Reading and Seeing : The Origins of Diderot's Art Criticism

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT:

Reading and Seeing : The Origins of Diderot's Art Criticism

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A study of Diderot's Salons seeking to understand the formation of Diderot's paradigms in context. Rather than project Diderot forward into time as proof of his modernity, the dissertation asks us to return to a moment in 18th century culture when many European artists, critics and aesthetic theoreticians contemporary to Diderot were also debating many of the issues we associate with the principles articulated in the Salons. Working with an inter-textual matrix, offering comparative analyses of Diderot's work with that of Piles' Cours sur la peinture, Edmund Burke's Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful and Hagedorn's Réflexions sur la peinture the dissertation demonstrates the specificity of Diderot's contribution and the originality of his style. The study suggests a new reading of Diderot's Salons that closely relates Diderot's work to that of his peers, indicating the development of Diderot's synthesis of 18th century European aesthetic theory, and demonstrates the evolution of his new rhetoric for art criticism.

In Loving Memory of my Mother,

Val Mortimer

Chardin, *L'étudiant faisant du copiage.*

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Introduction

In France in particular, under the influence of the Goncourt brothers, the art of the eighteenth century is epitomized under the label of the "fêtes galantes," and primary attention has been regularly given to Watteau, Pater, Lancret, Boucher, and Fragonard. A close reading of Diderot's Salons reveals that the visual arts and aesthetic theories of the 18th century in fact took quite a different direction.[1]

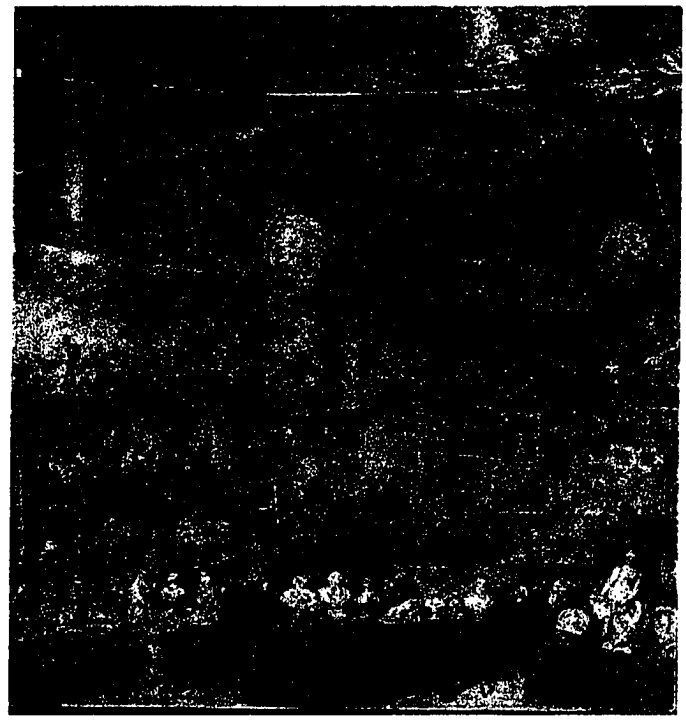

FIG: 1 St Aubin, *Le Salon de 1767.*

Diderot's Salons are a subjective recording of this change and of the theories that promoted it. The point of interest in an examination of the origins of Diderot's art criticism is twofold: first, it is the discovery of the collective mentality of the time, and second, it is the discovery of Diderot's personal views, which are a synthetic interpretation of the contemporary aesthetic outlook.

[1] See Philippe Minguet's excellent Esthétique du Rococo, Paris: Vrin, 1979 and Michel Levey's Rococo to Revolution. London: Thames & Hudson , 1977.

The extent and manner in which the works of certain aesthetic theorists and indeed artists influenced Diderot's own views are of capital importance for those interested in Diderot's art criticism. Certainly, Diderot was not writing in a vacuum and he often quite plainly remodels the judgment of others to form his own or employs their theories as a springboard to formulate an original concept. Just as Diderot's spontaneous analyses of paintings are often the direct result of his immediate sensitivity towards a painting, so too his innovative remarks on the visual arts are often the direct result of his readings of the aesthetic theories that were being expounded at the time. Even his own most staunch views in the Salons of a given year are often refuted in a subsequent one. The revision of his own conceptions, so closely linked to his reading of the moment, most clearly indicates that the development of Diderot's aesthetic formation is as much an effect of his "dialogue" with the works of aesthetic theorists, as it is the effect of his instinctive impressions of the paintings he reviewed. Diderot is a master of dialogue and his most famous works Le Neveu de Rameau and Le paradoxe sur le comédien are written in dialogue form. But Diderot is also the master of dialogue because he hardly ever put his pen to ink, without having first been inspired by a previous work he had read or person whom he knew. Better than any of his friends he was able to filter original points of view taken from a book or a dinner party. Diderot himself was very aware that the impulses and ideas that came to him from his environment were of decisive importance to his literary activity:

> Si je trouve quelque chose dans les auteurs qui me convienne, je m'en sers. S'ils m'inspirent quelque nouvelle idée, je l'ajoute en marge, car, paresseux de copier, je réserve toujours de grandes marges. Voilà le moment de consulter des amis, les indifférents et même les ennemis.[2]

[2] "Sur ma manière de travailler," in Diderot and Catherine II. Ed. M. Tourneux. Paris: 1899, p.450.

FIG: 2 Meissonier, *Diderot discussing the Salons with friends.*

In fact in several manuscripts of the Salons one finds different additions, groupings of ideas that occurred to Diderot after conversations with friends or during one of his readings.[3] Furthermore, he communicated indifferently with both the living and the dead:

> On y converse aussi réellement avec les morts qu'avec les vivants; pas plus ni moins réellement avec les vivants qu'avec ceux qui sont à naître; avec le passé et l'avenir qu'avec le présent.[4]

Already in the Entretiens avec Dorval in 1757, Diderot confessed that his friends had been a source of inspiration without equal.[5] Diderot is capable of being fired up by even the most trivial questions:

> Prenez-y garde, c'est vous qui me rengagez. On ne sait jamais avec une tête comme la mienne ce que la question la plus stérile peut

[3] A characteristic example of Diderot's manuscripts of the Salon de 1767 is given by Jean Seznec. III, p.346.
[4] See the letter from Diderot to Falconet of the 15.2.1766 in Correspondance. Vol. 6, p.97
[5] OE., I, p.21-28

> amener; d'abord une ligne, puis une autre, une page, deux pages un livre. Plus de questions, croyez- moi.[6]

Diderot's method of working did not escape his friends: "Il faut toujours qu'il parle à quelqu'un," said Grimm of his friend. Indeed the greater part the Salons present themselves either in letter form or simple remarks directed at Grimm, his other friends or even the artists themselves.[7] In the Salon of 1767, Diderot himself tells us that he is always thinking of his friends and books when he is writing.[8] Diderot rarely bothers to tell the reader whom he is addressing in the Salons or the origin of the passages to which he is referring. It is thus for the reader to unravel and interpret the web of allusions. This is particularly the case in the Salons of 1765, 1767, 1771, 1775 and 1781 as well as the Essais sur la peinture and the Pensées détachées.

Without doubt, Diderot generally reworks passages borrowed from other authors and gives them his own style in such a way that the borrowings melt into the textual unity of the work that has enveloped them. Once these inspirational borrowings have been monopolized by Diderot's unique poetic rhetoric, they then become an integral part of his aesthetic expression. An analysis of the capricious weaving of quotes and allusions from various sources shows that Diderot was untiring in his effort to acquire a solid knowledge of the literature that dealt with the aesthetics of his time as well as the essential elements on which this literature is based. Such an analysis also reveals that this "dialogue" with various aesthetic theorists produces a new vision of artistic appreciation. Diderot's

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[6] Salon de 1769, IV, p.117

[7] Naigeon made an in-depth study of the way in which Diderot always addressed his works to the friends who had inspired them even if in the smallest way. Baron d'Holbach made the same affirmation. See, J. Koscziusko, "Diderot et Hagedorn," *Revue de littérature comparée*, Vol. 5, 1936, p.665-666.

method is never reduced to simply copying the references of his colleagues and predecessors: he encompassed their points of view into a synthesis of prevalent aesthetic concepts. By his transposition of their work, Diderot clarifies his own position in relation to contemporary aesthetic theory. It is often impossible to fully interpret passages of Diderot's writing without reference to the texts that he was reading.

By insisting on Diderot's modernity as an art critic, scholars have lost sight of Diderot's strong links with his own period. With the exception of Jean Seznec,[9] who has undertaken several in-depth studies of Diderot's impassioned admiration for antiquity,[10] few scholars have focused on the important criteria that show Diderot to have been very much a man of the 18th century. Therefore, rather than trying to modernize Diderot and prove him to be a precursor of modern art criticism, it seems to me to be more appropriate at this stage of research, to underline the aspects that make Diderot's aesthetics original in his own time and in relationship to his own culture. Diderot's art criticism is neither exclusively forward nor backward looking, but essentially is the synthetic and eclectic expression of a transient period in the history of painting and aesthetic theory, as well as a deeply philosophical view of the role of the arts in general. Even if Diderot specialists do not always agree on everything,[11] most propose a "modern" reading of the Salons. For example, this could be either a modern reading of Diderot's aesthetic writings "sans paradoxe" as suggested by Belaval's title, L'esthétique sans

[8] III, p.141. He adds that he writes best when his work is destined to someone he cares about.
[9] See his penetrating Essais sur Diderot et l'Antiquité and his lectures at John Hopkins on Diderot and historical painting in Earl Wassermann, ed. Aspects of the Eighteenth Century. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1965.
[10] Diderot however took care to separate himself from the general wave which made a veritable cult of the antique revival. Here, as elsewhere, his critical stance is as original as it is complex.

paradoxe de Diderot, or a modern reading full of paradox, if one follows Starobinski's argument in "Diderot dans l'espace des peintres."[12] The most pressing case in point for Diderot's modernity is the enormous influence he had on such men as Stendhal, Baudelaire, Zola, Huysmans, and the Goncourt brothers.[13] However, rather than examine the Salons as a pioneering work whose far-reaching influences project into the 19th-century, I shall examine the Salons as a work of cardinal importance for an understanding of aesthetics in 18th - century Europe[14], of which I believe the Salons are very much a product. In short, I am interested in exploring the aspects that influenced the formation of the Salons, rather than those aspects of the Salons that came to be of influence subsequently, the latter having already been examined in extensive previous research by such scholars as Jacques Chouillet, Gita May, Norman Bryson, Michael Fried, Yves Belaval and Jean Starobinski.

Following the advice of Richard Wrigley, author of the Origins of French Art Critcism,[15] I would like to offer a comparative contextual analysis of Diderot's Salons with the writings of other men of letters in 18th century Europe: notably, Roger de Piles, Edmund Burke, Christian Hagedorn. I propose to analyze the Salons, not only as record of the effects that the paintings in question had on Diderot, but also as a record of the effects that the works of such diverse men as Dubos, Le Brun, Hogarth, Winkelmann, Shaftesbury had on him. I shall do this by comparing specific extracts of the works of

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[11] The theses of Jacques Chouillet 1973 and Else Marie Bukdahl 1980 take the opposite stance from the new propositions made by Norman Bryson 1981 and Michael Fried 1980.
[12] This article shows the essential part played by paradox in Diderot's writing.
[13] This aspect is most admirably shown in Anita Brookner's work, The Genius of the Future. New York: Cornell University Press, 1971.
[14] I shall be looking particularly at the impact of certain French, British and German works on Diderot's aesthetic thought.

these aesthetic theorists with closely related articles in the Salons. In this way, this study will highlight the essential elements assimilated by Diderot and demonstrate how their transformations manifest themselves in the Salons and progress to a clear evolution in his dynamic thought process.

In the field of art history such an approach has already been used successfully by Richard Wrigley in the previously mentioned work, although not directed at Diderot. Else-Marie Bukdahl in her work, Diderot, critique d'art[16] has of course touched on similar subject matter and in so doing has opened the door to a comparative analysis of the actual texts and images that influenced Diderot's discussion of the role and value of art. In fact, in his review of Bukdahl's work, Michael Cartwright encounters in it an invitation for further exploration and interpretation of the various elements that made up Diderot's aesthetic writing. Despite Diderot's apparently facile style, one should be under no illusion that he was not aware of his task of having to define the purpose of art criticism. The *encyclopédiste-philosophe* took serious care in researching and establishing principles on which the visual arts could best be judged and commented on. Beneath this nonchalant style, so like the one he had previously admired in Montaigne, Diderot is taking his enterprise for the subscribers of the *Correspondance Littéraire* very seriously: through the words of the Salons articles, the painting must be "visible."

I shall measure the extent to which Diderot's reading of contemporary art theorists and his interaction with artists influenced his own personal impressions of the paintings he

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[15] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
[16] Copenhagen: Rosenkilde Bagger, 1980.

observed at the Salons exhibitions between 1759 and 1781. To this end, I shall give case studies of three European aestheticians: Roger de Piles, Edmund Burke and Christian Hagedorn. I shall focus on the following question: Was Diderot able and did he indeed seek to create a system of aesthetic judgment in the Salons? If so, does the new vision eliminate evidence of the existing one or were his varying views elaborations of existing concept disguised by the new rhetoric that Diderot developed for art criticism? By addressing this question, I hope to be able to deduce a clear understanding of Diderot's motivation as art critic relative to that of his European contemporaries. Also, I hope to establish a thread that will, if not unify his ideas, at least show a reason for their frequent changes in direction and monitor an evolution of his thought. A fresh perspective of the Salons will be discovered in the aesthetic treaties that guided Diderot's in his own work. In fact, it is my thesis that Diderot's Salons can be read as a collection of dynamic interactions with other works of the century, including his own.[17] Using his genial talent of synthesis, Diderot has captured the essence of the aesthetic spirit of the age and transformed his sources to derive an original vision and rhetoric for art criticism.

It is appropriate in a study that is devoted mainly to emphasizing the strong affinities between Diderot and other 18th century art critics and thus of course seeking to highlight the rather neglected more contemporary factors of Diderot's art criticism, to begin with a salute in my first chapter to the 17th century and specifically to Roger de Piles. There are, in addition, obvious and overwhelming reasons to link Diderot with de Piles and his succeeding epoch. The second part of my first chapter will be devoted to a case study

[17] Especially in the form of a developed "dialogue" with his aesthetic writings such as Paradoxe sur le Comédien, Lettre sur les Aveugles and Lettre sur les Sourds et les Muets.

comparing Diderot's own aesthetic writing with de Piles' Cours de peinture par principes[18] and his prose translation of Du Fresnoy's poem Art de peinture.[19] *Chapter Two* will be devoted to a case study comparing Diderot's own aesthetic writing with Burke's Enquiry into the Origins of the Sublime and the Beautiful, 1757, which Diderot read in Desfrançais's translation in 1765 and *Chapter Three* of this dissertation will be devoted to a case study comparing Diderot's own aesthetic writing with Hagedorn's Betrachtung über die Malerei, 1762, which Diderot read in Huber's translation in 1775.

However, before entering into my three case studies analyzing the influence of de Piles, Burke and Hagedorn's aesthetic writings on Diderot, I would like to present, as a foundation to this study, a more general selection of Diderot's readings between 1747 and 1751. My choice in examining a specific work to demonstrate its influence on Diderot's aesthetic opinions is not only based on its impact on a given Salon article, but also, and most importantly, the works selected are those that can be shown to have actually been borrowed by Diderot, thanks to the records in the Catalogue of Royal Library. In his dissertation on Diderot's aesthetics,[20] Felix Vexler refrains from judging Diderot, who he writes even in the 20th century is still far too modern and original to be regarded as "classé." Following this apparent modesty, my proposal to compare Diderot's art criticism with that of other critics of his time might seem presumptuous. However, I hope that this study will convincingly place Diderot's art criticism clearly among that of his peers and note those aspects of his aesthetic views that were developed from his reading of their works, thus revealing a new reading of Diderot's art criticism, as an inspired

[18] Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1708.
[19] Paris: Nicolas Langlois, 1673.

synthesis of many important preoccupations in 18th century aesthetics. Diderot was not a man with preconceived ideas. His ideas became more precise as he conjugated the ideas he read into a new synthetic style in art criticism and an original rhetoric.

This said, in my concluding chapter I shall demonstrate how Diderot's use of literary techniques set him apart from other contemporary critics. With this aim, I shall make specific reference to the Salon de 1767 in which he used the same narrative devices as in his masterpiece novel Jacques le fataliste. In this way, I shall show that Diderot's interpretation of 18th century aesthetics developed into a new way of appreciating and writing about the plastic arts. Diderot is preoccupied with his descriptions of paintings and already in 1763, he asks what specific style of language best translates the pictorial language:

> Pour décrire un Salon à mon gré et au vôtre, savez vous, mon ami, ce qu'il faudrait avoir? Toutes les sortes de goûts, un coeur sensible à tous les charmes ... une variété de style qui répondît à la variété des pinceaux.[21]

To this one could add a variety of style that would appeal to the variety of readers. Diderot was set apart from his peers, as he realized the importance of addressing the growing public interest in aesthetics. A public that did not only consist of the nobility, members of the *Académie,* and aesthetic theorists, but of the largely bourgeois crowds who came flooding through the doors of the Louvre to view the paintings that were exhibited at the Paris *Salons.*

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[20] Diderot's Aesthetic Naturalism. Ph.D. Thesis, Columbia University. New York. 1922.
[21] Salon de 1763. p.43

The Formation of the French Academy.

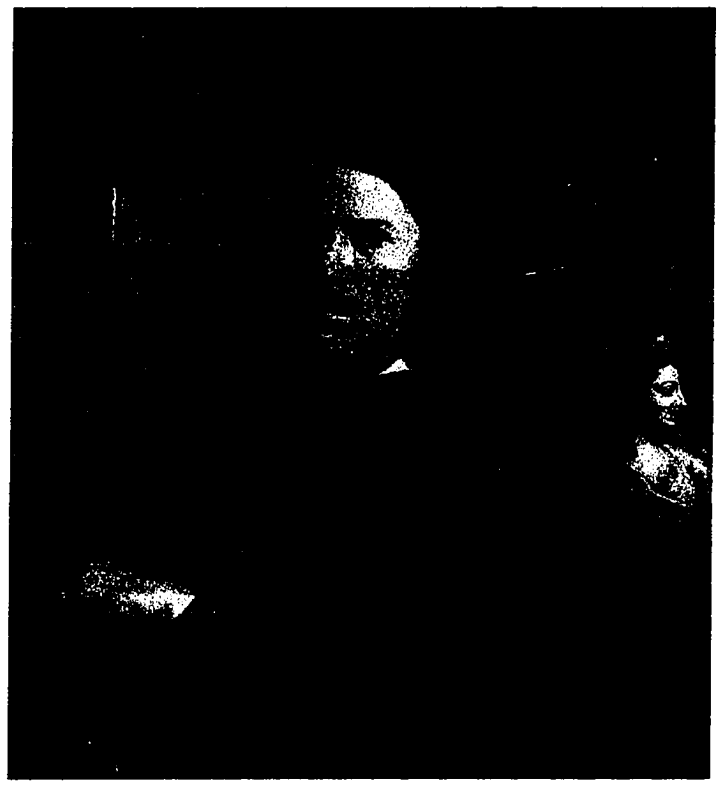


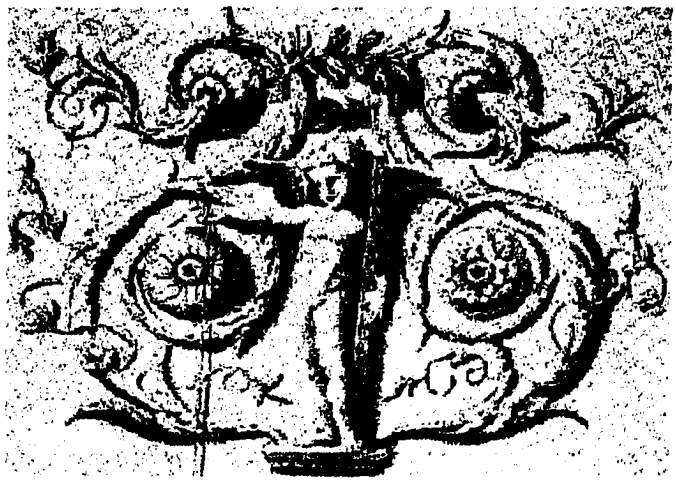
FIG: 3 Poussin, *Self-portrait.*

The classical doctrine in French painting in the 17th century was instilled much later than that of poetics, but it remained entrenched for a longer time and thus a vital force in the 18th century. This classical doctrine had a considerable influence on Diderot's aesthetic writings. It is for this reason that I want to examine first very briefly certain aspects of the classical doctrine. Poussin, whose mature ideas date from around 1640, laid the foundations of French classical doctrine. One of Poussin's closest associates, André Félibien, who although a man of letters had a thorough knowledge of the visual arts, recorded Poussin's views carefully. When these views were finally published twenty years later, they acted as a link between Poussin's classicism and later French *académisme*. Félibien's central aesthetic concepts all stem from Poussin. For example, the primacy of line over color, art as something that instructs as well as pleases, the ideal of the painter-philosopher, the *grand-goût*, and of course the light of reason as a guide to the arts.[1]

[1] "Dans les arts comme dans toutes les sciences les lumières de la raison sont au dessus de ce que la main de l'ouvrier peut exécuter." Félibien, Entretiens. 1666.

FIG: 4 Le Brun, *Portrait de André Félibien.*

However, Félibien was inclined to convert the great painter's reflections into absolute injunctions, thus crosses the narrow and tenuous borderline dividing classicism from *académisme*. He sought to limit the artist's area of freedom, condemning naturalism and baroque alike. For example, he noted that it was ill-advised for a painter to content himself with the simple and squalid imitation of nature, not distinguishing beauty from ugliness, but also criticized painting with fluency and fury, without the strict imitation of nature. It is in the 1640's that we find the first most important dates for French art theory that will concern us for this study. In these years, Du Fresnoy, whose work we shall examine depth later, started his long poem on painting that formulated classical art theory in verse form, just as Boileau later did in poetics with his L'Art poétique in 1674. Poussin was at the height of his powers and fame, and in 1645 Le Brun returned to Paris after his studies in Rome and began seriously to organize classical art in Paris, just as Poussin was reviving and developing it in Rome. In 1648 Le Brun founded the French Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture.



The 1660's represent another important phase in the development of French classical theory as it was taking its shape, thanks to key artists and men of letters and political figures.[2] The partial revisionist who was to be perhaps of the greatest influence on Diderot in relation to

FIG: 5 *Mesure Rules the Arts.* Engraving from Testlin's, Sentiments des peintres sur la peintres. 1696.

the classical doctrine was Roger de Piles. Many important books appeared during this decade including Félibien's Entretiens from 1666 on, and Fréart's Idée de la perfection en peinture published in 1662. Du Fresnoy's poem L'art de la peinture, which appeared in 1668, marked the beginning of the long career of de Piles, who translated the poem from Latin into French. Apart from his many lectures delivered at the *Académie*, Le Brun published a book about painting facial expressions in 1667, and later Testelin published the codified views of the *Académie* under the title of Préceptes.[3] For all its unity, the theory of the *Académie* recognized a considerable plurality in the matter of beauty.[4]

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[2] Such as Le Brun who was the organizer, Bosse the scholar, Testelin the editor, Poussin the painter, Felibien the chronicler, Fréart the polemicist, Fresnoy the popularizer.

[3] Testlin published Préceptes in 1679. These were the codified views of the Academy on the art of painting and the fruit of the *Académie* discussions.

[4] The main features of *académisme* in art theory as highlighted by André Fontaine in Doctrines d'art en France. Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1909 were as follows:

There were two main versions of French classical doctrine: one that took, as Bosse did, geometry as the guiding ideal and the other, decorum. For Bosse a picture was something that could be calculated and while the theory of appropriateness espoused by Le Brun was more popular among the

FIG: 6 Le Brun, *Self-portrait.*

majority of the theorists of the time it was not necessarily accepted by the majority of artists. Fréart's treatise, Idée de la perfection en peinture had a sharp edge directed

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1. A perfect work of art is marked by truth-in the literal sense. Art is knowledge. The virtues of works of art are of a cognitive nature; there is no place in them for the purely artistic (or alternatively: there are no artistic virtues other than the cognitive). Thus art requires the study of nature as well as its imitation.

2.Whatever art depicts, it should do so in an appropriate manner, decorously, in accordance with the principles of "bienséance" and "convenance".

3. Art is subject to general principles and absolute rules. These rules relate above all to proportions. But art should have other virtues in addition to regular proportions. Beauty is dependent on proportion, but grace, on the other hand, is not.

4. Art should be evaluated according to rational and universal criteria, and not individual taste. Everyone sees things differently, depending on the peculiarities of his organs of perception and his temperament; hence the diversity of taste and manner in art. And precisely for this reason it is impossible to judge beauty on the basis of individual inclinations, for these differ in different lands and climates.

5. What is most important in determining the value of a work of art is its content: its grandeur, nobility and sublimity - in other words, moral factors. It is essential that it should have a noble theme, a spiritual factor and expression. The beauty of a work of art lies not only in its sensual forms, but also in its deeper meaning. Allegorical art is the finest of all.

against the art that was produced by his contemporaries. Curiously enough, the classical doctrine flourished at a time when the practice of art was predominately baroque. That is to say, that although the *académiciens* appealed to Poussin and the masters of bygone days, as indeed Diderot did at the beginning of his career as an art critic, there were not yet such examples in their own times. Fréart, as Diderot would later, carried on a determined struggle with baroque extravagance of gesture and the chimerical beauty, calling for rational thought in the selection of a theme and in the process of composition, appropriate expression and fidelity to history and expression. Fréart's version of classicism placed maximal emphasis on the decorum of costume.[5] There was a detailed prescription for every theme and every figure. Apollo must be painted in this manner and Caesar in that. The ultimate justification was an appeal to truth as the highest authority.[6]

FIG: 7 *Apollo Belvedere*, after Greek statue.

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[5] Diderot also agreed that modern dress was not appropriate to ancient themes and figures. However, unlike most *acaémdiciens* his reason for this was that not to be historically accurate would deter from the moral message of the painting. See, E. Bukdahl, Diderot, Critique d'art. 1982. p.65.

[6] Diderot is not happy with the posture of Callacu. But what did he or Apollo really look like?

At the very basis of this theory lay the conviction that there is one defined beauty. Fréart was familiar with the view that art changes and develops, but he regarded the idea as frivolous and only satisfactory to the semi-educated.

Like Félibien and Fréart, Du Fresnoy was neither an artist nor a professional scholar, but an amateur-litterateur. Having spent a long period in Rome, he was able to constitute yet another link between the earlier Italian theory of art and the new French theory that was currently emerging. His L'Art de peinture was a long poem of 549 verses, which he chiseled out over the course of twenty years between 1641 and 1665. The poem had a timeless quality containing neither polemics with the baroque art of the period, nor any apparent aspirations to originality. It simply brought together the theses that every scholar of the period accepted. Thus the poem might be considered the credo of the *Académie* and it is because of its synthetic quality that its main group of ideas is particularly important to an understanding of the period out of which Diderot's thoughts on aesthetics were born. In my first case study, we will note that Diderot read de Piles' translation of Du Fresnoy's poem with great care, and this work was consequently an enormous source of influence on Diderot's aesthetic judgment.[7]

FIG: 8 Du Fresnoy, engraving late 17th century.

[7] Cf. A. Fontaine, Les doctrines d'art en France, Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1909, and H. Lohmuller, Die französiche Theorie der Malerei im 17. Jahrhundert, Marburg: Minkoff Reprint, 1933.

18th Century Critics.

A contemporary critic with whom Diderot had little in common was the père André, whose Essai sur le beau appeared in 1741. Although the père André is not well known and if so, judged harshly today,[8] Diderot believed that "il est celui qui a jusqu'à présent le mieux approfondi cette matière, et mérite le plus à être lu."

Diderot takes his admiration of this work to the extreme of actually copying word for word in his Recherches sur le beau the précis of Saint Augustine's doctrine as given by André in his Essai sur le beau without even acknowledging his borrowing. Of course, plagiarism was quite common practice and in fact Diderot was not the only one to manifest his appreciation in this way. Séran de la Tour's Art de sentir et de juger en matière de goût[9] is nothing more than a complete reproduction of André's Essai sur le beau.[10] Although Diderot does not use this work apart from this incident, the père André's work, as well as Batteux's, is of interest in that both are indicative of a desire that was haunting the period at which Diderot initiated his own aesthetic writing. This desire was to resolve all the complex and contradictory problems on the study of aesthetics into one unified theory. Batteux's Les beaux arts réduits à un seul principe[11] is most indicative of this preoccupation. In the preface of the abbé Batteux's work he states:

> Imitons les vrais physiciens qui amassent des expériences et fondent ensuite sur elles un système qui les réduit en principes. Toutes les règles sont des branches qui tiennent à une même tige.

[8] See, Bukdahl, Diderot critique d'art. Copenhagen: Rosenkilde, 1984, p. 252-359
[9] 2 Vols. Paris: 1762.
[10] Bukdahl. *ibid.* p.359
[11] Paris: 1746.

> Si on remontait jusqu'à leur source, on y trouverait un principe assez simple, pour être saisi sur-le-champ, et assez étendu pour absorber toutes ces petites règles de détails.

Batteux discovers this unity in an updated version of Aristotelian mimesis. In art, genius must imitate nature. It cannot be just any type of imitation, it must be "sage et éclairée ... en un mot, une imitation où on voit la nature, non telle qu'elle est en elle-même, mais telle qu'elle peut être et qu'on peut la concevoir par l'esprit."[12] This collaboration between "esprit" and nature gives birth to what Batteux calls "la belle nature," the portrayal of which should be the object of all artistic creation. His theory is thus: "imiter c'est copier un modèle."[13] Hence the artist is given the essentially passive role of observer[14] and Batteux's definition of genius underlines this point, as this role has no trace of creative effort:

> Le génie doit donc avoir appui pour s'élever et se soutenir, et cet appui est la nature. Il ne peut la créer, il ne doit point la détruire; il ne peut donc que la suivre et l'imiter, et, par conséquent, tout ce qu'il produit ne peut être qu'imitation.[15]

Le Brun had taught that the artist must correct nature with the help of antiquity. This idea, which is of course representative of the academic doctrine of the 17th century, is something that Batteux returned to, despite the fact that by the time he was writing, this system had been abandoned in most of the contemporary artists' studios.[16] In Diderot's Recherches philosophiques sur le beau of 1751, he explains the doctrine of *la belle nature* differently from Batteux:

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[12] p.24
[13] p.12
[14] The nature that Batteux refers to is "la belle nature."
[15] p.11-12
[16] See, Wrigley, The Origins of French Art Criticism. Oxford: 1993. Even Roger de Piles, who was more liberated than Le Brun, also comes close to following this concept in his Cours de peinture, 1708.

> Qu'est-ce donc qu'on entend quand on dit à l'artiste imitez la nature? Ou on ne sait ce qu'on commande ou on lui dit "Si vous aviez à peindre une fleur et qu'il vous soit d'ailleurs indifférent laquelle peindre, prenez la plus belle d'entre les fleurs."

Between Diderot's explanations and those of Batteux there is quite a difference and Diderot seems to be far more realistic.[17] In a letter dedicated to Grimm in the Salon of 1767[18] Diderot writes,

> Cependant on n'en parle pas moins ... de l'imitation de la belle nature; et ces gens qui parlent sans cesse de l'imitation de la belle nature, croient de bonne foi qu'il y a une belle nature, subsistante, et qu'on la voit quand on veut, et qu'il n'y a qu'à la copier. Si vous leur disiez que c'est un être tout à fait idéal, ils ouvriraient des grands yeux ou ils vous riraient au nez.

The explanations given by such men as Batteux in speaking about the laws of taste, "la belle nature est selon le goût celle qui a le plus de rapport avec notre propre perfection, notre avantage, notre interêt, celle qui est en même temps la plus parfaite en soi,"[19] were for all these reasons, unsatisfactory for Diderot.

In the Lettre sur les Sourds et les Muets, Diderot, addressing Batteux, states of the Les beaux arts réduits, "Ne manquez pas non plus de mettre à la tête de cet ouvrage un chapitre sur ce que c'est que la belle nature" and, in Recherches sur les origines et la nature du beau, "M. l'abbé Batteux rappelle tous les principes des beaux arts à l'imitation de la belle nature: mais il ne nous apprend point ce que c'est que la belle nature."[20] So, Batteux, after having reduced the fine arts to one principle, had in all good faith neglected to state what he understood the concept to mean. However, although of course Batteux

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[17] See also a passage in Essai sur la peinture, 1765. Eds. Assézat & Tourneux, Vol. 10 p.495
[18] Vol. 11 p.8-9
[19] *Op. cit.* p.79
[20] A.&T. Vol. 10 p.17

was not the first to address the problem of "la belle nature,"[21] or even the "le goût antique",[22] no one else had approached the theory in such a complete and lucid way. He opened up the floor to a discussion that Diderot will again address in 1777 in Pensées détachées.[23] Batteux's ideas on beauty are far from those of the père André in whose treatise beauty is seen as exterior to sensations. Batteux, as Dubos before him, believes in the sensorial aspect of our ideas. In the Cours de belles-lettres distribués par exercice, he affirms his belief in the natural order of our thoughts going always from the object to the subject, from the sensation to the idea.[24] This highlights the fact that the intellectual process of empiricism had already superseded the metaphysics of the père André and questions the theory that an object that pleases is necessarily worthy of pleasing.[25] There do not seem to be many aspects of Batteux's work that link him to Diderot, if not the century's preoccupation of unifying art and morality. Art had the first objective of pleasure but also the *utile dulci* of Horace - the useful mixed with the agreeable.[26]

> La belle nature telle qu'elle doit être représentée dans les arts, renferme toutes les qualités du beau et du bon. Elle doit nous flatter du côté de l'esprit, en nous offrant des objets parfaits en eux-mêmes qui étendent et perfectionnent nos idées: c'est le beau. Elle doit flatter notre coeur en nous montrant dans ces mêmes objets des intérêts qui nous soient chers, qui tiennent à la conservation ou à la perfection de notre être, qui nous fassent sentir agréablement avec le beau....un même objet présenté lui donne toutes les qualités dont il a besoin pour exercer et perfectionner à la fois notre esprit.[27]

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[21] See, Bellori and Perrault *Op.Cit.*
[22] See, J.H. Rubin's "Roger de Piles and Antiquity." *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism.* 1975, Vol. 34.2 p.159-161.
[23] p.743-747
[24] Paris: 1747. 2 Vols. p.16
[25] Essai sur les beaux-arts. Paris 1741 p.58
[26] Le Sage expresses this idea in Histoire de Gil Blas de Santillane, 1715, as does l'abbé Terrasson in Dissertation critique sur L'Iliade, 1715.
[27] p.88

The first work on aesthetics in French is Le Traité du beau, which J.-P. Crouzac published in Amsterdam in 1715. In this treatise he indicates that his method is Cartesian.

> J'éviterai soigneusement de bâtir sur les principes douteux, je me conduirai avec tout ordre et toute précaution qui me sera possible, je ne passerai point à une seconde pensée, sans avoir bien établi la précédente. Et j'aime mieux charger mon discours de quelques réflexions superflues que de hasarder quelque fausses vraisemblances et de laisser quelques-unes de mes propositions à demi prouvées. [28]

In his introduction he even goes so far as to say that he will filter out all subjective impression whatsoever. Fortunately, he sometimes forgets this. However, one cannot imagine a style of critical writing further from that which Diderot sought and indeed did achieve in his Salons. Roland Mortier talks of Diderot's irresistible attraction and fascination to that which is singularly irreducible.[29]

In 1719, four years after Crouzac, the abbé Dubos published his Réflexions. Dubos was not convinced as strongly of the Cartesian dichotomy of reason and sentiment and therefore did not indulge in philosophical intricacies. Indeed, when Dubos sensed a philosophical difficulty he was inclined to shrug off or change the subject. He was not admired by such men as the abbé Batteux as he had no wish to systematize, and the père André had strong reservations about Dubos' ultimate definition of aesthetic value being estimated in purely psychological terms. Yet Dubos' Réflexions were to be one of the most important works on aesthetics well into the 18th century,[30] and Diderot and the

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[28] Crousaz, Traité du beau. Paris: 1715, p.3

[29] L'Originalité: une nouvelle catégorie esthétique au siècle des lumières, Geneva: Droz, 1982.
p.154

[30] This is how Voltaire judged Dubos' critical work: "Tous les artistes lisent avec fruit Les Réflexions de Dubos sur la poésie et la peinture. C'est le livre le plus utile qu'on ait jamais écrit sur ces matières chez

FIG: 9 Dubos, engraving late 17th century.

editors of the Encyclopédie did not hesitate to use his definitions. Chouillet[31] gives the example of the article *Beau,* which is taken directly from Dubos. According to Dubos, the evocative power of a painting or writing depends on the painter or poet's knowledge of the specific means of expression available to him. The painter must remember for example that unlike the poet he only has one moment, "un instant" and that he can only render the states of the figures' souls by the facial expressions and gestures.[32] Thus, despite what Le Brun and the *académiciens* claim, Poussin cannot compete in this domain with Corneille, as the registers available to their particular art are too different. Yet Dubos will point out that the potential effect of a pictorial image will be more durable, because the visual impact is stronger than that of words. Diderot will defend this point following Dubos' original argument closely.[33] What is more, both cite the same passage from

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aucun peuple de l'Europe. Ce qui fait la beauté de cet ouvrage c'est qu'il n'y a que peu d'erreurs et beaucoup de réflexions vraies, nouvelles et profondes." Catalogue des écrivains du siècle de Louis XIV.

[31] La formations des idées esthétiques de Diderot. 1973. p.286.

[32] B. Munteano. L'abbé Dubos, esthéticien de la persuasion personnelle. *Revue de la littérature comparée,* Vol. 30, 1956. p.320-321. J. Chouillet, La formation des idées ésthétiques de Diderot, p.144-145.

[33] I, p.466.

Horace to stress the point: "Segnius irritant desmissa per aures, quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus, et quae ipse sibi tradit spectator."[34]

Through his travels as a diplomat, Dubos knew Holland, Germany, England and Italy, and it is through this experience of different cultures that he was inspired to write his Réflexions. Dubos was open and subtle in his ideas of the different guiding principles of arts in the various countries he visited. Dubos was an empiricist, a sensualist, and above all he accepted differences and did not try to adapt them to a hypothesis as his predecessors had done. Rather, he tried to explain them in his own efforts to understand them. He was a man of science. He writes that,

> Les hommes ajoutent foi bien plus fermement à ceux qui leur disent j'ai vu, qu'à ceux qui leur disent j'ai conclu. Les savants ainsi que les philosophes anciens, ne sont d'accord que sur les faits, et ils se réfutent réciproquement sur tout ce qui ne peut être connu que par voie de raisonnement, en se traitant les uns et les autres d'aveugles volontaires qui refusent de voir la lumière.[35]

With principles such as these we can be assured in advance that Dubos' work is an ideology based on vision. It is this lack of any distinct ideology that explains also the lack of unity in this work: there is hardly any general theory, but facts grouped together and followed by plausible explanations. There is also, as we shall see, a leitmotiv throughout the work but not a rigid system that encompasses all the points made and gives an underlying explanation to everything.[36] Indeed, he starts his book with the most legitimate question of all: what causes man to invent the fine arts? In other words, what is

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[34] Art poétique verse 180. Dubos 1st Part p.203-204. Diderot Salon de 1767. III, p.93

[35] Réflexions Ed. 1733. p.486

[36] In his work on Dubos, Etude sur l'abbé Dubos, 1850 p.11 Morel criticizes the lack of unity in Réflexions as one often does the writings of Diderot. However it must be remembered that Dubos was writing a scientific work on aesthetics.

the raison d'être and aim of art? Therefore, Dubos may well have seen his work as a scientific investigation of aesthetics, a discovery of its origins and purposes. Dubos points out that all pleasures come from the satisfaction of a particular need. The more pressing a need the more pleasurable will be its satisfaction. The soul like the body also has needs. One of the more important ones is the avoidance of boredom, which is born of inaction. To avoid boredom people seek passion, because however much they suffer at the hand of passion: "ils souffrent encore plus à vivre sans les passions."[37] To avoid boredom and stimulate emotion people go to see public executions, just as the Romans enjoyed watching the spectacle of the gladiators.

In his Réflexions, Dubos asks how the most barbarous spectacles of the amphitheater had for so long held such a deep fascination for people who had had great humanity and who were also responsible for creating so many objects of unsurpassed beauty. These spectacles are repugnant in themselves and yet offer something that is clearly attractive.

> Cette émotion naturelle qui excite en nous machinalement quand nous voyons nos semblables dans le danger ou dans les malheurs, n'a d'autre attrait que celui d'être une passion dont les mouvements remuent l'âme et la tiennent occupée.[38]

At the same time the search for continual emotion leads man to games of chance which set the soul in the state of ecstasy. Thus, according to Dubos, the whole of humanity chases passion like moths the light. Yet burning his wings only increases man's fascination about the deathly effects of the passions. The role of art as a liberator appears at these moments. It proposes to offer man the heightened feeling without the dangers associated with it. Art therefore acts as a substitute: "ne pourrait-il (art) pas produire des

[37] Vol. I p.11

passions artificielles capables de nous occuper dans le moment que nous les sentons et incapables de nous causer dans la suite des peines réelles et des afflictions véritables."[39]

Further on Dubos writes:

> Les premiers peintres et les premiers poètes n'ont songé peut-être qu'à flatter nos sens et notre imagination et c'est en travaillant pour cela qu'ils ont trouvé le moyen d'exciter dans notre coeur les passions artificielles.[40]

In the Salons, Diderot will encourage the artist to choose a subject matter that will make his heart beat faster. To induce these artificial passions the artist must imitate those things that would truly produce such emotions. However, Diderot's ideas as to what this subject matter ought to be will change enormously over the 20 years of his art criticism. Dubos claims that the impression that we get from the imitation of an object is the same as one would get from the real thing only, it is of lesser impact.[41] Obviously, the imitation is not followed by the inconveniences of the more serious emotions that the actual object would have caused.[42] It goes without saying that, "l'imitation ne saurait donc nous émouvoir quand la chose imitée n'est point capable de le faire" and with this idea, Dubos introduces another essential factor in his theory of aesthetics: that is to say, the subject in question must be of interest to the viewer. Dubos condemns, for example, landscape painting as being of little interest.

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[38] *Op. cit.* p.12
[39] p.25
[40] p.26
[41] p.51
[42] p.28

FIG: 10 Titien, *Madonna and Rabbit.*

> Le plus beau paysage, fut-il du Titien et du Carrache, ne nous émeut pas plus que le ferait la vue d'un canton de pays affreux ou riant: il n'est rien dans un tableau qui nous entretienne pour ainsi dire.[43]

He does remark that one can nonetheless admire a work of art only for its execution, but this is appreciation at a secondary level. He was obviously writing at a time before the sentiment regarding nature was to come into full force in the middle of the century, a sentiment that Diderot would find very important. For the time being it was a period of subjectivism, which preferred the subject to the object. Indeed, Poussin had preferred to philosophize in his *Arcadie* and leave his landscape as a geometric scheme. Such an example demonstrates that it might have been harder to have any feeling for landscapes, as opposed to the more interesting subject matter.

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[43] p.52

Diderot[44] greatly admires Poussin, calling him the master of heroic landscapes and uses *Arcadie* as an example of what he calls the "style héroique." Diderot also considers *Arcadie* to be an example of Dubos' theory of the potential suggestive force in psychological contrasts. Indeed, Dubos notes that in *Arcadie* there is a juxtaposition between the landscape, which is represented as a "contrée riante" and the shepherds reading the funeral inscription thus reminding the spectator of the vanity of all things.[45] Diderot concludes on Dubos' comments:

FIG: 11 Poussin, *Arcadie.*

> Voyez comme le Poussin est sublime et touchant, lorsqu'à côté d'une scène champêtre, riante, il attache mes yeux sur un tombeau où je lis: *Et ego in Arcadia.*[46]

[44] Diderot's description Vol. I, p.358 corresponds to that of de Piles' earlier work OE., 1767 Vol. II p.158-161 on the "style champêtre."
[45] Dubos, *Op. cit.* p.54-57
[46] III, p.176

However, Diderot differs from Dubos concerning the potential emotional effects that a landscape painting without philosophical elements can induce on the beholder. This can be most clearly observed in Diderot's Salons articles on Vernet and Loutherbourg in 1767, which exemplify his ideas of the sublime in aesthetic pleasure.[47] Dubos' principal theory of aesthetics is that man, seeking to escape boredom, will try to heighten, or rather stimulate his emotions artificially in the contemplation of art. At best, this art will provoke emotion by imitating convincingly and in an interesting way something that if real would have severe consequences, like a storm at sea.

FIG: 12 Loutherbourg, *Naufrage.*

[47] I discuss this aspect of Diderot's aesthetic appreciation in my chapter on Burke. See *Chapter Two* of this study.

Others before Dubos had remarked on the artificial character of art. For example, Pascal,[48] Bossuet,[49] Lamotte,[50] Nicole[51] and Fontenelle[52] discuss the moral dangers of false dramatic emotions. However, it is actually Dubos who is the first to insist on this particular aspect of aesthetic appreciation and to give an in-depth psychological study of artistic emotion, explaining it as a sort of aesthetic fictional game. The principal aim of the poet or painter will be thus to touch the soul of the spectator, and to do this he must create new and original forms and must have genius as well.

> On appelle génie l'aptitude qu'un homme a reçue de la nature de faire bien et facilement certaines choses que d'autres ne sauraient faire que très mal, même en prenant beaucoup de peine.[53]

Genius is a most important aspect of Dubos' theory, as it will be of Diderot's. Genius for Dubos is spontaneity *par exellence.* It is undetermined in essence and can only be recognized by its creation. Dubos asks what countries and times create genius, such as Greece before the reign of Philippe of Rome, during the time of Caesar and Augustus and the century of Louis the XIV.

> Les arts parviennent à leur élévation par un progrès subit...et les effets des causes morales ne les sauraient soutenir sur le point de perfection où ils semblent s'être élevés par leur propres forces.[54]

Diderot also alluded to times of war and hardship as a force that brought out artistic genius that might otherwise have remained unrecognized. In his Réflexions, Dubos also attempts to limit the domains of painting and poetry. He believes that there are some

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[48] Pensées. Ed. Havet, *Art,* XXV, p.26
[49] *Lettre au Père Caffaro,* 9th May, 1694 in connection with the theatre.
[50] Discours sur la poésie en général. *Op. cit.*
[51] Essai de morales. 1671. *Op. cit.*
[52] Réflexions politiques. Chap. XXXVI, Ed.1766 Oeuvres. Vol. III, p.161-162.
[53] Vol. II, p.7
[54] Vol. II, p.174

subjects appropriate to painting and others to poetry. The essential difference between the two are that that the painter works in space and the poet in time. The painter must present a unique moment of an action, and the poet, having the advantage of succession, can present the different phases of the action. Again, Dubos is of course not the first to compare the two arts,[55] Horace's *ut pictura poesis*[56] is cited at the head of his work and he no doubt remembered Ciceron's "la poésie est une peinture parlante et la peinture une poésie muette." In his comparison of the other arts, Dubos found that painting acted with greater force of the mind, because it works through sight, which is the sense which makes the greatest impression on the soul and also because painting uses natural signs unlike poetry, which uses only symbols. Before Dubos introduced this idea, it was that of Le Brun that was generally accepted. In a discussion on the academic doctrine, Le Brun explained that the writer "représente successivement telle action qu'il lui plaît" whereas:

> Le peintre n'ayant qu'un instant dans lequel il doit peindre la chose qu'il veut figurer, pour représenter ce qui est passé dans ce moment là, il est quelque fois nécessaire qu'il peigne ensemble beaucoup d'incidents qui aient précédé afin de faire comprendre le sujet qu'il expose.[57]

Considering those aspects of Dubos' thought that will relate to Diderot's, it is important to emphasize that the *leitmotiv* of Réflexions is that art should touch the spectator by

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[55] Even de Piles in his Cours de peinture: 1708, p.449 writes: "La peinture nous faire voir tout d'un coup: la poésie ne va à son but et ne produit pas son effet qu'en succédant une chose à une autre....Je ne veux point ici omettre une chose qui est en faveur de la poésie: c'est que les épisodes se font d'autant plus plaisir dans la suite d'un poème qu'elles sont insérées et liées imperceptiblement; au lieu la peinture peut bien représenter tous les faits d'une histoire par ordre multipliant ses tableaux: mais elle ne peut faire voir ni la cause, ni la liaison."

[56] See, H. Kohle's, Ut pictura poesis non ecrit. New York: Olms, 1989.

[57] Quoted by André Fontaine in Les doctrines d'art en France. 1909. p.77-78.

exciting his "artificial passions."[58] Most obvious in this regard is the large part played by emotion in artistic appreciation and critical judgment of aesthetics.

> Puisque le premier but de la poésie et de l'art est de nous toucher, les poèmes et les tableaux ne sont de bons ouvrages qu'à proportion qu'ils nous émeuvent et nous attachent. Un ouvrage qui touche beaucoup, doit être excellent à tout prendre. Par la même raison l'ouvrage qui ne touche point et qui n'attache pas, ne vaut rien, et si la critique n'y trouve pas à reprendre des fautes contre les règles, c'est qu'un ouvrage peut être mauvais sans qu'il y ait des fautes contre les règles, comme un ouvrage plein de fautes contre les règles peut être un ouvrage excellent.[59]

Later he also declares, "Vouloir juger d'un poème par voie de raisonnement, c'est vouloir mesurer un cercle avec un règle. Qu'on prenne donc un compas, qui est l'instrument propre à le mesurer."[60]

> Les raisonnements des autres oeuvres savent bien nous persuader le contraire de ce que nous croyons, mais non pas de ce que nous sentons.[61]... Le plus grand peintre pour nous est celui dont les ouvrages nous font le plus de plaisir[62]... La voie de discussion et d'analyse ... ne vaut pas celle du sentiment lorsqu'il s'agit de décider cette question.[63]

Indeed, on this question of the role of sentiment, Dubos shows the same abruptness that one so often associates with Diderot.

> L'ouvrage plaît ou il plaît pas? La décision de la question n'est point du ressort du raisonnement ... Raisonne-t-on pour savoir si le ragoût est bon ou s'il est mauvais? ... Il en est de même en quelque manière des ouvrages d'esprit et des tableaux faits pour plaire en nous touchant.[64]

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[58] ie. Those emotions stimulated by the imitation of reality.
[59] Vol. II, p.323-324.
[60] Vol. II, p.369.
[61] Vol. I, p.295.
[62] Vol. I, p.486-487.
[63] Vol. II, p.323-324.
[64] Vol. II, p.324-325.

To make his point yet clearer, Dubos calls the sentiment that judges art "a sixth sense." The idea of a "sixth sense" can either be seen a metaphor[65] or as a sort of *deus ex machina.*[66] The meaning of this term can seem ambiguous. However, according to Dubos one judges a work of art by taking into consideration our own personal experience "expérience ou conviction intérieure." It is possible and indeed valid to judge a work of art through sentiment. Diderot uses, only in reverse, Dubos' argument as to the existence of a "sixth sense" in the Salon of 1767[67], without actually mentioning Dubos' name.[68] Diderot rejects the idea of an innate aesthetic or ethical judgment and in the Salon de 1767 he writes:

> Croire avec Hutcheson, Smith et d'autres que nous ayons un sens moral propre à discerner le bon et le beau, c'est une vision dont la poésie peut s'accommoder, mais que la philosophie rejette. Tout est expérimental en nous."[69]

Diderot is referring here to a discussion - which he wrote about to Sophie Volland[70] - between Madame Le Gendre and J.-B. Suard on "le goût." During the discussion he criticized the concept of man's having a "sixième sens" which supposedly sets itself up as a judge in matters concerning aesthetics and ethics. It is almost as if in reading Dubos' work, a new thought is triggered in Diderot's mind for which Diderot felt the effects of his reading of Dubos inconsequential.

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[65] Mustoxidi, *Op. cit.* p.30.
[66] See, D. Bel, Dissertation où on examine le système de l'abbé Dubos, 1726.
[67] Salons. III, p.67-70.
[68] Chouillet, *Op. cit.* p.238-239 and p.283-284.

To claim the supremacy of sentiment was a very revolutionary point of view considering that 18th-century art was very much judged through fixed guidelines. Indeed, the *Modernes* of the famous *Querelle* based their judgment exclusively on reason. Dubos marks an enormous development from the thoughts of Crousaz discussed earlier. More particularly to this study, Dubos is an important stepping stone, showing the development of Diderot's ideas on aesthetics thanks to his reading of contemporary critics. Diderot readily adopts the concept that beauty depends as much on the beholder judging a work of art, as the genius of its creator. This of course brings us back to the predominant theme of Dubos' theory of art's ability to induce artificial passion and thus aesthetic appreciation. This is an aspect that will link Diderot's criticism most closely to Dubos.[71] Diderot was a better writer than Dubos, but to be fair he may well have been less original, as Dubos had to do something that Diderot did not have to face: Dubos had to draw proper conclusions from the *querelle* and thereby a establish a new direction in criticism.[72] The abbé Batteux and the père André, two great scholars by profession, had sought in their writing to be systematic. Like Diderot, Dubos remained an amateur and the very form of his Réflexions opens up a path for much of Diderot's own aesthetic appreciation in the early part of his career.

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[69] III, p.69-70

[70] Correspondance. 4th October, 1767.

[71] Batteux in Les Beaux-arts réduits insists more on the aspect of art being a lie, "un mensonge" which has all the characteristics of reality: "Les arts ne sont que les imitations, des vraisemblances qui ne sont point la nature, mais qui paraissent l'être et ainsi la matière des beaux-arts n'est point le vrai, mais le vraisemblable," p.14 but he does not discuss the potential aesthetic effects of this "vraisemblable."

[72] Voltaire knew his worth and borrowed a great deal from him.

The first remark of Dubos' Reflexions is: "L'art de la poésie et l'art de la peinture ne sont jamais plus applaudis que lorsqu'ils ont réussi à nous affliger"[73] and Diderot could only agree to such a paradox of aesthetic pleasure.[74] Indeed, as Jacques Chouillet has demonstrated in Diderot, poète de l'énergie, it is this appreciation of horror that contributes in inspiring Diderot energetic writing. In 1761 he notes this taste for horror: "J'aime bien les tableaux de ce genre dont on détourne la vue, pourvu que ce soit d'horreur et non de dégout." In 1763, he takes this appreciation of horror further stating: "C'est une belle chose que le crime et dans l'histoire et dans la poésie, et sur la toile et le marbre." In 1765 his admiration for the beauty of crime[75] has intensified:

> Je hais toutes ces petites bassesses qui montrent une âme abjecte; mais je ne hais pas les grands crimes; premièrement parce qu'on en fait de beaux tableaux et de belles tragédies; et puis c'est que les grandes et les sublime actions et les grands crimes portent le même caractère d'énergie.[76]

Furthermore, Diderot develops this concept to suggest that the spectator's pleasure does not only come from a horror at the terrible act itself, but also of the cruel mastering of the hero's passions. Thus he appreciates violent battle scenes where the horror is heightened by the distinct lack of remorse. Commenting on Rubens' *Judith* he writes: "Qu'y a-t-il de plus horrible que l'action de sang froid de la Judith de Rubens? Elle tient le sabre et elle

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[73] Reflexions. 1719. p.1
[74] See, René Démorris' article, "Peinture et cruauté chez Diderot." p. 299. In 1763, Diderot says he dreams of a canvas which would take Polytheme and Ulysses' companions and "nous ferait entendre le bruit de leurs os brisés sous ses dents."
[75] See, Michel Delon's article, "Diderot et la beauté du crime."
[76] VI, p.131

enfonce tranquillement la gorge de d'Holopherne"[77] and commenting on Pierre's *Décollation de St Jean* he writes:

> L'Hérodiade paraît frappée d'horreur; ce n'est pas cela. Il faut d'abord qu'elle soit belle, mais de cette sorte de beauté qui s'allie avec la cruauté, la tranquillité et la joie féroce."[78]

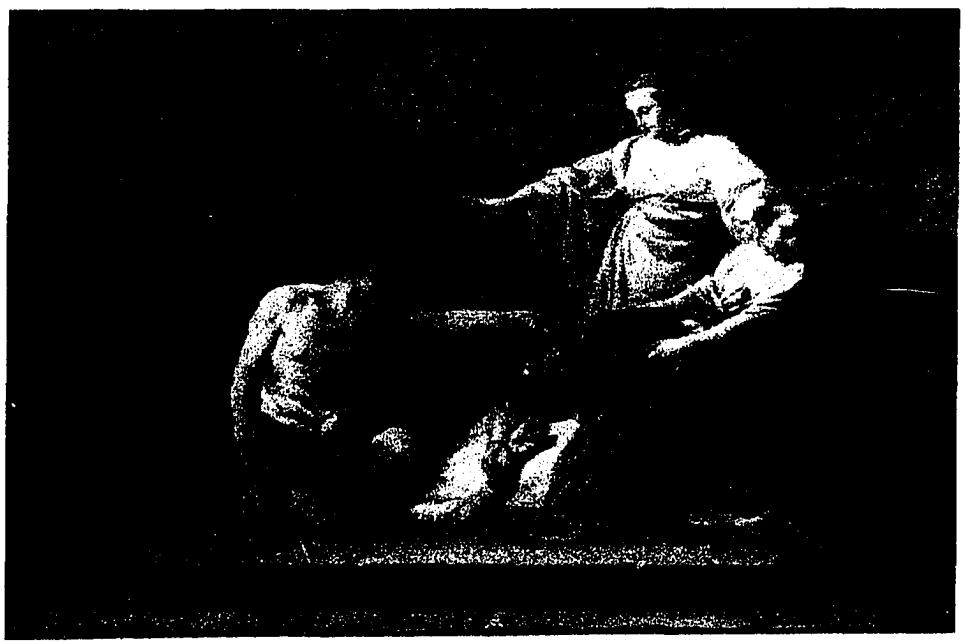

FIG: 13 Pierre, *Décollation de St Jean.*

However, although the affinity between these two men was strong, Diderot would outgrow and go beyond Dubos' theory.[79] Dubos never bothered to define beauty and was not interested in constructing a doctrine of taste or art since the quarrels that accompanied such doctrines showed that it was vain to do so. He could have written as Shaftesbury did that "the most ingenious way of becoming foolish is by a system." Dubos goes as far as to say that experts ought not to be judges of the fine arts. Diderot on the other hand

[77] V, p.60
[78] II, p.43
[79] As I will demonstrate later, Diderot would move on in his reading to English/Scottish and German treatises on beauty, the sublime and aesthetic judgment.

wanted to be an expert and would spend almost 20 years striving to be one in order to judge the fine arts better.

> Les professeurs qui toute leur vie ont enseigné la logique, sont-ils ceux qui connaissent le mieux quand un homme parle de bon sens, et quand il raisonne avec justesse?[80]

For his part Diderot only wrote two formal treatises on aesthetic theory, the articles *Composition*[81] and *Beau*[82] for the Encyclopédie.[83] Thus we can see that Diderot was much closer in spirit to Dubos' work than the père André in his Essai sur le beau, which is made up of systematic clear academic discourses. Also, the form of Diderot's writing in no way resembles the organization of Batteux's work, Les beaux arts réduits à un seul principe, which simplifies the problems facing aesthetics to such an extent as to dissolve them completely.[84] On the other hand Dubos, in his treatise, insists on "sentiment,"[85] and his opinion that the judgment of the imagination, be it painting or poetry, is the object of perception rather than discursive reason, brings him far closer to the ideas that Diderot will later express in the Salons.

Dubos, whose thought was innovative in so many ways, remained faithful to classical theory in his conception of imitation, and in fact the notion of originality is foreign in Réflexions. In his analyses of artistic creation, his ideas remain very much in line with

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[80] Pensées. p. 32
[81] Inspired by Roger de Piles. See *Part Two* of this chapter.
[82] Inspired by Dubos' Reflexions.
[83] Diderot, p.54
[84] "... que le génie qui est le père de tous les arts, doit imiter la nature. Secondement, qu'il ne doit point l'imiter telle qu'elle est. Troisièmement, que le goût pour qui les arts sont faits, qui en est le juge, doit être satisfait quand la nature est bien choisie et bien imitée par les arts."
[85] Dubos gives us a hint of precisely what he and his generation meant by sentiment: "on a donc raison de dire communément qu'avec de l'esprit on se connaît à tout, car on entend alors par le mot d'esprit, la

those of the mimesis of antiquity: he prefers subjects that have long demonstrated a capability of exciting passions. He is hostile to an aesthetic of surprise, as it is not because a work surprises us that it will necessarily be a source of continual pleasure. However, although he advocated the imitation of the ancients, this was not to be in a servile way, but only to be initiated to their technique and not as an exact copy.[86] Herein he gives place to the aptitude of genius. A good imitation is found in intuition: "Un homme sans génie n'est point capable de convertir en sa propre substance, comme le fit Raphael, ce qu'on y remarque de grand et de singulier."[87] To create a masterpiece the great artist must practice. He compares the maturation of such a work to that of fruit. "Les cerises parviennent à leur maturité dès les premières chaleurs, mais les raisins" - which we must consider the finer fruit! - "n'y parviennent qu'avec le secours des ardeurs de l'été et la tiédeur de l'automne."[88] Thus Dubos continues to promote creative imitation and "la vénération des ancients"[89] rather than artistic individuality. Thus even genius is the child of imitation rather than inspiration.[90] Diderot tries in his writing to hybridize

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justesse et la délicatesse du sentiment." Thus, we may surmise that "sentiment" insofar as it concerns the arts, would perhaps now be called "entendement" - understanding or perception.

[86] This is a concept that Diderot will pursue.

[87] II, p.89

[88] *Ibid.* p.67. It is amusing to think of Valéry's famous formular, "l'originalité est une affaire d'estomac...le lion est fait de mouton assimilé." Oeuvres. Vol. II, p.677.

[89] II, p.473.

[90] Joshua Reynolds went as far as to say that imitation of predecessors is the food of an artist and that works of genius are regulated by the directing principle of ideal beauty – the perfect state of nature. Although I do not believe that there was any actual contact between Reynolds and Diderot, their lines of thought often cross. Both Diderot and Reynolds reject certain established works of genius because they have not achieved the superior perfection they associate with ideal beauty. Therefore, in their judgment certain painters are relegated to second level if their subjects are too low or *bornés*. For example, the cabaret scenes of Hogarth or the revelers of Brouwer, Teniers, Ostade or the *fêtes galantes* of Watteau and even the landscapes of Claude Lorrain as he apparently did not aim at *le grand style*. Discourses at the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1791. New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature. 1971, p.58. In my chapter on Hagedorn, I shall however demonstrate that he later developed a high opinion of certain of these painters' canvases. Reynolds like Diderot does not recommend the use of modern dress as it gives a familiar air and thus destroys dignity. p.143. In the Salon of 1767 Diderot says, in reference to a painting by La Grenée "toutes ces natures sont trop petites, trop ordinaires. Il me les fallait plus exagérées moins comparables à moi." p.106. According to to Roland Mortier, in his study Originalité, this convergence of ideas is not

tenets of two positions in the 18th-century, by saying that the Greeks and the Romans codified eternal laws and ideas with rules that were relative. Since these views are logically incompatible, his attempt was doomed to failure.[91] For Diderot, rules help those who have little taste and are a great help for artists that are falling into decadence. However, genius is spontaneous and has no need of rules, which can make painting a work of routine. Thus rules that have helped the ordinary man have at the same time injured the genius.[92]

Diderot uses many of Dubos' points of view as foundations to his own arguments to criticize the theories of the *Académie.* Most particularly he is influenced by Dubos' demonstration that the comparison between the sister arts of poetry and painting is a futile one and that painting ought to effect the beholder by persuading him of its emotional beauty. There are of course important areas where the views of the two men clearly separate. Painting, in representing a "story," offers a visible object for meditation. Painting is eloquent in expressing the interior reflection that sometimes inspires stoic wisdom and Christian doctrine and thus classical paintings can be read as a meditation:

> La leçon des Sept Sacrements de Nicolas Poussin ... ces exemples pourraient servir à rappeler l'homme à la considération de la vertu et de la sagesse qu'il doit acquérir pour demeurer ferme et immobile contre les efforts de cette folle aveugle.[93]

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strange because the 18th century is not in favor of originality as such. The aesthetics of the century are marked rather by an aspiration towards the sublime and severe grandeur. - the art which has in Diderot's own words, "je ne sais quoi de terrible, de grand et d'obscur." Salon de 1767. p.166

[91] He may have found a solution in David's mature work.

[92] Pensées détachées p.753

[93] *Ibid.* p.765

Of all the painters in the 17th century, Poussin was the one who gave the clearest sense to the doctrine of *ut pictura poesis*[94] and who came closest to the demands of the dramatic arts of his time. According to the abbé Dubos, the most important role of the painter is to touch, as it is feeling that teaches best. Diderot, like Shaftesbury, had singled out for praise the "moral and intellectual seriousness" of Poussin's subject matter.[95] Yet allied to this admiration for Poussin as a painter of noble exemplar was a consistent appreciation of his mastery of the passions; indeed, the moral impact of his words was largely seen to depend on their emotive qualities. But according to Diderot there are certain limitations to painting, which he describes in speaking of Poussin's La mort de Germanicus in Lettre sur les sourds et les muets where he says:

FIG: 14 Poussin, *Le Testament d'Eurademis*.

> Au peintre donc la diversité sensible et visible des passions, qui nous permet d'embrasser d'un regard toutes les circonstances d'un événement, au poète l'art de nous rendre sensible aux vertus des malheurs des hommes.[96]

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[94] See, N. Schweizer's The ut pictura poesis. Frankfurt: Lang, 1972.
[95] Richard Frank Verdi, Poussin's Critical Fortunes: The Study of the Artist and the Criticism of his Works from c.1690-c.1830 with particular reference to France and England, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Courtauld Institute of Art, 1976. 2 Vols. I, p.25.
[96] Lettre sur les sourds et les muets. p.55

FIG: 15 Poussin, *La mort de Germanicus.*

Contrary to Dubos, Diderot considers that the emotional effects that come from the art should not only please the public, but also open its eyes to ethical values, educating the viewer to certain life conditions and social injustices. In spite of Diderot's numerous borrowings from Dubos, as from André, Crouzac and Batteux, he does not fully accept the thesis of any of them for Diderot is as firmly set against an aesthetic of pure sentiment as against one of pure intellect.

Diderot agrees with Dubos' opinion that the allegorical genre is often cold and difficult to interpret. Furthermore, as we note in their analysis of the *Naissance de Louis XIII*, they both deplore the fact that the allegorical genre only addresses an elite public.[97]

[97] Dubos, *Op.cit.* p. 197 and Diderot *Op.cit.* p.735. However unlike Dubos, Diderot accepts allegorical painting if it adheres to the criteria stipulated by Horace that real and mythical figures should not be mixed. Diderot is referring to Boileau's L'Art poétique, verse, 23. In the case of Rubens' representation of Louis

Diderot dreams of an academy that would be capable of criticizing society and culture and considers the *Académie* as a marvelous instrument to achieve this. The professors of the *Académie* educated the greatest artists of the time and therefore one could hope that they would promote a generation of artists ready to take part in an active struggle against social injustices and oppression and a corrupt government. But Diderot knew that such changes could not intervene without important modifications of social structure[98] as he felt that the *Académie* blindly served the interests and ideologies of the dominant class. In a letter to Falconet he writes:

> Les travaux de cette académie ont été jusqu'à présent infructueux, parce que ce corps mêlé de bonnes et de mauvaises têtes, salarié par le gouvernement, et son esclave par intérêt, est retenu par une infinité de petites considérations incompatibles avec la vérité.[99]

Doubtlessly, the *Académie* of which Diderot dreamt would aim to teach the public to judge works of art in such a way as to encourage criticism of society and culture, just as Diderot himself had done in the Salons and the Encyclopédie. Whereas Dubos thought that art ought to be a copy of reality aimed at divertissement, which would in turn serve to relieve boredom and its ensuing dangers, Diderot believed that the aim of art was not only for stimulating the senses, but for communicating an artistic totality, as he witnessed most notably in the work of Chardin. The important thing for Diderot is to show that the genre painter has "presque" all the difficulties as a history painter. After having carefully analyzed the point of view of the "composition" by showing how the "le travail du

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XIII's birth, the allegorical figures are seen to be superfluous when historical figures would have better replaced them.

[98] He realizes however that two initiatives taken by the *Académie*, the creation of the *Prix de Rome* and the Salons exhibitions can only favor the different forms of artistic expression needed to communicate a position taken in the different social and cultural domains of the time.

[99] Correspondance. July, 1767.

peintre d'histoire est infiniment plus difficile que celui du peintre de genre"[100] Diderot speaks about the qualities "d'esprit, d'imagination, de poésie" equally required for the "petit genre".[101] Diderot is more interested in determining the principles on which the different arts are founded.

In his Salons, Diderot is not categorically an adversary of the traditions established by the *Académie*. On the contrary, the *Académie* is treated with respect, and indeed Diderot does not review any artists that displayed their paintings at the other exhibitions that were not accepted and organized by the *Académie*. The fundamental role of the *Académie* as an essential institution is never questioned.[102] At the most, Diderot wishes that the "sept années passées à l'académie, à dessiner d'après le modèle ...soient mieux employées"[103] and that the young artists be more inspired by *la belle nature.* The most conventional attitudes of the *Académie* are never disputed. For example, as far as the doctrine of the hierarchy of genres was concerned one must turn to the famous passage in Essai sur la peinture, in which Diderot discusses the traditional differences between the genres imposed by the *Académie*. He does not question it, as it is precisely because of its existence that he can make certain of his points.

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[100] This is, of course, because the history painter as opposed to the still life painter does not have the subject before his eyes and therefore has to have an imagination capable of inventing.
[101] For definitions of the "genres" see Pierre Rosenberg's article "Diderot critique d'art conformiste?" in *Revue de l'Art.* 66. Paris: 1985. p.5-8
[102] It is the paintings of Carle van Loo, Boucher and Pierre that are criticized rather than their function as the *Premiers Peintres de l'Académie.*
[103] See, Wrigely, R. "Infectious Enthusiasms: Influence, Contagion and the Experiemce of Rome." *Transports: Travel, Pleasure and Imaginative Geography.* Eds. Chard and Langden. London: 1996. p.6-17

Diderot believed that if one judges a work of art only through one's sensibility, the criticism will be superficial and erroneous, [104] just as those criticisms based only on reason will lack depth.[105] Diderot observed that the methods of criticism of both the academicians and Dubos do not observe that artistic creation and judgment are synthetic operations taking advantage of all faculties of consciousness: intelligence, sensibility and imagination. Furthermore, Diderot believed that the criteria for appreciation for the critic, just as the models of comparison for the artist are realities of consciousness that have been accumulated by memory. It this acquired faculty that intervenes when one has to judge or indeed create a work of art. This faculty is developed as an organic process in nature[106] and is not - as Dubos would have it - an innate sixth sense. Furthermore, although Diderot adheres to a large part of Dubos' analysis showing the differences in the sister arts and his criticism of *Académie's* promotion of *ut pictura poesis*, this was only the beginning of Diderot's investigation in the world of aesthetics. Indeed, Diderot would not cease investigating and revising his ideas on the distinction of the various means of artistic expression only ending it a year before his death with his Additions to the 1749 edition of La Lettre sur les aveugles that he had written some thirty years earlier. [107]

[104] Although he does not undermine the legitimate goal of painting is to awaken man's passions.
[105] I, p.447
[106] Bukdahl, *Op. cit.* p.435
[107] As well as continued revisions to Les Pensées until 1783. See, *Chapter Three.*

Chapter one: Diderot and 18th Century French Art Criticism

Part Two: A Case Study of Roger de Piles.

Jacques Proust[1] quotes Roger de Piles among the theoreticians and connoisseurs that Diderot read after 1748. It is this article, which actually specifies the books that Diderot borrowed from the Royal Library, that invites a close examination of the debt that Diderot owes de Piles. Roger de Piles[2] was the well-known adversary of Le Brun in the quarrel of the Poussinists and the Rubenists.

FIG: 16 Rubens, *The Council of the Gods.*

De Piles reproached Le Brun for his dogmatic attitude and limited vision of not studying nature or observing living models as was the practice in the Northern schools. When de Piles was elected to the French *Académie* in 1699, he appeared simply to be an intelligent amateur who pleaded the cause of color and championed Titien's art. De Piles challenged

[1] "L'initiation artistique de Diderot." *Gazette des Beaux-arts*. Paris: April, 1960. p.225-232.

[2] Roger de Piles was a prolific writer on art. To quote only his most important works. Art de peinture de Dufresnoy. Paris: Nicolas Langlois, 1673. Dialogue sur le coloris. Paris: Langois, 1699. Abrégé de la vie des peintres. Paris: 1699. Cours de peinture par des principes. Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1708. For a bibliography on of the present studies on de Piles, see Bernard Teyssèdre L'histoire de l'art vue du grand siècle. Paris: Julliard, 1964. The authority of de Piles' work was attested in the 18th-century when his work was reedited and translated into English.

the superiority of the Roman school in the argument against color verses line. He attacked Poussin and was sub-acid about antiquity: "Il n'est pas nécessaire d'être toujours parmi les dieux ni dans la Grèce." De Piles raised the cry in favor of a new artist - new in French academic circles - Rubens. Diderot would often complain that the *Académie* often placed allegorical painting at the head of the summit of the hierarchy of genres[3] and that only such a painter as Rubens would be able to paint allegories without being cold or false.[4] The hegemony of Italy, combined with that of the ancients, was rudely challenged by claims for a painter who was not even French! The opposing party naturally rallied to the cause of Poussin, and de Piles' championship of Rubens continued to bring him into bitter conflict with the *Académie.* Diderot also reacts against the pedants of the 17th and 18th centuries who always judge in terms of rules and abstract reasoning.

FIG: 17 Roger de Piles, 17th century engraving.

Diderot liked to use the narrative stance of the dialogue form in which antagonistic theses can be confronted. Let me therefore begin this chapter with an example of de Piles' writing to show how similar in style Diderot will be to him. Roger de Piles in Conversation sur la connaissance de la peinture et sur le jugement qu'on doit faire des

[3] Salons. Vol. I, p.349-350
[4] Pensées. p.766

tableaux[5] had of course also used this dialogue form to expose contradictory ideas. The author is supposed to have taken his friends Pamphile and Damon to see the Royal collection at the Louvre and afterwards walk with them in the Tuilleries as they discuss certain aesthetic issues following their visit. One question is crucial: how does one judge a work of art? By good taste, is the answer given by Pamphile. But good taste is not simply made up of innate talent, but rather acquired through an in depth study of models that are known to be of good taste and have generally and for a long time been considered as such. In this way taste is linked to an approved classical canon in which antiquity stands as a reference and ideal model. More often than not, the claim of a "retour à l'antique" was more a promotion of the "grand genre" of historical painting considered to be more noble and severe than the other genres, such as landscapes and portraits. Pictorial aesthetics thus identified itself with the literary aesthetics of the century. It takes Damon to ask if that implies an a priori, but Pamphile assures him that this is good and reasonable taste. Damon is quickly convinced: "il me semble qu' il ne faut s'éloigner de l'antique que le moins que l'on peut, et qu'il n'y a pas de meilleur remède contre le mauvais goût."

This discussion demonstrates that of the *anciens* and the *modernes,* and de Piles' position converges with that of Boileau and his friends. However, de Piles is worried that what could be nothing more than a servile copy and not even express a stroke of originality could be called a work of art. The art critic seeks to correct that which could be sterile in such works.

[5] Paris: Langlois, 1677.

> L'antique est un remède contre le mauvais goût, à la vérité; mais s'il est pris tout cru et sans qu'il soit assaisonné des beautés vivantes de la nature, l'usage en sera dangereux. Le naturel a toujours quelque chose de vif et de remuant, qui tempère cette immobilité des figures antiques.[6]

Through the persona of Pamphile, de Piles then defines what he calls "le grand goût,"[7] which principally consists of simplicity or naiveté and nobility or grandeur. He declares that a work of art is more "majesteux," if it is purified of everything that could be seen to be superfluous and crass. At this point there is a curious personal intervention by the author. He claims that he had met a clever sculptor in Italy who deliberately separated himself from Antiquity.

> ... dans la vue d'attirer l'admiration par quelque chose qui sortit de l'ordinaire, il disait...qu'il fallait être plus que copiste, et se servait souvent de ce proverbe italien : "Chi resta in dietro mai non si tira avanti."[8]

However, the reasoning in favor of singularity by no means convinces Pamphile. True beauty, he maintains, is a question of proportions, and can be obtained through various models but is nevertheless made up of universal rules. Therefore one must not privilege diversity. The role of art is not to surprise, but to realize an ideal beauty. This ideal beauty should be neither too "figé" nor too finished in its effects, and de Piles recommends "de la néglience en bien des endroits."

Damon is sensitive in art to the pleasure that can be procured from the subject. Pamphile the expert puts the pleasure to the eyes found in color, light and the oppositions of form before anything else. Thus it is obvious that this connoisseur contests the thesis that "la

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[6] p.42
[7] Diderot will often use this expression in the Salons. See Mortier's study, Diderot et le grand goût. *Op. Cit.*

peinture est faite pour instruire"[9] and that he combats history painting. The discussion opposes the tenant of the ancients, Caliste, who finds in their work "non seulement la nature mais la nature la plus parfaite,"[10] and Léonidas, who in contrast prefers "la nature toute simple et que nous voyons tous les jours."[11] It will take Philarque, "vieillard d'un mérite extraordinaire" and a friend of Poussin's in Rome, to unite the men in their discussion and to conclude. The last word of de Piles' aesthetic will be to recommend:

> L'imitation de la nature accompagnée de quelque chose de surprenant et d'extraordinaire, ou plutôt ce merveilleux et ce vraisemblable qui fait toute la beauté de la peinture et de la poésie.[12]

Roger de Piles is perhaps best known as the avant-garde critique who led the combat against Le Brun and the partisans of drawing in the famous quarrel between the Rubenists and the Poussinists. Indeed, de Piles was a resolute opponent of the dogmatists at the *Académie* and he untiringly worked to enlarge the taste of his contemporaries.[13] The *Académie's* resurrection of the of the "grand genre" was largely linked to the work of two painters, Deshays and Doyen, who in fact had both put into practice the advice given by de Piles with regard to studying Rubens' coloring. When describing Rubens' *Fall of the damned* he writes: "Les chutes des damnés est le plus difficile sujet qu'un peintre puisse traiter" and such a composition demands "une imagination vive et nette."[14] Diderot will

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[8] p.44
[9] This idea was expressed by a new-comer in the debate, Caliste, who had lived in Rome for a long time and was an amateur of medals.
[10] p.244
[11] Secretary at the Embassy in Venice and amateur of Veronese.
[12] p.308
[13] The attitude of the *académiciens* and the classicists to different trends in art has been exhaustively discussed by B. Teyssèdre in his L'Histoire de l'art vue du grand siècle, 1965.
[14] Cited by B. Teyssèdre, *Op. cit.* 1963, p.264-285.

later say in similar words that only "une tête féconde et hardie" could treat a subject in a way that Diderot himself would have imagined it!

De Piles' influence was most deeply felt when the victory of the partisans of color had been established and he became the spokesman for the *Académie* that he had done so much to reform.[15] There is no doubt that through his doctrines as well as through his talent as a writer he opened paths for 18th century art critics including Diderot.

A diplomatic career took de Piles away from his artistic vocation and yet never allowed him to make long and instructive trips to Italy and Holland and thus familiarize himself

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[15] It is Du Fresnoy's poem, L'Art de.peinture that best indicates the *Académie's* overall aesthetic thought at this time. De Piles' translation of this poem marked the beginning of his career in the world of art.

As André Fontaine notes in Les doctrines d'art en France. Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1909, the main theses of L'Art de peinture were:

a). The object of painting is beauty, and its model nature and the ancients. The most important part of painting is to be able to recognize what is most beautiful and most suitable for art in nature's work. That selection could be carried out on the basis of the taste and style of antiquity. Without that, all is a blind and insolent barbarity, neglecting what is most beautiful.

b). Nature should not be simply copied; one should select from it. It is not sufficient to imitate nature of all kinds in a trivial, petty way. The painter should take from it only that which is most beautiful as the highest judge of his art, and, as he makes progress in that art, he should be able to correct the faults of nature, and to hold fast, transient and fleeting beauty. Permanent art in contrast to impermanent nature: this was not a new idea, but it received an incisive formulation from Du Fresnoy.

c). Art is ruled by principles, and its achievements cannot be regarded as a matter of chance. As Du Fresnoy said (and as Degas was to repeat two hundred years later): You should not expect that fate and chance will inevitably draw beautiful things to your attention.

d). The content of art should be grand and noble. According to the maxim of the painters of ancient times, the most beautiful things should contain grandeur -"avoir du grand", have noble contours, order and simplicity, and be free of all faults; they should be clear and coherent, and be compounded from few, but large parts. Avoid barbaric and exaggerated things which offend the sight, and likewise avoid things which are shameful, foul, indecent, cruel, chimerical, base and mean, for the eyes are repelled by things which the hands would not wish to touch.

e). On the other hand, there are also things in nature that are inaccessible to art. It would be idle to attempt to depict the full light of midday on a painting; we do not have the paints, which might do so.

In short, Du Fresnoy tried to give a closer chronological definition of the period of antiquity which painters should take as their model. Antiquity embraces all that was done between Alexander the Great and the Emperor Phocas, under whose reign war brought art to ruin. That style which contains nothing of ancient taste, and which is not guided by any rules, is known as Gothic. This barbaric style prevailed from 611 till 1450. The arts are akin to one another. The painter and sculptor work with the same intention and by the same method. The same is true of poetry, which should resemble painting, just as painting should resemble poetry. But in what does the link between them consist? Du Fresnoy seems to suggest that the link is one of content: painting should derive its subject matter from poetry. Du Fresnoy was perhaps the first person to transfer the Aristotelian principle of the golden mean from ethics to aesthetics. Beauty too, he

with several national schools. His artistic knowledge was vast and what is even more remarkable for a Frenchman at the end of the 17th century, his views were wide and independent. Although de Piles was closely associated with *Académie* circles, because he preserved views of his own he became regarded as a revisionist. Indeed, it is his discreetly nonconformist views that prevented him from becoming a member at first; however, when he finally became a member in 1699, he acquired a considerable standing. Ironically, it was not he who moved over to the position of the *Académie*, but eventually, quite the reverse occurred. This does not mean that he did not have some typically *académiste* views, for he did. In fact one such view, that the worth of an artist can be exactly calculated, he held in a form so extreme as to be quite grotesque. This said, he explains that he undertook his *balance des peintres*, (in which he sought the arithmetical assessment of the virtues of different painters – see below) at the request of others and more for the purpose of entertainment than anything else. Four aspects of painting were distinguished, and each evaluated according to a scale of points in which 20 was supposed to represent perfection. It is perhaps noteworthy that de Piles refrained from awarding any artist a score of either 20 or 19. Here, by way of example, are his assessments of fourteen distinguished candidates:

Name	Composition	Line	Color	Expression
Durer	8	10	10	8
Le Brun	16	16	8	16
The Caffacci	15	17	13	13
Holbein	9	10	16	13
Giulio Romano	15	16	4	14
Leonardo	15	16	4	14
Michelangelo	8	17	4	8
Caravaggio	6	6	16	0
Poussin	15	17	6	15

held, is to be found between two extremes, both of which are equally to be condemned.

Raphael	17	18	13	18
Rembrandt	15	6	17	12
Rubens	18	13	17	17
Tintoretto	15	14	16	4
Titian	12	15	18	6

De Piles' four cardinal elements in painting were a simplified version of the five elements distinguished by Junius and (following the latter) by Fréart de Chambray. One of those elements had also been referred to by them as expression, but in de Piles' usage, the term acquired a different meaning, signifying not any quality of the object as such, but rather the manifestation in that object of a subject - the thought of the human heart. De Piles himself explained that his classification was simplified, indicating that the category of composition ought, by rights, to be further sub-divided into invention and disposition. By "invention" he understood the "selection" of material on a chosen theme; it might be either historical or allegorical. Disposition he identified with the concept of economy in a painting.

In proposing drawing - "dessin" - as one of the basic elements in a painting, de Piles acknowledged that it was an ambiguous expression, capable of meaning the idea of the whole work, or a preliminary study later used in the execution of the painting, or again, a diagrammatic representation -"circonscription"- of the subject. It too, declared de Piles, is not a genuine element of art, for it is a complex phenomenon that can also be further sub-divided. Correctness, good taste, elegance, character, diversity, expression and perspective are all parts of "dessin". His energetic propaganda in favor of Rubens and his understanding of artists who stood apart from the general practices of the Italian

renaissance and French classicism are well known.[16] De Piles' works demonstrate an open mind and in his refusal to systematize his observations and in his desire to remain faithful to direct observation he resolutely opposed the dogmatic rationalism and the intellectualism of a man such as Le Brun.[17] Like Diderot, de Piles favored the part played by technical aspects and realized that the beautiful in art is impossible without a perfect mastering of the practical side.[18] This outstanding connoisseur who was also an *honnête homme* refused to hold to only one theory of art. One senses in his work a real need to render art accessible to cultivated men by initiating them in the very concrete problems of execution and composition. De Piles was the first to penetrate the world of the painter as well as the procedures and the language of the studios. Above all, he gives color as the essential function of painting, whereas for Le Brun colors are only ornamental and must therefore always be subordinated to drawing, thus demonstrating two very different concept of art. Although de Piles respects the ancients his respect is mitigated. De Piles was one of the very first writers to put antiquity in its place. That is to say to assign it a role of inspiration, which the painter can imitate but not as the absolute model of perfection. What distinguishes de Piles most from his contemporaries, however, is his disregard for the efficiency of rules and codifications. He exalts individual genius and praises the qualities of enthusiasm and verve to the detriment of taste and correction of design and the scrupulous application of the laws of perspective or demands of historical accuracy: "A la réserve du génie tout est démonstratif dans la peinture."[19] He brings theory and art criticism towards new directions and underlines the importance of free

[16] See Richard Wrigley's The Origins of French Art Criticism. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993.
[17] See Norman Bryson's fascinating chapter on Le Brun and the *Académie*. Word and Image. Cambridge: University Press, 1983, p.29-58
[18] This is the point of view of *Les Modernes*.

inspiration and individual spontaneity, which was threatened by the *Académie's* doctrine. This great defender of the colorists in the famous debate between the Rubenists and the Poussinists did a lot to assure the splendid victory of the former. Even before Dubos, he had the merit to recognize the essential role of the affective faculties in the aesthetic judgment. De Piles claims the rights of feeling to intervene in the evaluation of a work of art. The greatest of painters is not he who conforms most to all the points of theoretical demands of the official doctrine, but he who produces the most effect on the spectator.[20] As Norman Bryson points out,[21] the application of the doctrines of Le Brun's Conférence sur l'expression générale et particulière appear with the greatest success in *The Queen of Persia at the feet of Alexander* in 1662.

FIG: 18 Le Brun, *The Queen of Persia at the feet of Alexander.*

In this chapter on Le Brun aptly called the *Legible Body*, Bryson points out that the faces and bodies are standard Conférence images or crosses between two standard expressions for mixtures of emotions. He cites the representation of Darius' wife, (who is shown with

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[19] Conversations sur la peinture in Oeuvres diverses: 1767 Vol. 4 p.66
[20] *Op. cit.* p.49

her child) in which we find dissatisfaction mixed with hope. For although we may easily perceive by the motion she makes with her left hand that she excuses Sysigambis in mistaking herself, we likewise see very well that in beholding Alexander after that kind of manner, she endeavors even with her looks - which are the interpreters of her grief - to affect the very soul of that prince with compassion.[22] The woman to the left of the priest expresses surprise exactly as proscribed in the Conférence. Eyebrows raised, eyes widened, mouth open and palms facing outward: all the discursive markers are unambiguously and abundantly in evidence. Thus the portrayal of expression is a most didactic tool.

De Piles was less worried about following an ideal of absolute artistic beauty than appreciating the qualities unique to each great creator. His irreducible traits constitute an authentic style, contrary to the abstract and doctrinaire rationalism of Le Brun with his faith in systemization. Rather than justifying the reasons that some painters voluntarily kept a distance from the ideal promoted by the *Académie*, de Piles sought to make their individual qualities appreciated by the French aesthetic theorists who were generally hostile or indifferent to the accomplishments of these painters. This explains his passionate defense of Rubens and his more discreet, but very real appreciation of Rembrandt.[23] He was in fact one of the first amateur art critics to realize the originality of a painter such as Rembrandt who did not try to imitate the ancients or the Italians. In this regard also de Piles can be seen as a influential figure for Diderot, because the

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[21] *Op. cit.* p.52
[22] Félibien, A. La Reine de Perse aux pieds d'Alexandre, trans. by Collonel Parsons, The Tent of Darius Explained. London: 1703. p.11

bibliographical notes of his Abrégé de la vie des peintres and many allusions in his other works prove his most sincere effort to liberate himself from academic prejudices and preoccupations. Thus he is able to penetrate the qualities of all great artists, regardless if the artist's ideals were those of the high renaissance or those more modestly of what he saw around him in his everyday experience. Without contesting the preeminence of a Raphael or a Poussin concerning taste and ideal, de Piles does however proclaim resolutely the superiority of the Dutch and Flemish in execution. He abandons himself without a second thought to the pleasure of admiring a landscape or a genre painting which recommends itself not by the elevated subject matter but rather the psychological interest in the characters and the force and freshness of its coloring. Thus contrary to most amateurs at the end of the 17th century, de Piles does not neglect the qualities of "faire" in his appreciation, and a superficial dilettantism is not his style. Having himself painted, he does not ignore the manual work involved, and in his commentaries one perceives a trained eye which knows how quickly to appreciate the relationship between the technical and speculative elements that constitute a composition.

Like De Piles, Diderot estimates art very highly and suffers at the thought of painters only working for financial gain or happily following a specific route acquired during years of apprenticeship at the at the *Académie*. Also like de Piles, he knows how to say what he thinks to the artist who pays little attention to the execution of a work without promoting a servile imitation of nature. De Piles sought to bring French art back to a more sincere and scrupulous observation of the real. However, de Piles was certainly far

[23] For a systematic study of the attitude of criticism and Rembrandt from 1630 – 1730 see Seymour Slive, Rembrandt and his critics. La Haye: Martinus Nijhoff, 1953. See also, Gita May, "Diderot devant la magie

from being a revolutionary in his ideas on art, but he was one in his interesting and lively way of expressing his observations and reflections. It is probably in this aspect that he most stands out and this is also true of Diderot as I will show in a later comparison. One only has to read any part of de Piles' in which he is analyzing the *clair-obsur* of a Rembrandt, the coloring of a Rubens or drawing of a Raphael to realize that he is a writer who really knew how to handle technical vocabulary in a skilled way. Furthermore, he associates the marvelous results of this skill to the language of the *honnête homme* that he was. In Diderot and de Piles' work we find the same respect for nature, the same moral and technical demands of the artist, the same condemnation of everything which is "maniéré," that is to say executed according to convention. There is also the same admiration for the qualities of color as opposed to the authority of lines and purely intellectual factors. We observe the same admiration for the richness and diversity to which art and nature are susceptible and the same need to share with the readers the enthusiasm and the pleasure they received when looking at a beautiful painting. Furthermore they have the same desire to translate these impressions produced by a pictoraal work and the same curiosity concerning the secrets of the trade and technical procedures. There is also another area in which the indulgence of de Piles has been underestimated. One has attributed Diderot's interest in the expression of the passions to his reading of Le Brun's celebrated treatise.[24]

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de Rembrandt." *PMLA*. LXXIV. p. 3887-3897.

[24] See, Jacques Proust's "Diderot et la physionomie." p.320.

XLVI. Models of Facial Expressions. Engraving based on Ch. Le Brun in: H. Testelin, *Sentimens des peintres sur la peinture*, 1696.

FIG: 19 Le Brun, *Facial Expressions.*

Although de Piles vigorously opposed Le Brun's tendency to systematize facial expressions, he does accord the same coefficient to expression and drawing as to color and composition in his renowned *balance des peintres*. But contrary to Le Brun,[25] who believed that each state of the soul corresponded to one expression and that following Cartesian rationalist thought, it was enough for an artist to master the science of the expression of passion to create a work of art, de Piles proclaimed that in this domain each painter has to use such doctrines according to his own judgment and sensibility.

[25] See, A. Fontaine's Les doctrines d'art en France. Paris: 1970. p.157-185.

FIG: 20 Le Brun, *Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time.*

Bryson remarks that, examined at the rhetorical level at which *Franche-Comté Conquered for the Second Time* was aimed, the image reveals a striking symmetry of intellectual design.[26] But with its sober, drab coloration and thick-set, graceless figures, this painting points to central deficiencies in Le Brun, namely, lack of imagination and lack of figural involvement. Diderot like the *académiciens*[27] held Le Brun's *Batailles d'Alexandre* to be the model for paintings of battles. This said, Diderot shared de Piles' wariness of a single system and the value of rules and had imagined the dampening effects that a complete codification would have on the free development of genius. Because the legibility of the body interested Le Brun above all else he arranged his battle scenes so that hardly a head

FIG: 21 Le Brun, *Tête de frayeur.*

[26] *Op.cit.* p.35
[27] See, J. Locquin's La peinture d'histoire en France de 1747-1785. Dijon: 1912. p.2-69

FIG: 22 Le Brun, *Battle of Arbela.*

is not in some way turned to the viewer to best display its readable surface. Not surprisingly many of the embattled figures are taken directly from his work on the expression of the passions.

Even the reader who is not familiar with Diderot's work will recognize the similarities between it and that of de Piles. Indeed among the connoisseurs to whom Diderot is indebted, de Piles occupies an important place.[28] In the article cited above, Jacques Proust demonstrates that Diderot became acquainted with the Cours de peinture par principes as early as 1748, and he observes justly that Diderot learned a lot from de Piles concerning

[28] Bukdahl, *Op. cit.* p.139

the technique of the artists.[29] Of course, it is difficult to pinpoint exactly what aspects Diderot assimilated from his reading of de Piles, because he is, as usual, very discreet about his sources.[30] Diderot only mentions de Piles twice and both these times are in contexts that are not revealing.[31] It is not so much as a theoretician that we should see the most significant influence of Roger de Piles on Diderot. Dubos had much more importance in this. De Piles, on the other hand, like Diderot, is ill at ease when he proclaims abstract and general principles. He prefers to keep to direct observation on concrete and practical matters, which he almost always would verify, with direct experience. Too many anthologies have reduced de Piles' aesthetic to his famous *balance des peintres,* thus not taking into account the originality of his thought.[32] Nevertheless, it is true that de Piles does not overtly contest academic theories and is happy more often than not to reproduce certain accepted ideas on art such as *ut pictura poesis* or even *la belle nature.*[33] At the same time however, he contributed to the renewal of the critical doctrines of his time by looking at many aspects that until then had been very much ignored. This eclecticism explains why he is often criticized as being too consolatory and intellectually timid in his aesthetic ideas.

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[29] "L'initiation artistique de Diderot." p.20

[30] Even in a work such as Hagedorn's Réflexions which I will demonstrate Diderot to have used very heavily, he only acknowledges his source once and then most vaguely at the end of his own Pensées. Identifying his debts is of course the subject of this thesis.

[31] See, Pensées detachées. A&T. XIII, p.112 V. I, p.811. See also Diderot's article of Le Mierre on painting. A&T. Vol. XIII p.78. He also of course read de Piles' French translation of a poem by Du Fresnoys can been seen from the register of the Royal library. 14th November, 1747.

[32] See, Elizabeth Holt, A Documentary History of Art. New York: Doubleday & Co. 1958. p.176-187.

[33] See, Alderson, S. "Ut pictura poesis and its discontents," *Word and Image.* New York: 1995 p.131-160.

However, as far as the technical side of art is concerned, de Piles knew all the secrets of the trade and the vocabulary that he uses in his work proves this direct in-depth knowledge of the problems that the artist must confront as he paints. But if one only considers the theoretical side of de Piles' aesthetic, one certainly does not have the impression that he is the most original and independent amateur-critic of the 17th century. Indeed, de Piles usually quotes the aphorisms and precepts promoted by his contemporaries directly, at the same time as he places individual genius above all rules. That is to say that although he totally subscribes to the hierarchy of genres, he particularly praises landscapes and genre paintings. Diderot's own version of the *Académie's* hierarchy of genres consists in the conception of an artistic totality in which form, content and execution are an indissoluble entity. De Piles happily agreed to the superiority of the concept of "idea" of the Italian renaissance and yet defended with just as much vigor the painters from the Netherlands such as Rembrandt and Rubens, who had completely rejected the academic view of beauty.

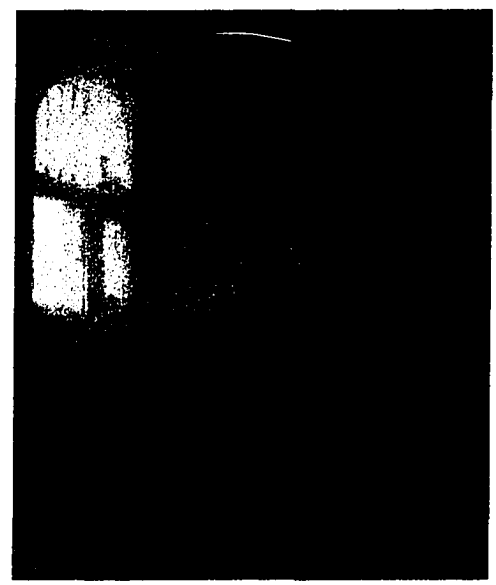

FIG: 23 Rembrandt, *Le Philosophe.*

According to De Piles the best model of beauty is nature as perceived by each individual painter and not a idealized nature that has been filtered and purified by "le grand goût." If de Piles appreciates the art of antiquity, it is because he appreciates its originality and the

talent of the artists and their specific technical challenges rather than appreciating their art as an absolute ideal model of style. Indeed he was most sensitive to all styles and manners that characterized a national school or a given painter he admired.

Roger de Piles, without actually rejecting classical heritage, influenced Diderot to the view that painting is an art with unique procedures that demand their own terminology. Ferdinand Brunot remarks that "on ne saurait exagérér son rôle et son influence."[34] Even if he seems passive to the established precepts, he also underlines the importance of direct visual experience and the limitations of theory. He accepts that art instructs and improves the mind, but he also insists on the necessity of a painting to speak first to the eyes. He believes, as Diderot will, that there are no rules which genius cannot successfully overcome and recreate. For de Piles art should aim not so much to instruct, but to represent and interpret the visual universe of forms and colors. In fact, no one before Diderot explained in such a concrete and precise manner various elements of visual phenomenon and technical procedures that are at the base of all painting.

It is also not as a metaphysician nimble in abstraction that de Piles influenced Diderot, but more particularly as a passionate amateur. Certainly, Diderot did not denounce intellectualism or moralism in his own criticism, but de Piles encouraged him to incorporate numerous technical terms, and his excellent definitions are always accompanied by concrete examples. These helped Diderot in turn and also constitute an appropriate language in which to express the emotions and thoughts that he felt standing before a painting. Although Diderot is better known for giving most of his attention to the

[34] Histoire de la langue française. p.702. André Fontaine, in his Doctrines d'art en France says, "Il a été le premier en date des écrivains d'art proprement dits, un des premiers aussi par le talent." p.141

moral and psychological aspects of a subject, there is also much evidence of the pleasure he felt when using and explaining technical procedures. This of course brings him very close to de Piles' aesthetic writing. At the same time both critics knew also to avoid an excess of artists' language and abuse of neologisms. Both knew exactly how to use this jargon of the studios with moderation and a rare precision, proving their intimate knowledge of the fine arts. An enthusiastic partisan of the baroque colorists of the Netherlands, de Piles also led Diderot to pay particular attention to the effects of *clair-obscur* in a composition and thus not be exclusively preoccupied with the subject matter, the realism of attitude and expressions or even the corrections of drawing.

FIG: 24 Chardin, *Pêches.*

Artists such as Chardin and La Tour also taught Diderot to look at a painting by abstracting the subject depicted or its ethical or philosophical value. [35]

De Piles encourages Diderot in his studio vocabulary, yet Diderot conforms quite readily and aggressively and often in familiar or even vulgar tones to the elegant and clear artistic formulas that he borrowed from his predecessor. Diderot's turns of phrase are much more direct and provoking, his judgments more cutting, and his explanations even more concise and aphoristic. Even in his essays, in which he takes de Piles' penetrating

[35] For an examination of the connection made by Diderot between the real and the moral, see Scott Bryson's L'Idée du vrai dans le tableau et le théatre. Michigan: UMI, 1983.

remarks on *clair-obscur* and color, he condenses the verbal expression and often thus only retains the evocative metaphor or the suggestive and instructive anecdote. What is more, Diderot brings even to de Piles' most technical explanations a vigorous bonhomie and his unique accent that is both plebeian and poetic. In Diderot's interpretation of de Piles we see the updating of an art theory along rakish lines.

> Quoique toute ma réflexion soit tournée, vers les principes spéculatifs de l'art, cependant lorsque je rencontre quelques procédés qui tiennent à sa magie pratique, je ne puis m'empêcher d'en faire note.[36]

FIG: 25 Teniers, *Village Gathering.*

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[36] Pensées. p.813

Through de Piles, Diderot discovered the originality of Rubens and Rembrandt, Gérard Dou and Teniers. De Piles revealed to him why these artists, despite their penchant to paint plebeian figures and potato planters from Flanders and the Netherlands, are nevertheless equal to Raphael and Poussin. De Piles is no doubt not the only connoisseur who revealed to Diderot the importance of the northern schools, but when Diderot himself talks about these northern artists he obviously has de Piles' words in mind. For example the following locutions and expressions placed in circulation by de Piles and transmitted by Diderot should be enough to reveal that the points of contact between are too precise to be considered merely accidental. Above all, they bear witness to the surprising similarity between their preoccupations and predilections and even their communal effort to render visual phenomenon and artistic application intelligible to a reader who is neither an expert nor an artist. Although the borrowings are undeniable, the sketchy theory traced by de Piles is transformed into a new aesthetic in the questioning dialectic of Diderot's writing. Diderot wanted to impose a coherent scheme on his aesthetic impressions and intuitions. In his chapter on color in the Essais sur la peinture, Diderot writes:

> On dit qu'il y a des couleurs amies et des couleurs ennemies: et l'on a raison, si l'on entend qu'il y en a qui s'allient si difficilement, qui tranchent les unes à côté des autres, que l'air et la lumière, ces deux harmonistes universels, peuvent à peine nous en rendre le voisinage immédiat supportable.[37]

These refer to de Piles, who had noted in the remarks of his translation of Du Fresnoy's treatise, "Ce précepte oblige de savoir les couleurs qui ont amitié ensemble, et celles qui

[37]A.&T. X, p.471-472 and V. p.678.

sont incompatibles."[38] And in his Deuxième Conversation sur la peinture, "Les couleurs quelqu'elles soient, sont réconciliées, ou par celles de la lumière dans les jours, ou par celles des ombres."[39] In Diderot's Dictionnaire des termes de peinture, we also encounter an identical definition under the rubric of *Amitiés des Couleurs*.[40]

Diderot frequently uses borrowed terms from music to describe the effects of color and light[41] and in his Deuxième Conversation sur la peinture de Piles underlines the importance of "l'accord du tout-ensemble" and praises Veronese and Rubens for having "entendu parfaitement tous ces accords."[42] It is most of all through light that the great colorist manages to "accorder" his painting.[43] De Piles was just as much a spokesman for the opinions of the *Académie* as any of his colleagues: both "la vérité idéale" and the *balance des peintres* were reflections of his *académisme*. Nonetheless, his views had a perceptible slant of their own; they represented a later and partially different version of the seventeenth-century mode of thinking. Le Brun, the custodian of the earlier model, had already been dead ten years when de Piles began to expound his ideas in print.[44] One of these ideas was that coloring should be treated as an element of painting that is of equal importance to draftsmanship and in this latter connection, de Piles began to fight for Rubens, who was not highly regarded in the *Académie*. This seemingly innocent affair was viewed as dangerous and revolutionary. De Piles' praise of Rubens the colorist

[38] Oeuvres diverses de M. de Piles. p.215
[39] *Op. cit.* p.152
[40] *Op. cit.* p.315
[41] See Gita May's Diderot and Baudelaire. p.100-105
[42] *Op. cit.* p.156
[43] A.&T. Vol. X, p.371 and V. p.678
[44] The new strands in de Piles' theory can be summed up as follows: slightly greater consideration for the psychological and individual elements in art, for emotional and irrational factors such as enthusiasm; the

elicited a reaction in support of P
camps known as Poussinism and R
a struggle between tradition and
innovation.[45]

In his Abrégé de la vie des peintres, de Piles relates this antidote about Rembrandt.

"Comme on lui reprochait un jour de la singularité de sa manière d'employer les couleurs qui rendaient ses tableaux raboteux, il répondit qu'il était peintre et non teinturier."[46] The briskness of this boutade must have delighted Diderot for he will use it several times in his own work.

Alluding to a composition called *L*
Loo exhibited in the Salon of 1763,

> Je vous dirai des *Grâces* de
> quatre ans de sa Médée: c'e

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conception of expression as the thought of
wrought by the eye, of the factor of illusion
[45] This episode has been thoroughly discus
au siècle de Louis XIV," 1965. Diderot ha
representation of the birth of Louis XIII. Se
[46] Abrégé. p.435. See also Seymour Slive's

pense pas que l'éloge d'un bon teinturier serait celui d'un bon coloriste.[47]

In 1765, he again qualifies van Loo as a "grand teinturier."[48] De Piles was indeed a great admirer of Rembrandt whose portrait he boasted of having at home. In his Abrégé he says, "Il y a dans sa gravure une façon de faire qui n'est point encore été connue que je sache. Elle a quelque chose de la manière noire."[49] Diderot for his part will many times mention the manner of Rembrandt, which particularly is made up of "sortilèges, enchantements, sabats, oracles, résurrections."[50] De Piles was above all impressed by Rembrandt's strokes, coloring and *clair-obscur.*

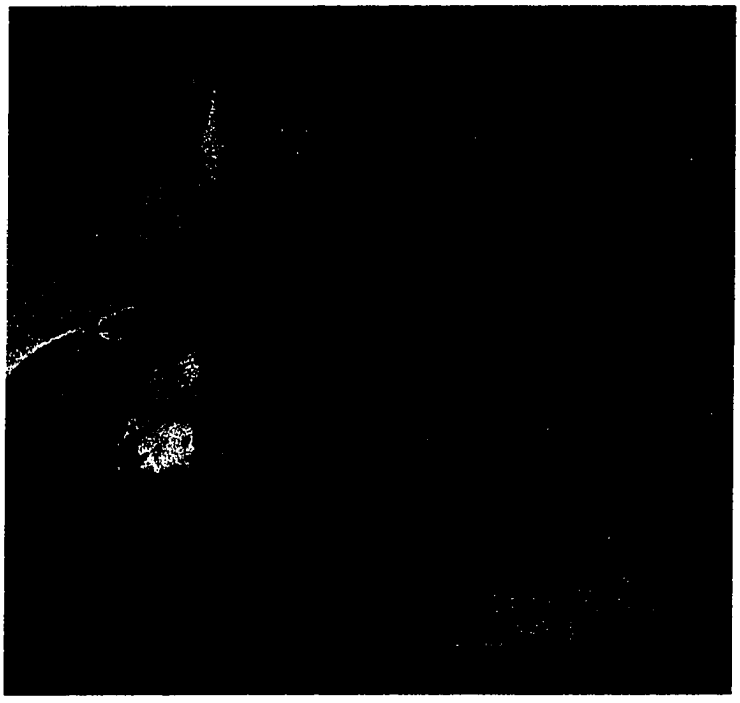

FIG: 27 Rembrandt, *The Resurrection of Lazarus.*

> Il avait une suprême intelligence du clair-obscur ... Les touches sont dans Rembrandt très distinguées et à les regarder de près; mais dans une distance convenable elles paraissent très unies par la justesse des coups et par l'accord des couleurs. Cette pratique est singulière à Rembrandt.[51]

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[47] S.&A. Vol. I, p.197
[48] *Op. cit.* Vol. II, p.126
[49] p.434
[50] This comes from his incomplete dictionary of the fine arts, which I will discuss later, Noms de peintres et leur genre, which for the most part remains unfinished and is examined in depth by Franco Venturi's "Fragments inédits d'un projet de dictionnaire des peintres." *Hippocrate.* June, 1938. p.324-327 and Herbert Dieckman Inventaire du fonds Vandeul. Geneva: Droz 1951. p.48-49
[51] Abrégé. p.438

Diderot seems to have been most inspired by this appreciation, which he also comes to describe as the effect that a Rembrandt composition has on the spectator.

> Deux sortes de peintures; l'une qui, plaçant l'oeil tout aussi près du tableau qu'il est possible...rend les objets dans tous les détails.... Mais il est une autre peinture qui n'est pas moins dans la nature, mais qui ne l'imite parfaitement qu'à une certaine distance; elle n'est pour ainsi parler, immatrice que dans un point; c'est celle où la peintre n'a rendu vivement et fortement que les détails qu'il a aperçus dans les objets du point qu'il a choisis...il ne faut pourtant pas blâmer ce genre de peinture; c'est celui du fameux Rembrandt. Ce nom seul en fait suffisamment l'éloge.[52]

De Piles however does not dare to question the reservations often advanced about Rembrandt's art. He readily admits that "On ne verra point dans Rembrandt ni le goût de Raphael, ni celui de l'antique."[53] A thought which will echo as Diderot writes: "Je vous entends: il fallait penser comme Léocharès, et peindre comme Rembrandt...il fallait être sublime de tout point."[54] It is also true that this remark is also made in Hagedorn's Réflexions sur la peinture, as translated by Huber:[55] "Que l'artiste imitateur pense comme Léocharès et qu'il peingne comme Rembrandt." However, as Hagedorn was also a great reader of de Piles whom he very frequently cites and always with great praise, he

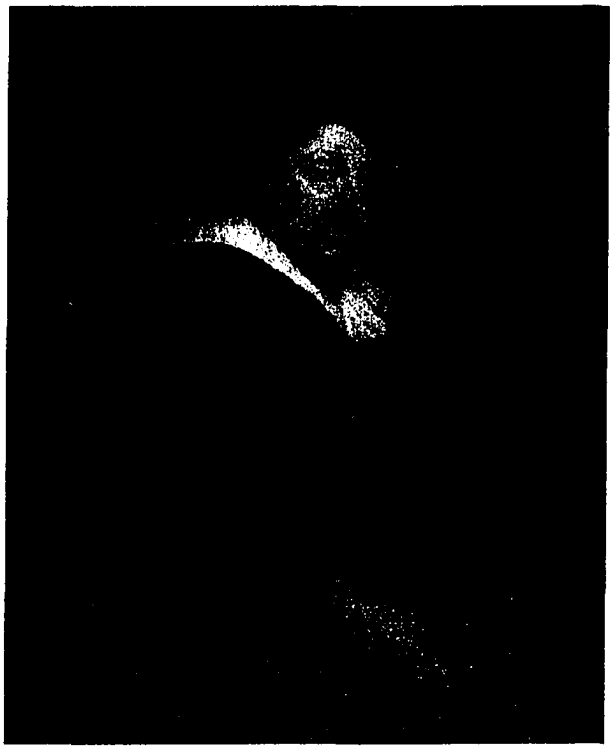

FIG: 28 Rembrandt, *Self-portrait.*

[52] A.&T. X, p.483 and V. p.692-693
[53] Abrégé. p.438 and Réflexions. p.100
[54] Vernière's edition. p.802

himself may well have taken this from de Piles, as he often did dress up de Piles' opinions in his own style. It is the total marriage of influences that makes a study of influences so interesting. For example, Hagedorn uses the expression "pentimenti" to denote the correction that a master will make to his first conceptions. Diderot, eager to explain this Italian term to his readers, will do so with the following example: "Les *pentimenti* de Rembrandt ont enflé son oeuvre de plusieurs volumes in-folio."[56] Reading this expression in Hagedorn's work must have reminded Diderot of an observation of Roger de Piles' about Rembrandt's engravings: "Il a retouché plusieurs de ses estampes jusqu'à quatre et cinq fois pour en changer le clair obscur et pour chercher le bon effet."[57] In the Pensées détachées are the rare direct allusions that Diderot makes to de Piles: "Giorgione, grand coloriste, selon le témoignage de Piles, tirait toutes les carnations, quelle que fût la différence d'âge et de sexe, de quatre couleurs principales."[58] Indeed, in Abrégé one reads: "Giorgione entendait très bien le clair obscur et l'harmonie du tout-ensemble; il ne se servait pour ses carnations que de quatre couleurs capitales, dont le judicieux mélange faisait toute la différence des âges et des sexes."[59] It is most interesting to note that Jaucourt's article *Peinture* in the Encyclopédie makes exactly this same observation. In his Essais sur la peinture, Diderot specifies his conception concerning the ability of color to create life and illusion. Thus the colorist is God of the pictural universe:

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[55] Leipzig: Fritsch, 1775.
[56] V. p.827
[57] Abrégé. p.434
[58] V. p.811
[59] Abrégé. p.257

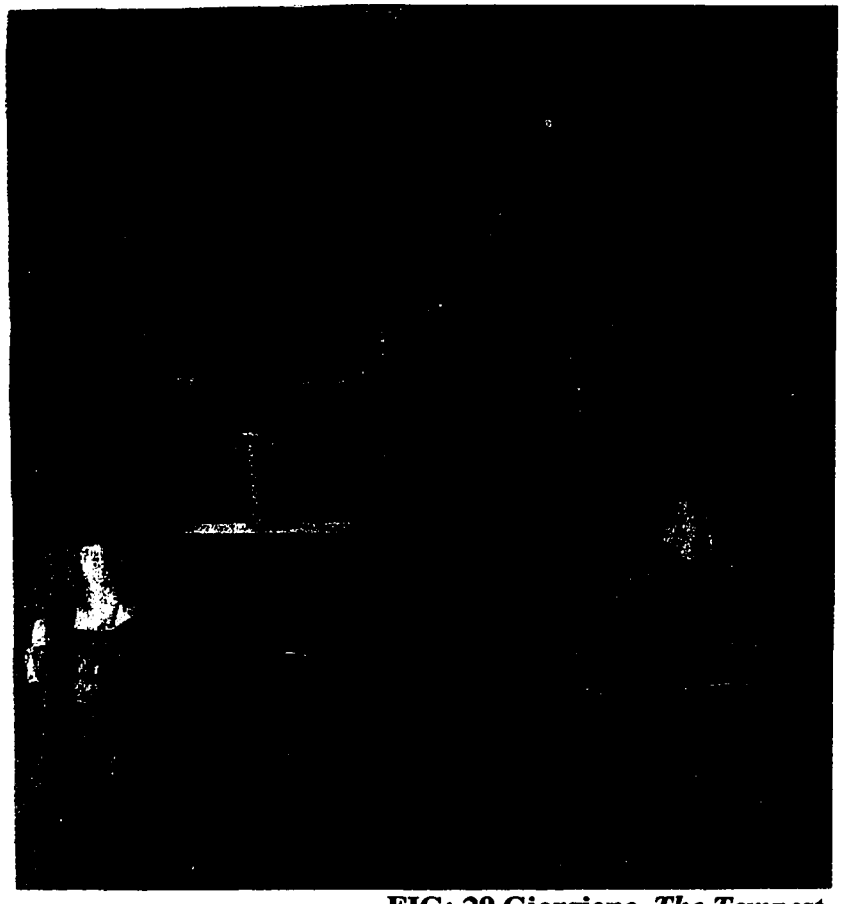

FIG: 29 Giorgione, *The Tempest.*

"C'est le dessin qui donne la forme aux êtres; c'est la couleur qui leur donne la vie. Voilà le souffle divin qui les anime."[60] This figurative expression hardly hides its polemic content which Diderot owes de Piles. In his chapter on color, in Cours de peinture, de Piles declares that draftsmanship is to color, what the body is to the soul. Not only is de Piles trying to make his point to Le Brun and his disciples concerning the relative importance of draftsmanship and color, but he is also underlining that the technique of coloring is the most noble process of the painter. It is also de Piles who probably taught[61] Diderot of the difference between "le plaisir des yeux et le plaisir de l'esprit." De Piles convinced Diderot that the task of the colorist consists above all in creating a pictorial unity that is full of life and immediately attracts the eye. One's mind only later infers the

[60] OE., p.674

equation of appreciation to analyses and interprets what one has seen.[62] Both Diderot and De Piles maintain that Raphael's paintings do not hold such immediate attraction to the eye, but gain attraction through being studied. On the other hand the compositions of Rembrandt, Titen, Rubens, van Dyck or Teniers can be appreciated by both the connoisseur and layman.

FIG: 30 Rubens, *Landscape with watering place.*

However, one ought not to be alarmed at the amount that Diderot borrowed from de Piles who was one of the first to inform him about painting, because the *Encyclopédiste* often heavily used authors who had the gift of igniting his spirit and imagination. In Diderot's attempt to decipher the "magie de la couleur", he often paraphrases the point of view of de Piles and his inheritors, La Tour, Cochin and Chardin and Oudry, on the nature of colors and how to use them. But often these points of views coincide with those of da Vinci, as de Piles had in turn borrowed from da Vinci, so it is sometimes difficult to

[61] As well as the whole empirical school of course.
[62] Conversations sur la peinture in Oeuvres diverses, Vol. 4 p.68-70 & Diderot I, p.346.

know if whether when writing the Salons Diderot is referring to the French *académicien* or the master of the Italian Renaissance himself! Diderot gives a new sensibility to a series of old traditions. For example, the analysis that Diderot offers of the aerial perspective owes a lot to the analysis of da Vinci. Like the latter, Diderot states that the aerial perspective depends on the rules of the degradation of color, and he makes an inventory of experiences that led to the discovery of these rules.[63]

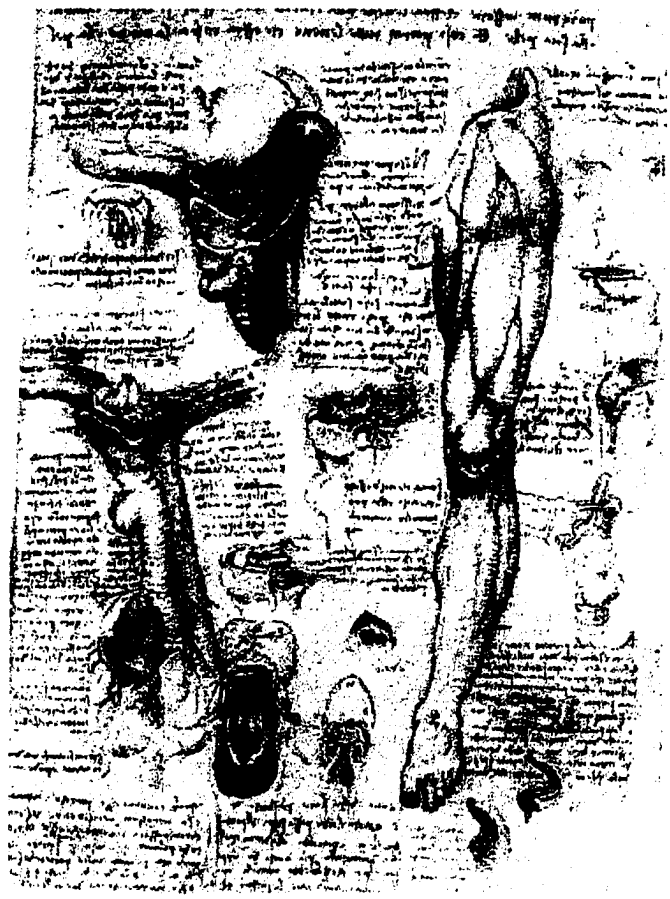

FIG: 31 da Vinci, *Anatomy Studies.*

When Diderot declares that "le premier pas vers l'intelligence du clair-obscur, c'est l'étude des règles de perspective," he is probably thinking of da Vinci's description concerning the way that light is used as a factor of the composition.[64] Just like da Vinci, Diderot agrees that a good knowledge of the laws of perspective is essential to anyone who wants to master other artistic effects. Da Vinci: "La pratique doit toujours être fondée sur une bonne théorie, dont la perspective est la vraie guide et la porte, car sans elle on ne saurait pas réussir en aucune chose de la peinture,"[65] and Diderot: "Peintres,

[63] OE., p. 684, Diderot I, p.411-412 and da Vinci Traité de la peinture. Trans. F. de Chambray, 1651, p.32-33 and p.49-50.
[64] Diderot, OE., p.684 and da Vinci *Op. cit.* 1651. p.109 and p.119.
[65] *Op. cit.* p.6

donnez quelques instants à l'étude de la perspective; vous en serez bien récompensés par la facilité et la sûreté que vous en retrouverez dans la pratique de votre art."[66]

In his commentaries and observations on painting, de Piles places the accent on the personality of the artist rather than the platonic idealism of an objective perfect beauty. He also pays particular attention to problems relating to inspiration and creation rather than those of ideal theory. From this stand point we can understand the importance he gives to drawing, sketching and all forms of direct and spontaneous art, precisely because they are dematerialized and independent from the demands of the finished product. Thus, in this way the profound personality of the painter is revealed. No other part of art is more revealing in demonstrating what constitutes the essential style of the painter than the first sketch. It is this first version of the picture, untouched by the demands of a completed composition that gives the closest look at the artist's initial inspired thought. It is de Piles who deserves praise for having the intuition to mark this point, which was to have significant consequences for the future of Diderot's criticism. In a sketch he sees not only the qualities of spontaneity and vitality which are lost in the finished work, but also a power of suggestion and evocation which has the gift of being able to directly appeal to the imagination of the spectator.

> Les dessins touchés et peu finis ont plus d'esprit et plaisent davantage que s'ils étaient achevés, pourvu qu'ils aient un bon caractère et qu'ils mettent l'idée du spectateur dans un bon chemin: la raison en est que l'imagination y supplée toutes les parties qui y manquent, ou qui n'y sont pas terminées.[67]

[66] OE., p.687
[67] Abrégé. p.70

Diderot, just as de Piles before him, recommended sketches which have the advantage of suggesting more than they show and of conserving the fire of inspiration that is lacking in a completed work.

> Pourquoi, une belle esquisse nous plaît-elle plus qu'un beau tableau? C'est qu'il y a plus de vie et moins de formes.... C'est que l'esquisse est l'ouvrage de la chaleur et du génie; et le tableau est, l'ouvrage du travail de patience, des longues études et d'une expérience consommée de l'art. [68]

Diderot's appreciation of sketches, presented and developed many times in Diderot's Salons and theoretical essays constitutes a very important contact point between the work of theses two authors. Both plead for the painter's right to leave an aspect of the unfinished in what is to be called the finished work. It is primarily as a theoretician of color and *clair-obscur* and partisan of Rubens and Rembrandt and the northern school that make de Piles' an authority in the 18th century. Indeed, the article by Landois in the Encyclopédie is directly inspired by Cours de Peinture par principes and Dialogue sur le coloris. Landois, recognizing his debt to de Piles, recommends that the reader refer to what he calls Dictionnaire de peinture, by which he most probably meant Dictionnaire des termes de peinture. Also Landois' article *Clair-obscur* is simply a clever résumé of what de Piles had said on the subject in Cours de peinture. The article begins with the honest remark, "Rien ne peut donner une idée plus nette du clair-obscur, que ce qu'en dit M. de Piles," and at the end of the article Landois expressly recommends Cours de peinture. Jaucourt, as a conscientious compilator who knew how to use a good source, marked Abrégé de la vie des peintres as a bibliographical notice that he inserted in his own analysis of the different national schools in the article *Peinture,* especially when discussing painters from the Netherlands or Venice. For example, regarding the colors

used by Giorgione in the section of the Venetian school, Jaucourt writes, "Ses carnations sont peintes d'une grande vérité. Il n'y employait que quatre couleurs capitales, dont le judicieux mélange faisait toute la différence des âges et des sexes." In the Abrégé one reads, as already mentioned above in connection to Pensées détachées, "Giorgione ne se servait pour ses carnations que quatre couleurs capitales, dont le judicieux mélange faisait toute la différence des âge et des sexes."[69]

Apart from this striking similarity, the technical expressions such as "couleur locale" and "accidents de lumière" are defined in exactly the same way as de Piles had previously done. In general the articles in the Encyclopédie devoted to the fine arts are very close not only in thought, but also in the pragmatic liberalism of de Piles. In the Encyclopédie's articles, whether they are written by Landois, Jaucourt, Watelet or even Diderot himself, one finds the attention given to qualities of color and *clair-obscur* and the same desire to imagine painting as an art where technique and skill have their part. All believed the merits of each school ought to be recognized. For example, the Italians, especially Raphael, have the monopoly of the "ideal" but the Dutch and the Flemish are unsurpassable when it comes to skill in the use of colors. Diderot declares: "J'oserais dire qu'il n'y eut peût-être pas un plus grand poète que Raphael: pour un plus grand peintre, je le demande..."[70]

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[68] S.&A. III, p.241
[69] See Mario Roques' article, "L'art et l'Encyclopédie." *Annales de l'Université de Paris.* Oct. 1952. p.91-109 for a careful examination of the attitude of the *encyclopédistes* towards the fine arts.
[70] OE., p.733

I have already noted that it was de Piles who excited Diderot's interest in sketches. This interest is most apparent in Diderot's allocation of the article discussing this medium to Watelet, who being an artist himself was probably the best qualified to write this definition. In Watelet's article we see all the ideas that de Piles also an artist himself had circulated, as well as the same appreciation for such marks of genius like spontaneity, energy and promptitude. Watelet writes:

> C'est la rapidité de l'exécution qui est le principe du feu qu'on voit briller dans les esquisses des peintres de génie; on y reconnaît l'empreinte du mouvement de leur âme; on en calcule la force et la fécondité.[71]

Watelet feels obliged to express certain reservations about excessive enthusiasm in the style of the sketch and warns the artist against the danger of confusing the draft with the finished product. It was de Piles who recognized in the sketch the distinctive signs of genius, audacity, verve and fecundity of invention. In the definition of a sketch and that of genius one notes the same accent on all that characterizes individual inspiration despite rules and recipes. Diderot's article on *Composition* constitutes one of his first critical essays on art theory, and takes some of the most fundamental principles from de Piles' aesthetics. The rejection of academic doctrines, especially when it comes to historical painting or the grouping of people, plays an important role:[72] "Que vos groupes soient liés entre eux" writes Diderot which echoes, de Piles:' "Que les figures soient bien contrastées, non de ce contraste de position academique où l'on voit l'écolier toujours attentif au modèle et jamais à la nature."[73]

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[71] p.53.
[72] Bukdahl, *Op. cit.* p.45-47.
[73] p.87. This does however also reflect what Le Brun had so admired in Poussin's *La Manne.*

FIG: 32 Cochin Fils, *Vue d'une école de dessin.*

In his Cours de peinture, de Piles urges the landscape artist to study the "effets du ciel dans les différentes heures du jour" and to make studies "en plein air." Diderot later also, contrary to the academy's system of "copiage",[74] recommends that the pupil study light and shadows outside the studio as was the practice. Diderot was extremely sensitive to the varying character and intensity of a landscape and even reproaches his favorite painter Vernet for having chosen the wrong time of day in one of his seascapes. If the student only learns to copy models he will eventually lose any creative powers. In a letter to Falconet, in which he disapprovingly condemns the tyranny of the rules imposed by Le Brun, Diderot writes, "Que sert à un artiste la faculté de penser, si on

FIG: 33 Vernet, *Naufrage.*

[74] On the "école de modèle" of the *Académie*, see the catalogue of exhibition,

veut penser pour lui."[75] In fact, de Piles had recommended that the young artist turn away from the academic models as quickly as possible to study nature and people occupied in everyday tasks.

FIG: 34 Houasse Fils, H. ***Une séance du modèle à l'Académie.***

> Il est bon...que les jeunes gens après être sortis des études essentielles à leur art, et avant de donner des preuves sérieuses et publiques de leur capacité, excercent leur génie sur toutes sortes de sujets.[76]

In his Essais sur la peinture Diderot seems to remember his article *Composition* in which he showed reservations about servile academic styles, emphatically inviting students of the *Académie* to leave this "boutique de manure"[77] and observe the world around them:

> C'est aujourd'hui veille de grande fête: allez à la paroisse, rôdez autour des confessionnaux, et vous y verrez la véritable attitude du recueillement et du repentir. Demain, allez à la guinguette, et vous verrez l'action vraie de l'homme en colère. Cherchez les scènes

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Eighteenth-Century Life-Drawing. Princeton University Press: 1977. p.8-37

[75] Correspondance. Vol. 6, p.154

[76] Cours de peinture. p.63

[77] Vernière's edition. p.671

publiques: soyez observateurs dans les rues, dans les jardins, dans les marchés, dans les maisons, et vous y prenez des idées justes du vrai mouvement dans les actions de la vie.[78]

FIG: 35 Rubens, *Village Wedding.*

Diderot, like de Piles, never gives up trying to exhort the artist to seek the natural above all else and the grace which resides not in the artificial academic attitudes but in the actions which conform to each particular function of each individual. When de Piles exalts nature as the great inspiring force, he is not referring to a nature idealized by the classical canons of beauty that have been filtered and corrected by taste. He is referring to a nature that has been seen directly in the way that it manifests itself in the infinite and fascinating diversity of human kind. "Il y a de la grâce dans l'expression des vices, comme celle des vertus. Les actions extérieures d'un soldat, ont leurs grâces particulières qui conviendront mal à une femme."[79] Those that taught proportion at the *Académie*, defined it has having been measured against "les belles antiques."[80] This particular attention to different human passions and the aesthetic resources that they offer the artist

[78] *Ibid.*
[79] Cours de peinture. p.261

was of course also discussed in da Vinci's celebrated Trattatto della pittura, which Diderot also read in 1747.[81]

"Il n'y a pas une personne dans le monde qui n'ait un caractère particulier de corps et de visage," says de Piles[82] and the Essais sur la peinture open on this aphorism: "Toute forme, belle ou laide, a sa cause; et, de tous les êtres qui existent, il n'y en a pas un qui ne soit comme il doit être."[83] In the Salons, Diderot writes that contrary to Michelangelo, Poussin knew how to interpret the models of antiquity with great finesse by closely studying nature.[84] Diderot tells how on his walks Poussin would collect flowers and rocks to ensure that his paintings were as faithful as possible. Students of the *Académie* only study once they have completed their study in drawing. Diderot's states that "Il y a des caricatures de couleur comme de dessin; et toute caricature est mauvais goût."[85] Both De Piles and Diderot denounce the technique of "copiage" in not dissimilar terms, Diderot remarks:

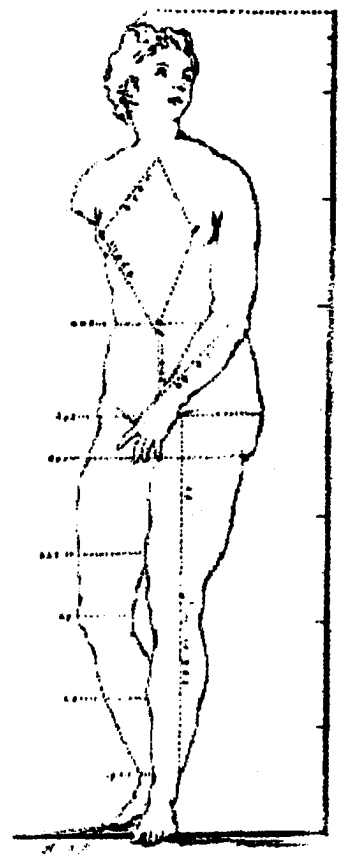

FIG: 36 Pierrre, J. ***Venus with ladder of proportions.***

> Mais ce qui rend le vrai coloriste rare, c'est le maître qu'il adopte. Pendant un temps imfini, l'élève copie les tableaux de ce maître, et ne regarde pas la nature; c'est à dire qu'il s'habitue à voir par les yeux d'un autre et qu'il perd l'usage des siens. Peu à peu il se fait

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[80] For example, the perfect height for a man was eight heads!
[81] See Jacques Proust's L'initiation artistique de Diderot. p.227-229
[82] Cours de peinture. p.261
[83] V. p.665
[84] OE., p.816
[85] OE., p.678

> une technique qui l'enchaîne, et dont il ne peut ni s'affranchir ni s'écarter.[86]

and in Cours de peintuure de Piles had written:

> Après que l'étudiant s'est acquis dans le dessin autant de capacité qu'il est nécessaire...il se met ordinairement sous la disciplne d'un maître dont il suit les sentiments, et dont il copie les ouvrages; d'où il arrive infailliblement que dans la suite ses yeux et son esprit s'accoûtument tellement aux ouvrages de son maître, qu'il voit tout le reste de sa vie la nature colorée comme son maître s'est accoûtumé de la peindre...Que peut-on conclure de-là, sinon qu'il faut que l'habitude leur ait gâté les yeux.[87]

However, de Piles recommends that the portraitist remain faithful, not servile in his interpretation of the model because: "La nature simple et naïve convient mieux à l'imitation, elle est d'un meilleur choix que celle qui est ajustée et que l'on a voulu embellir par un trop grand artifice."[88] It is in the light of this same principle that Diderot remarked that the painter who painted his father should have represented him in his work clothes rather than in his Sunday best.[89] This of course means a choice in the moment of representation. Diderot was particularly preoccupied by this problem. Thus he established a fundamental distinction between first, deformity, which is accidental and monstrous and over which the artist can have no control (unless he is interested in the grotesque genre) and the inevitable physical deformations and second, expressions which are the result of life, habits, occupations and passions.

De Piles, however, had subjugated the principle of imitation of nature, which he supported in favor of *académisme* with some important restrictions. But with him it was

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[86] OE., p.677
[87] *Op. cit.* Vol. 2, p.282-283
[88] Cours. p.261

no longer a question of arbitrarily correcting nature in virtue of the demands of good taste and in the authority of the models approved by the traditional canons of beauty. It was rather a question of opening the way to the artist's personal interpretation and his inner vision. "La nature n'est pas toujours bonne à imiter...un habile peintre ne doit pas être l'esclave de la nature, il doit en être arbitre, et judicieux imitateur."[90] Diderot also would never ask a painter to turn his back to nature and he uses the same terms that de Piles had used in this aim.[91] He does make them more poetic in expression: "Eclairez vos objets selon votre soleil, qui n'est pas celui de la nature; soyez le disciple de l'arc-en-ciel, mais n'en soyez pas l'esclave."[92] Diderot addresses this remark to all those who believe that they must diligently copy everything that they see: "Mais qui vous a prescrit d'être l'imitateur rigoureux de la nature."[93]

For Diderot, even more so than de Piles, the exterior model, however essential its role, has to be subjugated to the interior model[94] of the artist. It is not only by confronting the texts of de Piles and Diderot line by line that one can judge how much Diderot owes his predecessor. Well before Diderot, de Piles observed and described the variations and degradation of color by the shade, distance, and by the complex game of reflections – "accidents de lumière." [95] Before Diderot, de Piles had remarked that shade also has its colors and that each object not only has a local color, but also reflects the tones of the objects around it. He alluded to ways in which the atmosphere gives a general tone, a

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[89] V. p.694
[90] Dialogue sur le coloris. p.8
[91] This introduces the idea of the "representation" of reality.
[92] V. p.771
[93] V. p.805
[94] The idea of an "interior model" is essential with Diderot.

certain vapor on the people and things and that the artist, in order to be able to understand these phenomena, must leave his studio and study "les effet du ciel dans les différentes heures du jour." A tree or a field under a bright sun and under a cloudy sky must be experienced "en plein-air."

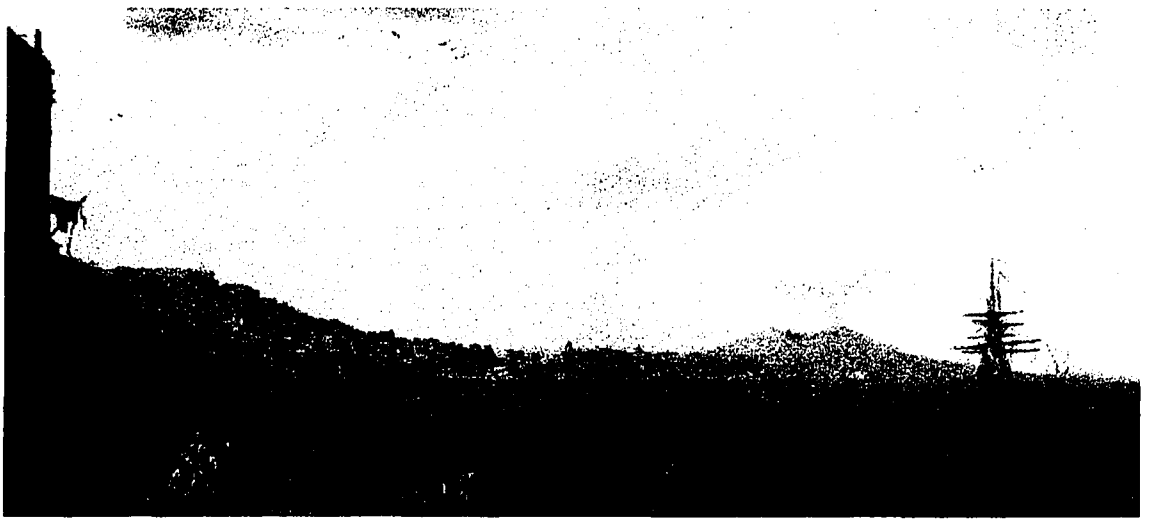

FIG: 37 Vernet, *Mont Vesuve.*

De Piles praised the painters who knew how to conserve the force of their color, and in his Deuxième Conversation he recommends control of the freshness of their tones: "Pourvu que le peintre ait la discrétion de ne point salir les couleurs à force de les mêler ensemble."[96] Exactly as de Piles, Diderot shows himself particularly sensitive to the quality of the coloring in the pictures that he had to describe in the Salons. Of *Conversion de Saint Paul* by Deshays, he says (using de Piles' terminology) that the color is "sale et pesante."[97]

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[95] As these atmospheric vibrations were mentioned in the same terms also in Art de peinture, one can not be sure that Diderot did not read it directly from Du Fresnoy's poem.
[96] Oeuvres diverses. IV, p.160
[97] S.&A. III, p.97

Both critics agree that among the most famous artists, great colorists are rarer than great drawers. Diderot and de Piles' ideas are also akin concerning many other points. Both, for example, noted that some paintings owe their ability to attract the spectator irresistibly to the effects of the light and color and the expressive force of the faces. De Piles remarks that even among the masterpieces of painting "le nombre de tableaux qui appellent le spectateur, n'est pas fort grand."[98] Diderot himself asks if this capacity to attract is more important than all the other perfections and with a little malice goes so far as to claim the superiority in this particular regard of the colorist in general and especially, Rembrandt.

> Quel est le grand peintre, ou de Raphael que vous allez chercher en Italie et devant lequel vous passeriez sans le reconnaître, si l'on ne vous tirait pas par la manche et qu'on ne vous dit pas: le voilà; ou de Rembrandt...qui vous appelle du loin.[99]

From the dogmatic academic approach of his contemporaries, de Piles adopts the humanist aesthetics of the Renaissance. In his thesis on de Piles, Bernard Teyssèdre revealed how much de Piles actually owed da Vinci.[100] In this respect it is easy to see that de Piles was far closer to the critics in the Enlightenment than he was to those of his own century. It follows that Diderot would be a most sympathetic reader of his work and find his ideas appealing. De Piles had an open-mindedness and sensitivity to the originality of a work. For de Piles as for Diderot, all the arts are linked and inspire each other mutually.

It is not only as erudite connoisseur sensitive to color and the effects of *clair-obscur,* but also as a theoretician and defender of the rights of genius that de Piles knows how to speak of art. Before Diderot, he had perceived and underlined the role of enthusiasm in

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[98] Cours. p.17. The idea the spectator is of particular concern to Diderot.
[99] V. p.733
[100] L'Histoire de l'art vue du grand siècle. Paris: Julliard, 1964.

inspiration and creation. The subject of enthusiasm is a whole chapter in Cours de peinture, and in it one reads this idea, which announces Diderot's Entretiens sur le fils naturel:

> Pour disposer l'esprit à l'enthousiasme, généralement parlante, rien n'est meilleur que la vue des ouvrages des grands maîtres, et la lecture des bons auteurs historiens ou poètes.[101]

In Diderot's Encyclopédie article *Composition*, which bears the undeniable influence of de Piles, this idea in taken up textually: "Nous ne pouvons trop inviter les peintres à la lecture des grands poètes, et réciproquement les poètes ne peuvent trop voir les ouvrages des grands peintres." When writing his last theoretical essay in 1776, Diderot still faithfully subscribed to this principle of a unity of the arts: "La vue des tableaux des grands maitres est aussi utile à un auteur que la lecture des grands ouvrages à un artiste."[102] However, in article *Composition*, Diderot differs from de Piles' in his views concerning certain points on the artistic unity of painting. For Diderot a work of art is born and developed in the same way as organic phenomena:

> Un tableau bien composé est un tout renfermé sous un seul point de vue, où les parties concourent à un même but, et forment par leur correspondance mutuellement un ensemble aussi réel, que celui des membres dans le corps animal.[103]

Diderot criticizes the *Académie's* categorical division between the "pittoresque d'une composition" - the ordering of the formal elements in a work of art and the "poésie générale d'une composition" - the semantic aspect. From his own analyses of the works displayed at the *Salons* and his work with Watelet on the article *Ensemble* for the

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[101] Cours. p.119
[102] V. p.749
[103] Enyclopédie, Vol. 3 p.729

Encyclopédie, Diderot concludes that there ought to be an analogy between the principles of artistic composition and those of nature. The academic rules dividing the "partie technique" and the "partie idéale" stifle potential creative genius. Diderot agrees with Dandré Bardon's declaration: "Rien ne saurait suppléer au génie, ni le communiquer. Cette aptitude à opérer bien et facilement est un don du ciel, qui le distribue à qui il lui plaît."[104] Diderot finds such an example of genius in Vernet, whom he describes as a Prometheus in the Salon de 1767 in words similar to Caylus:

> Le génie est ce feu, cette conception vive, originale et presque surnaturelle qui s'élève dans notre âme et la transporte hors d'elle-même, définition que je ne puis mieux achever que par l'ingénieuse allégorie de Prométhée dérobant le feu du ciel.[105]

De Piles operated with a concept of truth that was rigorous and loose by turns.[106] At times he said that only natural objects are true, and that objects in paintings are mere fictions. At other times, however, he affirmed that the latter too are true, if they successfully imitate their models. De Piles' notion of truth was half-objective and half-subjective. The painter should present things as they actually are in nature, but also as he sees them. De Piles was familiar with the peculiarities of human sight and took them into account in his theory of painting. The eye has the freedom to see perfectly all the objects which surround it, by fixing itself on each of them in turn; once it is fixed, however, only that object which is at the center of attention is seen clearly and distinctly. Thanks to this, other objects are subordinated to the central one in our vision,[107] and thereby form a unified whole "tout-ensemble". In proceeding thus, nature teaches the painter how he,

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[104] Essai sur lla peinture, 1765.
[105] Conference on *Réflexions sur la peinture*, 3rd June, 1747.
[106] See, S. Bryson's, Tableau et Théâtre. *Op. cit.*

too, must proceed. Truth always pleases, but left to itself, it may become tedious. When linked to feeling and enthusiasm, on the other hand, truth inspires amazement and admiration, so stirring the mind that it has no time to think about itself.

> Quoique le Vrai plaise toujours...il ne laisse pas être souvent insipide quand il est tout seul; mais quand il est joint à l'Enthousiasme il transporte l'esprit dans une admiration mêlée d'étonnement; il le ravit avec violence sans lui donner le temps de retourner sur lui-même. Le sublime est un effet et une production de l'enthousiasme.[108]

In the famous antinomy of classicism and baroque there is no doubt that de Piles, because of his temperament as well as his personal preferences, was more inclined towards the baroque masters of Italy and Holland. He admired 16th century Venetian art and was enthusiastic about Rubens and appreciated Rembrandt, but remained untouched by a Poussin or a Raphael. This is of course because he is more sensitive to the color value, the contrasts in writing, and the feelings of vitality than in a serene art and the lyricism of the content. What is more, de Piles is less touched by the profound spirituality and humanist Christianity of a Rembrandt, than he is impressed by the astonishing technique of *clair-obscur*. This eclectic man who made valiant efforts to show himself just and impartial to all painters, could not help however having preferences and affinities that surface through his appreciation. Above all, de Piles admires the powerful work of Rubens. He admires the marvelous fecundity of Rubens' imagination, the audacity and facility of his brush, the warm color in which his compositions are bathed and the brilliant carnation of the women whom he is happy to represent even in his mythological scenes.

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[107] This is the difference between "le vrai" and "le vraisemblable".
[108] Cours de peinture. 1708 edition. p.115

FIG: 38 Watteau, *Fête champêtre.*

De Plies' aesthetic sensibilities are hedonistic despite his efforts to rival with the Cartesians' relativism. For him painting is above all an art, which has to speak to the eyes, and thus color is the principal means of expression. Therefore, one can also say that de Piles announces especially an aspect of 18th century aesthetics, the rococo. He opens the way to Watteau, another great admirer and follower of Rubens. However, the moral, spiritual and philosophical side of painting all in all leaves him indifferent. It is in this respect then that one can observe that de Piles' influence on Diderot is limited. Greuze's

bourgeois realism and David's neoclassicism certainly would not have interested this defender of the Venetian tradition, who believed Rubens to be the worthy follower of Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese.

FIG: 39 Rubens, ***Destiny of Marie of Medici.***

However, this having been said, it is important not to forget the extent to which Diderot found the bases for some of his best arguments against academic mannerism and the study from studio models in de Piles' work. In the name of nature, de Piles had denounced dogmatic intellectualism, which risked drying out the live sources of inspiration, of spontaneity and audacity. Moreover, it was de Piles who, no longer happy to speculate on the relationships that distinguish poetry and painting, preferred to focus his attention on the aspects that distinguish painting from drawing. In his eyes, what is important is the concreteness of a work, and de Piles was one of the first to question, if not openly, at least by his very attitude, the academic hierarchy of genres. Diderot's penetrating observations on landscape painting might not have been possible if de Piles had not carefully and patiently and at great length explained to his readers the different effects that a great landscape painter can evoke of the natural phenomena such as light, color, and the laws of perspective.

It was de Piles, whose role is too often buried in the background of aesthetic commentary and often ignored as an influence on 18th-century aesthetics, who greatly set the course for Diderot's writing. Yet, although both men incorporated the technical language that was being used in the artists' studios in their criticism, Diderot realized that by transposing these expressions poetically, he could develop a new rhetoric in art criticism that would better address his public. Diderot used the legacy left to him by de Piles as a spring board from which he could break down the barriers set up by the very institutionalized *Académie* and thus make art criticism more accessible to those who read the Encyclopédie and the *Correspondence Littéraire.* By manipulating various strategies of language, Diderot sought to create a new public[109] that was not only made up of academicians. No doubt, Diderot - who had a great faith in posterity[110] - knew that by deinstitutionalizing aesthetic theory and by creating a new synthetic vision he would attract a larger audience.

[109] See, Crow, T. Painters and Public Life. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1985, and Solkin, D. The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in 18th Century England. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993.
[110] See Diderot's correspondence with Falconet on this subject of posterity.

Chapter Two: Diderot and 18th Century British Art Criticism

A Case Study of Edmund Burke.

In the Salon de 1765 and in his Essais sur la peinture Diderot leans on the points of view of Hogarth to develop his own.[1] However, in the Salon of 1767, Hogarth recedes into the background to give way to another English aesthetician, Edmund Burke. Occasionally, critics have noted in passing the resemblance both in content and form between certain passages in Diderot's Salon de 1767 and Edmund Burke's influential treatise on aesthetics, A philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful, the first edition of which appeared in 1757 and the French translation[2] in 1765.[3]

Curiously, Diderot hides his sources, omitting to mention the name of Burke or acknowledging his debt, although there can be no doubt that the Salons contain many direct borrowings from the Enquiry. For example, in the Salon de 1767, we read a long passage about terror and the sublime, the effect of a plain contrasted with an ocean and then about obscurity: "La clarté est bonne pour convaincre; elle ne vaut rien pour

[1] This is not the only instance of Diderot's proclivity for borrowing other men's ideas on aesthetics. For Hogarth's influence, see Jean Seznec, Essai sur Diderot et l'antiquité. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957, p.25-29.

[2] Translated by l'abbé Desfrançois.

[3] Wlaclyslaw Folkierski, in his Entre le classicisme et le romantisme. Paris: 1925. p.509 was the first to call attention to certain correspondences between the two works. More recent critics have been content to repeat Folkierski's general observation without any further investigation into this question. J. J. Mayoux, "Diderot and the Technique of Modern Literature," *MLR*, XXXI. 1936, p.528-529. Dixon Wecter, "Burke's Theory concerning Words, Images, and Emotion," *PMLA*, LV. 1940, p.177. See also, J. T. Boulton's critical edition of Burke's Enquiry. New York: 1958, p.cxx-cxxii. As for R. Loyalty Cru, author of Diderot as a Disciple of English Thought. New York: 1913, neither in his text nor in his bibliography does he refer to Burke's treatise and only mentions him in connection with his stay in Paris in 1773 p.110.

émouvoir... Poètes...soyez ténébreux."[4] Then Diderot goes on to consider the effect of sound alternating with silence, all of which is coolly lifted from Burke. In the same Salon[5] we also find a subtle analysis of the nature of words as reflecting psychological reality. This analysis springs straight from the same source.

The influence of Burke on Diderot is of even greater interest to the development of 18th-century European[6] aesthetic thought in that, just as I shall read the Salon de 1967 as Diderot's answer to Burke, Arthur Wilson has read the Enquiry written in 1756 as Burke's answer to Lettre sur les sourds et les muets, which he probably read in1751.[7] If this is true then the aesthetic debate continued for many years. The strange corresponding affinity of ideas of the two men is the subject of this chapter.

In the course of his exposition on the sublime and the beautiful, Burke describes the life and works of Saunderson, the English professor of mathematics, sightless from an early age, as an illustrative example of blind men's use of words.[8] He also analyzes the first visual reactions of a boy successfully operated on for cataracts by the famed British surgeon Cheselden.[9] In 1749 Diderot had already utilized these two case histories for a study of the nature of sight and the psychology of the blind in his controversial Lettre sur les sourds et sur les muets, which led to his imprisonment at Vincennes. Since Burke was very well informed about French letters, it is quite likely that while working on his

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[4] Salon de 1767, XI, p.146.
[5] *Ibid.* p.132.
[6] See, Guiragossian Carr, D. "The image of Diderot in the British Periodical Press."Digression and Dispersion. ed. Jack Undank, Kentucky: 1984.
[7] Wilson, A. M. The Testing Years 1713-1759. See, p.431. Burke speaks of Saunderson as if he had read the Lettres sur les aveugles. 1749.
[8] p.169.

treatise,[10] he had occasion to familiarize himself with Diderot's daring and experimental theories on the relation of imagery, abstract concepts, and words to sense-perception, theories which found their expression in the Lettre sur les aveugles and the Lettre sur les sourds et les muets.[11] Nevertheless, there is no doubt that Diderot relied more directly on the Enquiry than Burke ever did on any writing by Diderot. Be that as it may, certain themes common to the essay on the sublime and the Salon de 1767 can also be traced to the Lettre sur les sourds et les muets of 1751, particularly those that concern language and poetry. In this respect, the Salon can be considered a mature sequel to the early Lettre in that it deals with the same problems, although moving them into sharper focus and envisaging them from a different angle. One notes, moreover, that while the basic assumptions remain the same in the later work, there are also some significant departures from the original position. The ambiguous blanket term "hiéroglyphe" (so important in the Lettre),[12] has totally been abandoned, the divergences between painting and poetry are discerned with greater subtlety, and a new understanding into the function of vagueness and obscurity as concomitants of the sublime in poetry has been gained. And, as will be demonstrated in the following pages, this enriched outlook is in no small measure due to a careful reading of Burke's Enquiry.

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[9] p.144-145.

[10] While some scholars, like Marjorie Nicolson, (Newton Demands the Muse, Princeton: 1946, p.123) tend toward the view that Burke had completed the Enquiry by 1748, when he was not more than nineteen, it is more likely that he composed and revised this work in the years 1747-54. For conclusive evidence, see Boulton, p.xv-xxvi.

[11] See, Wecter, p.176. According to Arthur Wilson, Diderot, p.128, the Lettre sur les aveugles, was notorious in English learned circles. Professor Wilson also rightly states (p.367, n.33) that the Lettre sur les sourds et muets anticipated some of the conclusions of Edmund Burke in his treatise On the Sublime and Beautiful. These similarities, however, are more occasional and peripheral than the numerous and often textual parallels between the Salon de 1767 and the Enquiry.

[12] See, Doolittle, J. "Hieroglyph and Emblem in Diderot's Lettre sur les sourds et les muets." *Diderot Studies II.* 1952.

The impact made by the Enquiry in both France and Germany was both forceful and immediate. Diderot seems to have found that the work echoed and formalized much of his own unsystematic writing.[13] In a letter to Catherine II, Diderot would later write: "Il est clair, pour tous ceux qui ont des yeux, que sans les Anglais la raison et la philosophie seraient encore dans l'enfance la plus misérable en France."[14] Indeed, Diderot was particularly ready for Burke's influence. Diderot had made a free translation of Shaftesbury in Essai sur le mérite et la vertu[15] and he considered intense emotion essential in art. He detested formality and artificiality. Diderot's melancholy fitted him to respond to an aesthetic of a dark, terrible sublimity. It would have been strange if Diderot had not been fascinated by Burke's theory. Fascination led to borrowing. Diderot was perhaps not guilty of theft, but rather appropriation: the ideas were so congenial that he automatically integrated them into his own.

It must have been shortly after his return from St Petersburg that Diderot met Burke probably in the house of Mlle de Lespinasse, although little is actually known about Burke's residence in Paris.[16] Burke, according to the testimony of Mme du Deffand, spoke French very imperfectly and Diderot for his part does not seem to have spoken English as easily as he read it. It is therefore unlikely that they became very intimately acquainted. Sympathy would have been lacking for the formation of ties of friendship

[13] For such an examination of Burke's own sources as well as his impact on contemporary and later writers, see Folkierski, Wecter, and Boulton. Also see Samuel H. Monk, The Sublime: A Study of Critical Theories in Eighteenth-Cenitury England New York: 1935. Marjorie H. Nicolson, Newton Demands the Muse. *Op. cit.* and Walter J. Hipple, Jr., The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth-Century British Aesthetic Theory. Carbondale: 1957.
[14] 1775.
[15] 1745.

between these two men.[17] The French disciples of the English thinkers had indeed gone far beyond their masters in boldness of speculation. A conversation that Diderot had with Sir Samuel Romilly, three years before his death, serves to demonstrate the divorce between the fundamental tendencies of the French and English intellects of the time: "He praised the English" says Romilly, "for having led the way to true philosophy, but the adventurous genius of the French, he said had pushed them beyond their guides." His attitude had obviously changed since writing the aforementioned letter to Catherine II!

If one cannot find any allusion to Burke's work in Diderot's signed writings,[18] a brief but revealing review of its French translation appeared in the March 1765 issue of Friedrich Grimm's Corréspondance littéraire.[19] This notice, penned either by Grimm or by Diderot himself, reprimands the translator, a certain abbé Desfrançois, but praises the author:

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[16] J. Morley, Burke. 1879, p.66.

[17] Diderot could not have thought much of a man who had come to France in order to entrust the supervision of his son's education to a French bishop, who was thrown into raptures by his visit to the court of Versailles, and who was known to have brought back a passionate hatred of all free-thinkers from the Parisian *Salons*. In a letter from Horace Walpole to the Countess of Upper Ossory, March 11th, 1773. Toynbee, Ed. Vol. VIII, p.252) we read that "Mr. Burke is returned from Paris, where he was so much the mode that happening to dispute with the philosophers, it grew the fashion to be Christian. St. Patrick himself did not make more converts."

[18] There is no reference to Diderot in Burke's works, and, as has already been pointed out, the converse is also true. Nevertheless, Burke's biographers generally allude to a possible meeting between the two men in Paris in February 1773: See John Morley, Burke. New York: 1894 p.66; Robert H. Murray, Edmund Burke. Oxford: 1931 p.209; and Donald C. Bryant, Edmund Burke and his Literary Friends. St. Louis: 1939; R.L. Cru erroneously states (p. 110) that, "it must have been shortly after his return from Petersburg that Diderot met Burke," since it is evident from one of Burke's own letters (Correspondence, Ed. C. W. Fitzwilliam London: 1844, I, p.424), as well as the letters from Mme du Deffand and to Walpole that the statesman was in Paris during the month of February, 1773. He could only have become acquainted with Diderot before the latter's departure for Holland and Russia in June of that year. However, I found no evidence to confirm absolutely this encounter which, according to tradition, took place in Mlle de Lespinasse's salon.

[19] Correspondance littéraire, philosophique et critique par Grimm, Diderot Raynal, Meister, etc. ed. Maurice Tourneux, Paris: 1877-82, VI, p.237.

> On s'aperçoit à chaque page que le traducteur n'a pas bien saisi l'esprit de son original, ou du moins qu'il n'a pas eu le talent de le rendre avec la netteté et la précision nécessaires. L'ouvrage de M. Burke est estimé en Angleterre, et l'on y trouve, en effet, des vues fines et neuves, quelquefois aussi des paradoxes qu'on ne saurait adopter.

Two years later Diderot was sufficiently convinced of the merits of the book to accept even its boldest paradoxes. In this chapter, I shall offer a systematic confrontation of the Enquiry and the Salon de 1767, highlighting the parallels that show the two men's affinities of thought. I will start this chapter by examining the reasons why the *encyclopédiste* should have been so attracted to this particular English essay to the extent of utilizing many of its formulations.[21] I shall then analyze the manner in which Diderot manipulated and condensed Burke's most striking passages, vivified them, and adapted them to his own purpose. These examinations should yield interesting insights into Diderot's techniques as a stylist and synthesist.

Despite Diderot's numerous borrowings from Burke, he does not fully accept his thesis. Diderot is almost as firmly wary of an aesthetic of pure sensationalism, as of one of pure dogmatic reason, as discussed in the previous chapter. He started to refine Burke's very spontaneous aesthetic of the sublime in the Salon de 1767 and will continue to do so in Paradoxe sur le comédien in 1773. When Diderot was writing his articles on Vernet, Robert and Doyen, and studying Poussin and Rembrandt, Diderot had already been brought to examine the possibility of art expressing emotion and not just the "ideal

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[21] See also, Creech, J. "Diderot's Ideal Model." Digression and dispersion. Kentucky: 1984.

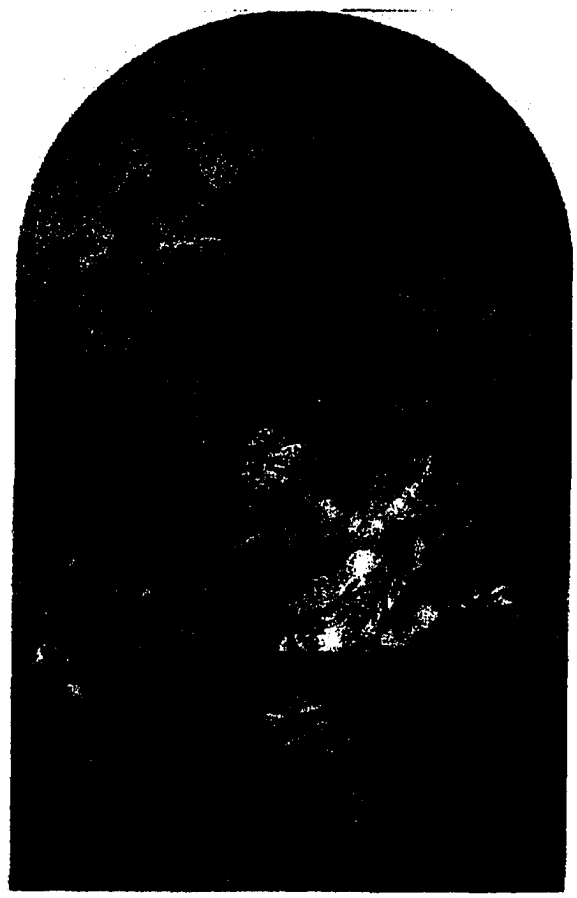

FIG: 40 Doyen, *Miracles des Ardents.*

beauty" prescribed by Winkelmann.[22] Diderot also touched on the considerable part that emotional reaction played in enhancing aesthetic appreciation in Essai sur la peinture. He would again mention this aspect in the *préamble* of the Salon de 1769 and his work on the dramatic arts. However, it appears that Diderot needed Burke as a springboard to refine these thoughts.[23] By studying Burke's ideas on the sublime, Diderot could strengthen the foundation of his criteria of the expressive aim in plastic arts. For Burke, as well as for Diderot, the sublime is the common denominator of all that intelligence cannot explain and that the imagination cannot maintain as a defined entity, such as eternity and the infinity of the seas and skies. But Diderot goes beyond the sensualist and empiric foundations of Burke's aesthetics.

[22] See, *Chapter One: Part One* of this dissertation.
[23] He no doubt read an English copy of the Enquiry in 1766, which was probably given to him by Grimm, rather than the 1765 French translation, which according to Grimm (see quote above) masked the original

Unlike Burke, Diderot finds traits of the sublime in the classical landscapes of Poussin in paintings such as *Les Bergers d'Arcadie* and *Paysage avec l'homme au serpent.*

FIG: 41 Poussin, *Paysage avec l'homme au serpent.*

Evoking sufferance and death they break the idyllic and harmonious unity. For example, he discovers a most sublime dimension in the second painting. The immense space is occupied by scenes that are rich in contrast. In the foreground a man is being strangled by a serpent and in the background tired travelers are resting. This painting apparently incites such shock and fear, that Diderot could not stop himself from calling out to the travelers, who did not see anything to escape before they were in turn killed by the serpent.

Before entering our discussion proper, a few general remarks about the dual role of the Salon 1767 are in order. On the one hand, it embodies the definitive expression of philosophic and artistic doctrines that had gradually crystallized in the writer's mind, and,

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points of view and paradoxes which are of the greatest interest. See also Allan Ramsay's letter to Diderot written at the end of January, 1766. Correspondance V. p.245.

on the other, it marks the inception of all those themes which were to dominate his mature productions. Diderot purposely kept the form as flexible as possible so that he could, within the framework of his descriptions and evaluations, elaborate a series of dissertations on a variety of subjects, and even indulge in a piquant anecdote now and then, whenever he sensed that the reader's attention would be flagging. Indeed, this work comprises such a wealth of observations and digressions, many of which Diderot developed further in current or subsequent projects, that we can consider it his private storehouse of ideas.[24]

In 1767 Diderot had finally completed his long and burdensome editorship of the Encyclopédie. But instead of breathing a deep sigh of relief at the thought that his main task was accomplished, he resolutely took stock of his as yet unrealized potentialities and boasted to his friend Grimm: "Je n'ai pas la conscience d'avoir encore employé la moitié de mes forces. Jusqu'à présent je n'ai que baguenaudé."[25] In 1767, Diderot more than ever was contending with and trying to draw away from neoclassical assumptions, so it is no mere coincidence that he did not hesitate to call on Burke's most original innovations in his own search for new criteria. Rather, it is proof of an agreement on certain fundamental principles at a crucial turning point in the history of aesthetics. Both writers belonged to an age that had been strongly marked by the English empiricists, and both were bent on seeking fresh ways to broaden critical traditions.

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[24] Michel Delon, "Le *Salon de 1767*, un carrefour philosophique." *Introduction* to Ruines et paysages. Paris: Hermann, 1995. p.4

[25] Oeuvres complètes de Diderot, Ed. Assézat-Tourneux. Paris: 1875-77, XI, p.22

It is not of course the purpose of this study to give an over-all evaluation of Burke's Enquiry, but rather to comment upon those aspects of it, and there are many, which appealed to Diderot and coincided with his own thoughts. Burke is keenly aware that certain objects strongly affect their beholder, although they do not belong to the traditional categories of the beautiful. For art historians such as Winkelmann, Webb and Mengs the aim of art was to express ideal beauty, whereas Diderot considered ideal beauty as an archetype around which other principles ought to organize themselves. The new perspectives that Burke had found on beauty and the sublime were most refreshing to Diderot. Burke had distinguished the sublime and the beautiful in order to probe their sensationalist basis. His characterization of the beautiful is rather weak and limited and does not concern us here. However, it is in his questions on the psychological factors that induce sublimity, in his specific illustrations, as well as in his section on poetry and painting that Burke reveals the newness of his critical method that so inspires Diderot. Indeed, the *philosophe* could not fail to approve wholeheartedly of this empirical, pluralistic, and psychological exposition, which emphasizes our basic emotions (or "passions" – as they were then termed), relating them to potentially sublime aspects of nature. But if Burke avoids metaphysical *a priori* speculations and systems, he does not renounce objective concepts and confine himself to unrelated observations. Everything that falls within the ken of man's senses constitutes for him a legitimate object for rational scrutiny. It is by analyzing and classifying those emotional impulses common to us all, which, according to him, are at the core of aesthetic experience, that he hopes to give general scope to his aesthetic treatise.

Diderot so enthusiastically espoused this experimental, Lockian[28] and anti-Cartesian approach to the sublime that he used it as a springboard for some of the most profound insights that can be found in his Salon de 1767.[29] In effect, the *encyclopédiste*'s firm grasp of ancient, contemporary, and particularly English critical theory enabled him to realize that here was an epoch-making document underscoring the psycho-physiological origin of artistic creation and appreciation. Both authors rejected Dubos' and Hutcheson's sixth sense[31] and, like Condillac, founded their system on the mental processes of memory and association, which can transform ordinary sensory impressions into the far more complex cognitive perceptions. Burke did not seem to discern the materialistic implications of his theory of the sublime. He continued to view the world as divinely ordained and our emotional drives as wisely determined by a benevolent creator. On the other hand, Diderot carried the sensationalist and naturalistic method to its ultimate conclusion and consistently eliminated all spiritualistic elements from his frame of reference.

As for Burke's presentation, Diderot's genius for synthesis permitted him to fuse the various chapters into one organic whole, eliminating unnecessary details and examples. In addition, he turns a systematic and analytical investigation into a conversational, informal, and apparently digressive exposition, wherein a lively dialogue between the author and a kindly abbot surrounded by pupils, alternates with philosophic meditations and highly lyrical flights. While tightening Burke's form, so that only the pith of his

[28] Burke's debt to Locke in this respect is highlighted in his *Introduction on Taste*. p.16-17
[29] It will be shown shortly that these borrowings are not confined to Part Two of the Enquiry, as scholars like Folkierski and Wecter have thought to be the case.

thought is retained, and effecting a complete metamorphosis in tone (by stylistic devices which will become clear as we compare the texts), Diderot proceeds to concretize his discourse on the sublime by providing it with a suitable background. And what could be more enchanting - at least to Diderot's mind[32] - than Vernet's own romantic landscapes and seascapes? These landscapes featured such gripping scenes as steep mountains whose

FIG: 42 Vernet, *La Mort de Virginie.*

summits reach storm-swept skies; deep, rock-bound valleys; dark, mysterious caverns; thundering and foaming waterfalls; vast lakes shimmering in the twilight; and narrow, winding paths ordered by stately pine trees. Pretending that he is viewing actual scenes of nature during a stay in the province, Diderot stages long walks, in this majestic countryside, and it is in the course of these leisurely wanderings that the aesthetic discussions and meditations take place. Only toward the end of the fifty-page section devoted to Vernet - and also inspired by Burke - does Diderot, who is probably writing

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[31] i.e., a separate aesthetic faculty.

[32] Diderot's descriptions of Vernet's work most often surpass the paintings in their expression of the sublime.

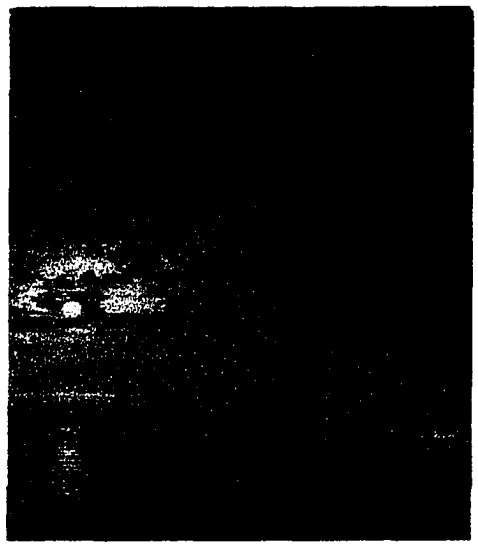

FIG: 104 Vernet, *Clair de lune.*

about *Clair de Lune* feign to make a "slip" and reveal "inadvertently" that we have been in the presence of art, not nature itself.[33] But he makes no such "slip" about his literary source! This skillfully contrived artifice has the two-fold result of allowing him to indulge in his favorite game of hide and seek with his reader and of providing a fictional framework for impressions induced from Vernet's landscapes and at the same time his reading of Burke's treatise. In his Introduction on Taste,[34] added to the second edition of the Enquiry in 1759 and included in the French translation of 1765, Burke examines the component faculties that go into the ability to appreciate and judge a work of art or natural beauty.[35] Although the problems dealt with here are far from new, the manner in which light is shed on them attests an original orientation. In the beginning of his essay, Burke recognizes the difficulty of establishing a common standard of taste since each man is affected differently by his senses - and contrasts this diversity with the greater reliance on reason:

> It appears indeed to be generally acknowledged that with regard to truth and falsehood there is something fixed . . . But there is not the same obvious concurrence in any uniform or settled principles which relate to taste. It is even commonly supposed that this delicate and aerial faculty, which seems too volatile to endure even the chains of a definition, cannot be properly tried by any test.[36]

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[33] See, S. Bryson *Op. cit.* p.123.
[34] See, Jacques Chouillet, La formation des idées esthétiques de Diderot. p.406.
[35] Burke did not establish an ontological difference between organic and artistic beauty. Diderot, however, shows a sharpened awareness of the constant process of transmutation and simplification involved in

Similarly, Diderot points out the relativity of taste and aesthetic judgment:

> Il me semble que la logique de la raison a fait bien d'autres progrès que la logique du goût. Aussi celle-ci est-elle si fine, si subtile, si délicate ... que peu sont en état de l'entendre, bien moins encore en état de la trouver. Il est bien plus aisé de démêler le vice d'un raisonnement, que la raison d'une beauté.[37]

Burke goes on to give a sensualistic, Lockian definition of imagination, which can rearrange impressions retained by memory, but cannot create anything *ex nihilo:*

> It must be observed that this power of the imagination is incapable of producing anything absolutely new; it can only vary the disposition of those ideas which it has received from the senses ... Wit[38] is chiefly conversant in tracing resemblances and the business of judgment is rather in finding differences.[39]

Diderot's famous and often-quoted definition of imagination is based on the same distinction:

> L'imagination ne crée rien, elle imite, elle compose, combine, exagère, agrandit, rapetisse. Elle s'occupe sans cesse de ressemblances. Le jugement observe, compare, et ne cherche que des différences."[40]

It is evident from Diderot's verbal enumeration, however, that he lays greater stress upon the transformations that imagination can make on sensory impressions, whereas these remain fundamentally unchanged (only ordered differently) in Burke's view. For Burke, the imagination has only the task of gathering and combining received impressions.

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representing nature on canvas, which I will discuss later.

[36] *Op. cit.* Boulton, Ed. p.1

[37] XI, p.130

[38] ie., imagination.

[39] p.17. It is this type of empirical reasoning that will excite that anger of Blake, who will see in it a disparagement of the cognitive value of imagination and of divine "Inspiration and Vision." (cf. Marginalia to Reynolds, in The Portable Blake. New York: 1946. p.584

[40] XI, p.131. For a study of Diderot's conception of imagination, see Margaret Gilman, "Imagination and Creation in Diderot," *Diderot Studies II*, ed. 0. Fellows and N. Torrey. Syracuse: 1952, p.200-220.

However, for Diderot the imagination has a more productive role, as it transforms the impressions and combines them with experience stored in memory.[41] From his psychological observations,[42] Burke infers that man draws greater satisfaction from the activities of the imagination than from those of reason and that the more uncultivated and credulous the group, the more naturally inventive and poetic it is. Knowledge and reflection, on the other hand, have the result of stifling this spontaneous artistic creativity:

> Men are much more naturally inclined to belief than to incredulity. And it is upon this principle, that the most ignorant and barbarous nations who have frequently excelled in similarities, comparisons, metaphors, and allegories, have been weak and backward in distinguishing and sorting their ideas.[43]

Likewise, Diderot sees a conflict between analytical reason and poetic inspiration and looks back upon the primitive age as one of richly figurative speech. Moreover, in spite of his philosophic materialism, his aesthetic awareness induces him to appreciate religious myths, cults, and rites as wellsprings of poetry:

> L'esprit philosophique, est-il favorable à la poésie? Grande question presque décidée par ce peu de mots ... Plus de verve chez les peuples barbares que chez les peuple policés ... Partout décadence de la verve et de la poésie, à mesure que l'esprit philosophique a fait des progrès ... Le règne des images passe à mesure que celui des choses s'étend ... Il est incroyable combien l'incredulité ôte de ressources à la poésie.[44]

This emphasis on the creative role of instinct, emotion, and religion, which so clearly anticipates nineteenth-century critical doctrines, is already incipient in Condillac's Essai sur l'origine des connaissainces humaines, 1746. In Condillac's work it is noted that

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However, there is no attempt in this essay to relate Diderot's aesthetics to that of Burke.

[41] Diderot will take up these ideas in Rêve de d'Alembert. p.189-190

[42] In Lettre sur les sourds et les muets, the opposition between imagination and judgment, between poetry and philosophy gave preference to the latter two. p.165

[43] p.18. Diderot had already traced such an idea in Lettre sur les sourds et les muets. p.187 and in De la poèsie dramatique. p.400

rhythmic, poetic language and music antedated abstract reasoning, for they expressed the natural outpouring of powerful feeling.[45] But, as we shall see when this question is treated more fully in connection with the last part of the Enquiry, it remained for Diderot and Burke to envisage all the aesthetic implications of such an evolutionary theory of language.

According to the two authors not only imagination, but also sensitivity and enthusiasm are keenest in the individual who is still free from the artificialities and fetters of civilization, such as in the savage and the child. Conversely, a sophisticated socio-cultural atmosphere only succeeds in inhibiting these qualities of unrestrained spontaneity by fostering the development of the critical faculties:

> As the arts advance towards their perfection, the science of criticism advances with equal pace, and the pleasure of the judges is frequently interrupted by the faults which are discovered in the most finished composition.[46]

Overlooking his own activity as a critic, Diderot is usually disparaging in his allusions to criticism, which he also considers the result of over-refinement:

> Quand voit-on naître les critiques et les grammairiens? Tout juste après le siècle du génie et des productions divines. . .Le génie crée les beautés; la critique remarque les défauts. Il faut de l'imagination pour l'un, du jugement pour l'autre.[47]

By rehabilitating and glorifying the primitive, irrational powers of invention, untrammeled by critical rules and conventions, both Diderot and Burke point forward to

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[44] XI, p.131

[45] See, Essai sur l'origine des connaissances humaines, Ed. Raymond Lenoir Paris: 1924, p.149. Rousseau, in turn was to set forth similar notions - although charging them with his characteristic emotive eloquence - in his posthumously published Essai sur l'origine des langues: 1781. See, Oeuvres complètes de Rousseau. Ed. V. D. Musset-Pathay, Paris: 1824, II, p.422-428.

[46] p.26.

the Romantic belief in the free expression of one's demon and exaltation of intuition and feeling above reason and intellect.

Part One of the Enquiry presents an analysis of those innate impulses which, according to Burke, determine aesthetic experience: curiosity, the pleasure-pain principle, and the selfish as well as social drives. Burke associates the sublime with the terrible, especially with the compelling emotions evoked by the idea of pain and of danger, which in turn directly affect egoistic instinct of self preservation: "Whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime."[48] As an apologist of strong passions, Diderot could not fail to be impressed by this novel aesthetic of terror, which is the cornerstone of Burke's system. He therefore proceeded to reproduce the definition almost *verbatim:* "Tout ce qui étonne l'âme, tout ce qui imprime un sentiment de terreur conduit au sublime."[49]

However, Diderot does not only believe in the possibility of an aesthetic appreciation caused by an immediate reaction to a work. Such a sensation of the sublime can only be at its most powerful the first time that it is experienced. For Burke, this aesthetic sensation of the sublime had to be spontaneous and irrational, and therefore reasoning faculty could have no part in it. Burke is convinced that the overwhelming ideas of eternity and infinity are among the most affecting we have. These call almost exclusively on our feelings and imagination, as according to him our reason is unable to comprehend such awe-inspiring ideas. However, Diderot goes on to develop a more intellectual path

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[47] XI, p.132.
[48] p.39.

to the sublime, which goes beyond the idea of direct impact to one of the sublime being contextualized. To illustrate his point he refers to drama. He gives the example of the sublime words from the tragedy, Horace, "Qu'il mourrût." If someone were not to know Corneille's play or the response of old Horatius and told these words out of context they would seem neither beautiful nor ugly. However, if one knew that this is the response of what another ought to do in combat, one might perceive a kind of courage that does not permit him the belief that it is always better to live than to die, then the words become of interest. Furthermore, if one were to also learn that the combatant is the son of the man interrogated and that he the only son remaining to him and that the young man must deal with three enemies who have already taken the lives of his two brothers and that the old man is a Roman, speaking to his daughter ... then the response, "Qu'il mourrût" which was at first neither beautiful nor ugly has grown more beautiful in the measure that the relations with the circumstances have been developed. The same words end being transformed into the sublime. If one were to change the circumstances and the relations and carry the words, "Qu'il mourrût" from the French theatre to the Italian stage and from the mouth of the old Horatius into that of Scapin, and the words would become burlesque.[50] Here, with clarity and imagination, Diderot illustrates the progressive expansion of the signification of three words through the broadening and changing of their context. The words "Qu'il mourrût", like the form or color in painting, the musical phrase or even the architectural structure can gain its aesthetic signification, not by direct

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[49] XI, p.146.

[50] A.T. II, p.139 & X, p.30. The line, "Qu'il mourrût" had already been used as an example by Boileau, Dubos and Condillac, though never for the same purpose. Cp. Lalo, p.68. "Ces formules font comprendre notamment comment le simple changement d'axe d'un même mécanisme suffit à radicament changer certaines valeurs esthétiques éminemment instables. Le même énigme, sublime quand elle ne se résout que par en haut, et dramatique lorsque la sensibilité y prédomine, devient plaisante lorsqu'elle est resolue par en

reference to nature, but by reference to the context in which it is placed. It becomes rich in connotation and emotive power, or, in the last case, in humor, almost by a process of absorption from that which surrounds it.[51]

Relationship, then for Diderot is not merely juxtaposition of parts, but rather the unity of the elements related. The relationship in general is an operation of the understanding, which considers either a being or a quality insofar as this being or this quality supposes the existence of another being or another quality.[52] The element necessary to complete the relationship, however, need not be fully determined, but rather, Diderot states, it is necessary only that some further element be required. The choice of the completing elements, as seen in the "Qu'il mourrût" example, will determine the total character of the relationship and will be inseparable from the sublime. In the quiet and stoic simplicity that the words have gained through comprehension, we see evidence of the sort of sublime grandeur of gesture that Diderot would discuss in Paradoxe sur le comédien in 1773.[53] Many of the key ideas in the Paradoxe had already been addressed in the Salon de 1767. One such idea is that the artist must master his inspiration and his subjectivity to achieve a perfect work of art. This will best communicate the feeling of sublime emotion on the spectator. Diderot would have greatly appreciated had he lived to see David's later

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bas, et ridicule si elle intéresse surtout notre vie affective. Toutes les parodies des grandes oeuvres sont fondées sur cette instabilité des valeurs."

[51] Cp. Dufrenne, I, p.132. "L'objet esthétique est celui où la matière ne demeure que si la forme ne se perd pas. Les peintres savent bien que les couleurs n'ont leur intensité que par l'accord qu'elles composent, et qu'elles s'éteignent si cette forme est mutilée. Le mot n'a tout son éclat, et aussi sa richesse de sens, que dans l'ordonnace rigoureuse d'un poème où il tient sa partie comme le violon dans l'orchestre, et où parfois, à l'occasion d'un enjambement ou d'une rupture de syntaxe, il retentit comme un coup de cymbale."

[52] A.T. X, p.31

[53] See, Bukdahl. E. "Diderot entre les participants des salons et les grands maîtres." Héros et martyrs. Paris: Hermann, 1995. p.5

FIG: 44 David, *Oath of Horatti.*

works such as *Oath of Horatii,* presented at the *salon* of 1783, just as he appreciated the rare intensity of expression that he witnessed in *Count Potocki,* which Diderot saw in David's studio in 1781.

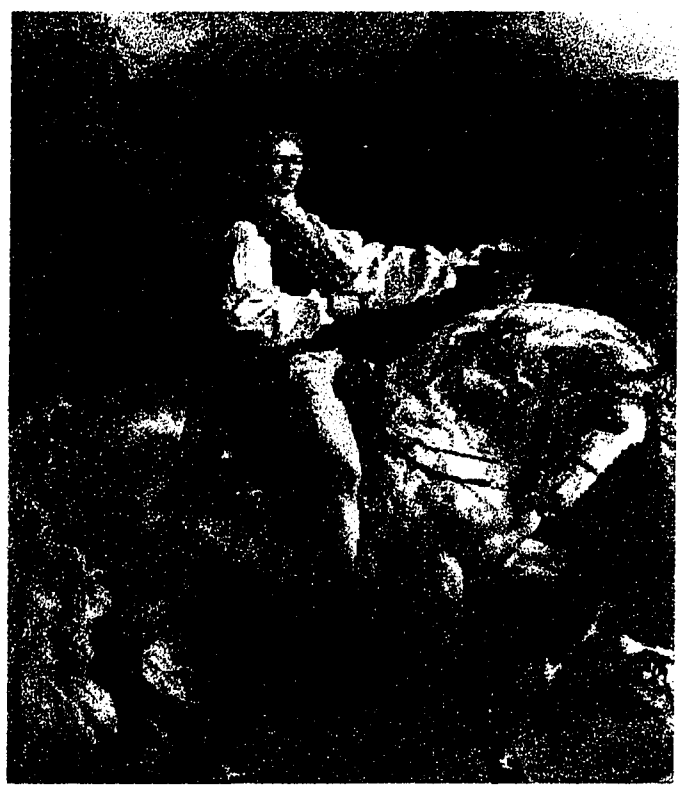

FIG: 45 David, *Count Potocki.*

Thus the relationship is not one of logical necessity, but is based rather upon the need of something further in order to attain comprehension. It is through both the artist creating and the spectator in viewing that a work can gain the correct balance of the complex of relationships forming the work, without any logical explanation of these relationships. Diderot explains that Michelangelo made Saint Peter's dome in the most beautiful shape possible and the geometrician, La Hire, struck by this form traces the curve of it, finds that it is the curve of the greatest resistance.[54] For Diderot, then, a thing does not become an aesthetic object by direct reference to nature, as it does for Dubos, Batteux, and even for Hume and Burke. Nor can beauty be reduced to a formula such as Hogarth's line of beauty, which could serve as an abstract external standard. All that has been said of elliptical, circular, serpentine and undulating lines is absurd. Each part has its line of beauty, and that of the eye is not at all that of the knee. And if the undulating line were the line of beauty of the human body, among a thousand lines that undulate, which would one prefer?[55] Thus for Diderot, neither the subject represented nor a quality or form or series of qualities or forms abstracted from the whole suffices to explain the beauty of the work of art. If a work is to be understood at all, it must be understood in terms of the whole and by a standard internal to itself.[56] Only in such a way can it evoke and serve to focus and unify the fragmentary experience of the spectator, which is the function that finally constitutes the value of the work of art. Science provides a schematic structure in

[54] A.T. X, p.519
[55] A.T. XII, p.124
[56] Cf. May Gita, p.105. "la peinture finalement rejoint le domaine de la poésie et la musique en ce qu'on n'exige plus qu'elle soit exclusivement narrative et imitative, mais qu'elle existe plutôt comme une création absolue qui vaut par ses qualités intrinsèques et irréductibles: organisation originale des éléments, architecture cohérente et homogène des formes et des tons."

which our experience may be ordered, but art focuses concretely on the vast areas our experience, areas which remain unknown or unclear to us for lack of a coherent form.[57]

In our self-love and constant struggle for survival, Burke sees the source of the pleasure we experience in the presence of another's distress: "I am convinced we have a degree of delight in the real misfortunes and pains of others."[58] The truth of this somber observation had not escaped the attention of such seventeenth-century French writers as La Rochefoucauld and La Fontaine.[59] Neither did it escape Diderot's, for moral issues of this kind constantly weighed on his mind and, in spite of his stubborn belief in humanness and benevolence, he was forced to recognize the all-pervading force of self-interest, a truth rephrased in the terms of La Rochefoucauld's famous maxim: "Dans les plus grands malheurs des personnes qui nous sont les plus chères, il y a toujours quelque chose qui ne nous déplaît pas."[60] No eighteenth century theorist, however, would accept such a pessimistic premise without turning it into a more socially positive and useful precept stressing the ties of the individual to his fellow human beings. Burke does just that, with the help of some ingenious reasoning:

> As our Creator has designed we should be united by the bond of sympathy, he has strengthened that bond by a proportional delight; and there most where our sympathy is most wanted, in the distresses of others.[61]

Diderot draws the same consoling conclusion and states that the separateness of

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[57] A.&T. II, p.329. Art develops our facility for perceiving in or among experiences that we have had a thousand times, qualities and relations that we have never perceived.
[58] p.45.
[59] See, La Fontaine, Les Amours de Psyché et de Cupidon, Oeuvres. Ed. H. Régnier, Paris: 1883-97, VIII, p.114: "Je vous soutiens...que les maux d'autrui nous divertissent, c'est à dire qu'ils nous attachent l'esprit."
[60] p.117. Maxime. No. 99 in the 1665 edition, and suppressed by the author in subsequent editions, reads: "Dans l'adversité de nos meilleurs amis nous trouvons toujours quelque chose qui nous déplaît pas."

individuals can be overcome by sensibility and *bienfaisance,* but his reasoning is stripped of Burke's theological argument:

> N'y aurait-il pas à cette idée un côté vrai et moins affligeant pour l'espèce humaine? Il est beau, il est doux de compatir aux malheureux; il est beau, il est doux de se sacrifier pour eux. C'est à leur infortune que nous devons la connaissance flatteuse de l'énergie de notre âme.[62]

Carrying this notion over into the field of aesthetics, Burke demonstrates that this ability to project ourselves into another man's thoughts and emotions and be affected by his joys and griefs, lies at the core of our taste for tragic representation. Like Du Bos, he fastens on the emotional and moral implications of the theatre: "Our delight. . .is very greatly heightened, if the sufferer be some excellent person who sinks under an unworthy fortune."[63] Diderot naturally and wholeheartedly subscribed to this sentimental and moralistic preoccupation with dramatic pathos, as can be attested by his enthusiastic admiration for Richardson and his own theatrical and fictional practices:

> Nous aimons mieux voir sur la scène l'homme de bien souffrant, que le méchant puni. . . C'est un aussi beau spectacle que celui de la vertu sous les grandes épreuves."[64]

Burke realizes that an actual calamity would horrify and repel us, especially one in which there is the danger that we be directly involved. In art, where such a possibility is removed, these spectacles cannot fail to be agreeable: "Objects which in reality would shock, are in tragedy, and such like representations, the source of a very high species of

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[61] p.46.
[62] XI, p.117.
[63] p.46. Dubos' Réflexions Critiques was first published in 1719, and translated into English in 1748. Both Diderot and Burke were well acquainted with this work (I quote from the 1740 edition I, p.110): "Commencez par faire estimer aux hommes ceux que vous voudrez leur faire plaindre. Il est donc nécessaire que les personnages de la tragédie ne méritent point d'être malheureux, ou du moins d'être aussi malheureux qu'ils le sont."
[64] XI, p.118.

pleasure."[65] Indulging his penchant for melodrama, Diderot elaborates upon this difference:

> Il y a encore une autre distinction: c'est l'objet dans la nature et le même objet dans l'art ou l'imitation. Le terrible incendie au milieu duquel hommes, femmes, enfants, pères, mères, frères, soeurs, amis, étrangers, concitoyens, tout périt, vous plonge dans la consternation; vous fuyez, vous détournez vos regards, vous détournez vos oreilles aux cris. Spectateur désespéré d'un malheur commun à tant d'êtres chéris, peut-être hasardez-vous votre vie, vous chercherez à les sauver ou à trouver dans les flammes, le même sort qu'eux. Qu'on vous montre sur la toile les incidents de cette calamité; et vos yeux s'y arrêteront avec joie.[66]

Having established the psychological basis for empathy, Burke deduces that the more realistic the imitation, the greater its emotional appeal: "The nearer tragedy approaches reality, and the further it removes us from all idea of fiction, the more perfect is its power."[67] Similarly, Diderot observes: "Moins la distance du personnage à moi est grande, plus l'attraction est prompte."[68] But can an imitation, no matter how convincing, compete with the fascination that certain sensational spectacles exert on the populace? An execution, for instance?

> Choose a day on which to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have ... and when you have collected your audience... let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is on the point of being executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts.[69]

Diderot utilizes the same illustration, but attributes to curiosity and a sense of importance

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[65] p.44. Dubos had already established this distinction, but without relating the aesthetic pleasure experienced to the innate impulse of self-preservation and to the social one of sympathy (I, p.28). In his famous Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles (1758), Rousseau also compares the effect of an imitated event to that of the event itself. Oeuvres, II, p.32.

[66] XT, p.116. Voltaire also liked to practice this melodramatic bravura piece. For a similar example, see his Oeuvres complètes. 1877-85, XXVII, p.340.

[67] p.47.

[68] XI, p.119.

this preference for real scenes of atrocity over fictional ones:

> On prétend que la présence de la chose frappe plus que son imitation; cependant on quittera Caton expirant sur la scène, pour courir au supplice de Lally. Affaire de curiosité. Si Lally était décapité tous les jours il resterait à Caton ... L'homme du coin devient au retour le Démosthène de son quartier. Pendant huit jours il pérore, on l'écoute . . . Il est un personnage.[70]

It is noteworthy that the same passage reappears, in almost identical form, in Jacques le Fataliste.[71] Imitation is the second social impulse taken up by Burke (sympathy being the first) and related to aesthetic pleasure, notwithstanding the inherent unimportance or even ugliness of the chosen subject:

> When the object represented in poetry or painting is such, as we could have no desire of seeing, in the reality; then I may be sure that its power in poetry or painting is owing to the power of imitation, and to no cause operating in the thing itself.[72]

It goes without saying that the theory of ugliness is an old one, for it had already been expounded by Aristotle, Boileau, Dubos, and others. Nevertheless, Diderot does not hesitate to endorse and rephrase this basic principle:

> Si l'objet nous intéresse en nature, l'art réunira le charme de la chose au charme de l'imitation. Si l'objet vous répugne en nature, il ne restera sur la toile, dans le poème, sur le marbre, que le prestige de l'imitation."[73]

But he cannot resist appending an afterthought inspired by his admiration for the grand style:

> Celui donc qui se négligera sur le choix du sujet, se privera de la meilleure partie de son avantage; c'est un magicien maladroit qui

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[69] p. 47

[70] XI, 120. Voltaire, too, insists that only curiosity, not selfish enjoyment, prompts people to witness executions and tortures. See his XXVII, p.340 and "Curiosité," Dictionnaire philosoplique XVIII, p.306-308.

[71] VI, p.179-180

[72] p.49

[73] XI, p.120

casse en deux sa baguette.[74]

As for our sense of ambition, the last of the triad of "social" drives considered by Burke, shows that it is pleasantly affected when we vicariously partake of the glorious exploits of the fictional in heroes or when a sublime passage in poetry or oratory fills us, as Longinus had observed, with an inner feeling of greatness:

> Now whatever either on good or upon bad grounds tends to raise a man in his own opinion, produces a sort of swelling and triumph that is extremely grateful to the human mind; and this swelling is never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects, the mind always claiming to itself some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates.[75]

Diderot also expresses this ideal:

> Nous allons au théâtre chercher de nous-mêmes une estime que nous ne méritons pas, prendre bonne opinion de nous; partager l'orgueil des grandes actions que nous ne ferons jamais. . .Là prompts à embrasser, à serrer contre notre sein la vertu menacée, nous sommes, bien sûrs de triompher avec elle, ou de la lâcher quand il en sera temps.[76]

Part Two of the Enquiry classifies those natural properties that readily produce the emotion of sublimity. In so doing, Burke considerably extended the concept of the sublime beyond the realm of literary style where it had heretofore been mainly confined.[77] Diderot uses the detailed characteristics that Burke had established in this

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[74] XI, p.120

[75] p.51

[76] XI, p.118. In his Lettre de d'Alembert sur les spectacles. II, p.32, Rousseau makes a similar observation, but uses it to disparage the theatre: "Au fond, quand un homme est allé admirer de belles actions dans des fables et pleurer des malheurs imaginaires, qu'a-t-on encore à exiger de lui? N'est-il pas content de lui-même? Ne s'applaudit-il pas de sa belle âme?"

[77] For an examination of the Longinian sublime as viewed by Boileau, see Jules Brody, Boileau and Longinus. Geneva: 1958, and for an assessment of the early stages of the English approach to the sublime, see Monk, *Op. cit.* p.10-83 and Boulton, *Op. cit.* p.xliv-liv.

domain to add to the precision of his own descriptions of the emotive effects of art, as well as to deepen his criticism of the formalist conception of art. However, Diderot is mostly interested in Burke's interpretation of the "sublime"[78] which according to Diderot reveals a new dimension of artistic experience. Although Diderot had established this concept before writing the Salons,[79] he had been unable to give a coherent analysis of it before his close reading of the Enquiry. Although the *Introduction on Taste* and *Part One*, are rich in illuminating passages they do not offer Burke's most original contribution. The section devoted to the sublime evidently made the greatest impression on Diderot as it yields the densest cluster of textual parallels. It is from here that he borrowed most liberally, but realizing the limitations of Burke's purely rational approach when applied to the arcana of sublimity, he transformed it into a suggestive and poetic synopsis, and avoided delving at length into the psychological causes and mechanism of aesthetic effects. In addition, the style is simplified, rendered more elliptic and direct; rhetorical articulations as well as didactic transitions and illustrations are sacrificed for the sake of expressiveness. For Diderot, to represent or suggest the expression of contrasting emotions and passions in a convincing, arresting fashion was the supreme test of the creative aptitude of an artist or poet. In Ossian he praised the mixture of voluptuousness and impending death:

> Le disciple d'Odin qui expire sur les champs de bataille s'écrie: "Je vous vois, jeunes et brillantes déesses; vous descendez légèrement du haut des airs ... Je vois votre gorge nue ... je vois voltiger vos écharpes bleues"[80]

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[78] Longinus and Boileau's translation are also essential to his thought. See, Alter Hipple's The Beautiful, the Sublime and the Picturesque in Eighteenth Century British Aesthetic Theory and Marjorie Nicolson's Newton Demands a Muse. *Op. cit.*

[79] Indicated by Chouillet, *Op. cit.* 1973, p.430-431

As an enthusiastic proponent of the Burkean sublime, Diderot sought in painting, poetry and drama the unabashed expression of overpowering and preferably contradictory emotions:

> Quant à ce contraste de sentiments et d'images que j'aime dans l'épique, dans l'ode et dans quelques genres de poésie élevée, si l'on me demande ce que c'est, je dirai: c'est un des caractères les plus marqués du génie; c'est l'art de porter dans l'âme des sensations extrêmes et opposées; de la secouer, pour ainsi dire, en sens contraire, et d'y exciter un tressaillemnt mêlé de peine et de plaisir, d'amertume et de douleur, de douleur et d'effroi.[81]

In the Enquiry Burke is above all trying to isolate and underline the psychological factors which could potentially explain why men feel touched by what he calls the sublime. In his exposé, the English writer uses the same empirical method as Dubos and Hogarth. Thus Burke justifies his interpretations of the sublime and the beautiful largely by calling on his own psychological experiences and those of his friends. Burke even considered his Enquiry as both a continuation of Du Bos' aesthetic of emotion and a formal understanding of Hogarth's art and thus an attempt to resolve the aesthetic problems that these two aestheticians had ignored. It is therefore completely normal that positions taken by Diderot in regard to both Du Bos' and Hogarth's ideas bring him to be interested in Burke's conceptions. Diderot, as we have seen, paraphrases and comments on Burke's aesthetic theories in the digressions, which he includes in his articles on Vernet. However, many such examples of Diderot's borrowings from Burke give testimony to his indirect criticism of the latter's artistic conceptions. Burke, unlike Diderot, only had a superficial knowledge of the materials and techniques of the fine arts, a factor that led them often to interpret artistic perceptions very differently.

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[80] A.&T. p.242

FIG: 46 Vernet, *Les Baigneurs.*

Diderot considers that the distinction that Burke makes between the sublime and the beautiful is too abstract and artificial. However, he recognizes that Burke is right to claim that an exhaustive analysis of aesthetic experience is impossible without having recourse to the diverse forms of emotional reaction provoked by artistic and natural phenomena.

In *Part Two* of the Enquiry, turning away from the neoclassical cult of balanced and serenely harmonious proportions, which embody consonance with, and intellectual control of external reality, Burke focuses his attention on those natural phenomena that produce overpowering rather than pleasing effects. Hence, his constant emphasis on the aesthetic value of such irrational feelings as terror, anguish, and melancholy. Like Burke, Diderot is attracted to awe-inspiring scenes whose qualities evoke lofty thoughts and powerful sentiments.

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[81] *Ibid.* p.239

What Diderot searched for in vain among his contemporaries was an art at once grandiose, high-minded, forceful and morally uplifting, as well as intimate and immediate in its depiction of human situations, conflicts and emotions. Diderot yearned for an art that could be spiritually ennobling.[82] Diderot also holds that sublimity is a subjective emotion, an inner state of mind, induced by the grand and wild aspects of nature, especially those that reveal the mysterious, enormous, untamed forces that surround us.

Already in the Entretien sur le fils naturel[83] in 1757, the main protagonist, Dorval, is found in a trance-like state after having fallen under the spell of the "l'horreur secrète" and the "sublime" permeating the countryside where he was meditating. Furthermore, given Diderot's lifelong interest in these matters it is indeed natural that there should occur here and there, in writings prior to the Salon de 1767, allusions to natural scenes, works of art, or human actions, which he terms sublime.[84] These passing references, however, do not

compare in scope with the insights gained from the Enquiry. Burke's fascination for the

[82] See Gita May's "Diderot's Esthetic Quest." Digression and Dispersion. *Op. cit.* p.180-193

[83] See Jacques Chouillet's La formation des idees esthétiques de Diderot. Paris: 1973, p.430. Diderot was influenced by Burke's Enquiry, 1757 when writing Discours sur la poésie dramatique, 1758, but obviously not in Entretiens avec Dorval written in the summer of 1756 appearing early 1757.

[84] Probably the most Burkean distinction between the sublime and beautiful is to be found in the Encyclopédie article *Génie,* 1757, an article claimed by Saint-Lambert, attributed to the latter by Grimm, but included in the Assézat-Tourneux edition of Diderot's works XV, p.35-41 and believed by such scholars as Dieckmann and Wilson to have been largely composed or reworked by the *encyclopédiste* himself. See Herbert Dieckmann's "Diderot's Conception of Genius," *JHR* II, 1941, p.163; Arthur M. Wilson, Diderot: The Testing Years New York: 1957, p.389, n.18). As for the Encyclopédie article *Sublime*, by the Chevalier de Jaucourt, it presents little interest as it is derivative and superficially reproduces theories and formulae of Longinus, Boileau, Batteux, and Sylvain. Another article under the rubric *Sublime*, in the

grandiose scenes of nature leads him to note the effect of spiritual magnitude:

> A level plain of vast extent on land, is certainly no mean idea; the prospect of such a plain may be as extensive as a prospect of the ocean; but can it ever fill the mind with any thing so great as a prospect of the ocean itself?[85]

This thought is faithfully echoed by Diderot: "Une vaste plaine n'étonne pas comme l'océan, ni l'océan tranquille comme l'océan agité."[86] Burke points out that darkness, which stirs in the soul the emotion of dread, can have the same ineffable effect, directly related to the sublime: "To make any thing very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary"[87] an observation which is eagerly seized upon by Diderot: "L'obscurité ajoute à la terreur."[88]

However, it is not only natural phenomena such as the ocean and darkness that can inspire the sublime in the spectator. For Burke and Diderot, formal dimensions of architecture, which according to Hogarth only please the eye, potentially also incite the interests of the spectator's feelings. Both consider their analyses as supplements to those of Hogarth, of whom they had a particularly profound knowledge. It is above all, to explain what he expects from a painting of ruins that Diderot refers to Burke's explanation as to how monuments ought to transmit the idea of the sublime.

Supplément of the Encyclopédie and signed by Marmontel, is equally a "hack" piece.
[85] p.57.
[86] XI, p.146.
[87] p. 58.
[88] XI, p.146.

However, contrary to Burke, Diderot does not believe that it should be the main aim of a ruins painting to elicit the effect of the sublime. Rather, for Diderot beholding a painting of ruins is a way to discover the forgotten dimensions of the past existence and to free oneself of the conventional attitudes of everyday life. This said, the effect of sublime sensation can only enhance the feeling of awe produced by the aspect of eternity and freedom. In Diderot's article on Hubert Robert's *Ecurie,* he refers to Burke's description of the architectural forms which provoke "sublime passion," "grandeur," "vastness," "darkness" and "obscurity." "Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime ... A perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, than an inclined plane."[89]

> Les dimensions pures et abstraites de la matière ne sont pas sans quelque expression ... La ligne perpendiculaire, image de la stabilité, mesure de la profondeur, frappe plus que la ligne oblique.[90]

Of Robert's *Grande Galerie*, Diderot remarks "O les belles, les sublimes ruines! ... Quel effet! quelle grandeur! quelle noblesse!" However, he regrets that Robert compromised the total sublime effect that a painting of ruins is capable of producing by having added figures: "L'obscurité seule, la majesté de l'édifice, la grandeur de la fabrique, l'étendue, la tranquillité, le retentissement sourd de l'espace m'aurait fait frémir."[91]

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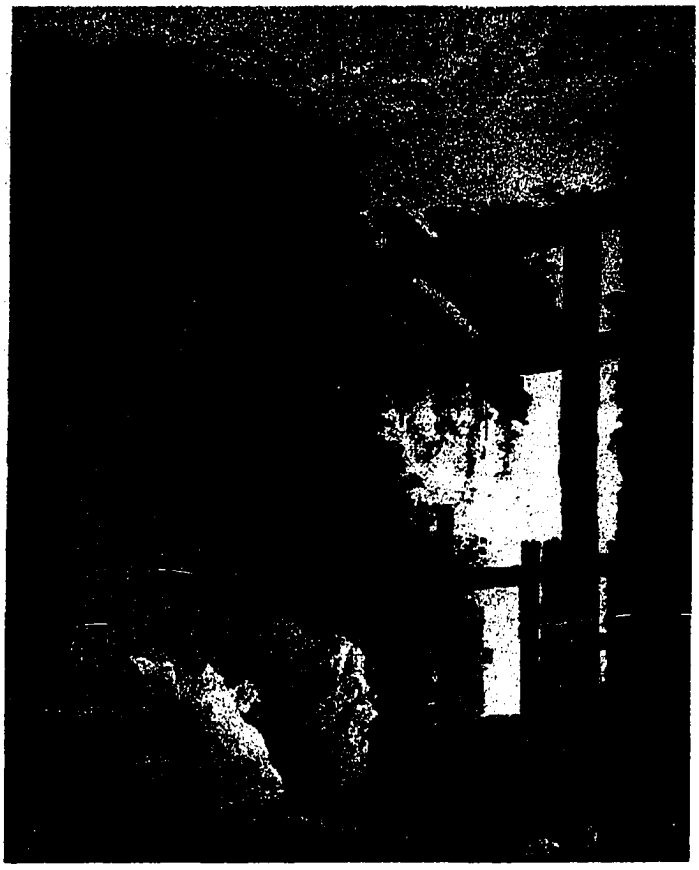
[89] *Op. cit.* p.72.
[90] III, p.166.
[91] III, p.228.



FIGS: 47 & 48 Robert, *Grande Galerie.* (below) ***& Ecurie.*** (above)

Diderot regrets that the *Port de Rome* does not transmit what Burke would call "an idea of the sublime."[92]

FIG: 49 Robert, *Port de Rome.*

Although in the Salon de 1767 it is evident that Diderot's leans on his reading of Burke's analysis of the sublime, he goes beyond the sensualist and empirical aesthetic that Burke exposes. This is particularly evident when Diderot applies Burke's ideas of the aesthetic effects of the sublime on the plastic arts. Burke's definition of the sublime did not leave any place for the creative power of the artist's imagination and genius. If the sublime in nature is caused by violent events in nature, such natural phenomena also have their pictorial universe as Diderot witnesses in the works of Vernet. It is not the work of rigorous copies that give Vernet's landscapes a feeling of the sublime, but Vernet's interpretation of them. For Diderot the expression of the sublime is not only - as it is with Burke - the search for intensity as an end in itself, but also the means of discovering the creative or destructive forces which are beyond the systems and following of specified rules. Vernet's success lies in the convergence of effects of nature and imagination. Furthermore, Vernet's landscapes inspire the convergence of various narrative styles, such as the dialogue with Grimm and the short story describing an imaginary walk. Only in his article on the seventh site, or rather Vernet's seventh landscape painting, does Diderot admit that:

[92] See also Burda, H. "Die Ruine in den Bildern Hubert Roberts." Munich: 1967. Burda does not make the difference between Diderot's conception of the painting of ruins and of the actual form that Robert gives.

> Entraîné par le charme du clair du lune de Vernet, j'ai oublié que je vous avais fait un conte jusqu'à présent: que je m'étais supposé devant la nature, et l'illusion était bien facile; et tout à coup je me suis trouvé de la campagne, au Salon..... Ce n'est donc plus la nature, c'est l'art; ce n'est plus de Dieu, c'est de Vernet que je vais vous parler.[93]

Literary invention expresses the pictorial invention. This fictional detour was necessary to tell of the painter's success. Unlike Burke, Diderot could speak of God and be an atheist. Diderot spoke of creation without giving in to the mirage of Creation. Fiction and religion both have in common the desire to bring about a belief, to encourage faith and vision. Both the violent experiences that in reality shake us without our being able to understand them and the infinite perspectives of the world that are wiped out by every day reality can appear clearly in the world of art - the artist as creator: "C'est qu'en effet les compositions de Vernet prêchent plus fortement la grandeur, la puissance, la majesté de la nature que la Nature elle-même." Thus the paintings in question do not only solicit terror, but also pleasure, the relief that the danger is not real. When Diderot analyses a work by Vernet the *philosophe* will silence his theoretical views in a poetic description in order to best evoke his impressions of the painting that otherwise could not be visualized.

Seeking to extract the essence of Burke's theory, Diderot condenses several passages of particularly impressive examples of sublimity into two long paragraphs, which take the form of a prose-poem and present a revealing instance of stylistic vivification. Illustrations found in different sections under such headings as "Obscurity," "Sound and

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[93] p.224

Loudness," "Suddenness," "Intermitting," and "The Cries of Animals" are combined into one coherent sequence in order to heighten the emotional impact of the images. By this telescoping device Diderot greatly accelerates Burke's pace and gives it new impetus. He also introduces his own peculiar cumulative syntax and rhythmic patterns, which vitalize the text and confer upon it a crescendo effect. In this case, as elsewhere, it is obvious that Diderot was especially concerned with a force of expression more congruous with the inner experience he is describing than Burke's objective analysis. It is also evident that he is writing for the ear as much as the eye. Another stylistic device utilized to increase the immediacy of tone is the transformation of general observations into direct apostrophes to those who, according to Diderot, ought to be acquainted with the workings of sublimity: priests and poets. Towards the end of the development, periods and enumerations are long so as to permit an ample flow of striking images, fraught with mysterious connotations. The over-all result of this recasting and fusion is that whereas Burke notes the effects of sense impressions from the outside, Diderot, through a characteristic psychological *dédoublement* becomes at once observer and subject, and successfully conjures up this elusive magical spirit which is the stuff of poetry. The changes brought on the English text are best illustrated when the passages selected by Diderot are shown alongside his adaptation:

Burke:

> Night adds to our dread, in all cases of danger, and ... the notions of ghosts and goblins, of which none can form clear ideas, affect minds ... Those despotic governments, which are founded on the passions of men, find principally upon the passion of fear;[94] keep their chief as much as may be from the public eye. The policy has been the same in many cases of religion. Almost all heathen temples were dark. . .For this purpose too the druids performed all

[94] The influence of Montesquieu, whom Burke held in high esteem, is perceptible here.

their ceremonies in the bosom of the darkest woods.[95]

Diderot:

> La nuit dérobe les formes, donne de l'horreur aux bruits; ne fût-ce que celui d'une feuille, au fond d'une forêt, il met l'imagination en jeu . .. Les temples sont obscurs. Les tyrans se montrent peu; on ne les voit point . . . Le sanctuaire de l'homme civilisé et de l'homme sauvage est rempli de ténèbres.... Prêtres, placez vos autels, élevez vos édifices au fond des forêts.[96]

Burke:

> In reality a great clearness helps but little towards affecting the passions, as it is in some sort an enemy to all enthusiasms whatsoever.[97]

Diderot:

> La clarté est bonne pour convaincre; elle ne vaut rien pour émouvoir. La clarté, de quelque manière qu'on l'entende, nuit à l'enthousiasme.[98]

Burke:

> The ideas of eternity are among the most affecting we have and yet perhaps there is nothing of which we really understand so little, as of infinity and eternity[99]... The images raised by poetry, are always of this obscure kind.[100]

Diderot:

> Poètes, parlez sans cesse d'éternité, d'infini, d'immensité, du temps, de l'espace, de la divinité, des tombeaux, des mânes, des enfers, d'un ciel obscur, des mers profondes, des forêts obscures, du tonnerre, des éclairs qui déchirent la nue. Soyez ténébreux.[101]

Burke:

> Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind[102]... It may be observed, that a single sound of some strength, though but of short duration, if repeated after intervals, has a grand effect. Few things are more aweful than the striking of a great clock, when the silence of the night prevents the attention from being too much dissipated. The same may be said of a single stroke on a drum, repeated with pauses.[103]... The angry tones of wild beasts are equally capable of causing a great

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[95] p.59
[96] XI, p.147
[97] p. 60
[98] XI, p.147
[99] p.61
[100] p.62
[101] XI, p.147
[102] p.82
[103] p.83

and aweful sensation.[104]

Diderot:

> Les grands bruits ouïs au loin, la chute des eaux qu'on entend sans les voir, le silence, le désert, les ruines, les cavernes, le bruit des tambours voilés, les coups de baguette séparés, par des intervalles, les coups d'une cloche[105] interrompus et qui se font atteindre, le cri des oiseaux nocturnes, celui des bêtes féroces en hiver, pendant la nuit, surtout s'il se mêle au murmure des vents, la plainte d'une femme qui accouche, toute plainte qui cesse et qui reprend, qui reprend avec éclat, et qui finit en s'éteignant; il y a, dans toutes ces choses je ne sais quoi de terrible, de grand et d'obscur. [106]

The *philosophe* must have been pleased with this enumeration of naturally sublime phenomena, for it reappears, in somewhat terser form, in the memorable pantomime scene of Neveau de Rameau. Seized by a frenzy of enthusiasm, the Nephew mimics the different instruments in an orchestra and ends up by acting out all the parts in an opera. At the height of his Dionysian furor, the character summons the primeval forces of nature and irrational human feelings of which Burke spoke in connection with the sublime. And this passage is one of such concentrated emotional, poetic, and rhythmic intensity that Daniel Mornet has rightly called it, "le plus lyrique qu'on puisse trouver dans toute la littérature du dix-huitième siècle:"[107]

> Que ne lui vis-je pas faire? ... c'était une femme qui se pâme de douleur, c'était un malheureux livré à tout son désepoir; un temple qui s'élève; des oiseaux qui se taisent au soleil couchant; des eaux qui murmurent dans un lieu solitaire et frais, ou qui descendent en torrent du haut des montagnes; un orage, une tempete, la plainte de ceux qui vont périr, melée au sifflement des vents, au fracas du tonnerre. C'était la nuit avec ses ténèbres, c'était l'ombre et le silence, car le silence même se peint par des sons. [108]

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[104] p.84

[105] Interestingly, "clock", due to a mistaken translation or deliberate change, becomes "cloche" in the French text. It is more likely, though, that Diderot knowingly chose the tolling of a bell, since it intimates a particularly portentous meaning.

[106] XI, p.147

[107] Daniel Mornet, Le Neveau de Rameau Paris: 1947. p.214

[108] V, p.464 -465

Elsewhere in the Salon de 1767, Diderot succeeds in compressing into two sentences the gist of a seven-page section entitled "Power."[109] Burke's leisurely and genteel exposition, studded with numerous references to the Bible, the Iliad, Lucretius' De Rerum Natura, and other texts, is stripped of all its didactic repetitions and rhetorical ornaments and reduced to a direct, bold statement of the sublime involved in various notions of power. Here again Diderot borrows each one of his examples, while introducing his characteristic rhythmic enumerations within the framework of a free-flowing period in order to enrich his explicit meaning with emotional over tones and create a style imitative of the sublime:

Burke:

> I know of nothing sublime which is not some modification of power.[110]... The emotion you feel is, lest this enormous strength should be employed to the purpose of rapine and destruction.[111] An ox is a creature of vast strength ... A bull is strong too; but his strength is of another kind; often destructive. . the idea of a bull is therefore great .. The horse in the light of an useful beast . . . has nothing of the sublime: but is it thus that we are affected by him, whose neck is cloathed with thunder? The description of the wild ass, in Job, is worked up into no small sublimity, merely by insisting on his freedom.[112] The power which from institution in kings and commanders, has the same connection with terror.[113] In the scripture, whenever God is represented as appearing or speaking, every thing terrible in nature is called up to heighten the awe.[114]

Diderot:

> Les ideés de puissance ont aussi leur sublimité: mais la puissance qui menace émeut plus que celle qui protège. Le taureau est plus beau que le boeuf; le taureau écorné qui mugit, plus beau que le taureau qui se promène et qui paît; le cheval en liberté, dont la crinière flotte aux vents, que le cheval sous son cavalier; l'onagre, que l'âne; le tyran que le roi; le crime, peut-être, que la vertu; les dieux cruels que les dieux bons; et les législateurs sacrés le

[109] p.64-70
[110] p.64
[111] p.65
[112] p.66
[113] p.67
[114] p.69

savaient bien.[115]

Having included vastness of extent and quantity among those natural properties conducive to sublimity, Burke establishes an aesthetic hierarchy of the three dimensions:

> Greatness of dimension, is a powerful cause of the sublime ... Height is less grand than depth; and . . . we are more struck at looking down from a precipice, than looking up at inclined object of equal height . . . A perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, than in inclined plane.[116]

From this Diderot extracts the premise and the example concerning the effect of a perpendicular:

> Les dimensions pures et abstraites de la matière ne sont pas sans quelque expression. La ligne perpendiculaire, image de la stabilité, mesure de la profondeur, frappe plus que la ligne oblique.[117]

As for vastness in a work of art, Burke insists that it has nothing to do with its actual dimensions, but that it derives exclusively from the deceptive optic impression produced on the beholder. Hence the definition of art as a concerted form of illusion: "A true artist should put a generous deceit on the spectators."[118] No precept could be closer to Diderot's heart, since mystification played a major role in his own fictional practices. In his Salons, moreover, he was constantly chiding those painters who, equating a great composition with a large one, neglected the fact that it is above all a "tissu de faussetés." We can therefore hardly be surprised to find in the Salon de 1767 a counterpart of Burke's dictum: "Le grand homme n'est pas celui qui fait vrai, c'est celui qui sait le mieux concilier le mensonge avec la vérité."[119] Such a preoccupation with art as ingenious craftsmanship aiming at a fiction superior to literal truth had been adumbrated in

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[115] XI, p.148
[116] p.72. Note also the influence of Longinus.
[117] XI, p.148.
[118] p.76.

Aristotle's Poetics[120] and Horace's Ars Poetica[121] and had permeated the theories of Renaissance artists and French classical writers like Boileau.[122] In this respect at least, Diderot and Burke judged it wise not to depart from tradition.

As for the classical concept of measure and simplicity, Burke chooses to abandon it and proceeds to extol sumptuous disorder: "Magnificence is likewise a source of the sublime. A great profusion of things which are splendid or valuable in themselves, is magnificent."[123] This pre-Romantic appreciation of a careless display of luxurious objects, which Delacroix was to illustrate so admirably in his famous composition, "La Mort de Sardanapale," obviously appealed to Diderot. For we see him, in effect, renouncing his own dictates concerning moderation in the choice of accessories in order to adopt Burke's notion of a magnificent disorder far more radical than Boileau's prudently calculated "beau disordre" and add to it a specific example for the painter:

> La magnificence n'est belle que dans le désordre. Entassez des vases précieux; enveloppez ces vases entassés, renversés, d'étoffes aussi précieuses. [124]

Because Burke held that a work's effectiveness rests on its power to suggest, evoke, and appeal to the imagination, rather than on an exact copying of nature, he deduced that a sketch or an incomplete painting is often preferable to a meticulously finished product. In order to make his point more convincing, he characteristically appealed to natural science:

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[119] XI, p.254
[120] Chapter, 24
[121] VV, p.151-152
[122] Art Poètique, VV, p.45-46 *et passim.*
[123] p.78.
[124] XI, p.148

> The young of most animals, though far from being completely fashioned, afford a more agreeable sensation than the full-grown; because the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more ... In unfinished sketches of drawing, I have often seen something which pleased me beyond the best finishing.[125]

Although the analogy may seem somewhat naïve today, one cannot fail to be struck by the modernity of the thought. But Diderot had independently arrived at the same conclusion, especially when comparing Greuze's forceful sketches with his sometimes disappointing completed paintings.[126]

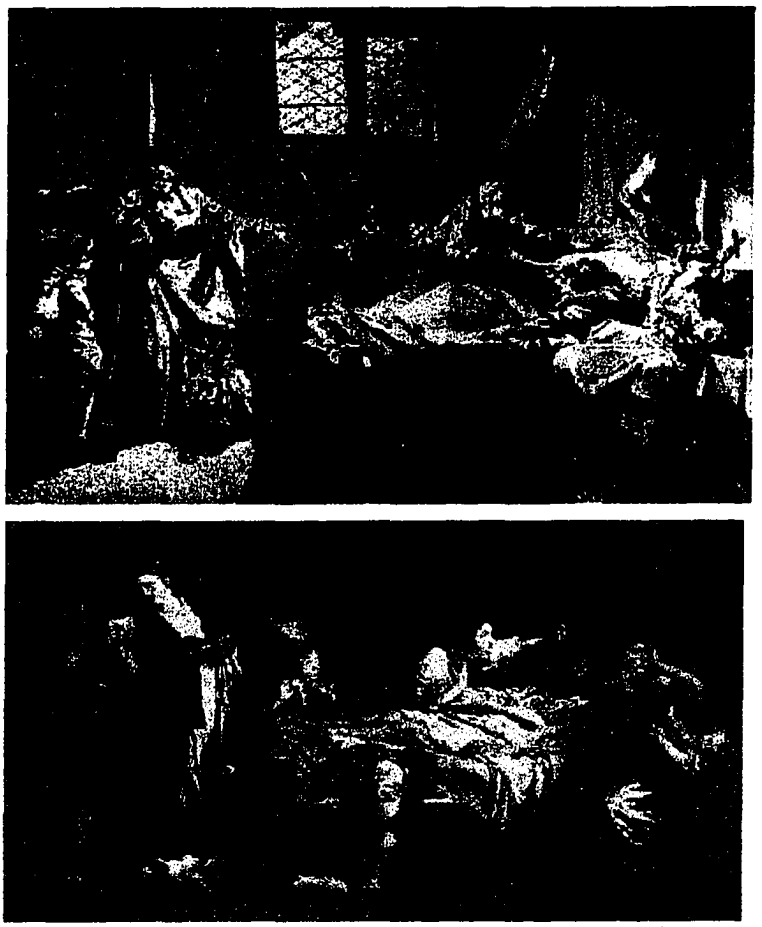

FIG: 50 Greuze, *Le mauvais fils puni.*

[125] p.77. Robert's ruins were in the same vein.
[126] Salon de 1765, X, p.351-359.

His reading of the Enquiry therefore prompted him to support this principle with Burke's analogy:

> Dans les jeunes oiseaux, les petits chats, plusieurs autres animaux, les formes sont encore enveloppées, et il y a tout plein de vie. Aussi nous plaisent-ils beaucoup[127] ... L'esquisse ne nous attache peut-être si fort, qu'en étant indéterminée, elle laisse plus de liberté à notre imagination, qui y voit tout ce qu'il lui plaît.[128]

In the final section of his treatise,[129] Burke posits the same pregnant distinctions between painting and poetry, distinctions that were to be taken up again by Lessing in his famous Laocoon.[130] Whereas previous theorists like Dubos[131] had deplored the inability of poetry to appeal directly to our visual sense, Burke turned this limitation to advantage by stressing that poetry, unlike painting, cannot and should not endeavor to produce clear and precise images. The purpose of painting is to convey the impact of the outside world

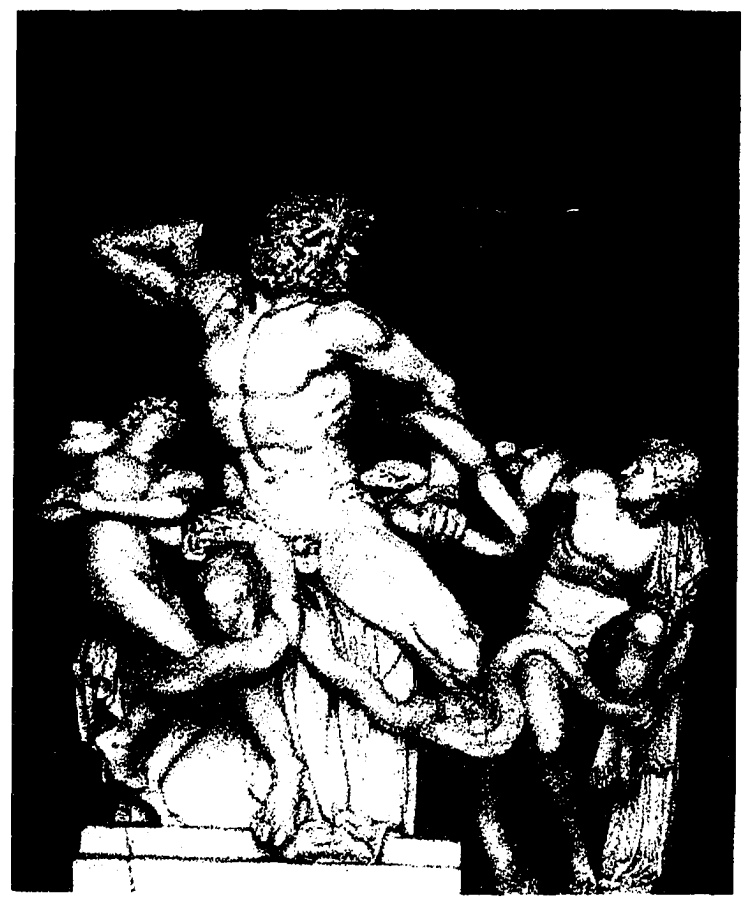

FIG: 51 ***Laocoon Group.***

[127] Here Diderot interpolates a long and rather salacious illustrative anecdote.
[128] XI, p.245-246.
[129] Part, V.
[130] Like Diderot, Lessing read the Enquiry and used certain sections of it in his own work. See J. T.

on the inner self. A detailed rendition of reality, on the other hand, only hinders the overall effect on the reader by drawing his attention to trivial details.

This emphasis on the suggestive and symbolic nature of poetry that was to be put into practice by later writers coincides almost point by point with Diderot's own reasoning in his Salon de 1767.[132] No longer is the poet required to imitate in minute and piecemeal delineations; instead, he is instructed to be inexplicit and to rely on broad brush strokes since these allow for the free interplay of emotional resonances. Once more we are reminded of Diderot's counsel to poets, a direct echo, (as has been shown) of Burke's section on obscurity:[133] "La clarté, de quelque manière qu'on l'entende, nuit à l'enthousiasme. Poètes soyez ténébreux".[134] "To make anything very terrible, obscurity seems in general to be necessary."[135] "L'obscurité ajoute à la terreur."[136] Diderot remarks with regret that " les scènes de ténèbres sont rares dans les compositions tragiques" both in literature and the plastic arts.

Burke quotes the vague, but effective description of Helen by Homer[137] in order to show that good poetry evokes by rhythm and sound, always leaving something unsaid and selecting only the most striking epithets:

> What is said of Helen by Priam and the old men of his council, is

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Boulton, *Op. cit.* p.cxxii-cxxv.
[131] Reflexions. I, p.386-399.
[132] XI, p.327-333.
[133] See above, p.533-534.
[134] XI, p.147.
[135] *Op. cit.* p.58.
[136] III, p.165.
[137] Iliad, III, p.156-158.

> generally thought to give us the highest possible idea of that fatal beauty ... Here is not one word said of the particulars of her beauty; no thing which can in the least help us to any precise idea of her person; but we are much more touched by this manner of mentioning her than by these long and laboured descriptions of Helen, whether handed down by tradition, or formed by fancy, which are to be met in some authors ... In reality, poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is to affect rather by sympathy than imitation.[138]

Both Diderot and Lessing refer in the same spirit to the passage of the Iliad commented on by Burke. In the Salon of 1767 we read:

> C'est lorsque Hélène passe devant les vieillards, et qu'ils se récrient, qu'Hélène est belle. . . Si une figure marche, peignez-moi son port et sa légéreté: je me charge du reste. Si elle est penchée, parlez-moi de ses bras seulement et de ses épaules: je me charge du reste. Si vous faites quelque chose de plus, vous confondez les genres; vous cessez d'être poète, vous devenez peintre ou sculpteur. Je sens vos détails, et je perds l'ensemble.[139]

Burke goes on to cite the terrible picture that Lucretius, in De Rerum Natura[140] has drawn of religion in support of his contention that poetry need not be slavishly descriptive in order to stir powerful emotions [141]and Diderot has recourse to these verses to illustrate the same point.[142] Burke[143]and Diderot [144] further exemplify this idea with Homer's symbolic characterization of discord [145] already mentioned by Longinus[146] and Virgil's similar portrayal of gossip.[147] The implication of these illustrations is that if poetry, unlike painting, cannot represent specific physical attributes, it can, much more effectively than

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[138] p.172.
[139] XI, 328-329. Diderot's style is radically different: the poet's "I." For Lessing's analogous observation, see Laocoon, trans. Ellen Fortliingham, New York: 1957, p.136.
[140] I, p.62-67.
[141] p.172.
[142] XI, 331. In view of Burke's position as a staunch defender of religion, it is somewhat surprising to see him quote some of Lucretius' most anti-religious lines.
[143] p.64.
[144] XI, 332-333.
[145] Iliad, IV, p.442-44.

painting, transcend literalism and suggest movement as well as mythical, supernatural figures and gigantic, action-filled scenes. Furthermore, owing to the successive effects of sequential images and aural patterns, it is not confined, as is painting, to the choice of a single moment.

> To represent an angel in a picture, [remarks Burke] you can only draw a beautiful young man winged; but what painting can furnish out any thing so grand as the addition of one word, "the angel of the Lord?"[148]

Diderot, for his part, concludes his dissertation on the divergences between painting and poetry on an identical note, adding an ironical quip aimed especially at the mincing taste of rococo artists:

> A nos peintres: Certes, messieurs, l'idée qu'on prend de l'ange du Livre de la Sagesse, n'est pas celle de vos petites têtes joufflues et soufflant des bouteilles, dont vous garnissez vos tableaux, que je dis petits, parce qu'ils seraient toujours petits, quand ils auraient cinquante pieds de long.[149]

Both men give subtle analysis of the nature of words as psychological reality and conclude that words have had in every mind their full intellectual-imaginative-affective meaning when we acquire them, but then the meaning became more and more held in reserve until only an instantaneous association is left. Burke, to show that we do not realize pictorially the words of a discourse, gives a clumsy example of an imagined reading of a geographical description of the Danube, with Germany, Austria, Vienna, Hungary thrown in. Because of its heaviness, the example proves nothing. Diderot

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[146] On the Sublime, IX.
[147] Aeneid, IV. p.173-117.
[148] p.174.
[149] XI, p.333.

improves on it by substituting some lines of Boileau after Homer,[150] and Diderot's remarks are presented as a digression in the midst of a conversation: "j'aurais été à la fin de mon oraison que vous en seriez encore au premier mot" ... that is, if one actually tried to visualize the words. Such is the psychological reality with which the writer has to deal. Diderot is only too aware of the dim suggestive power of words, and unlike Burke he concerned himself with techniques of startling and prodding the reader through striking angles of expression. Richardson, says Diderot, makes you perceive what passes before your eyes every day without your ever seeing it. The sensations are received, but they remain diffuse and unfocused. The value of the unity of art lies ultimately in giving the experience of the individual, or of the society, back to him in an expressive artistic form. This notion of the concrete unity, the inter-penetration of the elements in an aesthetic relationship, draws us closer to the analogy between the work of art and the living organism. This analogy becomes more marked in Diderot's writings as his philosophical thought moves further from a mechanical conception toward a more distinctly organic conception of reality.

In the last part of his book, Burke also discusses the relationship of words to ideas. Like Locke, he is aware of the unavoidable imperfection of all verbal communications: "Indeed it is impossible, in the rapidity and quick succession of words in conversation, to have ideas both of the sound of the word, and of the thing represented."[151] Diderot shares a similar preoccupation with the psychology of language:

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[150] Which introduce "les Enfers, le Styx, Neptune avec son trident..." See J. J. Mayoux's article "Diderot and the technique of Modern Literature." *MLA*. Vol. 43, 1936. p.518-531.

> Quoi! tandis que je parlais, vous vous occupiez de l'énumération des ideés comprises sous les mots abstraits; votre imagination travaillait à se peindre la suite des images enchainées de mon discours; vous n'y pensez pas, cher abbé; j'aurais été à la fin de ma description, que vous n'eussiez pas esquissé la première figure de mon tableau.[152]

Diderot also concurs with Burke that whereas children are capable of envisaging words and associating them with concrete sensations, feelings, and notions, as they grow older they gradually lose this power, and language becomes for them an abstract combination of indistinct symbols eliciting weakened responses.[153] Consequently, broad concepts of morality, which do not derive from direct experience or which involve complex relationships of ideas, can only be inaccurately apprehended in spite of their wide usage:

> Nobody, I believe, immediately on hearing the sounds, virtue, liberty, or honor, conceives any precise notion of the particular modes of action and thinking, together with the mixed and simple ideas, and the several relations of them for which these words are substituted; neither has he any general idea, compounded of them.[154]

Since Diderot's linguistic tenets are equally founded on relativity and sensationalism, he too questions our ability to perceive abstract terms:

> Pourquoi, me disais-je, les mots les plus généraux, les plus saints, les plus usités: loi, goût, beau, bon, vrai, usage, moeurs, vice, vertu, instinct, esprit, matière, grâce, beauté, laideur, si souvent prononcés, s'entendent-ils si peu, se définissent-ils si diversement?[155]

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[151] p.167.
[152] XI, p.133.
[153] Enquiry. p.165, and Salons. XI, p.133-134.
[154] p.164.
[155] XI, p.123.

This problem evidently haunted the mature *philosophe* for he rephrased it in almost identical terms in the Neveau de Rameau, where it serves as a recurrent leitmotiv.[156] This time it is Rameau, the Nephew who scoffs at our poor understanding of general names:

> Quand je prononce le mot chant, je n'ai pas de notions plus nettes que vous et la plupart de vos semblables quand ils disent: "Réputation, blâme, honneur, vice, vertu, pudeur, décence, honte, ridicule."[157]

Following Locke's division of words into modes, substances, and relations,[158] Burke classifies them into three categories, according to their more or less direct connection with actual sensations and the complexity of relationships involved.[159] Diderot simplifies this classification, reducing it to two types:

> Il n'y a dans un discours que des expressions abstraites qui désignent des idées, des vues plus ou moins générales de l'esprit, et des expressions représentatives qui désignent des êtres physiques.[160]

But whereas purely empirical and objective thinkers like Locke and Condillac had come to distrust and even disparage the faultiness and lack of precision in the meaning of words, Diderot and Burke depart at this point from the rational approach. In the case of poetry compared to painting, both endeavor to reveal the aesthetic and affective possibilities of language, imperfect though it may be.[161] Burke points out that if words used in everyday speech no longer raise concrete images and ideas, they still can have a powerful appeal over the imagination through mental association and the emotive effect produced by a speaker's forceful delivery:

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[156] V, p.396, p.419, p.458, *et passim.*
[157] V, p.458.
[158] Essay concerning Human Understanding. II, p.xii.
[159] p. 164. For a detailed study of this aspect of Burke's aesthetics, see Wecter, *Op. cit.* p.169-172.
[160] XI, p.132.

> All verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect, if the speaker did not call in his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself. Then, by the contagion of our passions, we catch a fire already kindled in another, which probably might never have been struck out by the object described.[162]

Diderot's attitude in this respect is curiously ambivalent, for as a philosopher and scientific writer he is drawn to Locke's and Condillac's mistrust of language in the communication of ideas, but as a literary artist he is deeply conscious of its expressive value and constantly strives to transcend the purely rational. His own style testifies to his uncanny ability to surpass cool logic by dazzling intuitions and audacious metaphors, and in his dialogues he admirably recreates the patterns of oral discourse. Furthermore, his pronouncement on this question, which is so central to his literary theories and practices, could not be closer to Burke's:

> Nous avons laissé là de côté l'idée ou l'image, pour nous en tenir au son ou à la sensation. Un discours prononcé n'est plus qu'une longue suite de sons et de sensations primitivement excitées. Le coeur et les oreilles sont en jeu, l'esprit n'y est plus; c'est à l'effet successif de ces sensations, à leur violence, à leur somme, que nous entendons et jugeons.[163]

From this it follows that the variety of *accents* is almost infinite and compensates for the paucity of human speech. According to Burke, these vocal modifications have the same expressive purpose as the rich modulations of "the natural cries of all animals."[164] But

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[161] Cohen, H. "Diderot's Awareness of the Limits of Literature in the Salons." *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century,* 264, 1989. p.432.
[162] p.175-176.
[163] XI, p.134.
[164] p.84.

what is a passing remark in the Enquiry, becomes a key idea both in the Salon de 1767[165] and in the Neveau de Rameau.[166] In Diderot's works the instinctive, primeval voice of nature is not only held up as the source of language, but also as the guiding model for all sublime poetry and music: "C'est au cri animal de la passion à dicter la ligne qui nous convient."[167]

Even before seriously studying the Enquiry, Diderot had already been confronted with and felt the importance of the effect of the sublime in the appreciation of art. He had contemplated numerous works which contain the natural and historical phenomena which Burke considers as rich "sources of the sublime." The gloomy funeral scene by Deshays, *Artémise au tombeau de Mausole*, which had been presented at the *salon* of 1765, had impressed Diderot with "de l'admiration, de la douleur, de la terreur et du respect."[168] Burke had used these exact sorts of expressions in his description of "sublime passion:" "Astonishment - with some degree of horror ... is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence and respect."[169] Although the Enquiry did not change Diderot's basic attitude or set him thinking in entirely new directions, this work helped him view important issues in a new light.[170] The concept of "delightful horror"[171] is "the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime."[172]

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[165] XI, p.135
[166] V, p.458
[167] V, p.466
[168] II, p.100
[169] *Op. cit.* p.57
[170] Cartwright, M. "Diderot et l'expression: un problème de style dans la formation d'une critique d'art." *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century.* Geneva: 1967, LV. p.654
[171] This concept refers for example to the contradictory sensation of feeling pleasure in fear.
[172] *Op. cit.* p.73

Also at the *salon* of 1765, Fragonard's *Callirhoé et Corésus* and Deshays with his paintings of martyrs in 1761 had provoked an emotional experience in Diderot which corresponds exactly to what Burke would define as "delightful horror."[173]

FIG: 52 Deshays, *Saint André.*

FIG: 53 Fragonard's *Callirhoé et Corésus.*

FIG: 54 Vernet, *La Rochelle.*

Reading the characteristics of Burke's concept of "delightful horror" provoked by scenes of nature that are deserted and grandiose surely reinforced Diderot's conviction that Vernet's canvas incited such an effect. Of one such painting presented at the Salon of 1767 Diderot notes: "Un plaisir accompagné de frémissement ... Je ne pouvais m'arracher à ce spectacle mêlé de plaisir et d'effroi."[174]

The Enquiry also afforded Diderot a wealth of arguments and examples confirming critical intuitions to which he had not yet given adequate expression. In Burke's observations on the psychological and aesthetic workings of the "sublime" of natural scenery connoting power, vastness, mystery, magnificence and in his apt delimitation between painting and poetry, as well as in his general preoccupation with those perceptions that lie beyond the ken of reason, Diderot found a lucid formulation of ideas singularly consonant with his own orientation.

It would be a gross oversimplification to regard Diderot's borrowings from the Enquiry as merely clever plagiarism, for, as is evident from the confrontation of their texts, they involve a rethinking, a creative and masterful reworking of the original passage. In

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[173] II, p.197 & I p.121-122
[174] III, p.134. The exact painting has not been identified.

addition to synthesizing Burke's theories, Diderot suffuses them with his own experience as a philosopher and literary artist, and manages to achieve an entirely individual style. In this connection, we are reminded of the definition he gave of the man of genius opposed to the unoriginal imitator. The seeds of the Rêve de d'Alembert are found in the Salon de 1767, in which he begins an aesthetic reflection of genius and creative inspiration:[179]

> Le génie attire fortement à lui tout ce qui se trouve dans la sphère de son activité, qui s'en exalte sans mesure. L'imitateur n'attire point, *il est attiré; il s'aimante par le contact avec l'aimant, mais il* n'est pas l'aimant.[180]

And if Delacroix's description of the creative act as "une manière particulière à chacun de voir, de coordonner et de rendre la nature"[181] is accurate, then Diderot dealt with the Enquiry as the artist does with nature itself: that is reducing it to a repertory of themes to be drawn upon at will. Like the artist, he freely exercised this prerogative to choose external elements (whether they be taken from rough-hewn life or as already shaped by men's thoughts) and transmute them into a new order and personal vision of the world.

An influence can best make itself felt when there is a basic affinity of outlook. Through his borrowing of Burke, Diderot seeks to demonstrate the importance that the creative artist be sensitive to the increased power and intense effectiveness on the beholder of a work of art if an expression of the sublime has an integral part. As feelings play an essential part for Diderot in the appreciation of a work, the *philosophe* refers most to

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[179] See, Bukdahl, p.448-451. *Op. cit.*
[180] II, p.411.

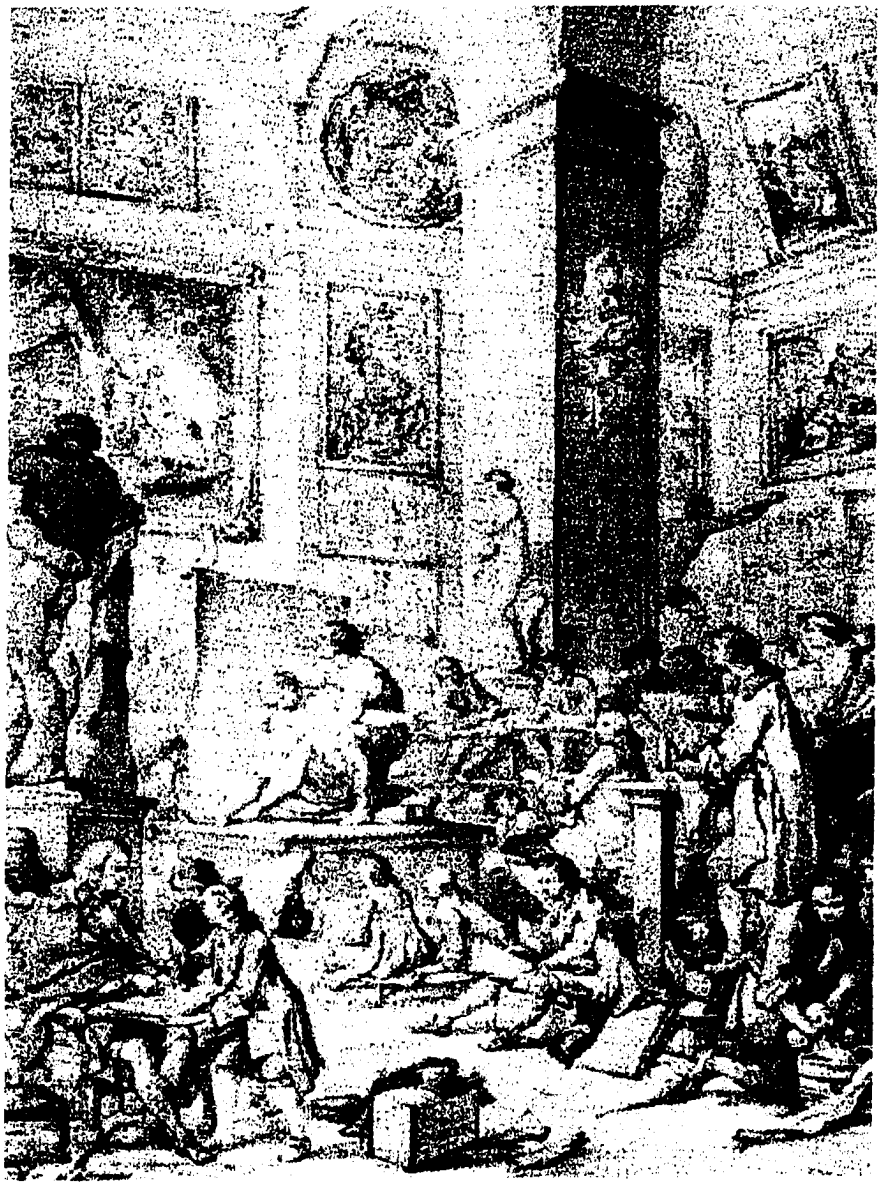

FIG: 55 Natoire, *Ecole du modèle.*

Burke's theories only to justify his own understanding of the effects provoked by the plastic arts and to give a foundation for his own criteria for expressiveness in painting.[182]

[181] Eugène Delacroix, *Journal,* Ed. André Joubin. Paris: 1932, III, p.222.
[182] Rather than the servile copying of a master's work or the study of models in a studio setting as encouraged by the *Académie.*

Chapter Three: Diderot vis-à-vis German Art Criticism.

A case study of Hagedorn.

In his Pensées détachées sur la peinture, Diderot introduces a whole series of aphorisms, some shorter some longer, which offer a synthesis of the general aesthetic questions on the nature and aim of the plastic arts, at the same time as elaborating on many of the ideas that Diderot had expressed in the Salons and Essais sur la peinture. However, a methodical study of Pensées sur la peinture la sculpture et la poésie pour servir de suite aux Salons allows one to see that two thirds of Diderot's text paraphrases sometimes quite freely and sometimes quite literally the aesthetic text of Christian Louis Hagedorn,[1] Betractung über die Malerei.[2] In Betrachtung, Hagedorn reviews the different European academic theories on the essence of the plastic arts, consecrating a certain number of chapters to the evolution of painting in Europe and especially since the Renaissance.

Why did Diderot rely so heavily on a text whose precision far from merited that of the other texts from which he had borrowed? Firstly, because Hagedorn had a particularly vast knowledge of the history of art. Furthermore, Hagedorn, who was eminently eclectic, managed to make a synthesis of numerous aspects of the European aesthetic tradition, to which Diderot had alluded in his Salons. Also, and perhaps most importantly as I shall show in this chapter, Hagedorn's work helped Diderot in his projected quest of defining his own position relative to the principal aestheticians of the time.

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[1] Diderot's indebtedness to Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn has also been discussed by J. Koscziusko, "Diderot et Hagedorn," *RLC*, xvi, 1936, p.635-669 and Paul Vernière, "Diderot et C. L. de Hagedorn: Une étude d'influence," *RLC*, xxx, 1956, p.239-254 and Friedrich Bessenge, "Diderots Pensées und Hagedorns Betrachtung." *Germanisch-Romanishe Monatsschrift*. ed. C. Winter. Heidelberg: 1967, p.254-272

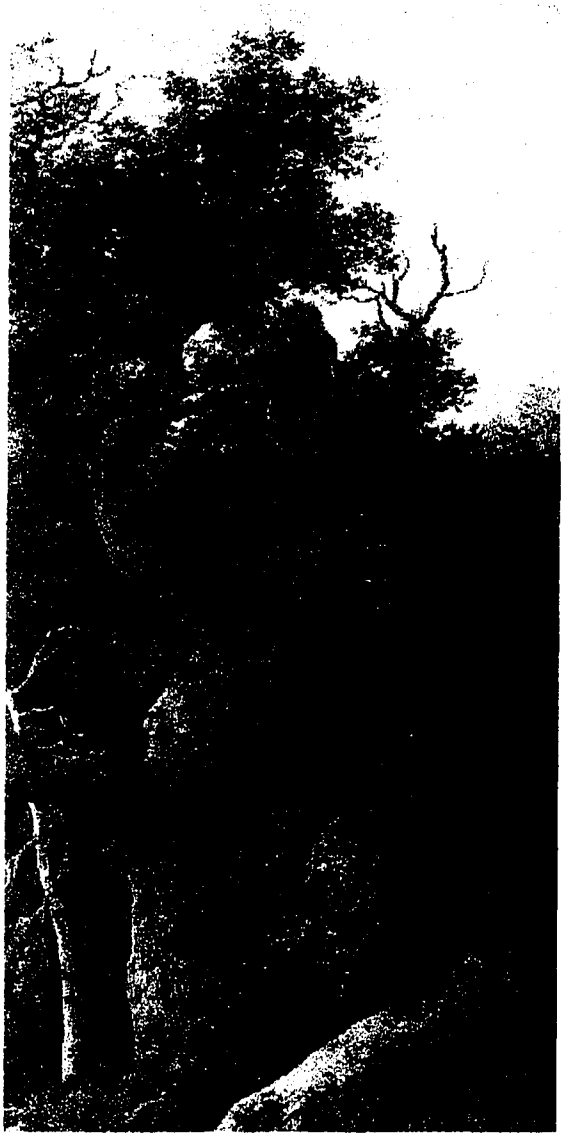

FIG: 56 Ruisdael, *The Marsh.*

Born in Hamburg in 1712, Hagedorn was the brother of a famous poet. In his diplomatic career he found enough leisure time to interest himself in the fine arts. He soon became an amateur critic and collector and even tried his hand at engravings, an activity for which he had a certain talent. Slowly he began to develop a reputation as a connoisseur.[3] The Betrachtung had already obtained quite a good success in the original version and caught the attention of Moses Mendelsohn, who wrote an article full of praise for it.[4] Moreover, Hagedorn had a very open mind to new tendencies. Certainly he remained faithful to the hierarchy of genres and shows himself to be respectful of the ideal of antiquity and the Italian Renaissance, but at the same time reveals a very authentic enthusiasm for genre painting, notably for landscapes such as those by Ruisdael.

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[2] Two Volumes, 1762.
[3] He even published a catalogue of his own collection in French. Lettre à un amateur de peinture avec clairissements historiques sur un cabinet et les auteurs de tableaux qui le composent. Dresden: Walther, 1755.

Like Diderot, he does not hesitate to publicize his preference for Teniers rather than Watteau and the rococo artists.

FIG: 57 Teniers, *Monkeys in a Tavern.*

What is more, there is even the possibility that Hagedorn and Diderot actually met. In response to Catherine II's invitation, Diderot set off for Russia in August of 1773. On the way he stopped several times to view various art collections in Germany and Holland. This is how Diderot discovered many paintings that had previously been unknown to him, when he had written his first five Salons. At the same time, Diderot was able to develop his knowledge about the painters who had so often served him as models of comparison, such as Raphael, Veronese, Berchem and Rembrandt in the Essais sur la peinture:

> Quand on considère certaines figures, certains caractères de tête de Raphaël, de Carrache et d'autres, on se demande où ils les ont pris. Dans une imagination forte, dans les auteurs dans les nuages dans les accidents du feu, dans les ruines, dans la nation où ils ont recueilli les premiers traits que la poésie a ensuite exagérés. Ces hommes rares avaient de la sensibilité, de l'originalité, de l'humeur. Ils lisaient, les poètes surtout.[5]

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[4] This has been quoted at length by Jean Huber in the preface to his French version of the Betrachtung.
[5] In the Pensées, Diderot also remarked: "On trouve les poètes dans les peintres et les peintres dans les poètes. La vue des grands maîtres est aussi utile à un auteur, que la lecture des grands ouvrages à un artiste." *pensée*, no.1, EST 749.

FIG: 58 Berchem, *Italian Landscape with a Bridge.*

Hagedorn was the Director of Fine Arts, not only in Leipzig, but also in Dresden. Diderot went to his Gallery in Dresden on the 14th of September 1773, where he was surely welcomed by Hagedorn. Whilst showing the Gallery to Diderot, Hagedorn no doubt took advantage to discuss the aesthetic questions that Diderot had addressed in the Salons and which he probably read in Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire.* In turn, Diderot was no doubt impressed by Hagedorn's erudition and vast research.

At the end of 1775, Diderot's friend, Jean Huber made a translation of the Betrachtung and may well have sent him a copy directly. The translation, Réflexions sur la peinture, received Diderot's immediate attention, despite Grimm's description in the

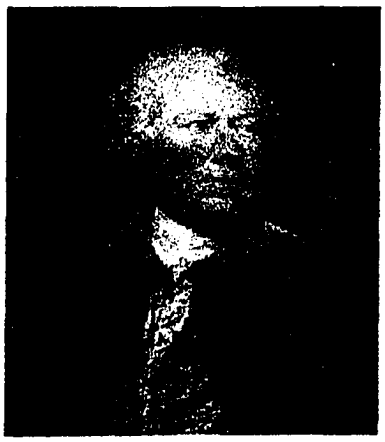

FIG: 59 Greuze, *Wille.*

Correspondance littéraire of its being "assez mal traduit" and having "fait aucune sensation à Paris".[6] Moreover, Diderot had probably heard a lot about Hagedorn and his work from their mutual friend, the German engraver, Wille. Wille by this time had already acquired a European reputation and was corresponding with important critics and amateurs in his native Germany. Indeed, Wille was one of Diderot's first artist-friends and had initiated Diderot into many trade secrets as they shared "le même grenier" from 1740 in Diderot's bohemian years.[7] However, whether or not Wille had excited Diderot's interest in Betrachung or whether Diderot actually met Hagedorn, or whether Jean Huber indeed sent Diderot a copy of his translation, the fact remains that Réflexions came into Diderot's hands as soon as they were published. As the Pensées were written between 1775 and 1776, it is undeniable that the French version of Hagedorn's treatise was the catalyst that incited Diderot to write his own great theoretical synthesis of the plastic arts.

In Hagedorn's art criticism, he frequently underlines the importance for those who, like himself wrote about academy exhibitions, of knowing the history of art perfectly. It is therefore probably for this reason that on his return from Russia, Diderot began to write a

[6] Cf. Paul Vernière's, "Diderot et Hagedorn," p.240

[7] Jacques Proust mentions the relationship between Wille and Diderot in his article, "L'initation artistique de Diderot." *Gazette des beaux-arts,* April, 1960. p.225. See also, the Salon of 1765 in which Diderot makes an allusion to this cohabitation. Oeuvres complètes. X, p.320 Salons. Ed. Seznec-Adhémar, Oxford: 1957-1967. Cf. Wille's Memoirs. Paris: Renouard, 1857. II, p.30. On the 15th November, 1775 Wille thanks Huber for having sent him his translation of Hagedorn's treatise. The original edition appeared in 1762 in Leipzig. However, Diderot, who could not read German, certainly could not have consulted this. The two volume French translation was also published in Leipzig, by Gaspar Fritsch.

sort of "encyclopedia" of aesthetics which he called Noms des peintres.[8] Noms des peintres presents not only many artists and their work, but also articles on many principal aestheticians. This work was never completed and exists only in the form of rough articles. While writing the Salons, Diderot had realized the great importance of having an in depth knowledge of art history and thanks to Hagedorn's work, he acquired precious information about several painters and theorists of whom he had practically known nothing. However, his own project remained in skeletal form and certainly Noms des peintres et leur genre can be considered as nothing more than working notes. Although a few entries reflect his own impressions, most are taken from Hagedorn. It was obviously Diderot's intention to develop his notes into more substantial articles in which he would not only include the painters, works and art theorists mentioned by Hagedorn, but also the artists he himself had already discussed in the Salons. Chardin was the only French painter on whom Diderot's commentary was developed in his incomplete work.[9] A close reading of this draft and Hagedorn's Réflexions demonstrates that 95% of it literally paraphrases Hagedorn's thoughts, not only on northern painters, but also on artists of French and Italian origin. This said, Diderot only once mentions the source from which he had so freely borrowed, in the article on Hutchenburg. In all other cases, Diderot's borrowings take the form of indirect quotes.

FIG: 60 Chardin, *Urne en cuivre.*

[8] See, R. Lewinter's Oeuvres complètes. Vol. XII, 1971. The whole fragment dedicated to this "encyclopedia," which Diderot called Noms des peintres, is only 17 pages.

[9] In the Salons Diderot had referred to Chardin as a magician. "Il est permis à un grand maître d'oublier quelquefois qu'il y a des couleurs amies." Salon de 1767, p.457.

> Huchenburg: Peintre de bataille. Sans intelligence des lumières et des couleurs, sans harmonie de ton. Hagedorn en dit autant de van der Meulen.[10]

However, it is not my intention here to give an extensive examination of the draft of Noms des peintres et leur genre, but rather to use Diderot's Pensées détachées as a comparative text with which to compare Hagedorn's Réflexions. I will only refer to the Noms des peintres if something from it that was inspired by Hagedorn, is again developed in Pensées.[11] For example, in Noms Diderot simply writes of Elzheimer: "Grand paysagiste, mort de misère. Horizon bas." In Réflexions Hagedorn had written: "Mourût à Rome accablé de misère et de chagrin...Les ouvrages de Mathieu ou plutôt des yeux qui voyaient la nature ont instruit Elzheimer à placer le point de vue plus bas[12]" In the Pensées, Diderot develops the details that Hagedorn gave of Elsheimer's tragic destiny to illustrate the difference between the modest retribution that an artist obtains in his life time for his work and the considerable amount for which one pays for them after his death.[13]

FIG: 61 Elzheimer, *St. Christopher.*

[10] Noms. p.393 cf. Réflexions, II p.167.
[11] In Pensées détachées Diderot also transported several of Hagedorn's general definitions of aesthetic terms however, they are more developed than in Noms des peintres. For example, "le naive:" a person or a thing that is marked by a natural simplicity and grace. Réflexions. I, p.21 and I, p.391 and in Lewinter's edition of Diderot's work, p.390.
[12] Réflexions. I, p.354 - p.357.
[13] See, Koscziusko's "Diderot and Hagedorn." *Révue de littérature comparée*. 1936. p.635-669.

In Noms, unless Diderot was particularly moved in his note-taking from Réflexions, his articles remain very close to Hagedorn's text, although he often shortens Hagedorn's commentaries. Sometimes, Diderot even uses different terms and turns from his German colleague. For example, as in the article on Castiglione, Hagedorn writes:

> Rien de plus admirable que la richesse de ses grandes compositions et la hardiesse de son pinceau moelleux; mais il semble aussi que dans ses petits tableaux de chevalet, il n'a pas su éviter un certain effet désagréable, en offrant à la vue et en éclairant d'un même jour ses troupeux distribués presqu'uniformément sur le premier plan sous un point de vue élevé.[14]

FIG: 62 Castiglione, *L'Adoration des bergers.*

Diderot writes:

[14] Réflexions. I, p.336

> Composition riches, pinceau hardi. Peintre d'animaux. Dans ses petites compositions effet désagréable de ses animaux éclairés d'un même jour et presque uniformément distribués, sur le premier plan et sous un point de vue élévé, ou horizon haut.[15]

What is perhaps particularly interesting about this incomplete "encyclopedia" of art is the commentaries devoted to art theorists. Although these are rarely original[16] and are usually merely extracted from Hagedorn, these commentaries demonstrate that Diderot's curiosity went beyond just the artists and their work to an untiring and conscientious study of art theory. This is particularly pertinent when opposing the argument that after the Salon of 1767, Diderot's enthusiasm for the plastic arts had started to flag. Indeed, the project proves that Diderot not only wanted to further his research on the theoreticians that he knew,[17] like Félibien, Du Fresnoy, Hogarth, de Piles, Testelin, da Vinci, Watelet and Winkelmann, but also to learn about those theoreticians like Baldinucci, Barbaro, Durer, van Goo, Lamaze, Posse, Presser, Sandrart and Schegel to whom Hagedorn had drawn his attention.

Most importantly for my study of the influence of Hagedorn on Diderot, is that it was only during Diderot's trip to Russia after he had met Hagedorn that Diderot was inspired to order and crystallize his own work on aesthetics of the past twenty years. Obviously, the artistic universe that manifested itself before his eyes on this trip was so new and so imposing that he was obliged to have the help of a specialist to best assimilate everything. Who could be better qualified to do this than Hagedorn, the erudite connoisseur who had

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[15] Noms. p.390.
[16] For example, this article on Sulzer, "A écrit comme Batteux." Noms. p.100.
[17] See *Chapter One: Part One* of this thesis.

personally guided Diderot through his Gallery in Germany and given him in Réflexions the information that he needed to structure his own on-going artistic questions.

Both Noms des peintres et leur genre and Pensées détachées sur la peinture were essentially written between 1775 and 1776. No doubt if Diderot had had more time the two works might well have developed into one coherent work.[18] Diderot may even have imagined that his "dictionary" of painters and their work could be a compendium of art history related to his Pensées. Possibly, Diderot had hoped to create a French pendant to Betrachtung, which would not only have incorporated the essential points of Hagedorn's chapters devoted to theory, history and technique and materials, but also would be a synthesis of the enormous mass of information that he himself had brought together as an art critic for the *Correspondance littéraire*. It is also possible that Diderot intended to write two separate works. The first, the Pensées, was perhaps to be an essay on the theory of the nature and function of painting, an analysis of the styles and process particular to the art of painting, and the second, Noms, was destined to give the reader all the useful information on painters and art theorists who since the Renaissance had made a mark in European aesthetics. Yet the Pensées would remain nothing more than a collection of aphorisms and Noms a list of points. However, as already mentioned these fragmentary drafts can be seen as proof that since 1759 Diderot was still preoccupied with the essence and history of the plastic arts, as well as the aesthetic theories to which they gave birth.

[18] For conclusive evidence on what he had meant to write, see Herbert Dieckman's, Inventaire du fonds Vandeul, Geneva: Droz, 1951, p.223-234.

What is more, these incomplete works reveal the decisive influence that Diderot's meeting with Hagedorn and his reading of Réflexions sur la peinture had on Diderot's artistic conceptions between from 1773 to 1782. It is for this reason that Hagedorn deserves to occupy a much more important place in the history of French art criticism than the one he does currently. Although so much of Pensées is borrowed from Réflexions, in over a third of it, Diderot has also recapitulated his own ideas on the essence and the finality of art, as well as his ideas on the techniques and materials of painting. Thus, Hagedorn's comprehensive work can be seen as the firm foundation on which Diderot chose to build his own aesthetic synthesis of his experience and reading. Furthermore, there was much affinity between the two men's reading.

As a personal friend of Winkelmann, Hagedorn learned to admire artists who preferred to follow the examples of antiquity.[19] As a reader of Roger de Piles and Du Bos, Hagedorn prized very highly the qualities of color. In front of a painting Hagedorn often lets himself be led more by sensitivity rather than pure erudition. Hagedorn is deeply wary of all dogmatic and absolutist criticism and demonstrates his historical and eclectic relativism. The fact that he himself did engravings shows that he is very sensitive to the qualities of composition and design. In his personal preference, he is more of a *rubeniste* than a *poussiniste.* Hagedorn's prejudice for forms which are vigorously accentuated by shade and light, for dramatic compositions that violently move the spectator reveal a keen penchant for baroque art. Furthermore, Hagedorn establishes a close relationship with his reader by presenting his analyses in an epistolary form. In his preface he warns the

[19] Diderot is no doubt reminded of his reading of Winkelmann's Gedanken in 1756 in the *Journal Etranger* when reading Hagedorn who retransmits many of Winkelmann's ideas in Réflexions. See, Chouillet,

reader, whom he does not hesitate to call "mon ami" and "mon cher ami," and who he imagines is a man of taste, that his essay will not be systematic and will be more like a casual conversation. One sees that all these tendencies could only have recommended his work more highly to Diderot.

Hagedorn's attitude toward nature is not so far away from that of Rousseau. In front of beautiful natural scenes, he takes pleasure in expressing religious sentiments in a style which is characteristic of that of the 18th century. The tone of these passages is very similar, although, watered down, of the Profession de foi du vicaire savoyard. Art for Hagedorn is a mysterious and ineffable world, which makes man sensitive to the natural splendors and to the goodness of God. Certainly, Diderot in his Pensées will temper this sentimentality and Germanic religiousness by adding jokes and very French sallies. Nevertheless, it is certain that Diderot could not help but feel a certain sympathy for an amateur-critic who valiantly tried to avoid dogmatism and who was a man of great taste and sensitivity.

Hagedorn was a great amateur of the Northern painters of whom he admired both the vigorous realism and the immaculate finish. Hagedorn does not allow himself to be influenced by the academic canons and he voluntarily adheres himself to the artists usually discredited by the partisans of classical beauty.

Op. cit. p.210-211

In front of compositions by Ruisdael or Salvator Rosa, he likes to imagine that he is standing in front of a real scene of nature, and some of Diderot's descriptions of these paintings are not too unlike the pages of the Salons that Diderot writes in honor of Vernet and Robert. Like Diderot, Hagedorn wants art to express nature and yet at the same time compete with it. Thus the painter must not just imitate in a servile way. For both writers the artist must recreate the world in his own way, according to an interior model.

FIG: 63 Ruisdael, *Coastline.*

However, the artist must not allow himself only to be led by his interior model in case he turns so far away from nature that his works become as cosmetic as Boucher's.

FIG: 64 Boucher, *Pastorale.*

Nature is a valuable source of inspiration thanks to its real forms and colors. When carried away by a lyrical surge, Hagedorn peppers his text with digressive analysis and poetic meditations. When he exalts the merit of a beautiful landscape and takes advantage of the occasion to evoke the pleasures of country life and solitary reveries, one has the impression that one is reading Diderot himself, but a Diderot mixed with rose water. Diderot also exalts the poetry of nature, the solitude and the emotion of land and seascapes. Diderot also likes paintings of ruins that remind him of life's trials and the

vanity of man's labor.[20] But in these paintings, Diderot is also looking for the sensation of the sublime:

> Le paysagiste a son enthousiasme particulier; c'est une espèce d'horreur sacrée. Ses antres sont ténébreux et profonds; ses rochers escarpés menacent le ciel; les torrents en descendent avec fracas, ils rompent au loin le silence auguste de ses forêts.[21]

Furthermore, Diderot likes the sublime attached to a great moral ideal,[22] as long as it has a certain simplicity, which for the *philosophe* is an essential ingredient of beauty.[23]

The Réflexions are not comparable in either the boldness of thought or the quality of style to the Pensées. Yet the fact that Hagedorn is almost totally forgotten seems rather unfair.[24] Hagedorn was a very well-read amateur and a judicious theoretician. Although he was not very original, the German critic had a sensitivity which he used to judge Rembrandt despite the artist's choice of the *nature basse* and his indifference in front of the *belle nature.* Hagedorn believed that Rembrandt's work had other merits that could overcome the defects. The author of the article *Beau* in the Encyclopédie could only have approved of this definition of beauty given by Hagedorn.[25]

> L'harmonie des parties entre elles et avec le tout, sans s'arrêter sur le chemin de la discussion, charme le sentiment; et c'est à cette

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[20] no.93, EST 773
[21] no.92, EST 772
[22] no.53, EST 764
[23] no.279, EST 822
[24] In his article, Diderots Versuch über der Malerei. J. Rouge quotes Goethe saying of his reading of the Essais: "Je me réjouis quand nous nous retrouvons d'accord, je me fâche contre ses paradoxes, je me récrée à voir la promptitude de son coup d'oeil; sa parole m'entraîne, le combat vif et j'ai sans difficulté le dernier mot, puisque j'ai affaire à un adversaire mort." *Etudes germaniques*, 1949, p.227-234. P. Vernière says of this quote: "C'est ce que fit Diderot à l'égard de son hôte de Dresde; mais il aurait été honorable pour lui de révéler l'étendue de ses dettes et charitable de ne pas considerer Hagedorn comme un adversaire mort ou comme un ami sans importance."Diderot et Hagedorn," *Revue de la littérature comparée*, Vol. 6, 1956, p.239-254.
[25] For this definition Hagedorn in his turn was inspired by Baumgarten.

perfection, dont le sentiment saisit les rapports, qu'on donne le nom de beauté.[26]

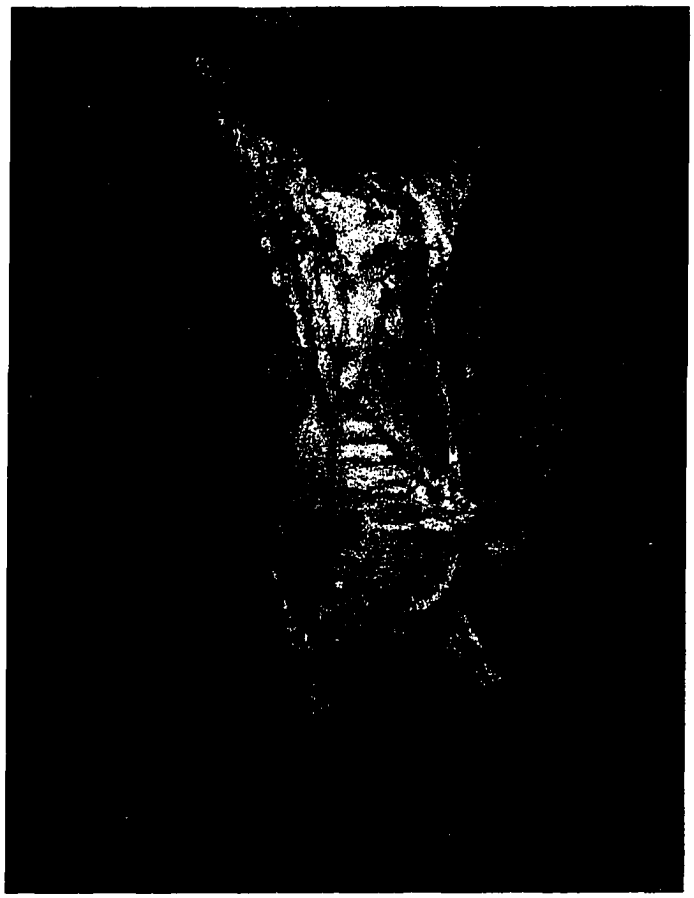

FIG: 65 Rembrandt, *Carcass of Beef.*

Hagedorn gives wise precepts to history painters, yet he does not show the usual prejudices against genre painting. He is objective in his criticism of talent regardless whether the painter is Italian, French or Dutch or German. Neither does he worry if the composition is ambitious historical work or if it is a small easel painting. He knows how to appreciate the liberty and fantasy of genius as well as the clever execution of a work appreciating each aspect in the way it deserves.

Like Hagedorn, Diderot continues to apply the classical traditions such as the *grande manière*, which he voluntarily opposes to the *petite manière* of the contemporary artists whom he condemns, like Boucher and Baudouin. Diderot's temperament, like that of Hagedorn's, brings him closer to northern baroque, from which he intensely feels the very sensual and passionate way of envisaging art. The visible symbols and this new and anti-

[26] Réflexions sur la peinture, trad. Huber, Leipzig, Fritsch, 1775, I, p.9.

classical taste were, as already discussed in the first chapter, effects of the color and light. These were the sensitive guides of a concrete world as antithesis of the abstract line. Diderot feels and sees in a manner, which is too direct not to greatly appreciate the Flemish and Dutch painters. Before the luminous and serene art of Raphael and above all in front of his Madonnas with their tranquil and sovereign majesty, Diderot believes himself to be in the presence of a living incarnation of the ideal transcendent and perfect beauty.[27]

FIG: 66 Raphael, *Madonna.*

In contrast, in front of the compositions of the northern artists Diderot finds himself in the presence of a perception that is resolutely attached to immediate reality. Rubens' feminine figures are lavish, robust, overflowing with a plebean vitality and which of course have nothing to do with the classical canons of human proportions, enchant the *philosophe* despite his attachment to an artistic ideal, which is refined by *goût.*

FIG: 67 Rubens, *Perseus liberating Andromeda.*

[27] p.89

Teniers' genre scenes aim to express most exactly the surrounding reality with the help of a specific language whose signs remain as close as possible to the world which is familiar to us.

FIG: 68 Teniers, *Guardsroom.*

Hagedorn was a great admirer of Teniers and he revived Diderot's taste for this artist. Hagedorn declared in connection to landscape and genre paintings that:

> C'est ici que Teniers mérite d'occuper une place. Nouvel Aristide, il a peint les mouvements de l'âme des villagois...Dans ses kermesses ou ses fêtes de village, il nous offre la gaîté et l'amusement des hommes laborieux... Mais quoi? n'est-ce pas à ce même Teniers qu'on a fait le reproche d'avoir encore abaissé le genre bas du paysage ?... Mais c'est assez disserter sur le paysage, me dira un amateur à la modèle. Conduisez-nous promptement dans les îles enchantées d'un Watteau![28]

[28] Réflexions sur la peinture. trad. Huber, I, p.381

Following this and picking up on the irony, Diderot affirmed in one of the *pensées*: "Le talent imite la nature; le goût inspire le choix; cependant j'aime mieux la rusticité que la mignardise; et je donnerais dix Watteau pour un Teniers." In the Essai, Diderot had already noted:

> On n'a point encore fait, et l'on ne fera jamais un morceau de peinture supportable, d'après une scène théâtrale; et c'est, ce me semble, une des plus cruelles satires de nos acteurs, de nos décorateurs, et peut-être de nos poètes. Je sais qu'on objectera les tableaux de Watteau; mais je m'en moque, et je persiste. Otez à Watteau ses sites, sa couleur, la grâce de ses figures, de ses vêtements; ne voyez que la scène, et jugez. Il faut aux arts d'imitation quelque chose de sauvage, de brut, de frappant et d'énorme.

However, despite the great affinity of thought between the two men, unlike Hagedorn, Diderot does not write his work in a such a systematic form, but rather as a suite of reflections and remarks on theoretical and practical questions concerning painting, sculpture and poetry. In fact, Diderot's Pensées détachées distinguish themselves most by the great number of aphorisms. Therefore, before establishing the extent of Hagedorn's influence on the Pensées, I would like to address Diderot's use of aphorisms, which stylistically create the most distinct divide between the Pensées and the Réflexions.

The principal characteristic of the aphorism is to tend towards concision, towards force and depth of expression. One only needs to confront any passage from the Pensées with the one that inspired it from the Réflexions to realize that, even in the places where he borrows an idea directly, Diderot does his best to always say or suggest the most possible with the least amount of words. The compressed turns of phrase impose the necessity of striking images and effects with a strong impact and imitate, by language, what is seen by the eye.

In 1747, after the publication of Pensées philosophiques,[29] Diderot wrote in *Discours préliminaire* of Promenade du sceptique: "Les prétendus connaisseurs en fait de style chercheront vainement à me déchiffrer. J'en ai point de rang parmi les écrivains connus."[30] If we believe Cousin d'Avalon, Diderot's contemporaries did not hesitate to compare the Pensées philosophiques for their clarity, eloquence and force of the style to Pascal's Pensées. It would be interesting to discover the reasons why thirty years after the Pensées philosophiques, Diderot returns to this literary form when writing his last theoretical work on aesthetics, Pensées détachées. Why, instead of writing a systematic treatise on the theory and practice of the fine arts, did he leave us with this sketch of a work? In the Pensées détachées, Diderot favors discontinued and wandering reflections while reviewing (without apparently trying to reconcile them) the great aesthetic and ethical problems that had preoccupied him for a long time. Instead of giving us his final word on all that he had learned throughout his career as an art critic, did Diderot once again abandons himself to an another experiment?

The original usage that Diderot makes of dialogue, as much in his theoretical essays as in his fictional works, has been thoroughly investigated by scholars. However, I would like to examine Diderot's tendency to use the maxim. The maxim allows Diderot not only to express a lot of things in a few words, but also to imbue an observation with the maximum stylistic expression. His tendency to do this did not escape the attention of his friends and immediate readers. In a letter to M. de Saint-Germain, Rousseau writes in

[29] 1746.
[30] Oeuvres Complètes. Ed. Assézat-Tourneux, Paris: Garnier, 1875-1877.

connection with his own literary mode that it was as Diderot's: "un peu sautante et sentencieuse."[31] Having read Essais sur la peinture, Schiller praised particularly its aphoristic turns that as he wrote to Goethe, illuminated the secret depths of art.[32] However, unlike the Essais, the Pensées have distinct chapters consecrated to the problems of inspiration and artistic execution, the relationship between the creator, society, taste and criticism. These chapters, inspired by Hagedorn's, form a precise framework surrounding the apparently extremely lose and flexible form of an amalgam of *observations, anecdotes, dialogues and reflections in which one finds* all of Diderot's aesthetic and ethical leitmotivs.

As he grew older Diderot seems to have become more and more tired of traditional composition procedures, which he considered as a form of servitude and a stumbling block to the kinds of methods of observation and experimentation that were very much part of his work. More and more, Diderot moved away from the traditional forms of writing in order to give free reign to a spontaneous and impulsive approach. Because of his irresistible taste for associations and digressions and his need to research the expressive effects produced by images and apparently disparate features, we see that Diderot the critic is very much Diderot the novelist. He likes to cross the tracks and mystify his reader, even to leave out liaisons, which he feels are too obvious, preferring a personal and dynamic allure that accords a large place to improvisation and surprise. It is the form of the Pensées, which is at once both incomplete and energetic, that catches the reader's attention and spurs his imagination to provoke his own critical spirit.

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[31] Correspondance générale. Ed. Th. Dufour, Paris: Colin, 1924-1934. XIX, p.251.

Without wanting to make Diderot a conscious follower of the 17th century moralists, one can say that La Rochefoucauld, Pascal and La Bruyère certainly left their mark on Diderot especially in terms of style. They particularly contributed to the manner and tone in which the Essais are presented and the form of the Pensées. In the Pensées Diderot renounces a methodical structure in favor of cut up reflections, which are detached of all further development. In his important essay, "Diderot et le problème de l'expressivité: de *la pensée au dialogue heuristique,*"[33] *Roland Mortier arrives at the conclusion that* Diderot only came back twice to the form which he used for Pensées philosophiques, that is to say, in 1753 with Pensées de l'interprétation de la nature and in 1762 with Additions aux pensées philosophiques. From this, Mortier infers that the return to this form is more incidental than significant. According to this critic, it is a question in the first case of a purely scientific work, in which style has no importance and in the second, of reflections that were not Diderot's and he was therefore happy to dress in his own way. So, are the Pensées détachées - which Mortier omits to mention - an attempt that did not reach its goal?[34] Is the work a provisional solution and thus simply the rough draft of an ambitious work on art theory which was to be the crown in Diderot's career in the art world and a work that however never went anywhere? Yet, it could indeed be a conscious return to a form, which being loose and disjointed, lends itself well to the sort of investigation that Diderot sought to accomplish.

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[32] Correspondance Schiller-Goethe. Trans. L. Herrr, Paris: Plon, 1923. II, 70. Quoted by Paul Vernière in his edition of Oeuvres esthétiques de Diderot. Paris: Garnier, 1959, p.661.
[33] *Cahiers de l'Association internationale des études françaises*, Vol. 13, June 1961, p.287.
[34] This is the opinion of Paul Vernière in his *Introduction* to Oeuvres esthétiques, p.746.

One must not forget that among Diderot's favorite canons in his later years, there is an evident priority given to Greek, Latin and French moralists, and amongst the latter to the writers of the 17th century who used the *maxime* and the *pensée*. In his Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron,[35] which dates from the same time as the Pensées détachées, Diderot warns his reader that he does not seek to compose a work but rather to meditate, dream and converse with his reader and himself. He also writes that it is in the spirit of La Rochefoucauld and La Bruyère that one ought to read Essai sur la peinture.[36] I believe that it is in the same way that one ought to read Pensées détachées sur la peinture. This is not to say that Diderot did not use other flexible modes of writing such as the letter or dialogue. As we have seen with the Salons, where Diderot seeks to translate the paintings he saw at the exhibition in a verbal form, he enriches his theoretical considerations and observations with all the possible literary techniques in order to catch and keep the attention of the reader.[37] But in the Pensées détachées, Diderot is not so much aiming at proving his stylistic virtuosity to a reader, as primarily searching for some of the fundamental principles.

At the same time, Diderot is not displaying his qualifications as an art critic by proceeding on a systematic examination of all that he had learned about drawing color, *clair-obscur*, composition and expression as he had done ten years previously in Essais sur la peinture. In 1776, Diderot no longer has to make a display of his vast artistic knowledge, his prodigious visual memory and his astounding cleverness in translating

[35] 1778.
[36] A.T. 1875-1877 III, p.10

hundreds of historical, allegorical, mythological compositions, genre paintings, portraits, still-lives and seascapes onto a blank page. It is as a *philosophe* that Diderot for the first time tackles the aesthetic problems that were important to him.

By their title, as much as by their stylistic configuration, the Pensées détachées, written two years after Diderot's return from Russia, present an interesting stylistic analogy with his Pensées philosophiques. In both cases, Diderot rejected a systematic method, preferring a more personal approach: that of speculation and interrogation. Such an approach is to a large extent made up of risk and discovery, contradiction and paradox, some of Diderot's favorite ingredients. In the last essay dedicated to the theory of art, just like the first consecrated to the fundamental problems of philosophy, Diderot goes back to a form that is voluntarily invertebrate and thus allows the confrontation of irreconcilable positions. One has attributed the incomplete character of the Pensées détachées to the weakening of Diderot's creative energy, thus to circumstances beyond and outside his will.[38] However, such a judgment does not take into account Diderot's natural tendency to proceed in stops and starts, rather than in measured out analyses. Therefore, one should then not be surprised that Diderot, instead of leaving us an exhaustive treatise offers us this curiously fragmented work, in which he presents more problems than solutions. Many times Diderot underlined his preference for a type of expression that conformed to the impulsive character of his mind and temperament. The phrase in Neveu de Rameau, "Mes pensées ce sont mes catins," is without doubt the most

[37] For an analysis of Diderot's methods of description in his aesthetic works, see Michael Cartwright's "Diderot et l'expression: un problème de style dans la formation d'une critique d'art." *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*. ed. Besterman, Geneva: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1967. LV, p.345-359.
[38] Cf. Paul Vernière, Oeuvres esthétiques. p.746

famous and concise expression of the acute conscientiousness that the *philosophe* had of the spontaneous and unpredictable character of his intellectual approach. What Diderot says in the dedication of the second edition of his Essai sur les règnes de Claude et de Néron in 1782 is very significant in this regard and repeats in terms that are less elliptical, the affirmation of Neveu de Rameau:

> Sénèque le père dit que les ecrivains arides et steriles suivent facilement le fil de leurs discours; que rien ne les détourne, ne les amuse, ne les distrait en chemin, ne les embarasse, ni les figure, ni le choix des mots, ni la manie des réflexions. Il en est d'eux comme les femmes laides: si elles sont chastes, c'est un manque d'amants et non de désirs.[39]

Diderot never hesitated to tell his readers with his customary frankness that his thought, and his sensitivity were always changing. Both had many forms and were susceptible to the smallest psychological or physiological disturbances. A natural approach was the one that best corresponded to the multiple solicitations of his mind and one that thanks to its very absence of a framework or exact size conformed most faithfully to the oscillations of his dialectic. The easy layout of Pensées admirably allies itself to Diderot's capricious and staccato style, to his tendency to align his ideas, his hypotheses and his paradoxes without trying to force them into a coherent, yet artificial scheme. Of all the literary modes favored by Diderot, the Pensées most brutally breaks with the traditional framework of discourse. La Rochefoucauld, La Bruyère and perhaps Pascal had perhaps already had the intuition that in this form there is a supreme art to compose that which is not composed.

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[39] Oeuvres Complètes. III, p.10, no. 1

Diderot, matured by experience, seems not to have forgotten the useful lesson learned from his first philosophical essay, and therefore it is no coincidence that he chose to write in a style that suited him so well. It is not because Diderot adopted other literary stances, notably the letter and the dialogue, which of course are most compatible with the *pensée,* that one can automatically assume that he had discredited a form to which he owed his first success.[40] Indeed, we can hardly be surprised that Diderot returned to a stylistic form that was concurrent with the free reign of his thought, which always refused the temptation of making satisfying solutions or simplifying the questions in hand. In fact, nothing was stopping Diderot from integrating embryos of dialogue, pleasant or agreeable allusions, outlines of descriptions and instructive anecdotes into his detached reflections.

The Pensées détachées present remarkable diversity in tone and style by having any potential narration nimbly taken away. Diderot condenses and concentrates the levelheaded and moderate developments made by Hagedorn. He eliminates the transitions and the links, only extracting from the text the examples and the observations that are apt to provoke reflection or contradiction. In this way, the wise and rather indigestible work of the German critic is transformed. Diderot frequently takes a passage that is long, muddled, confused, duly studded with allusions and erudite quotations and reduces it into a few pungent, incisive lines. Where Hagedorn analyses at great length and prudently demonstrates, Diderot will judge and truncate abruptly without hesitation, even if it means retracting an argument made a few lines previously. Where Hagedorn proceeds by tiny careful steps, Diderot progresses by brusque attacks, by leaps and

[40] Cf. Roland Mortier, *Op. cit.* p.287

bounds imitative of the sublime. It seems that the *philosophe* wanted to compensate for what was flexible in the structure of the Pensées by the expressive dynamism of a pithy phrase in which each word must shine with force, firmness and clarity. Although breaking with the servitude of steady composition and discourse, the Pensées do not renounce any rhetorical process. The maxim allows Diderot to clearly express in well-chosen points what he wished to underline and had perhaps already amply developed in the Salons and other aesthetic works. The aphorism does not impose a demonstration to a rule. In this respect the maxim has something in common with a sketch, an artistic genre greatly prized by Diderot for its evocative qualities that suggest more than is explicitly expressed and force the viewer to use his imagination.[41]

FIG: 69 Greuze, *Septime Sévère.*

[41] Diderot had praised Greuze's preliminary sketches for his academy reception painting, *Septime Sévère* and yet he finds the completed painting weak in expressive power and for him the great man seems to be doing no more than complain about a broken wrist!

In general, one can say that the dialogue puts an idea into movement by propelling it in time. On the other hand, the maxim immobilizes the idea by giving an image an unforeseen association with distinct notions and the appearance of scientific objectivity. The two methods, as different as they are from each other, are nonetheless complimentary and Diderot knows exactly how to combine them to the best effects.

From 1751, the date on which he published Lettre sur les sourds et les muets, Diderot showed himself to be conscious of the insufficiency of language compared to the infinity of nuances of thought and feeling. In 1776 he notes the effects that one can get from an imperfect instrument and that tends always, either to say too much, or not enough. In Pensées détachées he again turns quite seriously to reflect on these linguistic and stylistic problems, and in turn to link these directly to certain developments in Lettre sur les sourds et sur les muets.[42] For example, let us read this example on the expressive value of the word "incorrect," and the term "impropre."

> Un mauvais mot, une expression bizarre m'en a quelque fois plus appris que dix belles phrases ... Rien n'est plus ridicule et plus ordinaire dans la société qu'un sot qui veut tirer d'embarras un homme de génie. Eh! pauvre idiot, laisse-le se tourmenter, le mot lui viendra; et quand il l'aura dit, tu ne l'entendras pas.[43]

Diderot's stylistic philosophy constantly places the emphasis on the power of verbal expression. In spite of and perhaps because of his inaptitude to recover the *pensée* exactly, Diderot puts our imagination in motion and incites us to fill in the lacunas of spoken discourse. Ten years separate the composition of Essai sur la peinture and his

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[42] Cf. The critical edition of this work presented by Paul Hugo Meyer, *Diderot studies VII,* ed. Otis Fellows, Geneva, 1965. Cf. Also, Philippe Garcin Monvel's "Diderot et la notion de style." 1951, p.288-305.

writing of Pensées. In the interim, works of sociological and political character gain the attention of the *philosophe*. His experience in Russia, two stays in Holland, and the trip across Germany had amongst other things given Diderot the opportunity to visit galleries and private collections where he admired not only works that were well known in France, but also the works of painters who were hardly known at all beyond the frontiers of Holland. One could say that the Pensées philosophiques constituted for the greater part a dialogue between deism and atheism,[44] and the Pensées détachées allow Diderot to confront the Italians and the Flemish and to meditate on two irreconcilable, but equally valuable ways of transforming exterior reality into an artistic truth. The Pensées détachées do not pretend to operate a compromise between Diderot's diverse sympathies and opinions. In the Pensées the reader finds the same tensions between the conscious preferences and the spontaneous prejudices as in the Salons. Diderot may well offer praise for Raphael and Poussin,

> Le naïf sera tout voisin du sublime; le naïf se retrouvera dans tout ce qui sera très beau, dans une attitude, dans un movement, dans une draperie, dans une expression. C'est la chose, mais la chose pure sans la moindre altération. L'art n'y est plus. Tout ce qui est vrai n'est pas naïf; mais tout ce qui est naïf est vrai, mais d'une vérité piquante, originale et rare ... Presque toutes les figures de Poussin sont naïves, c'est-à-dire parfaitement et purement ce qu'elles doivent être.[45]

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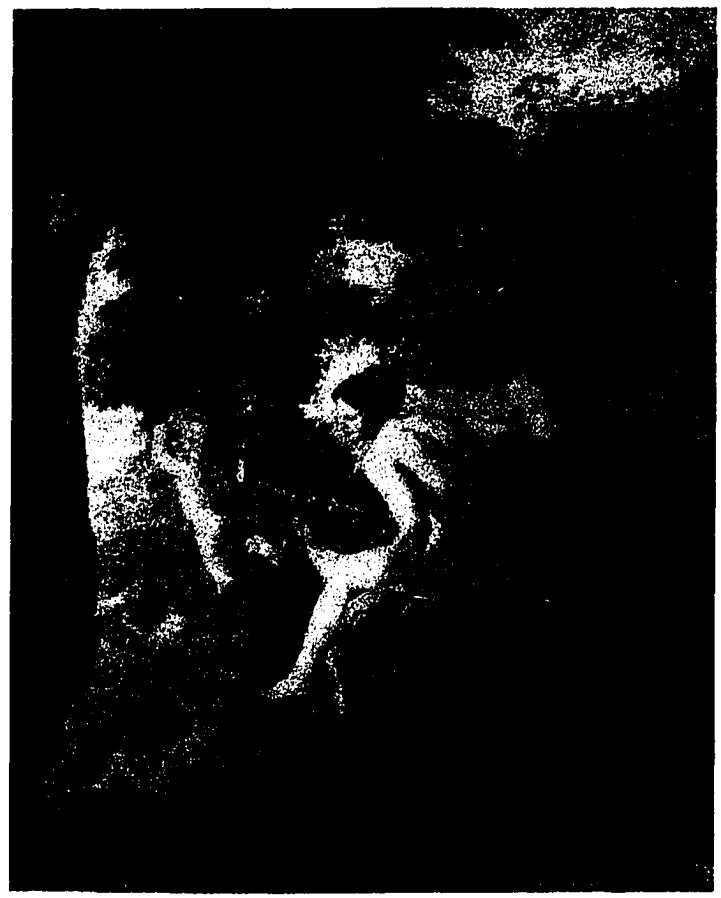
[43] Oeuvres esthétiques. Ed. P. Vernière, p.756.
[44] With the religious conformist serving to reject the confrontation of arguments.
[45] *pensée* no. 297.

Poussin, *Satyr et Bacchante.*
FIG: 70



but before a Rembrandt or a Rubens he is confounded by admiration and forgets the demands of formal beauty and the dignity of the subject matter to which he had once subscribed, or at least had in principle.

FIG: 71
Rembrandt, *The Bridge.*

Diderot in no way refrains from supporting an idea or commending an artist in one *pensée* only to contradict and oppose his own arguments with surges of condemnation a few *pensées* later. Diderot at one point says of Boucher:

> Tout ce qui est vrai n'est pas naïf; mais tout ce qui est naïf est vrai, mais d'une vérité piquante, originale et rare ... La manière est dans les beaux-arts, ce que l'hypocrisie est dans les moeurs. Boucher est le plus grand hypocrite que je connaisse; il n'y a pas une de ses figures à laquelle on ne pût dire: "Tu veux être vraie, mais tu ne l'es pas." La naïveté est dans tous les états ... Sans naïveté point de vraie beauté. La naïveté est une grande ressemblance de l'imitation avec la chose, accompagnée d'une grande facilité de faire: c'est de l'eau prise dans le ruisseau et jetée sur la toile.[46]

but then goes on to state that he has been too hard on Boucher:

> J'ai trop dit de mal de Boucher, je me rétracte. Il me semble avoir vu de lui des enfants bien naïvement enfants. Le naïf, selon mon sens, est dans les passions violentes comme dans les passions tranquilles, dans l'action comme dans le repos. Il tient à presque rien; souvent l'artiste en est tout près, mais n'y est pas.[47]

Dresdner[48] points out that this remark was also made by Hagedorn and Diderot is agreeing with him. This may be the case in this instance, but the Pensées also bear witness to the fact that time has not made Diderot any more indulgent towards painters such as Boucher. For Diderot, Boucher represents those painters who have an immense talent and fruitful imagination, but who use their gift only in the clever exploitation of libertine themes prized by the public and the Court. The author of Le Neveu de Rameau has not forgotten the multiple and insidious pressures that a depraved society places on its artists, yet Boucher and his son in-law Baudouin are the objects of the most ferocious remarks in the Pensées. The Pensées present an abundance of allusions to the relationship between talent and manners, art and morality, character and genius. To preserve his

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[46] *Ibid.*
[47] *pensée* no. 298

integrity and independence an artist must know how to resist the temptation of popularity and money. From this we understand the importance that Diderot gave to the judgment of prosperity. His bitterness towards artists who like Falconet minimize and ridicule the role of this posthumous rectification is obvious, not only in his famous correspondence with the sculptor, but also in his Pensées, where his old friend Falconet is also the victim of some of Diderot's most mordant remarks.

The disjointed form of the Pensées authorizes a vigorous didactic of opposition and contradiction and reveals the tension of the aesthete *philosophe* divided between his spontaneous reactions before a pictorial composition and the intellectual positions which he voluntarily adopts and exalts. The regular and measured progression was certainly not something that Diderot strove for even in his most technical writings and moreover his lateral thinking brought with it many divisions and digressions.

If on the one hand Diderot brings additions to Hagedorn's text with the intervention of anecdotes and dialogues, he also condenses it by reducing his demonstrations and analyses to a few cutting and elliptical formulas. In the Pensées Diderot writes: "Il est peu, très peu d'hommes, qui se réjouissent franchement du succès de celui qui court la même carrière."[49] This is very much something that La Rochefaucald could have written. Also, in writing about certain landscapes that although not spectacular yet had a certain charm, Diderot writes: "Je me souviens de m'être promené dans les jardins de Trianon. C'était au coucher de soleil; l'air était embaumé du parfum des fleurs. Je me disais: les

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[48] Dresdner, A. "Die Entstehung der Kunstkritik." Munich: 1968.
[49] Pensées. Ed. P. Vernière. p.108

Tuilleries sont belles; mais il est plus doux ici."[50] One thinks of the Caractères de La Bruyère; "Il y des lieux que l'on admire, il y a d'autres qui touchent et où l'on aimerait vivre."[51] This is what gives a very particular tone to the Pensées and enriches what is not so composed with a profound resonance. The least theoretical concept is closely related to experience.

In 1776 more than ever, Diderot's sensitivity and intelligence are open wide to the multiple forms that artistic beauty can assume. The Pensées reflect this enlargement and deepening of the *philosophe's* aesthetic values. On the stylistic and linguistic plane this enrichment of artistic experience translates itself in a direct form that feels familiar. The incomplete state of this work invoked by several critics does not on its own explain the intimate tone and the total absence of pomp and ceremony. The style of the Pensées from its brusque passages of serious discussion to its pleasant anecdotes, its high lyrical eloquence to its most malicious comments, is certainly not an effect of chance or simple caprice. We find in the Pensées a marvelous diversity of tones, an energy full of bonhomie, which characterizes the best of Diderot's works. Even though Diderot used Hagedorn's work, he used the German writer most of all as a trampoline, which set his imagination in motion. Even in the places where Diderot leans most heavily on the Réflexions, there is still an attentive confrontation between the two texts, which shows more divergences, than points of contact. Diderot is conversing and arguing with Hagedorn.

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[50] *Ibid.* p.111
[51] Pensées. n.82, Chapter: *Du coeur* of Caractères.

As E. M. Bukdahl points out in "Diderot, est-il l'auteur du Salon de 1771?"[52] the sound of several voices can also be found in Diderot's Salons. The confrontation of arguments is a working method that Diderot had adopted previously. Indeed he did so quite literally in the Salon of 1771, which was probably first written by Daudet de Jossan in a draft form and then corrected by Diderot. The two juxtaposing hands create two very distinct voices. Futhermore, D. J. Adams points out in his article, "Les Derniers Salons - continuité ou rupture de la pensée Diderotienne?" that Diderot probably wrote the Salon of 1775 in collaboration with Saint Quentin and Cochin.[53]

In the Pensées, Diderot, with very obvious pleasure, engages in a play of thought in which he recruits several voices in a dialogue. That is to say his own, that of the reader who is promoted to the rank of a connoisseur, who is sometimes skeptical or satirical, and the voice of the artist with whom Diderot does not always agree and whom he often enjoys chiding. There is even the voice of the *femme du peuple,* who is none other than Mme Diderot, whose ignorance and ingenuity are the objects of a lively and instructive dialogue. However the main hero of the Pensées, despite the fact that his name is only mentioned at the end, is Hagedorn and it is his Réflexions that set the Pensées in motion. Diderot probably did not consider Hagedorn as original a thinker as the other aestheticians he admired, but the rich synthesis he found in the Réflexions allowed him to develop and renew his own ideas and the critical positions he had adopted in the Salons. Hagedorn's work was exactly the type of raw matter that Diderot needed to remodel and shape into his own context.

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[52] *Historisk-filosofiske Meddelelser,* Copenhagen: 1966.
[53] Diderot: les dernières années. ed Peter France. Edinburgh: University Press, 1985. p.107-121

Paul Vernière in his article, "Diderot and Hagedorn," affirms that there are more than sixty indisputable points of contact between the two works.[54] Indeed, if one confronts the two texts, one can see that this figure probably ought to be doubled. In fact, there are closer to a hundred and twenty borrowings, paraphrases and commentaries that lead directly to Hagedorn's text.[55] Yet one could not say that we are looking at a work, which is an imitation or even a pure adaptation or imitation. Firstly, because even when Diderot makes no scruples about copying ideas and examples, it is more often than not because he himself had already expressed the idea somewhere else previously.[56] Secondly, because this dialectical method is very in keeping with how he worked on his other works, which were often, inspired by those of other writers.[57] Furthermore, this method allows Diderot to ask again the questions that were important to him, but in a different light and from another's point perspective. Diderot often uses Hagedorn as he a few years before had used Helvétius in his commentary following L'Homme: as a confrontation of spirits, as a sort of trampoline on which to bounce his ideas. However, where he totally refutes Helvétius, who exasperated him, with Hagedorn for the most part he has a friendly discussion and his comments are part of a discreet dialogue: "Le contraste est une affaire de règle, *dites-vous*? Je n'en crois rien."[58]... "Je vous entends, il fallait penser comme Leocharès et peindre comme Rembrandt."[59]

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[54] Cf. *Revue de littérature comparée*, Vol. 10 April-June, 1956. p.239-254
[55] In the Edition Nationale des Oeuvres de Diderot of the Pensées the notes quote passages from Betrachtung that relate directly to Diderot's text.
[56] Finally borrowing was a tradition in the *Ancien Régime* Society.
[57] Including Jacques le Fataliste.
[58] p.93
[59] p.106

In general Diderot and Hagedorn have the same conception of artistic creation. They both for example insist on the fact that it is essential for the artist to think very carefully about the various thematic and compositional problems facing him before attempting to project his pictorial vision on the canvas. Thus, to illustrate this concept Diderot can allow himself to use the same anecdotes as Hagedorn. Therefore, to exemplify his affirmation: "Il faut penser avant d'opérer", Diderot mentions the working methods of Knibbergen, van Goyen and Porcellis. Only Porcellis' method corresponds to what Hagedorn considers the model process of creation and Diderot also uses this example to shed light on the same aesthetic problem and for once actually mentions his source:

> Kniphergen, van Goyen paysagistes et Porcellis peintre de marine, gagèrent à qui ferait le mieux un tableau dans la journée, au jugement de leurs amis présents à cette espèce de lutte ... Ses rivaux n'avaient pensé qu'en faisant. Porcellis avait pensé avant que de faire. J'ai lu ce trait dans Hagedorn.[60]

Hagedorn:

> Un jour Knibergen, van Goyen, tous deux paysagistes et Porcellis peintre de marine firent une gageure à qui ferait mieux un tableau dans la journée et cela en présence d'autres artistes de leurs amis ... L'autuer l'avait conçu avant de le faire, pendant que les autres n'avaient pensé qu'en faisant.[61]

Diderot also copied the characteristic that Hagedorn had given of sketches drawn in the wave of inspiration. Regarding this aspect, Diderot quotes the artistic term "pentimenti" which Hagedorn had used to characterize "les corrections qu'un maître fait à ses premières idées"[62] a term he had discovered in the Italian academicians. Diderot adds, following Hagedorn, that Rembrandt's drawings offer many "pentimenti."

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[60] *pensée*, no.127
[61] Réflexions. II; p.224

Hagedorn notes that artistic execution must not be dominated by "trop de fougue," neither by "trop de timidité." Artistic execution must be carried out by a discreet and sure dexterity. As this concept corresponds exactly to what Diderot had previously already formulated, he copies it directly without any contradiction, yet adds an expression he had used in De la poésie dramatique, "la fougue *strapasse.*"[63]

FIG: 72 Greuze, *Madame Greuze.*

In the chapter that Hagedorn dedicates to the *L'union nécessaire du goût et des règles* Diderot finds parallels with his own analysis of the difference between "le tact" and "le goût éclairé." Hagedorn calls these two forms of taste, "le tact" or "le sentiment du beau" and "le connaissance des règles".[64] Diderot very freely paraphrases the definition that Hagedorn gives of "tact."[65] He takes quite textually Hagedorn's explanation showing that

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[62] Pensées. p.827 and Réflexions. I, p.413
[63] Réflexions. II, p.76 and Pensées. p.798
[64] Réflexions. I, p.44-47
[65] Réflexions. I, p.44 and Pensées. p.752

it is because "nous avons plus d'idées que de termes" that it is often difficult to formulate a judgment in an appropriate way.[66] However, Diderot cannot adhere to Hagedorn's definition of "la connaissance des règles" because it constitutes an acceptance of the "hiérarchie des règles" stipulated by the *Académie* against which Diderot had always fought. It is precisely for this reason that Diderot can turn Hagedorn's analysis around to formulate his own criticism of the "hiérarchie des règles." Such is the case with Hagedorn's attempt to "déduire des règles exclusives des ouvrages les plus parfaits." Diderot retorts that "les moyens de plaire" are "infinis" and that there is no rule or principle that "le génie ne puisse enfreindre avec succès." Diderot goes on to explain that "les règles ont fait de l'art une routine."[67] If he accepts Hagedorn's definition of "tact," it is only because Hagedorn had stated that this type of "goût" was "antérieur à toutes les règles." However, Diderot regrets that Hagedorn did not justify this affirmation, which is very similar to one he himself had already made in the Salons:[68]

> Tous disent que le goût est antérieur à toutes les règles; peu savent pourquoi. Le bon goût, le bon goût est aussi vieux que le monde, l'homme et la vertu; les siècles ne l'ont que perfectionné.[69]

Diderot does not agree with Hagedorn that an artist has to avoid creating original allegorical figures in favor of using traditional models. In 1769, Diderot had said of Vien's *Télémaque*: "Une composition sans effet, sans talent, sans harmonie; toutes les carnations d'une même teinte, toutes les figures sur le même plan."[70] Diderot resumes and accentuates Hagedorn's criticism of the allegorical genre: "L'allégorie, rarement sublime,

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[66] Réflexions. I, p.44 and Pensées. p.754
[67] Pensées. p.753
[68] Salons. I, p.448-451
[69] Réflexions. I, p.42 and Pensées. p.753
[70] Salons. IV, p.78

est presque toujours froide et obscure."[71] Diderot recognizes with Hagedorn that it is necessary to found schools and academies where young artists can learn to master artistic processes,[72] but he also agrees with Hagedorn that "la faculté de sentir" is innate and he adds: "Je voudrais bien savoir où est l'école où l'on apprend à sentir."[73] "Eclairez vos objets selon votre soleil, qui n'est pas celui de la nature: soyez le disciple de l'arc en ciel, mais n'en soyez pas l'esclave."[74] In his last *pensées* Diderot writes:

> ... mais cette imitation où en est le modèle? dans l'âme, dans l'esprit, dans l'imagination plus ou moins vive, dans le coeur plus ou moins chaud de l'auteur. Il ne faut pas confondre un modèle intérieur avec un modèle extérieur.[75]

Although all of Hagedorn's ideas enrich Diderot's own personal experiences in the Salons, it not a fusion, but incessant reaction. Certainly, Diderot does not share the German writer's quite prudish taste, and although in the Pensées Diderot insists above all on morality as does Hagedorn:

> Rien de plus facile à trouver que le terrible; mais quand il n'est pas combiné avec la grandeur morale, il lui manque cette force qui, en remuant le coeur, y répand du plaisir."[76]

Diderot :

> Soyez terrible, j'y consens; mais que la terreur que vous m'inspirez soit tempérée par quelque grande idée morale."[77]

this does not prevent him from recognizing his own nature. This is what he says before the canvas of the chaste Suzanne caught taking a bath by the two old men: "Je regarde

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[71] However, Diderot often refers to Vien as a model that he believed the rococo painters should use as a correcting example.
[72] Réflexions. II, p.5 and Pensées. p.756
[73] Réflexions. I, p.xxv-xxv and Pensées. p.756. See also, Koscziusko, J. "Diderot et Hagedorn." *Revue de la littérature comparé*, Vol. 23 1936 p.640
[74] *pensée* no.89, EST 771
[75] no. 743, EST 838 Cf. Shaftesbury's concept of "an outward beauty that reflects an inner beauty."
[76] Réflexions. I, p.118

Suzanne; et loin de ressentir de l'horreur pour les vieillards, peut-être ai-je désiré d'être à leur place."[78]

In his chapter, *La morale de l'artiste*, Hagedorn adheres to the French academicians' conception of the moral objective of the plastic arts. Diderot agrees with him insisting on the value of "la grande idée morale" which tempers the terror that the artist can inspire[79] and without which sculpture and painting are silent.[80] When Diderot explains that "il faut sacrifier aux grâces," he is taking the advice that Hagedorn gives his colleagues to make them understand to what extent the moral and emotional force of a work of art intimately depends on the quality of its visual translation.[81]

> "Deux qualités essentielles à l'artiste, la morale et la perspective."[82]... Dans toute imitation de la nature, il y a le technique et le moral. Le jugement du moral appartient à tous les hommes de goût; celui du technique n'appartient qu'aux artistes"[83]

It is obvious that the word "moral" has to be taken in a large sense. In painting, Diderot challenges the relaxed morals as seen in Boucher's and in Baudouin's works. In some instances, his concept of morality is that expressed in his plays and the *Moi* of Neveu de Rameau. However, Diderot takes a certain distance from Hagedorn's rather sterile interpretations of passionate subjects: Diderot does not like a Pyhrrus[84] without savagery, or an Apollo who is too respectful of Daphne:

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[77] Pensées. p.764
[78] no.69, EST 767
[79] no.53, EST 764
[80] no.56, EST 765
[81] Réflexions. I, p.126 and Pensées. p.768
[82] no.57, EST 765
[83] no.69, EST 765
[84] p.84

> Je n'aime pas qu'Apollon poursuivant Daphné soit respecteux. Il est nu, et la nymphe est nue. S'il retire son bras en arrière, s'il craint de la toucher, c'est un sot; s'il la touche, l'artiste est un indécent. La-touchât-il avec le revers de la main, comme on le voit dans le tableau de Layresse, le spectateur dira: "Seigneur Apollon, vous ne l'arrêterez pas comme cela; si vous craignez qu'elle ne s'enfuie pas assez vite, vous vous y prenez fort bien." Mais peut-être que le dieu avait la peau dessus, de la main douce et celle du dedans rude. Laissez-moi en repos, vous n'êtes qu'un mauvais plaisant. [85]

However, the definition that Diderot gives of the ethical aim of the arts expresses a radical criticism of society, which does not find a parallel in Hagedorn or even the French academicians. It is thus characteristic that Diderot completes Hagedorn's neutral description of the "cariatides" by an attempt of seeing it as a symbol of the oppression to which men of all ages are subjected.[86]

> Quand je sais que presque tous les peuples de la terre ont passé par l'esclavage, pourquoi serais-je rebuté des Cariatides? Mon semblable me choque moins, la tête courbée sous le poids d'un entablement, que baisant la poussière sous les pas d'un tyran.[87]

Diderot's ability to consider simultaneously both the value of the content of a work and its technical merits creates the linking thread throughout the Pensées. Diderot often places the aesthetic questions posed in Réflexions in a socio-critical context, and by such transpositions Diderot creates a distinct departure from Hagedorn's work. The reader should not be surprised that Diderot, who looks at aesthetics as a moralist, borrows the precise and yet evocative form of the *maxime* from the *moralistes* from the previous century.

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[85] p.86
[86] Réflexions. I, p.181 and Pensées. p.832
[87] no.329, EST 832

This said, Diderot does not hesitate to follow the plan of the chapters adopted by Hagedorn. Yet, within this framework, his explodes the format of the German critic and adds anecdotes and traces of dialogue which are entirely his own. Diderot often turns the order of certain developments and suppresses others, which seem superfluous or trivial to him. Above all, he condenses the lengthy demonstrations of many of Hagedorn's quotes and allusions by making them cutting or interrogative, or highlighting them with interesting and curious details. Diderot relies on his own artistic knowledge to operate a choice in Hagedorn's vast erudition.

In the Pensées Diderot deals with great aesthetic themes not only as a moralist but also as an astute critic whose ideas had matured through experience. Diderot was of course also a literary artist poet who sought in the Pensées to give the maximum effect with the minimum of words. The stylistic transformations that he brings to the Hagedorn's text are very instructive. In the passages where Diderot follows his model closely, he often tries to improve the expression by airing out Hagedorn's copious developments, and lightening the load of their clumsiness and heavy pedantry. A juxtaposition of Hagedorn's and Diderot's texts[88] brings out the direct borrowings, which are of course undeniable points of contact, but does not indicate the procedures by which Diderot enlivened the text that inspired him.

Hagedorn's irony did not escape Diderot, who caught on to Hagedorn's smiling observations and as was his way, condensed them into cutting and aphoristic formula. Another thing that must have impressed Diderot was that despite all Hagedorn's *clichés*,

set ideas and clumsy expressions, a very sincere enthusiasm pierces through for everything that relates to painting. Diderot's two visits to German galleries deepened and enlarged his appreciation of northern artists. Hagedorn, great amateur of these artists, fortified this taste, without affecting the nostalgia that Diderot feels for the type of art that selects and refines reality according to an ideal of grandeur and dignity.

Critics' opinions on the importance of the Pensées are divided. Paul Vernière accords only a single limited importance to the work, the fact that it constitutes in his eyes an informal sketch of a treatise that was never written.[89] For Jean Thomas, on the other hand, the Pensées are not only the distinguished crowning of a career of over twenty five years of the life of the writer, but they also initiate an aesthetic philosophy which announces the great literary and artistic currents of the 19th century.[90] Indeed, one can certainly say that the Diderot of the Pensées is in complete possession of the theoretical and practical elements of the plastic arts. Throughout Diderot's writing, the technical terms of the artist's trade, which he obviously enjoys using, return at frequent intervals and are practically always accompanied by definitions and precise examples. At the same time, the complex and ambiguous relationship between nature and art preoccupies him more than ever. He does not hesitate to distinguish between imitation and artistic deformity and to sacrifice exactitude in favor of expressiveness and a truth that transcends reality. Certainly, Diderot was not a man to turn his back on nature, but he recognizes that it has to be interpreted in a large sense, and nature often has to be greatly

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[88] Cf. Paul Vernière, *Op. cit.* p.242-251
[89] *Op. cit.* p.254
[90] Humanisme de Diderot. Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1938. p.121-124

modified in view of permitting an artist to translate his own personal vision on the canvas.

Just because the Pensées are so directly inspired by the Betrachtung it is important not to conclude that it is a work of secondary importance. The fragmentary character of the essay and its apparently arbitrary and capricious organization lend themselves admirably to the purpose of the critic. Indeed, scholars have learned by studying Diderot's methods as a novelist that it is often when he most directly borrows from another work, that he is able to invent most brilliantly. It is for this reason that one should be careful that despite the results of comparative analyses of the text showing Réflexions to be the obvious source, one must not overestimate the part that this model played in the creation on the Pensées. The many resemblances in detail must not lead us to exaggerate the resemblances in the spirit and tone of the work, although there are many.

Hagedorn serves as a pretext for Diderot to have a dialogue with himself. Diderot's last essay on art theory could not be a general survey or a demonstration. For the *philosophe* aesthetic experience constitutes a vehicle for moving thought which through its fluctuations and oscillations is both seeking and interrogating itself. In front of a Raphael and a Rembrandt, Diderot does not choose: but if he rejects the spirit of the system, he does not he totally subscribe to Hagedorn's rather passive eclecticism. Diderot always passionately wants to take sides, but his opinions are often provisional, subject to caution and revisions.

It is not one of Diderot's least merits as an art theoretician to have kept to the end of his career in the arts his freshness of perception, his free allure and his dialectic questioning.

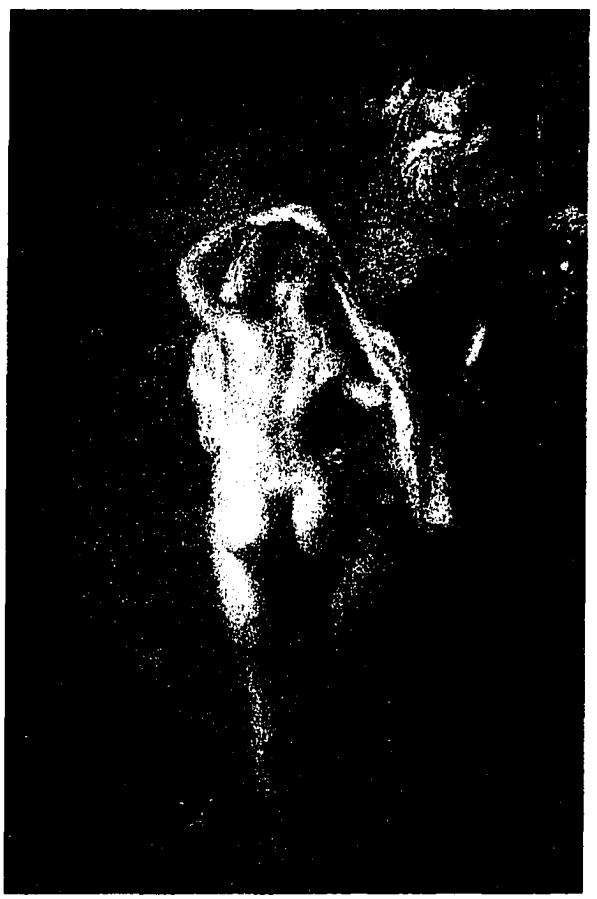

FIG: 73 Watteau, *Le Jugement de Paris.*

If the artist in him accepts and respects the multiple forms that beauty can assume, the moralist on the other hand obliges him to look for painters and sculptors who claim what he had long claimed for himself: the independence and the dignity of a creator. It is in this respect that the art of his time, despite and perhaps because of its elegance and seductions, disappoints him and in the end exasperates him. The cool welcome he gives Watteau and his animated aversions to Boucher demonstrate the passionate nostalgia that he has for an art which is powerful and energetic in a different way from that of the vapory *fêtes galantes*, the naughty affectations and the provoking preciosity of the rococo painters.

On the other hand, neo-classicism leaves Diderot quite cold, and even David, who from his first exhibition in 1781 showed himself to be a painter who can cope with great historical and didactic themes, does not receive an overwhelming welcome from Diderot in the Salon of that year.

FIG: 74 David, *Bélisarius.*

FIG: 75 Chardin, *La Blanchisseuse.*

In 1776, while writing the Pensées, Diderot remains faithful to his favorite painters: Greuze, Chardin, Vernet and La Tour. However, more than before he wishes to see works that would be worthy to be ranked next to the master-pieces of Raphael, Poussin, Rembrandt and Rubens. In this way the Pensées confirm Diderot's very classical and baroque affinities. The contemporary artists, even those most diligent to the demands of truth and simplicity, leave Diderot dissatisfied. The *philosophe* looked in vain amongst

their productions for the heroic ideal that he had admired in past masters, who without moving away from the great source of inspiration of nature, knew how to create works that were both powerful and original. Before the licentious sentimentality of Boucher's paintings, Diderot dreams of expressive forms that exalt man's spirituality. Above all, the Pensées represent Diderot's condemnation of all that is faddish, constricted, and artificial in rococo art. In 1776, rococo's hour has struck. When Diderot turns himself resolutely away from the painters who glorify libertinage while turning towards artistic models that have merit apart from their formal perfection and encourages the civil virtues of antiquity, we know that he is in fact aiming at society's incapability to give birth to a virile and vigorous art. His allusions to the Ancients are particularly numerous in the Pensées. However, despite this, we cannot say that Diderot is preaching a complete "retour à l'antique."[91] But what is obvious, is that as he gets older Diderot goes back to the great humanist and classical traditions. More than the followers and imitators who are too conscientious, Diderot incorporates a patrimony that conforms to his temperament. In Diderot's eyes, the artist does not have the right to cut off all the links that attach him to the past, and he believes that it is perilous to despise the lessons of one's predecessors.

In the Salons, Diderot succeeded in varying his descriptions and evaluations by integrating all sorts of elements and literary genres from meditations to philosophical dialogues, to anecdotes or pleasant sallies. He goes from aesthetic discussion to the transformation of a landscape to a walk in the country. In his Salons and especially in his Salons in 1765 and 1767, Diderot gives the reader the whole scope of his verve. In the Pensées, where one can recognize the wit of the Salons writer, Diderot is not however

[91] See, Seznec, Diderot et l'antiquité. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957.

looking for variety, but rather intensity. It is for this reason that he chooses this eminently concentrated form of the Pensée. But the maxim as Diderot uses it is not at all dry or impersonal. The Pensées despite their aphoristic tone have all the freshness and apparent spontaneity of a spoken style. Perhaps one of the most curious aspects of the Pensées is that, Diderot, just as much as he borrowed his form from the obscure German critic, also lent his talent to him. In fact, Diderot completely metamorphosed Hagedorn's treatise into a set of observations in which he gave free reign to his taste for improvisation and fantasy. The Pensées are not just a clever adaptation of the Réflexions, of which they have the undeniable marks. The Pensées are saturated with Diderot's lyrical and poetic bursts, his joyful ferociousness, his everyday freshness and his untimely and noisy moralism. Above all the Pensées have glossed the Réflexions with all the nuances of Diderot's marvelous mobility of spirit and his humor.

It is always instructive to confront a work of Diderot with the work that inspired it. One could perhaps regret that Diderot's last work on the plastic arts is so closely inspired by the work of another. One could also reproach Diderot for being so discreet about his resource and to have only mentioned Hagedorn's name once in the Pensées, and this quite incidentally at the end of the end of his work without really recognizing the debt that he owed the German critic. But even when Diderot appropriates a text, as we have seen him do with Hagedorn, Burke and de Piles, he modifies it profoundly. In fact, one only has to compare Réflexions with the Pensées to realize that despite the hundred and twenty literal borrowings, Diderot largely made up for this - and this is a very important point - by transforming the source from which he borrowed to suit his purpose.

Under the *philosophe's* hand, Hagedorn's treatise with its slow and pondered developments and his heavy and diffuse style assumes a most expressive and impressive character.

In writing the Pensées, Diderot was not contented just to cleverly appropriate to himself a foreign text that was rich in insights in conjunction with many of his own aesthetic ideas. In using Réfexions in this way, Diderot was obeying an interior necessity, which led him to define his aesthetic orientation by addressing himself to an invisible interlocutor and calling out to his conversation partner in a lively and interrogative tone. This said, the principal protagonist of the Pensées is without doubt the silent Hagedorn, whom Diderot leads into discussion, comments on, approves or energetically refutes. Again it is Diderot who steals the show.

Conclusion

It is perfectly in keeping with Diderot's literary manner that he took the work of another author to stimulate, complement and reinforce his own. Reading and conversation acted as trampolines for Diderot's ideas. This dissertation has suggested a reading of the Salons as a questioning dialectic between various 18th Century aesthetic views. In the Salons Diderot consistently engages in a dialogue with a real or an imaginary interlocutor. The motivation of this dissertation has been to investigate exactly whose theories Diderot was "conversing" with when writing the Salons.[1] The most obvious "conversation partners" are of course, Grimm to whom the Salons are addressed and Diderot's painter friends such as Chardin, Vernet, La Tour and Falconet. The reader often has the impression that Diderot is continuing unfinished debates (or at least unfinished to Diderot's satisfaction) within the Salons text itself. However, Diderot wrote in a letter to Falconet that he

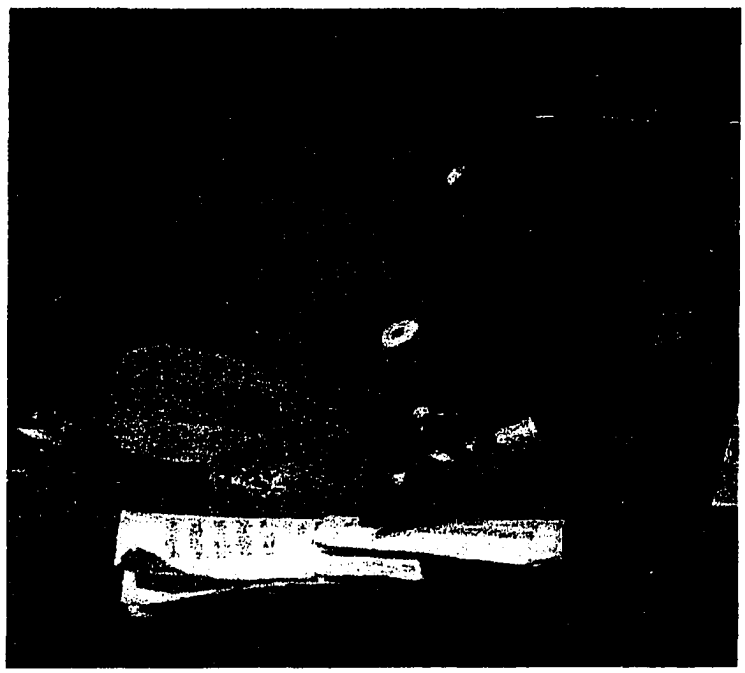

FIG: 76 Chardin, *Les Attributs de la musique.*

[1] Diderot wrote in a letter to Catherine the Great that if he found something that suited him or inspired a new idea in the work of another author, he would copy it without hesitation into his "large margins." "Sur ma manière de travailler," in Diderot and Catherine II. Ed. M. Tourneux. Paris: 1899, p.450.

could converse as easily with the living as the dead as well as those yet to be born.[2] But one can be certain that in this "virtual conversing," it is Diderot who recruits the cast, sets the stage, directs and orchestrates the debate and my study has concentrated on the unacknowledged protagonists of the Salons. That is to say the authors whom Diderot was reading at the time of writing and who had the gift of igniting his creative spirit. These discreet players - unlike Helvétius who inspired Diderot's angry rejection in Réfutation de l'homme - are all men with whom Diderot shared much affinity. In fact, the case studies in this dissertation show that these authors each give rise to a two-sided conversation in which they give Diderot the raw material that sets the propeller of his imagination in full force and he in return lends them his genial talent of synthesis and stylist verve. Indeed, the comparative analyses of the texts presented in my study show that where Diderot leans most heavily on an author, as is the case with Hagedorn where we can identify 120 borrowings, his originality be most clearly demonstrated.

The premise for my work was that it was important to hear the other voices that inspired Diderot so that the aesthetic discourses in the Salons could take on their on full meaning. By the same token, it would be fruitful to hear the silent and as yet undiscovered voice of Sophie Volland who inspired some of Diderot's best writing in his reply letters to her. In this vein, I have sought to pinpoint exactly which aesthetic questions Diderot was addressing at a given time and who acted as his reference. My dissertation suggests a reading of the Salons as a set of dynamic interactions between Diderot and other

[2] See the letter from Diderot to falconet of the 15th February 1766 in Correspondance. Vol. 6, p.97.

contemporary aesthetic writers. Else Marie Bukdahl[3] has already identified two distinct voices in the Salon 1771 that of Daudet Jossan who wrote the first draft and that of Diderot with his confrontational corrections and furthermore David Adams[4] has identified three juxtaposing voices in the Salon 1775, which Diderot wrote in collaboration with Saint-Quentin and Cochin.

Delacroix described the creative act as being a way unique to each person to see, coordinate, and to render nature and this is exactly how Diderot dealt with his readings of Roger de Piles. Just as Delacroix coordinates nature, so Diderot reduces de Piles' work to a repertory of themes to be drawn upon at will. Diderot uses de Piles most to formulate his criticism of *Académie* and de Piles's bibliographical notes prove his sincere effort to liberate himself from academic prejudices.

De Piles did much more than teach Diderot the technical terms and definitions and procedures proper to painting. De Piles taught Diderot the relative importance of draftsmanship to color, gave him a perspective on the virtues antique models and by his enthusiasm for landscapes and still-life paintings asked Diderot to question the *Académie*'s hierarchy of genres. Above all, de Piles alerts Diderot's wariness of a single system and the absolute value of rules. Like Diderot later, de Piles imagines the dampening effects that complete codification would have of the free development of genius. Both writers sought to address a reader that was neither an academician nor

[3] "Diderot, est-il l'auteur du *Salon* de 1771?" *Historisk-filosofiske meddelelser*. 41.2. Copenhagen: 1966. p.34-45.
[4] "Les dernières Salons – continuté ou rupture de la pensée Diderotienne?" in Diderot: les dernières années. Peter France. ed. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1985. p.107-121

connoisseur and yet Diderot's turns of phrase are more direct and provoking, his judgements more cutting. Even when Diderot refers to de Piles' most technical explanations, he condenses the verbal expression and often thus only retains the evocative metaphor or suggestive and instructive anecdote.

When writing the Salon of 1767 more than ever Diderot was contending with and trying to draw away from academic assumptions. It is therefore not surprising that he does not hesitate to call on Edmund Burkes's most original innovations in his own search for a new criteria in the appreciation of aesthetics. However, although a few years before his death Diderot still praised the English for having led the way to true philosophy, he also believed that the adventurous genius of the French had pushed them well beyond their guides across the channel! Indeed, Diderot carries Burke's sensualist method to its ultimate conclusion by eliminating all spiritual elements from his examination of natural phenomena. Furthermore, Diderot condenses and concentrates Burke's work so tightly that only the core of the thought is retained. Burkes's illustrations, found in different sections are combined into one coherent sequence in order to heighten the emotional impact of the images. By this telescoping device Diderot greatly accelerates Burke's pace and gives the expression of the sublime a new impetus. Diderot must have been pleased with his enumeration of the naturally sublime

FIG: 77 Vernet, *La Rochelle.*

phenomena because it appears later (in somewhat terser form) in the memorable frenzied enthusiasm of the pantomime scene in Le Neveu de Rameau.

Diderot kept the form of the Salons as flexible as possible so that whenever he sensed the readers attention would be flagging he could change his literary tactic. Unlike Burke, Diderot concerned himself with techniques of startling and prodding the reader through striking angles. Burke said that a true artist should put a generous deceit on the spectators. No precept could be closer to Diderot's heart since mystification played a major role in his fictional practices, as in his skillfully contrived literary artifice of feigned walks in his description of Vernet's paintings. This narrative device allows Diderot to play his favorite game of hide and seek with the reader at the same time as providing a fictional framework for the impressions induced from both Vernet's paintings and Burke's treatise on the sublime. The roaming narrator pretends to leave his critical work:

> J'avais écrit le nom de cet artiste au haut de ma page et j'allais vous entretenir de ses ouvrages, lorsque je suis parti pour une campagne voisine de la mer et renommée pour la beauté de ses sites. Là, tandis que les uns ... que les autres ... j'allais, accompagné de l'instituteur des enfants de la maison, de ses deux élèves, de mon bâton et de mes tablettes, visiter les plus beaux sites du monde.[5]

With this introduction the reader has been placed in a novelistic type of fiction. Instead of describing Vernet's paintings, Diderot tells of the walks that he is supposed to have taken in a real countryside:

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[5] p.67

> Nous nous mîmes à grimper par ce chemin difficile. Vers le sommet nous aperçumes un paysan avec une voiture couverte ... Nous les lassâmes derrière nous ... Après une marche assez longue, nous nous trouvâmes sur une espèce de pont.[6]

This fiction,[7] while allowing Diderot to evoke problems concerning art, also allows him to portray the emotional aspect of aesthetic appreciation.

FIG: 78 Vernet, *Paysage avec un pont.*

In my last case study, that of Christian Hagedorn, the great affinity of taste between these two men was examined. Hagedorn was a personal friend of Winkelmann and like Diderot had read Dubos and de Piles and possibly Diderot's Salons. Hagedorn's great work led Diderot to define his own aesthetic orientation by addressing himself to invisible interlocutor. Having met Hagedorn, it must have been easy for Diderot to call out to this agreeable colleague in a pretext to have a dialogue with himself. Hagedorn also calls out to his reader, addressing him directly as "mon cher ami" and in his preface says that his essay will be like a casual conversation. These are aspects that combined with the vast erudition of Betrachtung must have appealed to Diderot. However, what Schiller had

[6] *Ibid.*

[7] Jean-François Lyotard goes as far as to conclude that the Salon of 1767 could be called a "satire" because of the "manière métamorphique" of its composition. "La philosophie et la peinture à l'ère de leur expérimentation," *L'art des confus*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. 1985, p.467 and p.469.

written of Diderot's style,[8] that the personal approach of speculation and interrogation in the Pensées illuminated the secret depths of art, could not be said of the rather indigestible work that inspired it! The confrontation of the two texts show that through Diderot's use of the maxim, he created tensions of risk and discovery, contradiction and paradox that are of course - mixed with a bit of improvisation and surprise - Diderot's favorite ingredients.

The invertebrate form of the Pensées allows Diderot's to compose that which is not composed. And so once again with Hagedorn, we noted yet another stylistic technique the "maxim" which like the various other narrative forms highlighted in this dissertation are concurrent with Diderot's free reign of thought. Most importantly, I hope that my reader is able to conclude from the evidence examined in this dissertation that, unlike like his paper and ink conversation partners, Diderot knows exactly how to combine these stylistic techniques to the best effects. Diderot catches and keeps the reader's attention and even provokes his own critical spirit of investigation.

At the time that Diderot writes his Salons, he is no longer interested in the aesthetic speculations of writers[9] like Crouzac, André and Batteux who operate at a level of particularly high abstraction and whose points of view were submitted to an in depth examination in the article *Beau* in the Encyclopédie.[10] As discussed in the first part of *Chapter One* of this study, this article was written under the new perspective that Diderot

[8] Correspondance Schiller-Goethe. Trans. L. Herrr, Paris: Plon, 1923. II, 70. Quoted by Paul Vernière in his edition of Oeuvres esthétiques de Diderot. Paris: Garnier, 1959, p.661.
[9] See, *Chapter One: Part One.*

found in Dubos' work. Diderot prefers to hold conference with aestheticians who like Dubos or Shaftesbury respect the difference between the arts, or who like Burke or Hogarth base their theories on empirical psychological analysis or even those who like Hagedorn and Winkelmann, whose general ideas on aesthetics are based on imposing research on art history.[11] It is also Diderot's interest in the artistic expression of the plastic arts and the technical terms that leads him to be an applied student of certain academicians or at least those who were of a more liberal tendency such as Roger de Piles.

Diderot's criticisms were directed mainly at the dogmatic wing of the *Académie*, but he also directs criticism against those who bought paintings and thanks to their capital could decide not only the value of a work, but also the stylistic conceptions and essence of art. To support and develop his attacks against the *Académie,* Diderot had recourse to the works of criticism of Dubos, Hogarth and Burke. Thanks to his discovery of Burke's

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[10] As well as of course alluded to in Lettre sur les Sourds et les Muets and Recherches sur l'origine et la nature du beau.

[11] In his interpretation of the "ideal model" he borrows most particularly from Winkelmann as he agreed with the importance of the study of nature and the sociological factors of the creative genius. This said, he categorically denies Winkelmann's attempt to promote the idea of ideal beauty of the Ancients as the norm that ought to defend all forms of art. Following the ideas of the defenders of the moderns such as Falconet and Cochin, Diderot prefers to modify his conception of the "ideal model." His model, as well as those that come from it, expresses an interpretation of the principles on which all art forms which transform reality or are born of the imagination are based. Diderot's original contributions to the 18th century aesthetic debate are particularly evident in his suggestive answers to the theoretical questions in the Salons concerning the interpretation of the "modèle idéal". For Diderot, the "modèle idéal" is the fruit of a "génie rare et violent" and thus the best definition one can give is that of a creative reaction before the real world. Diderot attempts to define ideal beauty and to highlight the dependence that art has on cultural, social and economic factors. See, Rudowski, V. "Lessing contra Winkelmann." *Journal of Aesthetic and Art Criticism.* New York: 1986.

theories on the sublime[12] Diderot refined his knowledge of the ideas and conceptions that mark the non-classical expressions. But Diderot also enlarged his definitions of the relationship between art and reality through an incessant polemic against the forces that within the artistic and social life of the time tried to alienate the personal liberty and politics of different artists and furthermore dampen their critical sense by forcing them to be guided by rules and submit to the religious authorities and contemporary politics.[13] Diderot regretted that neither Falconet nor any other artist or aesthetician with "anti-establishment" tendencies understood that the course of history justly shows that political systems are not natural entities, but rather organizations created by man, that are therefore constantly knocked over. Diderot believed that such a complete reorganization could perfectly occur in the system operating at his own time. Moreover, he reproaches his contemporaries who, either like the academicians did not try to expose a theoretical justification of the characterizations of artistic talent or those who, like Dubos and Burke did not know how to go beyond sensualism. This is to say, they followed a sensualist doctrine according to which all knowledge derives from the senses and therefore they did not present a synthetic analysis of the operations of consciousness.

In the course of his characterization of the process of appreciation, Diderot refers to the demonstration of Hagedorn[14] and Webb according to whom even the appreciation of art presupposes an innate talent. The arguments backing up the judgments emitted emerge from the ensemble of knowledge and experiences accumulated in the consciousness. In

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[12] See Wecter Dixon's "Burke's Theory concerning Words, Images, and Emotion." *PMLA*, Vol. 55, 1940. p.177.

[13] The concept of history on which Diderot based his own struggle against his time is the result of long conversations with Falconet.

this regard also, Diderot regrets that the art aestheticians of his time were not in a position to explain their conception by making reference to a theory of knowledge. As we have noted, those among them who understood this dimension, like Dubos and Burke, were unable to obtain solid results because their sensualist theories prevented them from formulating a theory of memory, which takes into account the historic dimension of consciousness.

In his Pensées détachées, Diderot inserts an extremely complicated network of borrowings from Hagedorn's Réflexions sur la peinture. With the help of this work, he gives a résumé, in the form of aphorisms, of his position in relation to that of those who represent the academic tradition and those who oppose it. However, at the same time, he also exposed a synthesis of his own original participation in contemporary aesthetics.[15] Diderot's conception of artistic totality as a linked entity composed of form and content also marks his version of the *hierarchy of genres,* which he defined as an alternative to that of the *Académie.* The diversity of knowledge or the revelation of forgotten dimensions that the "peinture de genre" or the "peinture d'histoire" express are integrally linked by technique according to Diderot. He found rudimentary elements of this concept in Roger de Piles and in Hagedorn. The difference between Diderot's appreciation of various styles and genres and that of his contemporaries[16] is often the result of the fact

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[14] See, *Chapter Three.*

[15] Apart from the discussions that Diderot held with other aestheticians of his time in his Salons, he also - as already briefly considered - exposes such debates in his Encyclopédie. Furthermore, his dramatic works written between 1757 and 1758 all present a series of ideas which announced his struggle against the academic doctrine of *ut pictura poesis.* Above all, in his abundant correspondence, notably with Falconet. See, Seznec, J. "The Horse of Marcus Aurelius: A Controversy between Diderot and Falconet," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 15, 1952 p.445-465, which contains numerous developments pertaining to potential solutions to aesthetic problems of both a general and technical nature.

[16] For a comparison with the *salonniers*, see, Bukdahl, *Op. Cit.* p.363-366

FIG: 79 Vien, *La Glycère.*

that between 1763 and 1768 Diderot is the only individual to consider the pictorial entity as an autonomous entity impregnated with a unifying expressive power, which he calls "magie." It is through this concept that he considers throughout this period the works of Vernet and why he so harshly criticizes the peintres d'histoire such as Vien, whose works lack the creative force in which form and content are integrally linked.[17] Diderot will deliberately use a poetic and narrative process to describe and interpret all the aspects of a complete work, which could not have translated by concepts or categories. For example, in his descriptions of *Saint Denis* or of *Miracle des Ardents*[18] he uses the two methods that he defines in the Salon of 1765.[19] In the Salons Diderot has not only synthesized contemporary aesthetics, but also transformed them so that they could potentially be able to be read by both the elite subscribers of the *Correspondance littéraraire* and also the larger audience that

FIG: 80 Vien, *Saint Denis.*

[17] He does however use Vien's work as an example to correct the rococo painters' frivolity.
[18] See, FIG: 40 on page 98.
[19] Salons. p.5

visited the Paris *Salons*.[20] Diderot had an acute awareness of the importance of developing a variety of styles not only to describe the variety of paintings he reviewed, but also to appeal to the growing public interest in the world of art.[21] In Diderot's writings, the reader is bearing witness to the development of a new rhetoric in art criticism in the era of its experimentation.[22] It is precisely when one compares Diderot's descriptions with the articles of other *salonniers* and the Salons with other contemporary works on aesthetic theory that one has the clearest evidence to demonstrate that Diderot was the only critic of his time to possess, as he said of Casanove, "de la verve, des conceptions rares, une manière d'apercevoir et de sentir originale et forte" and the gift "de trouver l'expression singulière, individuelle, unique, qui caracterise, qui distingue, qui attache et qui frappe."[23]

FIG: 81 Vernet, *Vue de Naples.*

[20] From 1759 to 1781, the years during which Diderot reviewed the *Salons*, he saw the numbers in attendance practically triple. See Udolpho van de Sandt's "Le Salon de l'Académie." in Diderot et l'art de Boucher à David. p.82.
[21] Both David Solkin's Painting for Money and Thomas Crow's Painters and Public Life invite a method of comparative analysis of Diderot's sources to best highlight Diderot's power of stylistic transformation.
[22] Jean François Lyotard's "La philosphie et la peinture à l'ère de leur experimentation." in L'art des confins. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1985.
[23] Salon de 1767. p.286

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