Review

Reviewed Work(s): The Social History of Art by Arnold Hauser

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tion of the arabesque in France are the activity of the sculptor Lhuillier, and the availability of reference matter, especially on the Loggie of Raphael. Lhuillier, recommended to Bélanger by Clérisseau, returned from Rome in 1769. Did he bring sketches of the arabesques of the Loggie, as Hautecoeur allows us to think? All we know positively is that he brought an album with antique friezes and vases (p. 479). Lhuillier's first work was on the casino of Lauraguais at the Hôtel de Brancas; it has no arabesques and indeed, except that its interior has columns, still belongs to the *style Gabriel.* In the dining room of Maisons, which Bélanger redecorated for the Comte d'Artois, 1779, Lhuillier's bas-relief over the door is after an engraving from Angelica Kauffmann. The panels of the salon of Bagatelle, 1777, by Lhuillier and Dusseaux, are close to Raphael's models, which Camporesi had published so magnificently in 1776. His was the first of many volumes showing the ancient and Renaissance arabesques. Most significant of all is the title of the French edition of Columbani's *New Book of Ornaments*, issued in London in 1775: *Recueil des ornements composés, lorsqu'on voudra s'en servir, pour embellir les chambres à l'Anglais.*

One would be foolish to suppose or to contend that the influence was all in one direction. Very specific instances may be cited where the British followed the French. Thus the colossal projects of Peyre, made on his first arrival in Rome in 1753, and published in his *Livre d'architecture*, 1765, were the inspiration of projects of John Soane's about 1779. But, *per contra*, we must not forget that Colin Campbell had published in his *Vitruvius Britannicus*, 1714 (II, p. 27), a temple "prostile, hexastyle, eustile," long anticipating Peyre's published "Modèle d'un portail disposé comme celui des temples antiques" (1765). For furniture, Sheraton, in 1793, copied directly a plate of a frieze from Salembier about 1777. Long before that, however, the plates of Lock anticipated the first designs of Riesener, 1772, which can be traced directly to them. The essential point in this *chassé-croisé*, as Horace Walpole called it, was that the instances of English priority are by far the earlier ones, and he, who knew both capitals so well, was the first to remark this.

By postponing until Volume V, for consideration under Romanticism generally, the *jardin anglais* and its *fabriques*, the author incidentally minimizes further the English influences on the *style Louis XVI*; he also places out of order some of the earliest monuments of the reign of Louis XVI and of the Louis XVI style.

Though the formal discussion of work under the Directory is still to come, one begins under Louis XVI to see work which foreshadows what is called the *style Directoire.* This is a very interesting development, of considerable originality and influential also in England, which awaits satisfactory analysis.

All this is aside from what Palmerston called "any damned question of merit." In pointing out various English priorities and influences, we have not been claiming for the English any superiority, except in originality at certain moments, such as the French had at other times. The French, with their professoinal training and skill, as contrasted with an amateur tradition in England (embracing Wren, Vanbrugh, Burlington, and Kent), often show a smoothness and accomplishment which is greater than that of their island neighbors.

The picture of French "Classicism" over four centuries which emerges from these volumes is very impressive in its continuity and total achievement. One who knows Paris well, for instance, cannot fail to be struck by the remarkable skill of generation after generation in adapting its contributions to what went before: from the Louvre of Francis I, for instance, with its enlargements and connection with the Tuileries and its gardens, the Cour de la Reine, the Champs Elysées (planted under Colbert), the insertion, in between, of the Place de la Concorde, with its adjuncts to north and south, the clearing of the space around the Carrousel, the flanking of the gardens by the Rue de Rivoli, the enlargement of the Louvre, the building of the Arc de l'Etoile, which make one of the grand compositions of all time—a triumph for any body of architects and for any nation.

Although Hautecoeur thus, as we have said, misses the artistic essentials, his book, in the latest volume as in the others, is a mine of information, assembled both from books and documents and from personal observations. Again and again his account of individuals—as, to take one instance, Servadoni—is the most complete and instructive we know. His lists of works embodying special features, such as organs of every classification, or of churches built at the end of the eighteenth century, are of dazzling comprehensiveness. Such knowledge extends not only around Paris, but through the provinces. There are some thousands of illustrations, plans and halftones, in the text. While those of any one monument are scattered by the varied classifications, they may be found by the very excellent indices. All told, a marvelous instrument of reference, creditable alike to the knowledge and industry of the author, and to the courage of the publisher.

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ARNOLD HAUSER, *The Social History of Art*, 2 vols., New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1951. Pp. 1,022; 145 illus. $12.50.

If by the "social history" of art we mean an account of the changing material conditions under which art was commissioned and created in the past, such a history is one of the desiderata of our field. Documents there are, of course, in profusion, but it still is not easy to lay one's hands quickly on information regarding, say, the recorded rules and statutes of lodges and guilds, the development of such posts as

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that of the *peintre du roi*, the emergence of public exhibitions, or the exact curricula and methods of art teaching. What precisely is our evidence for the role of those "humanist advisers" of whom we have heard a good deal of late? When did a job at an art school become the normal stand-by of young painters? All these are questions which could and should be answered by a social history of art. Unfortunately, Mr. Hauser's two volumes are not concerned with these minutiae of social existence. For he conceived his task to be quite different. What he presents is not so much the social history of art or artists as the social history of the Western world, as he sees it reflected in the varying trends and modes of artistic expression—visual, literary, or cinematic. For his purpose, facts are of interest only insofar as they have a bearing on his interpretation. Indeed, he is inclined to take their knowledge for granted and to assume a reader who, familiar with the artists and monuments under discussion, merely seeks guidance about their significance in the light of social theory.

The theory that Mr. Hauser offers us as a key to the history of human thought and art is historical materialism. His basic approach is exemplified in such statements as, "Nominalism, which claims for every particular thing a share in being, corresponds to an order of life in which even those on the lowest rung of the ladder have their chance of rising" (p. 238), or, "The unification of space and the unified standards of proportions [in Renaissance art] . . . are the creations of the same spirit which makes its way in the organization of labor . . . the credit system and double entry bookkeeping" (p. 277). Mr. Hauser is deeply convinced that in history "all factors, material and intellectual, economic and ideological, are bound up together in a state of indissoluble interdependence" (p. 661), and so it is perhaps natural that to him the most serious crime for a historian is the arbitrary isolation of fields of inquiry. Woelfflin, for instance, comes in for strong criticism on the score of his "unsociological method" (p. 430), and Riegl's *Kunstwollen* is rejected for its "romantic" idealism (p. 660). He seems less conscious of the fact that this insistence on the "indissoluble interdependence" of all history makes the selection of material no less arbitrary. Where all human activities are bound up with each other and with economic facts, the question of what witness to call for the writing of history must be left to the historian's momentary preference. This is indeed the impression one gains from Mr. Hauser's book. Artistic styles are mainly questioned for the interpretation of periods in which more articulate documents are rarer. Thus the first volume, which reaches from the "magic naturalism" of the Old Stone Age to "the baroque of the Protestant bourgeoisie," concentrates on the analysis of sculpture and painting, though the Homeric epic and Greek tragedy, the Troubadours and Shakespeare are each in their turn related to the stylistic and social trends of their period. In the second volume, which extends from the eighteenth century to the present day, literary forms of expression, notably the social novel, and the film come to the fore, though the related movements of the Rococo, Classicism, Realism, Impressionism, and Symbolism are also evaluated for what they may tell us of the underlying crosscurrents of society.

So far as the visual arts are concerned, Mr. Hauser's starting point seems to be the superficially plausible assumption that rigid, hieratic, and conservative styles will be preferred by societies dominated by a landed aristocracy, while elements of naturalism, instability, and subjectivism are likely to reflect the mentality of urban middle-class elements. Thus the geometric character of Neolithic, Egyptian, Archaic Greek, and Romanesque art may seem roughly to fit this first approximation, since the "progressive" revolutions of Greek and Gothic naturalism are each connected with the rise of urban civilizations. But Mr. Hauser is too conscientious and too knowledgeable a historian to be satisfied with such a crude theory. He is, moreover, well aware of the many instances which seem to refute it, and so we watch him almost from page to page thinking out ever new and ingenious expedients in order to bring the hypothesis into harmony with the facts. If an Egyptian king such as Akhnaton initiated a shift toward naturalism, the movement must be rooted in urban middle classes (p. 61); if the urban culture of Babylon, on the other hand, exhibits a rigid formalism, this must be due to the hold of the priests (p. 65). If the classical age of Greek art is also the age of democracy, this can be explained by the fact that "classical Athens was not so uncompromisingly democratic nor was its classical art so strictly 'classical' as might have been supposed" (p. 95).

In the course of these attempts to rescue his basic assumption, Mr. Hauser makes many shrewd and illuminating remarks on the limitations of sociological explanations (p. 70), on the impossibility of accounting for artistic quality by a "simple sociological recipe" (pp. 103, 162), on the possibility of time lags between social and stylistic changes (pp. 132, 293, 643), on the different stages of development in different artistic media (p. 153), and even on the futility of too facile comparisons between social structures and stylistic features (*ibid.*). The more one reads these wholesome methodological reminders, the more one wonders why the author does not simply give up his initial assumption instead of twisting and bending it to accommodate the facts. And then one realizes that this is the one thing he cannot do. For he has caught himself in the intellectual mousetrap of "dialectical materialism," which not only tolerates but even postulates the presence of "inner contradictions" in history.

A brief methodological digression may serve to elucidate the cause of Mr. Hauser's theoretical paralysis. To us non-Hegelians, the term "contradiction" describes the relation of two "dictions" or statements which cannot both be true—e.g., "Socrates drank hemlock" and "Socrates did not drink hemlock."[1] Now

1. Cf. K. R. Popper, "What Is Dialectic?" *Mind*, N.S., XLIX, 1940.

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we all know that there are many apparently contradictory statements, both of which seem true—e.g., "Socrates was mortal" and "Socrates was not mortal" —but we also know that this apparent contradiction is simply due to using the term "mortal" in a different sense each time. If the context leaves doubt as to what we mean by "not mortal," we choose another term or qualify it somehow so as to remove any contradiction. This, however, is not the way of the dialectician. Mr. Hauser, for instance, can describe a style as "classicistic and anti-classicistic at the same time" (p. 627), or he can pronounce the terms "symbolism" and "impressionism" to be "partly antithetical, partly synonymous" (p. 896) without feeling the need to discard them. For Hegelians believe to have discovered the secret that Socrates' being both mortal and not mortal "harbors contradictions," and that this, indeed, is true of all reality. Now within the fantasy-world of Hegel's metaphysics there was at least a reason why the distinction between statements and objects became blurred. For Hegel, of course, believed that reality was "identical" with the process of reasoning and that history was nothing but the unfolding of the Absolute Idea in time. Within this system the contention that any separate phase or aspect of history must "harbor contradictions" (in the mind of God, as it were), which are resolved in the cosmic syllogism of its totality, is at least of a piece with the rest. Materialists who do not believe that reality is only the thinking process of the Absolute have no such excuse for retaining "dialectics." Clearly, material objects as well as human beings, societies, or periods may be subject to conflicting pulls, they may contain tensions and divisions, but they can no more "harbor contradictions" than they can harbor syllogisms. The reason why Marxist critics so often forget this simple fact is that they are mostly concerned with the analysis of political systems. It may be true or not that "Capitalism"—if there is such a thing—contains "inner contradictions," if we take capitalism to be a system of propositions. But to equate the conflicts within capitalist society with its "contradictions" is to pun without knowing it. It is where the politicians turns historian that this confusion becomes disastrous. For it prevents him from ever testing or discarding any hypothesis. If he finds it confirmed by some evidence he is happy; if other evidence seems to conflict he is even happier, for he can then introduce the refinement of "contradictions." Much as it is to Mr. Hauser's credit that he rejects the cruder version of historical materialism, according to which "the quality of the actual means of production is expressed in cultural superstructures" (p. 661), such a theory might at least be tested and found wanting. His more esoteric doctrine, according to which "historical development represents a dialectical process, in which every factor is in a state of motion and subject to constant change of meaning, in which there is nothing static, nothing timelessly valid" (*ibid.*), denies the very possibility of such a test. Of course it, too, rests on a Hegelian confusion. Granted that when we watch history we always watch changes, there is no reason why, given the evidence, we should not be able to describe such changes just as well as we describe changes of the weather. Mr. Hauser's "factors" may conceivably be "in motion" (e.g., the trade winds) but they cannot change their "meaning" because meaning is a term that does not apply to things or forces but to signs or statements. And, contrary to the belief of the dialecticians, we can make perfectly valid statements about these signs—else the hieroglyphics could never have been deciphered and the chronology of red-figured vases never established.[2] If Mr. Hauser finds that he is concerned with entities in history which constantly elude his grasp, if he finds that the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, rationalism and subjectivism constantly seem to change places in his field of vision, he should ask himself whether he is looking through a telescope or a kaleidoscope. If one approaches the past with such statements as "The late Middle Ages not merely has a successful middle class —it is in fact a middle class period" (p. 252), one cannot but run into various barons and dukes who will serve as "contradictions." And if the Duc de Berry sponsored such unhieratic works as the *Très Riches Heures*, Mr. Hauser need not revise his notion of aristocratic styles; he merely finds his view confirmed, for "even in court art . . . middle class naturalism gains the upper hand" (p. 263).

But it is in Mr. Hauser's discussion of the social significance of French classicism that the dialectic tangle becomes well nigh impenetrable. "The archaic severity, the impersonal stereotyped quality, the die-hard conventionalism of that art [of Le Brun] were certainly in accordance with the aristocratic outlook on life—since for a class which bases its privileges on antiquity, blood and general bearing, the past is more real than the present, . . . moderation and self-discipline more praiseworthy than temperament and feeling—but the rationalism of classicistic art was just as typical an expression of the middle class philosophy . . . the efficient, profit-making burgher had begun to conform to a rationalistic scheme of living earlier than the aristocrat . . . and the middle class public found pleasure in the clarity, simplicity and terseness of classicistic art more quickly than the nobility" (p. 451). "Classicistic art certainly tends towards conservatism . . . but the aristocratic outlook often finds more direct expression in the sensualistic and exuberant baroque" (p. 623). "There arises in French art and literature a curious proximity and interaction of classicistic and baroque tendencies, and a resulting style that is a contradiction in itself—baroque classicism" (p. 627). It is in this way that we are led to the contradiction referred to above—the style that is classicist and anti-classicist at the same time.

Perhaps the above quotations have somewhat illuminated the path by which Mr. Hauser arrives at this logical absurdity. He has built into the groundwork

2. Cf. my review of Charles Morris, *Signs, Language and Behavior, in* ART BULLETIN, XXXI, 1949, pp. 70ff.

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of his system a psychology of expression that is simply too primitive to stand the test of historical observation. For though I have called superficially plausible the theory that rigid noblemen will like a rigid style and that agile merchants will be eager for novelty, the contrary assumption—that blasé aristocrats love ever-new sensual stimuli while strict businessmen, with their "double entry book-keeping," want their art neat and solid—sounds equally convincing. And so Mr. Hauser's sociological explanations really turn out to be psychological fallacies.

To be sure, it would not be fair to blame Mr. Hauser for adopting a type of reasoning which admittedly has deep roots in the tradition of art history on which he relies. Specious arguments about expression are not, alas, Mr. Hauser's monopoly. His analysis of Mannerism is a suitable case in point. It is closely modeled on Max Dvorak's interpretation, to which he pays tribute (p. 357), and although it lacks the sweep and subtlety of Dvorak's lectures and articles, it may have its value as the most detailed discussion of Mannerism that has so far appeared in the English language. Mr. Hauser is well aware of the roots of this interpretation in contemporary art movements; indeed, he is at his best whenever he can point to the "conditioning" of historians by their own period. But he has no qualms about following Dvorak and Pinder in projecting "expressionist" and even "surrealist" attitudes into Mannerism. The style (and he insists that it was a distinct style, whatever that may mean) becomes "the artistic expression of the crisis which convulses the whole of Western Europe in the sixteenth century" (p. 361). He sees it connected with "the religious revival of the period, the new mysticism, the yearning for the spiritual, the disparagement of the body. . . . The new formal ideals do not in any way imply a renunciation of the charms of physical beauty, but they portray the body . . . bending and writhing under the pressure of the mind and hurled aloft by an excitement reminiscent of the ecstasies of Gothic art" (*ibid.*). One wonders what Benvenuto Cellini would have done to anyone who told him that he "disparaged the body," or how Giambologna would have reacted on hearing his *Mercury* compared to the "ecstasies of Gothic art." And was there more "yearning for the spiritual" at the court of Cosimo I than in the household of Cosimo *Pater Patriae*? Was there more of a "crisis" in the Europe of 1552, when Bronzino painted his *Christ in Limbo*, than in 1494, when the French descended on Italy and the Florentines drove out the Medici and fell under the spell of Savonarola—while all the time Perugino went on painting his utterly serene compositions? In other words, can we really use such generalities as "explanations," or are we just shifting the responsibility into another, less familiar field? To attribute to the *Zeitgeist* of an epoch the physiognomic characteristics we find in its dominant artistic types is the constant danger of *Geistesgeschichte*. No one would deny that there is a genuine problem hidden here. There is such a thing as a mental climate, a pervading attitude in periods or societies, and art and artists are bound to be responsive to certain shifts in dominant values. But who, in the middle of this twentieth century, would still seriously assert that such crude categories as "sensuousness" or "spirituality" correspond to identifiable psychological realities? To say with Mr. Hauser that the Renaissance was "world-affirming" and therefore given to placing figures in a "coherent spatial context," in contrast to the "other-wordly" Mannerists (p. 388), whose treatment of space betrays the "weakened sense of reality of the age" (p. 389), may sound impressive, particularly when coupled with a reference to Spengler. But is all this true? Can we continue to teach our students a jargon which beclouds rather than clarifies the fascinating issue at stake?

Those of us who are neither collectivists believing in nations, races, classes, or periods as independent entities, nor dialectical materialists untroubled by the discovery of "contradictions," prefer to ask in each individual case how far a stylistic change may be used as an index to changed psychological attitudes, and what exactly such a correlation would have to imply. For we know that "style" is really a rather problematic indication of social or intellectual change simply because what we bundle together under the name of art has a constantly changing function in the social organism of different periods and because here, as always, "form follows function." It is curious that all his insistence on "dialectics" has not prevented Mr. Hauser from comparing, say, Mannerist art with late Gothic art as if they were commensurable. Before we ask ourselves what they "express," we must know into what institutional framework they are meant to fit, and this frame of reference clearly changes between Gothic and Mannerism. In this sense, Borghini's account of the origin of Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* as a deliberate challenge to the connoisseurs who had doubted his power to create a monumental group, and the story of its subsequent naming and placing, tell us more about the background of Mannerism than all the religious tracts of the Counter-Reformation taken together.[3] It is not a story to be found in Mr. Hauser's book. Paradoxical as it may sound, the most serious objection to his approach is that it by-passes the social history of art.

It is true that the author sometimes interrupts his description of styles and movements to devote brief sections to the social position of artists or the organization of their work. Although there is little organic relation between these passages and the main argument of the book, the information he supplies should be of use to the student. Mr. Hauser is a prodigious reader who has consulted most of the comparatively few studies which exist in this field. His chapter on the social position of the artist in the ancient world is mainly based on B. Schweitzer, *Der bildende Künstler und der Begriff des Künstlerischen in der Antike*, 1925. He might have made even more use, in later

3. Raffaello Borghini, *Il Riposo*, Florence, 1584, pp. 71f.

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chapters, of H. Huth, *Künstler und Werkstatt der Spätgotik*, 1924, and of H. Flörke, *Studien zur niederländischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte*, 1905, both of which works are mentioned in his notes. He missed Jean Locquin, *La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747 à 1785*, 1912, which would have told him so much about the social and political background of classicism, but he has made extensive excerpts from W. Wackernagel, *Der Lebensraum des Künstlers in der Florentinischen Frührenaissance*, 1938, which gives substance to his chapter on the social position of Renaissance artists. But even where he can thus rely on excellent groundwork, his preoccupation with generalities makes him careless of the significant detail. To find him speaking of the "Luke Guild" in Florence (p. 311) shakes one's confidence in his reliability, for there was no such body. And where can Mr. Hauser have found evidence for his statement that Botticelli and Filippino Lippi were the "close friends" of Lorenzo de' Medici or that Giuliano da Sangallo built the Sacristy of San Lorenzo for him (p. 303)? Sometimes it is only too clear how the information compiled in his reading is transformed in the retelling. His impression of Bertoldo di Giovanni's relation with Lorenzo is obviously derived from Bode's monograph: "Bertoldo lived with him, sat daily at his table, accompanied him on his travels, was his confidant, his artistic adviser and the director of his academy. He had humor and a sense of tact and always maintained a respectful distance from his master despite the intimacy of the relationship" (p. 304). However, this is not social history, but historical fiction. All we really know from documents about this relationship is that (a) Bertoldo wrote one bantering letter to Lorenzo dealing mainly with cookery; (b) that a room in the Medici Palace was called "del Bertoldo ouvero de Chamarieri"; (c) that Bertoldo died in Poggio a Cajano; and (d) that on one occasion "Bertoldo schultore" is listed among the retinue of thirty-one that Lorenzo took with him to the baths at Morba—far below the musicians, by the way, and right above the barber. Would not this list have told the reader more of the social history of art than the romance about the tactful confidant? One hopes that Bertoldo was not taken along as a "cameriere" for his skill or trustworthiness in cookery (for those were the days of poisonings), and that he was at least allotted one of the fourteen beds available for the thirty-one members of the retinue.

One more example must suffice to show how dangerous it can be for the historian to think himself "in the know" about the past. Speaking of Donatello's position, Mr. Hauser says: "What he himself thinks about the relation between art and craft is best shown by the fact that he plans one of his last and most important works, the group of Judith and Holofernes, as a decoration for the fountain in the courtyard of the Palazzo Riccardi" (p. 311). This Palazzo, of course, was the Medici Palace and, as it happens, the group was not planned as a "decoration" (though it stood above a fountain) but was charged with an unusually explicit social and political message. Piero il Gottoso had placed under it the Latin inscription, *Regnia cadunt luxu, surgunt virtutibus urbes*, etc. Apparently the Medici wanted, by this *exemplum*, publicly to proclaim their continued belief in what Mr. Hauser would call their "middle class virtues"—a proclamation much needed in view of the criticism their princely *magnificentia* had caused. When at last Piero di Lorenzo's "reign" did fall *luxu*, the citizens of Florence must have bethought themselves of this prophetic image, for they placed it in front of the Palazzo Vecchio as suitable reminder. Mr. Hauser, of course, need not, and possibly could not, know all the evidence,[4] but he gives no sign of really seeking out the vivifying contact with texts and documents.

Whatever the historian's individual outlook may be, a subject such as the social history of art simply cannot be treated by relying on secondary authorities. Even Mr. Hauser's belief in social determinism could have become fertile and valuable if it had inspired him, as it has inspired others, to prove its fruitfulness in research, to bring to the surface new facts about the past not previously caught in the nets of more conventional theories. Perhaps the trouble lies in the fact that Mr. Hauser is avowedly not interested in the past for its own sake, but believes that "the purpose of historical research is the understanding of the present" (p. 714). His theoretical prejudices may have thwarted his sympathies, for to some extent they deny the very existence of what we call the "humanities." If all human beings, including ourselves, are completely conditioned by the economic and social circumstances of their existence, then we really cannot "understand" the past by ordinary sympathy. The "man of the Baroque" was almost a different species from us whose thinking reflects "the crisis of Capitalism." This is indeed the conclusion which Mr. Hauser draws. He thinks that "we are separated from all the older works by an unbridgeable gulf—to understand them, a special approach and a special effort are necessary and their interpretation is always involved in the danger of misunderstanding" (p. 714). This "special approach," we may infer, demands of us that we look on the more distant past from the outside as on an interplay of impersonal forces. Perhaps this aloof attitude accounts for the curious lack of concreteness in Mr. Hauser's references to individual works of art. The illustrations seem to exist only as an afterthought of the publishers, and their captions have a strangely perfunctory character. Has a "social historian" really nothing to say about Ambrogio Lorenzetti's *Good Government* other

4. The inscription is quoted by H. Kauffmann, *Donatello*, Berlin, 1935, p. 172. The manuscript source (not known to Kauffmann) is a letter of condolence on Cosimo's death to Piero il Gottoso by *F. Francischus cognomento paduanus*, copied in B. Fontio's *Zibaldone*, Cod. Ricc. 907, fol. 142v. Fontio notes on the margin of the distich, "In columna sub Iudith in aula medicea."

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than that its master, "the creator of the illusionistic town panorama, takes, with the greater freedom of his spatial arrangement, the first important step in the artistic development leading beyond Giotto's style" (pl. XXII, 1)? Even in the comparatively few descriptions of earlier works of art, the qualities Mr. Hauser emphasizes are more often than not those the works "ought to have," rather than those we see. Thus we read that in the dedicatory mosaics of San Vitale "everything complicated, everything dissolved in halftones is excluded . . . everything is simple, clear and obvious . . . contained within sharp, unblurred outlines . . ." (p. 143). This, of course, is as it should be with aristocratic works, but surely such a description is quite misleading. His similar remarks about Le Brun's "orthodox style" almost make one wonder whether he has ever looked at one of these paintings with a fresh mind.

The same sense of remoteness is certainly responsible for the difficulty of Mr. Hauser's style. The book is translated from the German, and the author was not always well served by his translator, who puts "the free arts" (*die freien Künste*) for "the liberal arts" (p. 322) and is capable of writing: "The perspective in painting of the Quattrocento is a scientific conception, whereas the Universum of Kepler and Galileo is a fundamentally aesthetic vision" (p. 332). But the basic character of the writing cannot be blamed on the translator. It is rooted in Mr. Hauser's approach, which may be illustrated by the following specimen, neither worse nor better than many others: "For even where Italian culture seems to succumb to the Hispanic influence it merely follows an evolutionary trend resulting from the presuppositions of the Cinquecento" (p. 363).The abstractions set on their course here are in the thought, not in the language. The remarkable thing is how this bloodless, cramped style changes when the author reaches the "generation of 1830," "our first intellectual contemporaries" (p. 715). Here he permits himself to trust his own responses and sympathies; the pace quickens, and we are given telling quotations and are made to feel that we are concerned with people rather than with "factors." These are the chapters where first literature and then the film predominates, but they include, for instance, a page on Impressionist technique alive with the thrill of intuitive understanding (p. 872). Such pages, no less than the various penetrating asides scattered throughout the two volumes, only increase one's regret that a misconceived ideal of scientific sophistication has all but cheated the author and the reader of the best fruits of an immense labor.

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