proposed a number of alternative positions: that painting *as sign* must be the fundamental assumption of a materialist art history; that the place where the sign arises is the *interindividual* territory of recognition; that the concept of the sign's meaning cannot be divorced from its embodiment *in context*. That much, one hopes, has been established; yet the mode of the sign's interaction with the social formation has yet to be explored. Its exploration is a responsibility we cannot afford to ignore. But before that exploration can begin, we must first shift our perspective from the *image*, the imago, the spectre, to the *painting*, to the carved sheet of pigment, to the stroke of the brush on canvas: despite its obsession with the body's endless variability, with the spectacular and protean transformations of a body under constant visibility and display (no tradition of the Nude, outside Europe), the image finally knows the body only as a *picture*. To dissolve the Gaze that returns the body to itself in medusal form, we must willingly enter into the partial blindness of the Glance and dispense with the conception of form as con-sideration, as Arrest, and try to conceive of form instead in dynamic terms, as matter in process, in the sense of the original, pre-Socratic word for form: *rhuthmos*, rhythm, the impress on matter of the body's internal energy, in the mobility and vibrancy of its somatic rhythms; the body of labour, of material practice. It is this dynamic, subversive term we will now examine.