

*The View Painters
of Europe*

Giuliano Briganti

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TRANSLATED FROM THE ITALIAN

BY PAMELA WALEY

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Although the words *veduta* and *vedutismo* are not to be found in the Italian *Enciclopedia dell'Arte* and the few short references under other headings in the general index are inadequate, the interest aroused by this aspect of eighteenth-century European art, not only in recent years, is amply demonstrated by the number of books that have been written about it and by several exhibitions, such as the memorable Bellotto exhibition seen in Warsaw, Dresden and Vienna, and the more controversial one of Venetian view painters in Venice. This interest is chiefly concentrated on the great Venetian *vedutisti*, but there has been no lack of studies on more general questions related to eighteenth-century view painting as a genre, its origins, its significance in the context of the artistic and cultural tendencies of the century, the methods and techniques employed by individual artists, its connections with the theories and the practical application of perspective and with the science of optics, and with other specialized forms of painting such as illusionism (*quadraturismo*) and scenography.

I have myself made an extensive study of Gaspar Van Wittel, chronologically the first of the topographical view painters in the eighteenth-century sense of the word, in which I endeavoured to define the term and to attempt a brief summary of the history of this form of visual art from the beginning of the seventeenth century, and indeed before that.¹ This outline of *vedutismo*, since it was related to the career of Van Wittel, ended in the early decades of the eighteenth century, which was, among many other things, the age of the view painter. It is always difficult and even more tedious to repeat in slightly different words what one has already written, especially if it was written only a short time previously. Faced with the unwelcome task of quoting myself with tiresome frequency, I have preferred to give here a brief summary of my ideas, referring the reader who requires a more detailed investigation of the antecedents and genesis of eighteenth-century *vedutismo* to my book on Van Wittel;² and instead of a straightforward essay on the subject, which would of necessity have been repetitive, to offer what is in effect an anthology of passages taken from other writings which I consider relevant and significant. I do this not so much to declare openly my indebtedness to all those who were of assistance to me in my previous research, as in the hope that this will enable me to make as objective as possible a survey of the changes in critical appreciation to which the genre of view painting has been subject. It might be considered as a survey obtained by means of a kind of *camera ottica*, a method dear to the *vedutisti* themselves who, typical of their time, the age of enlightenment, were certain that reality could be reproduced exactly. This anthology, in which the passages are linked by the thread of a personal view, follows a clear plan, being divided into sections which deal with the definition of the term, the origin of the genre, the discussion of problems relevant to the theme, and the evaluation of the work of individual artists.

It is well known that in the famous letter of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani to Theodor Ameyden, written between 1620 and 1630, in which he discusses the differences between various categories of paintings, architectural view painting is listed as the sixth of twelve classes.

'Sixthly, to know how to paint well perspectives and buildings; for which it is necessary to have some practical knowledge of architecture and to have read books which treat of it, and also books dealing with perspective, in order to understand regular and visual angles and to ensure that all is in concord and painted without disproportion'.²

The Marchese, by natural inclination and by specialized knowledge, was well qualified to perceive the influences at work in the world of art and the current tendencies of every 'class' of painting at the time; and when he insists on the necessity for some knowledge of perspective he certainly has in mind the architectural landscapes which, whether inspired by reality or the imagination, were clearly distinguishable from the fantastic and panoramic 'bird's-eye' views, predominantly descriptive in intention, characterized by Giulio Mancini in his life of Paul Bril: 'the horizon is not high, as with the Flemish, whose landscapes present as a result the majestic quality of scenery rather than the actual appearance of a countryside'.

In order to give a concrete example of the clearly contrasting principles and approach implied in the two passages which I have just quoted, I drew attention in my essay on Van Wittel to the fact that at the time Giustiniani and Mancini were writing, Viviano Codazzi was beginning his work in Rome. His point of departure was the methods of the illusionist painters or *quadraturisti*, who were primarily concerned with perspective, and he was preparing the way for those artists whom Lanzi calls *prospettivi*, among whom he included the seventeenth-century *vedutisti*. The perspective painters took as their principal and characteristic concern the strict application of architectural perspective (*grammica*, as Gemino and Lomazzo called it), their main objective being 'the better to deceive him who looks'. In other words, they were concerned with optical illusion, and with the problems, pleasures and tricks of perspective. In certain conditions of artistic culture and expressive tension this approach was to coincide with the most progressive principles of pictorial realism and so to contribute to the origins of topographical view painting, particularly in the work of Codazzi. At the same time, under the influence of other stimuli, it had effects in other directions and notably on the theatrical scenography of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

It is also significant that the term *veduta* itself, as it is most widely understood today – a topographical view depicting a site, a building, a picturesque corner of a city, a panoramic townscape – is closely connected with the terminology of perspective. It derives from the same word meaning 'the point to which the sight is directed' and thence 'the appearance of a place', the 'prospect' of a place whether countryside, city or architectural subject, the picture or plane which is framed by the diverging lines of the visual pyramid. In the work to which I have already referred I have described at length the fundamental relationship of the word *veduta* to the science of optics, or what was called *prospettiva naturale*. During the seventeenth-century the term *prospettiva naturale* lost the identification with optical science, that is, with direct vision and the laws which govern it, which it had had in prece-

ding centuries and especially in the fifteenth, and from the middle of the seventeenth century, *prospettiva*, deriving from *prospettiva naturale*, meaning a natural perspective, became synonymous with *veduta* in the sense of a view, a prospect, a perspective, of topographical reality. The following passage, taken from the *Paradossi per praticare la prospettiva senza saperla* of 1683, by Giulio Troilo, is significant in this respect: 'Thus such views (*vedute*) as villages, mountains, the sea, islands, castles, cities, valleys, towns, houses and so on are natural perspectives (*prospettive naturali*)'.

A century later Lanzi called *prospettive* not only the works of Codazzi and other illusionist painters but also the view paintings of Carlevarijs, Canaletto, and Bellotto; and in course of time the word gradually tended to disappear and to be replaced by *veduta*. Emerging from this complicated evolution of terminology and especially owing to the drastic simplification which common usage imposes upon a language, the concept of the *veduta* has become part of the normal and almost unambiguous vocabulary of art criticism.

'The *veduta* is not merely a painting of landscape which may emanate from the painter's imagination and only incidentally be suggested by a definite place: a *veduta* is a landscape portrayed precisely and recognizably, which gives in an image a faithful account of a definite place and ambience – a historically objective landscape. This is consistently the approach of the real view painters: absolute fidelity to the visual perception of reality, to the appearance of reality, whether in normal or exceptional conditions (a square with a market in progress, buildings, famous palaces, townscapes, picturesque corners, fires, eruptions, etc.). The painter goes outside the four walls of his studio and descends into the street, if not with his easel, then certainly with a sketchbook which he will soon cover with notes drawn from life. This material constitutes his visual stockpile, a repertory of images which from time to time he uses in his paintings, in his views. When these notes are transmuted from drawing into painting, if the artist then checks his remembered and recorded experience by comparing it with the reality, the picture will be true both as to line and as to light; but this checking and verifying happens only rarely, and the view painter is more likely to let himself be guided by ability, habit and his supposed knowledge of the place, which frequent commissions may have compelled him to reproduce often and almost without variation. Again, he often plans his view with a stylized spatial lay-out, making repeated use of the same tricks of composition – emphasis on one side of the picture, on a branch or on a rock or on a part of a building. This leads to a kind of mechanical reproduction, which constitutes a limitation that may confine minor artists to the illustration of costume or to topography, on the fringes of the history of art' (A. Martini, 1965).³

VIEW PAINTING AND PERSPECTIVE PAINTING

There is obviously a very strong connection between view painting, illusionism and scenography (including stage design and scene painting), both in the origins of the genre and in the early stages of the careers of individual artists. Like the *veduta*, illusionism and scenography are concerned with the problems of the representation of space, and make use of the guidance offered by the practice of perspective. They developed simultaneously and influenced each other continuously. They are

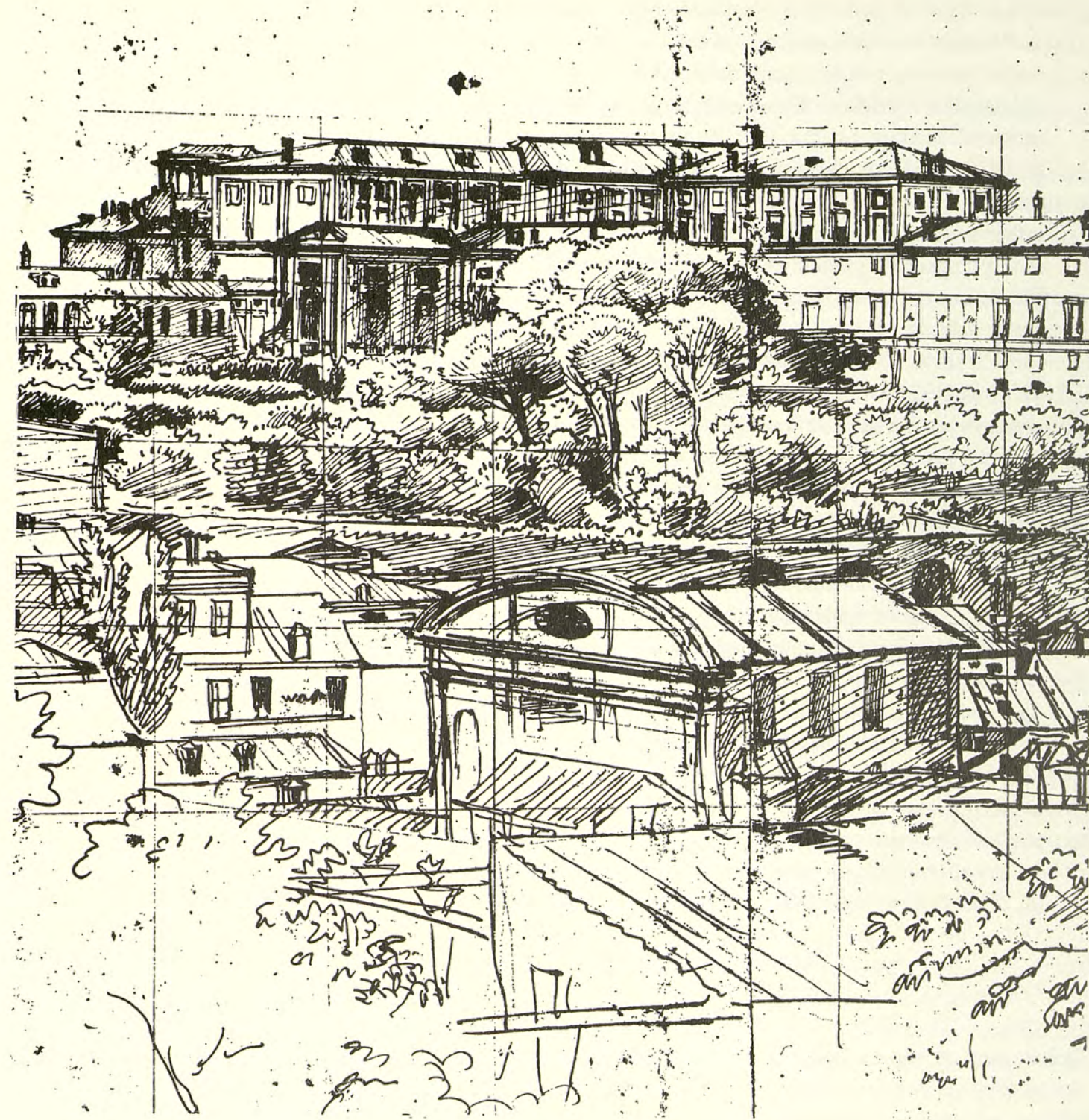
linked by common principles which draw inspiration from actual architecture, take their departure from the most elementary application of perspective and become involved in its more subtle and complex problems. The links between illusionism, scenography and view painting are an essential part of the investigation of one of the historical origins of the *veduta*.

'...The origin of this specialized form of art could well be found in Mannerism and thus date from an age which delighted in classifying and subdividing the various fields of representational art; but its ancestry was as old as the sporadic manifestations of illusionism which had for centuries been used to bridge the gap between figurative mural painting and the actual architecture to which it was attached, so as to emphasize by artifice the real existence of the latter. The science of perspective had furnished illusionist painters with mathematical principles from Melozzo and Bramante onwards, and during the sixteenth century had developed in various directions which would repay study as rather vague antecedents of the 'optical view' of the seventeenth century. It is not by chance that such painters, and in the first place Codazzi, should have been called *prospettivi*, perspective painters, until the time of Lanzi. Other profitable lines of study would be the evolution of the important Brescian school of the sixteenth century from the Rosa to Sandrini and Viviani; the Lombard and Emilian stream which includes Castelli, Tibaldi and Cambiaso before producing the great perspective scenic artists of Bologna and Modena who, with such painters as Dentone, Colonna, Mitelli, Vigarani, Joli and so on, dominate the whole of Europe; and the Central Italian stream, which, after the experiments of the *raffaelleschi* (including Tuscan artists such as Salviati), includes the Alberti, who significantly came from San Sepolcro, Laureti, Zaccolini, Tarquinio da Viterbo, and so on, down to 'Padre' Pozzo. It should also be remembered that the treatise on the subject written by Nicéron in 1643 is called *Thaumaturgus opticus*' (R. Longhi, 1955).⁴

As a result of this significant observation of Longhi's, made almost casually in an aside, in a study not immediately concerned with research of a general nature, recent criticism has investigated in greater detail the relationship of illusionist architectural painting with the historical origin of view painting.

'...It is symptomatic that not only the art of Canaletto but eighteenth-century view painting in general should have been founded on illusionism, on the use of perspective to achieve *trompe-l'oeil* effects. In other words, these *vedute*, which have been taken to constitute a separate genre in painting — in the sense that there are genres in literature — have their origin more in intellectual activity and less in the appearance of nature than do Mannerist landscapes. It is evident that here a perspective frame is gradually filled with representational figures. The fact that in most cases this framework remains no more than that, and only in a few cases succeeds in conveying the initial personal experience which becomes an image, does not alter the common birth of two kinds of paintings, of which the first achieves no more than illusionism and the other achieves pure reality. But in this sense there is no doubt that in the early Canaletto can be traced the hidden ancestry that derives from the scenography and illusionism of the Bibiena, rather than the strictly optical and receptive painting of Van Wittel' (C. Brandi, 1960).⁵

Besides, given the illusionist and decorative nature of perspective scenography, which presupposes a rational handling of space, view painting was inevitably liable to a mechanical and repetitive sta-



Gaspar Van Wittel: *View of the Quirinal* (detail).

Rome, Biblioteca Nazionale.

gnation, even if in fact the best artists were capable of overcoming this limitation.

'...Perspective scene painters were no less active in the eighteenth century than were the landscape painters, and although they did not dominate elsewhere as they did in the Emilia, they were nonetheless untiring. The many theatres open in Venice required an ever-increasing and ever-renewed activity on the part of theatre designers and scene painters, and although theirs was an ephemeral art, confined to paper and pasteboard, it served as a stimulus to decorative perspective painting. Throughout the century teams of scenic artists succeeded one another, and influenced in their turn by the major art form of painting, they freed scenography from the narrow perspective principles followed by the Bibiena which had restricted it at the beginning of the century, giving it new life and a broader basis, striving for more mobile and adaptable pictorial effects.

'Marco Ricci himself had been a scene painter during his period in England, as his drawings in Windsor Castle show. His imagination, rather than being trammelled by the exigencies of perspective painting, took its departure from the free principles of painting from nature; and Crosato, as we have seen, in his turn gave new life to scene painting in Piedmont. The engraved and painted *vedute* of Marieschi are clearly theatrical in spirit. G.B. Piranesi was able to achieve fantastic effects with his starting-point in perspective scenography, interpreting the antiquities of Rome from a point of view that was not at all classicizing, but with a creative energy that was entirely pre-romantic.

'But those artists who were by profession perspective painters and, for the most part, theorists and teachers, and thus at the outset the dominating force in the Venetian Academy, restricted the decorative impulse of architectural and landscape scenography into arid geometrical formulae. Underlying the work of such perspective painters there was clearly an incorrigible error; and whereas Canaletto, although his point of departure was a scenographic training, which he himself declared he had forsworn, was able to create real space, that is, a poetic reality of light and atmosphere, the perspective painters reduced space to the result of illusionist techniques, merely decorative and rationally calculated. The stream of Venetian perspective painting was thus easily made to conform to neoclassical taste, and indeed became a strong support of it' (R. Pallucchini, 1960).⁶

THE ORIGINS OF VIEW PAINTING

The figurative and cultural elements in which are to be found the origins of eighteenth-century topographical view painting are as varied as they are different; and clearly all these diverse contributions go back to the beginning of the seventeenth, and in some cases to the preceding, century. On to the perspective element of illusionism was grafted the optical and realistic veracity which reflected, in this specific context, the new seventeenth-century discovery of reality; while other tendencies, some of which they had in common and others which were confined to one or the other, are seen to derive from the knowledge of nature which was characteristic of that century and concern more or less directly the rise of view painting. Thus one can go back not only to Codazzi and

Tassi, but also to the followers of Elsheimer of around 1620, and trace its descent through the succeeding generations of Italianized Dutch painters who worked in Rome during the seventeenth-century and at the beginning of the eighteenth, glancing at the protoromantic delight in ruins; or follow the thread which leads from the sixteenth-century North European painters who portrayed the most atmospheric and decaying aspects of Rome.

Here again the insight and perception of Longhi provide guidance to the relevance of the genre, in the context of the naturalistic tendencies which played so great a part in the art and culture of Rome at the beginning of the century, and to those characteristics which were analogous to but not identical with those of the perspective and the illusionist painters.

'...According to the new conception of truth, a street may be painted as it is — a fragment of what appears. As early as 1627, a Genovese painter, Sinibaldo Scorza, set up his easel in Piazza Pasquino while the shadows moved across the buildings and people took off their hats to one another, and the knife-grinder and paper-seller attended to their business. This has nothing to do with a survey map of properties, what we see here is a view painting. And twenty years later Codazzi of Bergamo, who was already something of a specialist in these views, paints Palazzo Gravina from Monte Oliveto, with a great shadow falling across it, and the Duke's carriage in the depths of the shadow, while two black-clad Jesuits walk along beside the sunlit wall towards the corner where a dealer in second-hand wares has his stall. This is the road which leads to Canaletto' (R. Longhi, 1950).⁷

'...The presence of Codazzi in Rome and Naples and Rome again between 1625 and 1672 could well demonstrate the opposite view to that which Denys Sutton has correctly identified as the protoromanticism of ruins: the converse view, that is, which looks beyond the apparent category of 'archaeological' scene-painting to derive view painting *secundum veritatem*, based on optical and realistic veracity which leads without interruption to Canaletto and Bellotto.

Codazzi certainly also liked painting ruins; he knew them by heart, and would even assemble scattered fragments into a kind of anthology, as required by his patrons, a practice also widely used by Panini. But these were not romantic ruins — they were fragments of reality mingled with everyday events and observed with a detachment so sceptical and objective that when they are invested in light and shadow they have a certain flavour of drama about them, but not one of elegy and nostalgia.

'...Whether or not he may be accounted a 'thaumaturge', Codazzi has always been considered an innovator in this field, and it may be his frequent use of archaeological motives that led Lanzi to call him "the Vitruvius, as it were, of this type of painting" ...The extraordinary career which led him from scenography on the strictest perspective lines combined with Caravaggesque contrast, to view painting from nature should ensure that Codazzi will not be forgotten among the artists of seventeenth-century Rome and Naples' (R. Longhi, 1955).⁸

These were all suggestions that led to new lines of critical investigation into the more or less remote origins of the pictorial experience offered by the view painters. Estella Brunetti follows one of them:

'Because of their exquisite transformation of reality into image, the architectural pieces of Codazzi (the imaginary views) may be considered as examples of view painting, and offer the same subtle pleasure of the immediately and profoundly real.

'...Codazzi's paintings were always intended as views, and the form he used makes this evident. But the opposite is also true; for if a painter who reproduces accurately determined arrangements of buildings must inevitably face a task which involves both reality and illusion, Codazzi is very well aware of this antithesis; with him, far from being an obvious motive and an exterior attempt to organize space, it is resolved in real pictorial terms and, transcending the limitations of a simple adjustment of perspective, attains values which, rather than ideal, are abstract. I can think of no other way of describing the intangible purity which emanates from his architectural views, even from those which might be called real, as opposed to imaginary, which confers on them the subtle charm of a *pulchritudo* which is both *vaga* and *adhaerens*.

'...There is certainly no reason to suppose that Codazzi was ignorant of the discoveries of optical science when he conveys surfaces flat or curved by delicate transitions of colour instead of deploying light and counterlight. He tended constantly to transform the observation of reality from a scientifically rigorous exactitude into a truth which is essentially pictorial. This tendency also led him to correct the falsifications of perspective in a manner which could not be bettered, just as a century later Canaletto was to correct the distortions produced by the *camera ottica*' (E. Brunetti, 1956).⁹

These are substantially the historical antecedents which provided guidance for my attempt to analyse the historical and formal premises of the phenomenon, which obviously go back far beyond the compass of the paintings of Van Wittel, the starting-point of my investigation.

But as I have attempted to show in my earlier work, at the beginning of the history of view painting, and more particularly of the topographical view painting as it developed and spread especially in the eighteenth century, we do not find only the naturalistic component, typical of Codazzi, the view from nature, based on contrasting light and shade in the Caravaggesque tradition and closely linked to the perspective of illusionism and optical illusion. The true nature of the genre will not be grasped, or will be only partially understood, if we do not take into account an entirely different tendency, the prevalence of descriptive intention, almost of programmatic intention, over formal intention — in other words, the importance of content. If indeed by *veduta* is meant 'what is seen' (and hence the naturalistic connection), it should not be forgotten that one sees only and always what one wishes or is conditioned to see. And here there is an element of affinity, if not a close one, with a period, that of Mannerism, which more than any other was prepared to subdivide and classify the whole field of representational art; a way of looking at visual reality which seeks stimulation not so much from the illusory effects of perspective as from the more subtle suggestiveness of an interior perspective, and an intellectual attitude, which is turned towards the past and may be thought of as a kind of historical perspective.

It is a kind of vision born of the consciousness of the existence of an insoluble fusion of natural scenery and reminiscence, which is aroused by a sentiment that is ready to accept the message, or the warning, conveyed by the crumbling evidence of an irrecoverable past; a consciousness and a sentiment which are inevitably stirred by the relationship between present and past, nature and history, and so between the indifference of nature, present and eternal, and the fragile transience of past greatness. I have already remarked that such an attitude is discernible, in an undertone, as it were, particularly in the drawings and sketchbooks of those artists from Northern Europe who were



Gaspar Van Wittel: *View of Naples* (detail of Monte Echia).

Naples, Museo di San Martino.

drawn to Rome by the renown, the prestige and the archaeological wealth of the city, which provoked a response typical of a time of crisis, in which nostalgia for a past so different from the present joined with admiration for a declined greatness which was in a sense unknown and mysterious. All this was, however, accompanied by a realistic and descriptive impulse appropriate to the portrayal of the actual state of the venerable ruins and a wish to make this known, a didactic and almost invento-rizing attitude, which affected the choice of subject and the aim of the vision, and which is more directly concerned with the origins of view painting. *Quanta Roma fuit ipsa ruina docet*: a vision which can be considered as a protoromanticism of ruins, as Denys Sutton has acutely perceived:

‘Any examination of the origins of the consciousness of nature at this period makes it clear that various trends, some connected, others independent, were operative. Hence the extreme fasci-nation of this particular aspect of the age. Perhaps the most intriguing movement that emerged was the cult of ruins, either in Rome itself or the Campagna. That they should fascinate artists such as the Dutch and Flemish, who came from lands where the physical presence of antiquity was almost non-existent, is understandable. A danger is that in looking back now at such pic-tures — and Rose Macaulay’s brilliant survey *The Pleasure of Ruins* has made us more than ever aware of the pitfalls of the subject — we may see them in a more romantic, more symbolical guise even than we should; they may, in fact, often be no more than views, expressly designed to give a taste of foreign parts to those unable to make the pilgrimage themselves. Yet Bril’s endeavour to compose as he did, to place particular buildings in relation one to the other, was an expression of the romantic spirit. Earlier painters — such as Heemskerck — had been con-cerned to record the appearance of individual items of an antiquarian nature. Now, the painter was anxious to provide a summary of what could be seen, so that a vision was revealed of the ideal, rather than the actual, Rome.

‘To understand the inner meaning of such pictures (that is to say, if one accepts that any arran-gement of forms masks a particular comprehension of facts), one would have, so it seems, to delve into the layers of consciousness at the time. Such pictures may be considered simply for their topographical value; but the *ruine herbose* (as Marino termed them) may also be read as symbols of the strength of natural forces as compared to the transitoriness of human endeavour. Are these ruins, echoes of antiquity, posed amidst trees and grass, there to emphasize that natural life, untroubled by external problems, continues, and to stress the continuity of such factors in the very spot where noble buildings once stood?

‘If the fact is accepted that the artist, consciously or unconsciously, reflects states of mind, may we say that there is some connexion between the straightforward ruin pictures of Bril and the more subtle suggestions as to decay apparent in certain works of Annibale Carracci? That in this period of paradox Annibale was prepared to take an actual building, the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, and present it under a particular guise, with vegetation encrusting a detail and suggest-ing a mood of abandonment, and that Breensbergh chose to imitate the Dome of St Peter’s in the same state may well be significant. Are we to conclude from these examples that meanings existed within meanings, and that there prevailed, at the turn of the century — in the vital years between 1590 and 1620 — some sense of impermanence which demanded artistic expression? It is for these reasons that such isolated pictures, recalling the curious ruin mythology of certain

Surrealists, suggest the value of examining the past, and the exhibition may shed further light not only on the situation as it then was but on the perplexing and intriguing question of the various *familles d’esprit* that may be discerned in the arts’ (Denys Sutton, 1955).¹⁰

Returning to my argument, it is obvious that such an attitude, which enabled the artist to ‘see’ the circumstances, the context, of a place, whether natural or historical, in its reality as an actual scene, isolating and emphasizing its most suggestive aspects and its most picturesque contrasts, was the prerogative of the North European artists who worked in Rome, drawn thither by the at-traction of an atmosphere so different from that of the countries from which they came, where the the physical presence of antiquity was almost non-existent. Artists such as Poelemburgh and Breens-bergh, for example, and the rest of the Italianized Netherlanders who succeeded one another in brief visits to Italy throughout the second half of the seventeenth century and the first decades of the eighteenth, cannot be omitted from any consideration of the origins of the topographical view painting. Even if they were mainly landscape painters (but many of their drawings and sketches are in fact of the subjects treated by the *vedutisti*), it should not be forgotten that they were attempting to project a vision of the reality around them which, even if it was imaginary, was at least probable and always based on sketches made from life and constituted what was substantially a *veduta*. The intention, whether latent or explicit, of expressing a visual idea in terms of a *veduta* has a clearly dis-tinguishable effect on the result. As an autonomous genre, however, as distinct from an occasional achievement, the topographical view painting in the late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century sense of the word, the *veduta*, reached full development fairly late compared with the other genres, although its characteristics were features in the art of the early seventeenth century, on the one hand in the North European tendency to landscape painting that was inspired by particular scenes and an en-deavour to convey them, and on the other hand in the methods of the perspective painters, and espe-cially of Codazzi, whose strict architectural compositions served as a frame for the portrayal of the atmosphere and actuality of daily life.

THE METHODS OF THE VIEW PAINTERS

The close connection between view painting and the problems of optics and of perspective, and above all the intention of the eighteenth-century view painters to reproduce reality — topographical reality — objectively, as a mirror, and their belief that this was possible in an absolute fashion, are factors which induced the artists to make use of special methods and techniques, and occasionally to make use of the aid offered by the *camera ottica*.

These processes, once they have been identified, can help to explain the working methods of the individual artists and the genesis of their works, or to reveal to us their convictions and, in the pro-foundest sense, their relationship, conscious or unconscious, with the fundamental tendencies of the century in which they lived. But they cannot tell us much more than this, because that particular accuracy of perception and of portrayal of reality was of an interior, intellectual nature — at least with Canaletto and Bellotto. Even if the *camera ottica* could help to immobilize and concentrate the image of the view in a limited space, flat and two-dimensional, without depriving it of stereoscopic

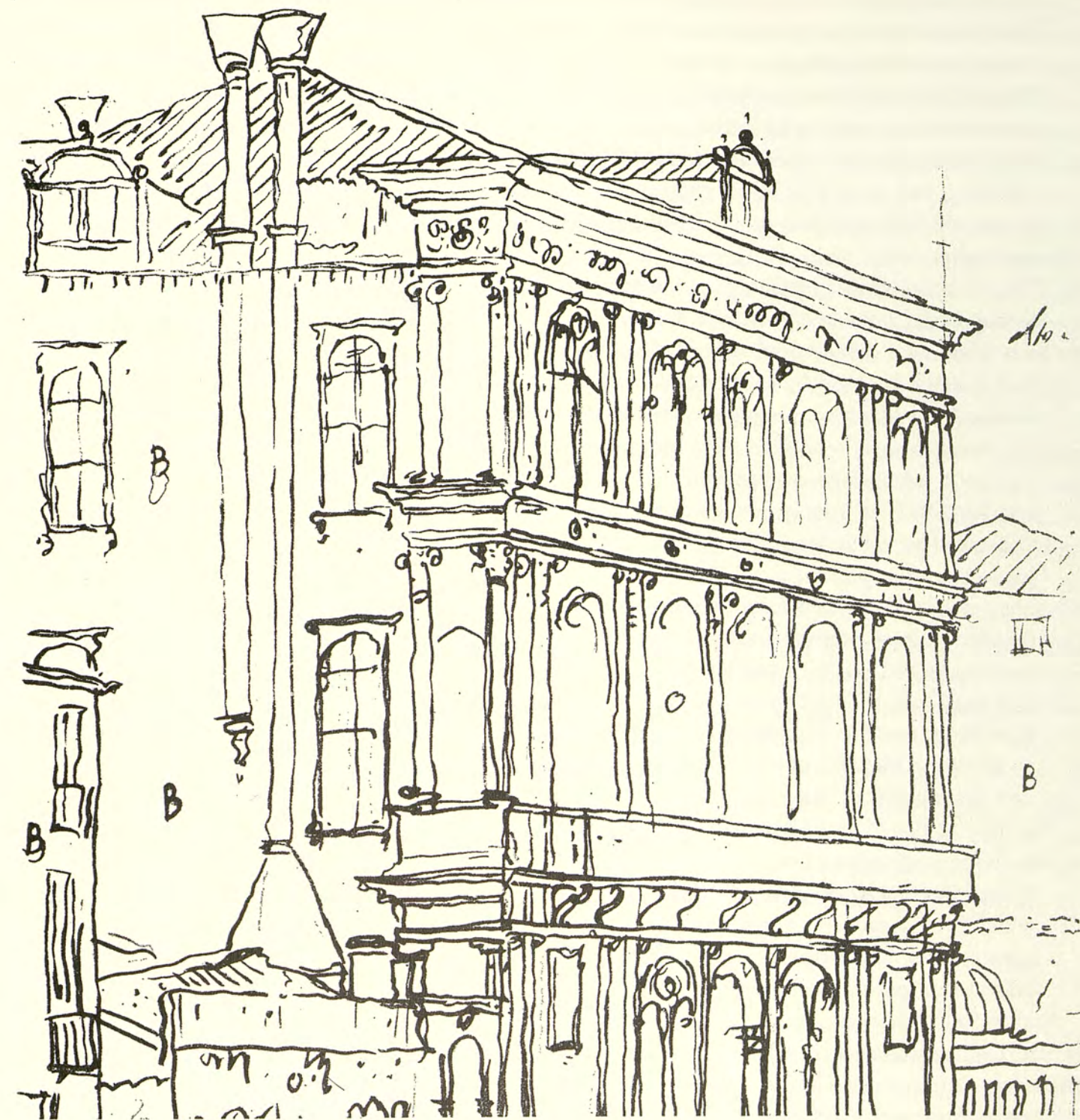
effect, what really mattered was the spirit which led them to draw inspiration from that small, concrete microcosm, which led them to discover the process, or at least its practical application, rather than the modest aid towards effects which the *camera ottica* could offer towards the realization of the images.

In this connection it is instructive to read the description of the use and features of this optical device given by one of the outstanding men of letters of the period, Francesco Algarotti:

'...There is no doubt that if it were given to man to see a picture made by the hand of Nature herself, and to study it at his ease, it would be of more profit than anyone could ever imagine. Nature paints such pictures continually within our eyes. The rays of light which emanate from objects, entering the pupil, pass through the crystalline humour, which is the size and the shape of a single lentil. Refracted by this, the rays are again united on the retina, which is at the back of the eye, and there they fix the image of the objects towards which the pupil is directed; and thus the mind, however this happens, apprehends and sees them. This mastery of nature, which has been revealed to our time, might only have provided food for the curiosity of philosophers and been of no avail to painters, had not art succeeded in counterfeiting it, making it familiar and evident to the eyes of all. By means of a lens of glass and a mirror a device may be constructed which conveys the image or picture of anything, in a very convenient size, on to a fine sheet of paper where anyone may see it at his ease, and study it; and this device is called the *Camera Ottica*. Since no other light enters there save the rays proceeding from the object which is to be portrayed, its image appears with unbelievable clarity and strength. Nothing is more pleasant to see nor of greater utility than such a picture. And leaving aside the exactness of the outline, the truth of perspective and chiaroscuro, which could not be excelled or imagined, the colour is both so vivid and so mellow that it could not be surpassed. The lights on the figures are well-defined and bright in the parts which are most prominent and exposed to the source of light, and diminish gradually and insensibly as they recede. The shadows are strong but not hard, and the outlines are precise but not sharp. In the reflecting parts of the object can be perceived an infinite array of tints which it would be difficult to distinguish in any other way. And in every sort of colour, because of the reverberation of light between one and another, there is such harmony that very few can be called truly hostile one to another.

'Nor is it to be wondered at that by means of this device we succeed in discerning what we cannot do by any other means. When we turn our eyes to an object to consider it, there are so many other things surrounding it which also send their rays to our eyes at the same time that they do not permit us to distinguish clearly all the modulations of colour and light which the single object possesses, or at the most they show them muted, lost, between seen and unseen; whereas in the *Camera Ottica* our visual energy is concentrated upon the single object it has before it, and all other light is silent.

'Wonderful also in such a picture is the impression it gives of what is before, what behind. Besides the decrease of size in objects which is conveyed according to their distance from the eye, one sees also the decrease in intensity of colour, of light and of the parts. The further away from the eye, the more colour it loses and the vaguer are its outlines; and the shadows are far duller in less light or at a greater distance. On the other hand, the objects which are closer to



Canaletto: *Palazzo Vendramin-Calergi*. From the *Quaderno dei Disegni*.

Venice, Accademia.

the eye and larger in size have also more precise outlines, stronger shadow, more definite colour. This constitutes the perspective which is called aerial perspective, as though the air between the eye and the objects, as it obscures them just a little, were wearing them away, consuming them. Upon this kind of perspective a great deal of the pictorial art depends, in matters of recession, foreshortening and background; and with its aid, together with that of linear perspective, are born 'things sweet to see, and sweet deceptions'.

'Nothing can show this better than the *Camera Ottica*, in which Nature paints the objects closest to the eye with firm and pointed brushes and more distant ones with brushes increasingly broad, and softer.

'The most celebrated painters of views today make great use of the *Camera Ottica*, and without it they could not have portrayed so vividly. It was probably also used by figure-painters beyond the Alps, who depicted what lay before them so well and in such minute detail; and it is known that Crespi, *lo Spagnolo*, of Bologna availed himself of it, and there are paintings of his that are wonderfully effective. I happened to be present when a good painter was shown the device for the first time: he was filled with indescribable delight, he could not tear himself away from the sight nor see enough of it; he tried it a thousand ways, turning the glass now to one thing now another; and he openly confessed that nothing could compare with pictures by so sovereign and excellent a master. There is a certain gentleman who is wont to say that in order to revive painting in the present time he would like to found an Academy which should contain only the book of da Vinci, a catalogue of the merits of the greatest painters, plaster casts of the most excellent Greek statues and, above all, the pictures produced by the *Camera Ottica*. A young student should begin to study them early in order that one day he may approach as close to them as a man can.

'The same use that astronomers make of the telescope, the physicists of the microscope, should be made by painters of the *Camera Ottica*. All these devices lead equally to a better knowledge and description of Nature' (F. Algarotti, 1756).¹¹

But with rather less confidence in the new techniques, a contemporary theoretician gave warning of the dangers inherent in an over-mechanical exploitation of mechanical means:

'Canale taught by his example the true use of the *camera ottica* and how to recognize the defects which it may cause in a painting when the artist trusts entirely to the perspective he sees in the *camera*, especially in the colours of the air, and when he does not obviate by his skill what might offend the sense. The Professor will understand...' (A.M. Zanetti, 1792).¹²

And indeed it appears that professors (or in this case, the critics) did take heed of the arch warning of the eighteenth-century scholar. In his introduction to the Canaletto drawings in the Venetian Galleries, Pignatti gives a full and illuminating account of the working methods of this artist and the limited use which he made of the aid afforded by the *camera ottica*:

'...It is curious that until the discovery of the *Quaderno* (of Canaletto's drawings) the problem of the identification of these drawings made 'on the spot' was always rather a confused one and was indeed made more difficult by the uncertainty regarding the use of the *camera ottica*, that is, of the portable *camera oscura* which the perspective painters and engravers of the preceding generation had certainly used for their views of Venice. It is well known that Zanetti, a contemporary

of Canaletto, asserted that Canaletto not only used the instrument but also perfected its application. What is odd is that many scholars have maintained that drawings such as those in the *Quaderno* (and frequent reference is made to the exact copy of a drawing in Berlin) could have been made with the *camera ottica*. Since the publication of the *Quaderno* this opinion no longer seems tenable; it would reduce a collection of very impressive drawings from life to mechanical transpositions. This is clearly refuted by their quality, from the page in Berlin to the *Quaderno* in Venice and the drawings in the Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge, Mass.

'Patient experiments have been made using an authentic eighteenth-century portable *camera ottica* preserved in the Museo Correr. The wide-angled image of the view appears upon ground glass, on which it is an easy matter to place a transparent sheet of paper in order to draw the principal lines. But it is difficult to obtain more than the outline, and even this presents difficulties such that the results are uncertain, mechanical, rigid. I have several times used the *camera ottica* for the same views and from the same viewpoints as drawings which are included in the *Quaderno*, and I have obtained perspective diagrams which are very similar, on paper of the same size; but the nature of the line, even allowing for the effects of inexperience, has been consistently different. Canaletto's drawings was in comparison always infinitely more lively, more animated in every part, even if at times not lacking in what might be called signs of mechanical drawing (such as those which make use of drawing pens and squaring up, which are essential in architectural subjects.)

'I think that Canaletto certainly made use of a *camera ottica*, as the sources tell us, but not to make drawings such as those in the *Quaderno*. Very probably he used it only in the initial stages, for a brief general sketch of the view, to give an indication of levels and vanishing points. And there is a kind of documentary proof of this: an inscription on one of the Viggiano drawings provides unexpected confirmation of this thesis. It reads: "Buildings shown in the view of the entrance to the Salute Canal opposite the said church, with more that comes after this paper, as can be seen from the scribble (*scaraboto*) of the said locality". The *scaraboto* is no doubt one of those general preliminary sketches mentioned above, and very probably made with the help of the *camera ottica*, providing a panoramic schema which would then be subdivided into different sections of the drawing: some on pages before and some on those 'after', as the inscription says and as the *Quaderno delle Gallerie* shows' (T. Pignatti, 1958).¹³

PATRONS AND THE GRAND TOUR

The success and diffusion of the *veduta*, which implies the increased activity and the growth in numbers of view painters, were naturally affected by external factors which are to be included among the origins of the genre in so far as they correspond with the reasons for its taking a definitively topographical character. The tendency towards accuracy and exactness of the *veduta* was accentuated as demand for this type of painting increased, as it did especially in Rome and Venice from commissions for foreign patrons. This was a type of commission which, as I have explained elsewhere,¹⁴ also existed on a small scale, a kind of wholesale trade, which did not assume that the purchaser

possessed a humanistic education or a literary or sentimental awareness of past greatness. Rather than idealized and symbolic representations, what was required were accurate portrayals of the most famous, most picturesque or most memorable places. Small view paintings like those of Baur, which were obviously painted to comply with such requirements, owe to this circumstance their apparent role of precursors of the trend towards *vedutismo* which was to assert itself rather later, towards the end of the century, and to expand in the following one: the age of the Grand Tour was approaching. But already in the seventeenth century the commercial factor, if only on a minor scale, had a certain significance as a feature of the growing fashion for view paintings. The relationship between traveller and view painter became more specific as the eighteenth century proceeded, and it came subsequently to determine the activity of the artist.

‘...English collectors, it is well known, constituted the principal clientele for the painter of views. This singular fact cannot, I think, be explained simply in terms of the sentimental tourist, however strong the nostalgia provoked by the places admired during the Grand Tour and the desire to prolong the pleasure they afforded by possessing faithful representation of those places; or at least, not only by this. I think that English purchasers delighted in these ‘views’ because of their objectivity, the workmanlike realism which was congenial to their character and their way of considering works of art. There was also, of course, the matter of the social prestige conferred by the possession of Italian *vedute*, a sign of culture and refined taste. I should say that the great success of view painting in eighteenth-century Europe, especially of Italian view painting, was connected with the fashion prevailing in the country seats and manor houses of England at that time’ (A. Martini, 1965).’

This question of view painters and the tourists who patronized them is of particular importance when it concerns the great Venetian painters and rich English patrons. To know something of these transactions, on however banal a level, means in many cases to have concrete evidence of the conditions of birth of a masterpiece.

‘...Relations between England and Venice have always been peculiarly friendly. As great maritime and trading powers, they faced similar political and economic problems, and it was to Venice that England first sent a resident ambassador; while admiration for the efficiency and stability of Venetian government was widespread in England. Indeed, for a long time Venice came in English eyes to typify the whole of Italy; and to provide for English writers an unfailing source of themes and settings.

‘With the decline in Venetian seapower and commerce, the strength of political and economic ties weakened; but that of cultural links remained, and probably attained its highest point during the eighteenth century. This was the age of the Grand Tour, of the travelling Englishman, and of an unparalleled growth in English wealth. Never before had so many English people visited Venice or come to reside there; and with them came not only money, but an ardent desire to patronize the arts. So the products of the Venetian eighteenth-century Renaissance found an immediate market among the English. Not only did Venetian works of art go to England, but also Venetian artists, either by invitation or to seek their fortune in the then richest country in the world.

‘...Connoisseurs and collectors regarded a visit to Rome as obligatory. But most of them had

an incorrigible taste for the elegant and ornamental art of Venice — to use the jargon of the day — which made them liberal patrons of that art. In certain directions this followed conventional lines: the employment of Venetians to decorate the walls of churches or of great houses; the commissioning of portraits, either in Venice or England; the purchase from the easel of idealizing and picturesque landscapes. But in one direction it took a novel form — the acquiring of topographical views, in somewhat the same spirit as we today collect photographs or even picture postcards; and to this demand, the topographical painters of Venice made immediate and extraordinary response.

‘A crucial event in the development of this patronage was connected with the appointment in 1707 of the fourth Earl of Manchester as Ambassador Extraordinary to Venice. There he had painted by Luca Carlevarijs a representation of his arrival at the Ducal Palace to present his credentials; an event which marks the beginning of a considerable connection between Carlevarijs and English collectors. Equally important, however, was that on his return to England in 1708 the Earl of Manchester took with him Giovanni Antonio Pellegrini and Marco Ricci, forerunners of a long succession of Venetian visitors.

‘Such direct dealing between artists and patrons were, however, unusual. More often there would be a professional go-between, generally an Englishman resident in Venice. Typical of these was Owen MacSwinnny, a playwright and theatre manager in London, who on becoming bankrupt, went to Italy in 1711 and remained there for over twenty years. He acted as agent chiefly for the Earl of March, who in 1723 became second Duke of Richmond. Through MacSwinnny the Duke of Richmond acquired Venetian paintings, notably two small works by Canaletto, painted on copper, which are still at Goodwood. These are early works; and MacSwinnny, writing to the Duke in 1727, says of the painter: “The fellow is whimsical and varies his price every day; and he that has a mind to have any of his work must not seem to be too fond of it, for he’ll be the worse treated for it both in the price and the painting too”. This is not the only evidence that Canaletto quickly developed all the characteristics of a prima donna.

‘But the activities of MacSwinnny pale before those of Joseph Smith, who after spending some years in Venice became British Consul in 1744. But he was active and prosperous long before then. In 1729, for example, he despatched to Samuel Hill in London, works by Piazzetta, Rosalba, Titan or Polidoro, and Marco Ricci; and in 1731 two paintings by Canaletto, still owned by one of Hill’s relatives, after a correspondence containing a good many disparaging remarks about the artist’s reliability. Smith’s activities extended far beyond acting as agent for collectors. He was busy as merchant and banker; and as early as 1730 was able to rent a still-existing villa at Mogliano, represented in a series of drawings of the subject made for Smith by Visentini. More important was that Smith’s prosperity enabled him to acquire a fine library and a great collection of paintings, mainly by contemporary Venetian artists. Both were sold to George III of England, the library in 1762, the collection some time between 1763 and 1770. The books of the library provided the foundation for what is known as the King’s Library in the British Museum. Included therein were a number of albums containing drawings mainly by Venetian contemporary artists, among them no less than 143 drawings by Canaletto. These are now at Windsor Castle, where is also the bulk of the painting collection. Included in this were 54 works

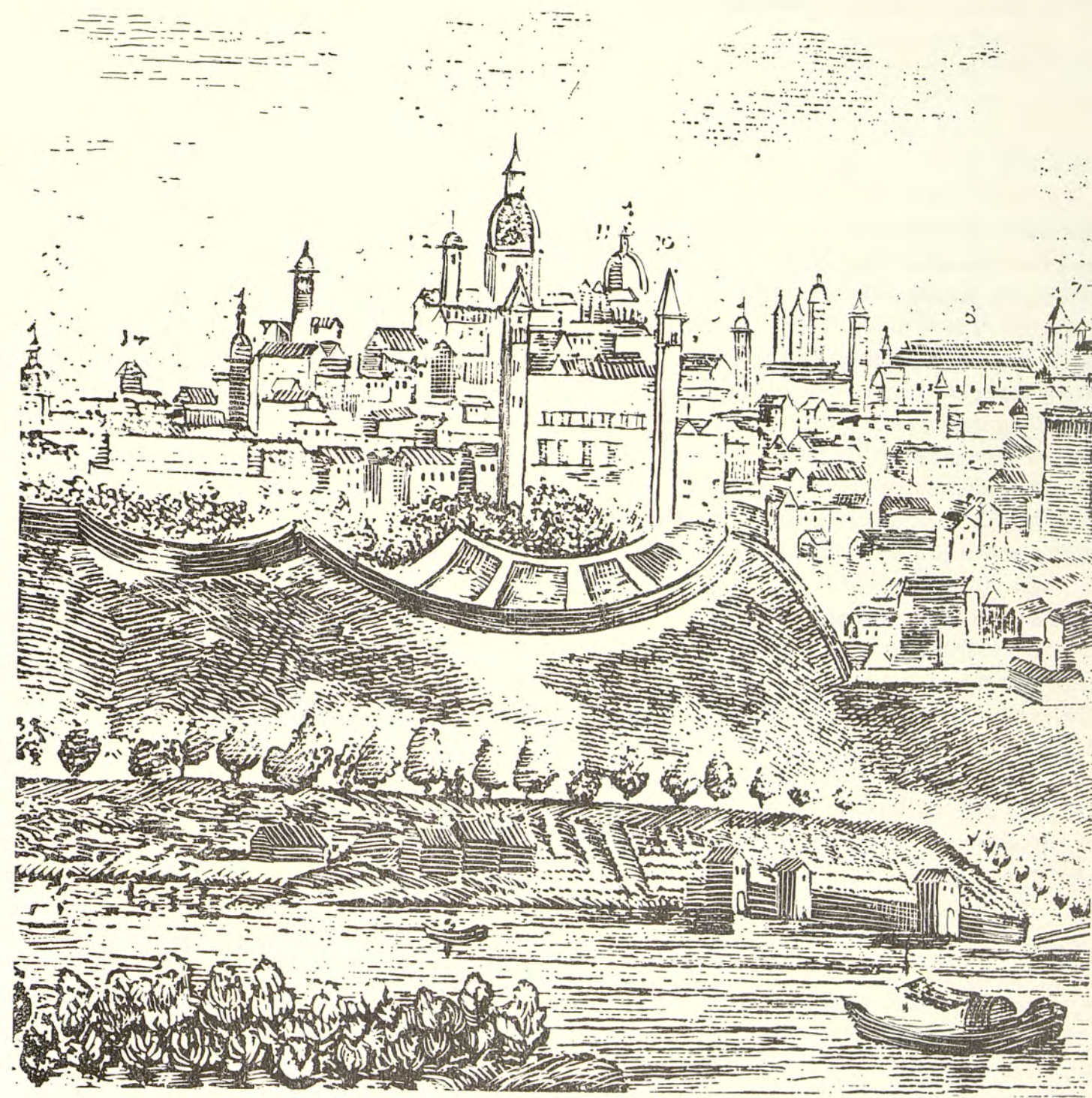
by Canaletto, 41 by Marco Ricci, 38 by Rosalba, and 36 by Zuccarelli. So it is that the Royal Collections in England are the *locus classicus* for the study of eighteenth-century Venetian painting. 'Smith's library and collection were housed in a small palace on the Grand Canal, now the Palazzo Mangilli-Valmarana, which Smith bought in 1740, and had completely remodelled by Visentini, the work being completed in 1751. Contemporary estimates of Smith vary from that of an unscrupulous exploiter of artists to that of a generous patron. Horace Walpole described him as having "purchased the fee simple of Canaletto for the purpose of selling to English travellers". Yet Smith kept for himself most of the paintings he bought; and Canaletto could certainly take care of himself. In any case, Smith will always be remembered as one of the chief channels through which English patronage of Venetian artists was exercised.

'George III was not the only English collector to buy on a large scale in Venice. Still in England, or only recently dispersed, are notable groups of Venetian paintings acquired in the eighteenth century, such as the twenty-four views by Canaletto which belong to the Duke of Bedford, and the group of twenty-eight Venetian views formerly belonging to the Earl of Carlisle.

'Canaletto was perhaps the most sought-after of Venetian *vedute* painters; but Guardi also had his admirers. As early as 1764, Pietro Gradenigo speaks of two paintings ordered from him by an Englishman; and works by him are often mentioned in lists of paintings sent to England. An interesting case is that of Ingram, an Englishman resident in Venice in the later eighteenth century, who not only bought from Guardi, but whose daughter was a pupil of Guardi. Later, when Ingram settled in England, Miss Ingram is reported to have made most skilful copies of her father's pictures; and these are now in circulation as works by that painter.' (W.G. Constable, 1955).¹⁶

Opportunities for the view painter could also be less dependent upon chance. Unlike the Venetian painters, for example, Vernet worked on official commissions: the famous series of seascapes which he painted for the King of France at the orders of the Marquis de Marigny is well known; and the condition under which they were painted was perhaps responsible for a certain courtly quality in the rendering of the view which, however, by no means invalidates the principle of truth upon which they were based.

'...Your views must have two qualities: that of pictorial beauty and that of resemblance. In the plan which you have proposed to me the one is undoubtedly understood, but I fear that this may be at the expense of the other, and I doubt whether the port of Sète painted from the sea would be recognized by those who have seen it from the land. The storm you propose to portray would make your picture even less like reality since it is rare to see a sea roughened by storm inside a harbour. The foreground of your painting would have to be the open sea with the port itself in the background, which would prevent you from portraying it in enough detail to characterize it. It appears to me that the plan for this picture as it stands in the Itinerary that I have commissioned from you is the subject that you must treat. On one side a large area of the lake of Thau, on the other the entrance to the Languedoc canal, would give your picture an individuality which it would not have if you follow your earlier plan. Think it over before you decide, and above all do not lose sight of the King's wish, which is to see the ports of his realm depicted according to nature in your paintings. I realize that your imagination will be



View of Madrid from the Manzanares. From an eighteenth-century print. Milan, Bertarelli Collection.

obstructed by this; but you with your ability will succeed in reconciling veracity with invention, as you have already shown you can' (Letter from the Marquis de Marigny to Vernet, 9 October 1756) (L. Lagrange, 1864).¹⁷

THE VIEW PAINTERS

Naturally the discussion of view painting becomes more illuminating and effective when it centres upon individual artists, whose work may be reduced to common denominators only in its external aspects, their authentic personal motivation remaining, as it must, personal and unique.

Gaspar Van Wittel is the first painter to feature in this anthological review if only for reasons of chronology and legitimate precedence, for in the penultimate decade of the seventeenth century he chose topographic view painting as his speciality, and he raised it to a level of expressiveness and of artistic quality which had been unknown in that field before. His was the merit of having been the first to portray the living Rome, to convey its special character and immediacy not only by a minutely accurate recording of places, always chosen with extraordinary discernment, but also by an intelligent awareness of its contrasts, never dramatic or harsh, which were one of the most singular features of the city. It was not only the more obvious contrast between ancient and modern that he knew how to make less dramatic by introducing the reality of the everyday life of the city which penetrated into every corner, but also the contrast between the blackest poverty, or the infiltration of pastoral life and rural atmosphere, and the proud display of wealth and pomp. Only rarely did he paint famous sights or single buildings, he had no romantic feeling for ruins and was not particularly concerned with archaeological interests; but he sought out new angles, viewpoints and scenes that had not previously been thought of. Views of Rome are the most numerous among the many works which still survive by Van Wittel, because from the time he first arrived in 1674, before he was twenty years old, this was the city he chose for his permanent residence. But he also explored its surroundings, and in a long journey undertaken in the last decade of the century he went as far as Lombardy and the Veneto, passing through Emilia and Tuscany and making many drawings in several cities, especially in Venice, that were to serve him in future years as the basis for many paintings.

The influence of Van Wittel had more direct and important consequences in Rome than elsewhere. It was particularly effective in the early career of Panini, who often shows that he had learnt much from the experience of the Dutch artist, in his real views and especially in his early works. His example was decisive also in the case of Hendrik Van Lint, who may be considered his direct heir, and he also influenced the artistic development of Paolo Anesi, Alesio De Marchis and Joli.

The topographical view painting became increasingly popular as the century progressed, and the English, who in every field of art were now the most active and open-handed purchasers in Europe, were among the most faithful and numerous customers. I have pointed out elsewhere that the increasing success of the genre, especially with the English noblemen who undertook the Grand Tour, depended not only on the fact that the view paintings of Van Wittel and his followers, both direct and indirect, constituted a tangible reminder of sites and buildings visited and wondered at during

the journey, but also on a more profound reason: that the mirrorlike objectivity, the essential realism and the direct simplicity of style with which the views were conceived and executed were particularly congenial to the English outlook.

It is not surprising that the Venetian masters have received fuller treatment from critics and historians. As far as they are concerned, a brief synthesis will suffice, beginning with the vivid observations made by Longhi in the immediate post-war period:

'The great Antonio Canal starts from the bald Roman views of the type painted by VanWittel and then, in order to achieve greater veracity, he makes use of the *camera ottica* and miraculously, by doing this, he produces poetry. When it is remembered that sixty years earlier in Venice the most highly esteemed in this line was Monsù Cussin, while in Holland Vermeer was painting his view of Delft, it will be obvious to what European level Canaletto succeeded in raising Venetian painting. His enlightened certainty as to the absoluteness of truth, directed on to the golden light of empty afternoons, barred by shadows, in a Venice which was crumbling and cracking, like the lines of his wonderful etchings, has the stereoscopic melancholy of the views of the Cosmorama.

'And his hardly less well-known nephew, Bernardo Bellotto, transposed that poetry to the bridges of Turin, the city-walls and towers of Dresden and Pirna, with a magical substantiality which foreshadows that of the great Russian writers of the nineteenth century.

'And Francesco Guardi? He derives from a more bizarre cultural background, which was inspired by the verve of Callot, sharpened in Magnasco and always lurking in the corner of every seventeenth-century studio disguised as Arlecchino or Coviello, Pulcinella or Zanni. Some traces of it remained with him for a long time, in the over-elaborate sketch, in the over-meticulous manner of the *Festa per i Conti del Nord*. One can see too soon, too easily, where the gondola will pass and the tired sail will fall in his lagoon scenes, where the groups of three and four will pause in his piazze, with their terraced tricorneres, and even where the little dog will stop for his own trifling business. The fact is that Guardi, who had grown up in a workshop of painters of religious subjects for provincial commissions, was never fully aware of his own powers and was sometimes prepared to consider his activity as a view painter, as did the public, always traditionally and academically-minded, as painting for foreigners, amusing illustrated tickets from Venice, made by hand. He was capable of recovering his senses, and did not hesitate to paint in the chancel of a church, as Tiepolo would never have dared to do, his biblical 'caprices', his unfinished stories, which Fragonard would have admired. And on the ceilings of some minor palaces he painted his vaguely allegorical fantasies or lyrics, without the bravura of Tiepolo, without Tiepolo's scenic effects and mounting perspective; a few empty remnants of decorative forms swayed by the windless air. The same can be said of his *capricci*, juxtapositions of landscape and ruined buildings, which appear as ingenious versions in literal terms of the figurative poetry of the Far East, which he might have absorbed from coffeecups; the same applies to his views of Venice, vibrating, sandy with rust and silver, not indeed lacking in optical subtlety but on the whole as poetically removed from truth as those of Canaletto are poetically faithful to it. He thus seems sometimes to represent a shifting link between the ideal of capricious transience of Rosalba and

that of melancholy truth of Canaletto; but the first so clearly prevails that it is certainly impossible to accept the current rather ingenuous interpretation which makes of him a precursor of Impressionism' (R. Longhi, 1946).¹⁸

'...Certainly his contacts with Van Wittel prior to 1690, renewed when Gaspar visited Venice in 1697 (and again in 1706), were of great importance to the first essays of Luca Carlevarijs as a view painter. But it is also helpful to underline the sense of *construction* which was typical of his paintings of buildings and which is not to be found, on the other hand, in the work of the painstaking Dutchman: it is a quality which is clearly Italian, and whose origins are to be sought in the perspective painting which so many lovers of art had discovered in seventeenth-century Italy' (E. Brunetti, 1956).¹⁹

'...The view painters were in some ways yet more humble than the landscapists. Whereas Venetian interiors of the period may well show a Zuccarelli on the wall, they never show a view of the city itself. And the view painters had every cause to be grateful to the tourists, especially the English tourists, who filled Venice. It was tourist demand which called into existence the supply of picture-souvenirs which could be carried back to the North, shown to admiring untravelled friends, and which brought Southern light and warmth into that cold world...

'The eighteenth-century had perfected the idea of the 'Grand Tour'. It was particularly an English idea and equally specific was its devotion to Italy. "A man who has not been in Italy", said Johnson (who had not) "is always conscious of an inferiority". And the visitors in Venice, eager to be portrayed by Rosalba, were probably eager to bring back further proof of their superiority with a painted view of Venice. Venetians did not want, or need, view pictures. And so the view painters received few commissions from their fellow-citizens; their fellow-painters despised them, and most of them even now remain in oblivion — only the famous names of Canaletto and Guardi being generally known. They had little place in the discussion of art in their own period and none in the period which followed. Canaletto was lucky to get a mention at all in the mid-nineteenth century — even an unfavourable one by Ruskin. Guardi was barely known and seldom mentioned.

'But they are among the most important, as they are among the most typical, aspects of art in eighteenth-century Venice. Canaletto and Guardi between them have created a concept of Venice which influences those who have not seen it — and those who have. There has never been a city so extensively the subject of such sustained representation, but perhaps that can quickly be explained by adding that no other city has deserved to be. The view painters, besides, are a marvellous tribute to the eighteenth century's rational use of art; their pictures have a definite purpose, a purpose the English did not find in the contemporary history painters whom they therefore ignored. Nothing had yet been said about 'same delineation of a given spot', and the record of 'a given spot' had all the impartial value of an eyewitness record. Enthusiasm was required less than accuracy.

'Nor did Venice need any enhancing of the picturesque. It presented, as it still presents, the traveller with an eternal surprise. This was the lure of Italy, in general, and though the sober qualities of the eighteenth-century mind are so often emphasized the age actually loved a good surprise, appreciated fantasy and enjoyed incongruity; it was civilized enough to be the first century

which could truly savour and indulge these emotions. "One finds something more particular in the face of the country (Italy), and more astonishing in the works of nature," Addison remarked, "than can be met with in any other part of Europe".

'That ability to astonish was crystallized by Venice, beginning with the enchanting infraction of nature's law whereby it rises from the water; it was a city of the imagination to console those who without it would have had no illusions; it was a *pays lointain* which fortunately turned out to be not too far away. Not only tourists felt its permanent attraction. A native like Goldoni, by no means uncritical of his city and its citizens, looked back to it, the city he would never see again, as an old man in Paris: "Venise est une ville si extraordinaire qu'il n'est pas possible de s'en former une juste idée sans l'avoir vue... Chaque fois que je l'ai revue, après de longues absences c'était une nouvelle surprise pour moi".

'As well as a surprise, Venice offered entertainment with its theatres, cafés, gambling houses, brothels. Its prostitutes were famous and the general air of licence and amorality excited even the sluggish hearts of the English. It was the civilized world's concept of a city, although it had not the glamour of antiquity which took travellers on to Rome. What it lacked in classical ruins it made up in carnival, the delightful air of being for ever *en fête* deceiving many visitors into thinking it an ideal city.

'The view painters catered for the eyes alone; they represented, and they did not need to comment. What Goya, for example, would have made of the corrupt but fascinating spectacle is an intriguing question; but the Venetian republic would have dealt with Goya long before his satire grew savage. From the fact of the city's declining power the view painters turned tactfully away; more, they concealed that decline under the splendour their pictures derived from the great pageants so often represented. The pictures became then both view and pageant scenes recalling those of Carpaccio. The annual feasts which the Doge attended at various churches became popular subjects, and each of these was part of Venetian history, a traditional spectacle which age had consecrated and time made meaningless. Like a simulacrum, the Doge revolved through the pre-ordained circle of pompous empty activity. Painted by Canaletto, such moments as the *Wedding of the Sea*, most splendid of all Venetian festivals, must have made his countrymen proud again; the crowd agog on the Piazzetta that he shows us, a seething mass through which the ducal procession had to push its way to reach the golden many-oared barge of the *bucintoro*, forgot politics and poverty in the excitement of the day. And in the *bucintoro* the Doge was enshrined as the gilded symbol of the Most Serene Republic — like the Host in a monstrance was Goethe's apt comparison. With Canaletto and still more with Guardi, the ordinary man sinks his significance until he becomes a mere blob on the horizon, an articulated puppet to enliven the scene...

'Certainly these figures seem part of the gaiety of the view pictures; and part of the attraction for the English was to gaze at these variegated Venetian throngs: "in S.Mark's Place, such a mixed multitude of Jews, Turks and Christians; lawyers, knaves, and pickpockets; mountebanks, old women, and physicians..." However arbitrarily Canaletto grew to treat this assortment, he did not ever omit them, and in his early paintings he hit off the Jews and the Turks, the raffishness of the loungers and beggars, the pride of a passing senator; and, as the eighteenth century enjoyed

its life as mirrored on the stage in topical comedy, it enjoyed these reminders of man amid the topography of Venice.

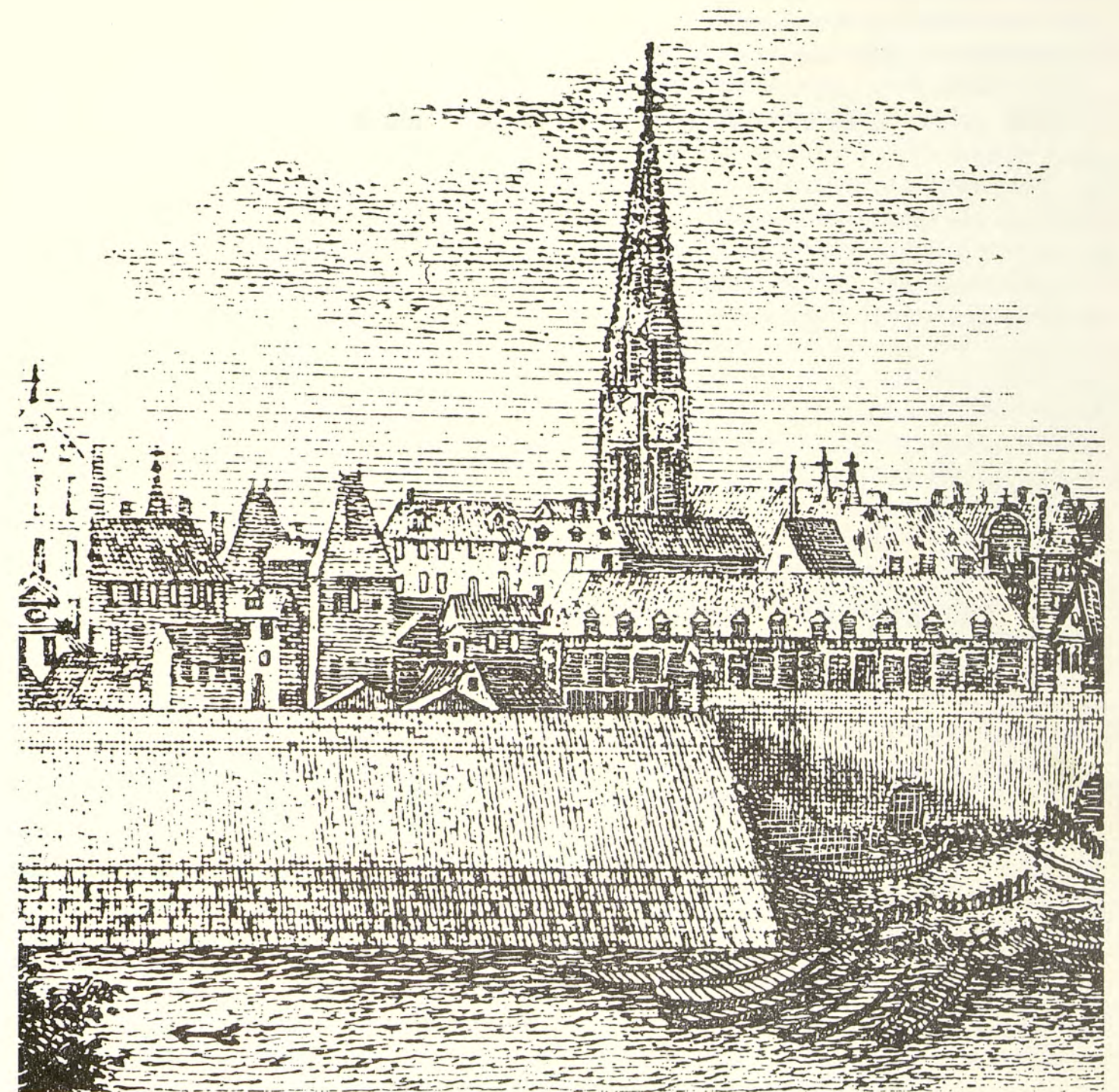
'The view picture was a microcosm. It was basically a product of observation, almost a scientific one since it was often observed through the *camera ottica*, a sort of camera obscura in which mirrors reflected the scene outside. In his dark box, as he peered towards it, the view painter saw his scene composed — rather too steeply in perspective, admittedly, but this could easily be corrected. Canaletto occasionally, and Guardi more often did not bother to correct the distortion and it can be seen in some telescoped line of buildings, or in a sprawling distant feature which was beyond the *camera ottica's* range of true focus. But in the *camera ottica* the world was mirrored while the viewer watched, himself withdrawn. Life became a peepshow, and the painter himself was no more part of what he saw than somebody looking through a keyhole is part of what he sees' (M. Levey, 1959).²⁰

'...Canaletto owes his radically new vision, which is new because it is the result of a fresh approach to artistic creation, neither to Van Wittel nor to the dull Carlevarijs, although he does not hesitate to borrow details, compositions, perspectives from Carlevarijs — those aspects of scenographic painting, that is, adapted by the mathematician-painter Carlevarijs to the charming scenes of Venice. This approach to visual reality has no precedent in the Veneto, nor in France or Italy, either at that time or earlier.

'...For Canaletto, the wonderful work of the sixteenth-century Venetian painters represented an unforgettable and precious part of his visual heritage, and although it afforded him ready examples of the handling of colour and of space, he did not find there a firm outline of image. It should be noted, moreover, that the rendering of atmosphere is not among the natural affects to be found in Canaletto's painting... The jewel-like clarity of his pictures almost precludes the intrusion of a breath of air; of the natural phenomena of which Canaletto makes use in order to give his images concrete form, atmosphere has a negative function; in a lens, it is the thickness of pure crystal that matters.

'...Thus from the outset he uses light to make a point stand out in space: a point which approaches the onlooker, which comes to meet him, offers itself to him, so to speak. Light settles like a thick, tangible deposit, a deposit which will spread, drop, mingle with shadow; the perfect equilibrium between light and shadow is ensured precisely because of this uniting and disintegrating function of the rhythm of light and shadow with regard to the conformation of the object. And this is why Canaletto needed to concentrate his object within the *camera ottica*.

'The resulting stereoscopic value which Canaletto strives to confer upon the painted image is what was destroyed by the old illusionist mechanism of perspective, and results from a basically new manner of seeing his subject. Canaletto's perspective does not construct a receding image, but one that is approaching. The vanishing point on the horizon does not draw towards it the images of buildings and scenery, absorbing them into the indistinctness of distance, but rather it projects them forward, from indistinctness towards the spectator. The ideal horizon of these paintings is not on the pictorial horizon but in the eye of the beholder. It is, then, in this emergence, this coming forward from the back towards the front of the stage, that the stereoscopic quality of Canaletto's handling of space is most evident. This, fundamentally and radically, is his vision,



View of Vienna and the Danube. From an engraving of 1760.

Milan, Bertarelli Collection.

his manner of seeing.' (C. Brandi, 1960).²¹

'...Bellotto was not an unknown painter. His belief, characteristic of the age in which he lived, in the absolute nature of truth, and the poetry of his magical, enchanted vision have already been stressed, especially by Roberto Longhi and Rodolfo Pallucchini. But in general he has been inadequately appreciated, considered on a secondary and subordinate level, due principally to the fact that he had always to share his glory with an older and more famous uncle... This naturally had the effect of making him thought of rather as a 'stand-in' for the older Canaletto, with the result, especially an earlier period, that there was considerable confusion between them and, more recently, that his real stature and originality undoubtedly suffered some diminution. It must be said at once that he was not only a great artist but a very great one, in no way inferior to Canaletto himself, and indeed from several points of view he appears a more modern, more committed, artist.

'...It is true that from the very beginning of his career he adopted the manner of looking at reality that Canaletto had been developing and, in his forties, had succeeded in bringing to full perfection. He had absorbed it almost with the air he breathed, and so radically and profoundly that between 1740 (as a contemporary, Guarienti, noted in 1753) it was difficult to distinguish between the works of the two artists. But it must be added that the training he received, and this is the point, was based on the firm conviction that a visual reality corresponded to something absolute, objective, existing in and for itself, and therefore recognizable through experience; that was not only certain and indisputable but also unique, not to be confused with anything else. It was the certainty that this reality could be achieved by one road alone, and with the help of a specific method, which caused this training to concentrate above all on the means considered most suitable to carry out the operation of recording a reality. These were means such as the *camera ottica* and the strict application of practical perspective which, given the eighteenth-century belief in scientific objectivity, were considered indispensable instruments for the reproduction of this reality, the visible appearance considered as certain and objective. This was something more radical, therefore, and in a way more likely to lead to results closely resembling each other than a simple handing on from master to pupil of the subjective methods of achieving a certain pictorial style. The fact that Canaletto was then able to transmute into poetry this confidence in an absolute truth is quite another matter: and the same is true for Bellotto, who, starting from identical principles, touched with a fresh spirit different keys of feeling. This enabled him, without abandoning anything that he had been taught, to find a way which led to results quite distinguishable from those of Canaletto.

'...It was certainly a lucky chance that enabled him to leave the Italian scene for the novel and different one of Dresden in Saxony. Everything that was seductive, antique, decayed, in the cities of Italy, the way in which the immediacy of modern life inserted itself into the welcoming folds of a past which lay everywhere, the feeling of inevitable crumbling into slow ruin of the evidences of ancient greatness, could not help but induce a tendency to delight in the picturesque. This was an insinuating invitation to make elegant arrangements with which the eighteenth-century taste for the *capriccio* nudged the original objective attitude towards actuality in the direction of the realms of fantasy and imagination. The views of Dresden and Pirna which Bel-

lotto painted during his residence in Saxony from 1747 to 1758 perhaps mark the highest point in his striving for that absolute objectivity which was one of the two opposing poles of the figurative arts in the eighteenth-century. The impression of veracity which they convey has something magical about it, their power of evocation seems inexhaustible. In their contemplation the spectator lives through peaceful afternoons on the banks of the Elbe, in an enchantment of veiled melancholy, on the gentle eastern fringe of eighteenth-century Germany, still polite and civilized, while around the horizon the perspective diorama follows the ordered elegance of the new constructions with which Frederick Augustus II was rebuilding his city. With a natural objectivity that does not conceal his secret but rather seems to confirm that a methodical way of seeing is the only one capable of recording truth, Bellotto brings before our eyes the life of this modern city, its buildings still with sharp corners projecting among the scaffolding, and blocks of stone being chiselled into shape in the shadow of the old wooden buildings which are in course of demolition. The tranquil life of the new market-place dominated by the cupola and pinnacles of the Frauenkirche, the wide prospect of the Zwingerhof with the symmetrical, somewhat military, ranks of its buildings, the seething crowd in the old market, the Oriental pavilions and gardens on the banks of the Elbe, with great green flowerbeds writhing in slow convolutions; or the rustic prettiness of the little village of Pirna, and the fortress of Sonnenstein at the edge of the meadows which slope down towards the river, the vineyards on the hillsides, the unused cannon beside which soldiers are dozing in the strong light of a lazy afternoon.

'His residence in the more ostentatious scene of the Vienna of Maria Teresa... brings a supra-real accentuation of the magical solidity of his vision, with almost pre-romantic effects, as in the wide views of the Schlosshof or the ruins of Theben. Bellotto gives his greatest demonstrations of this verism, transposed into a still colder and brighter atmosphere, in Warsaw. Here his objectivity is transported into natural surroundings which suit it well, and the existence of a simple and reliable affinity with the reality is evident in his views of the Polish city... and shows how open towards future possibilities was the vision of an artist whose beginnings were nevertheless so deeply rooted in the culture of his own age' (G. Briganti, 1965).²²

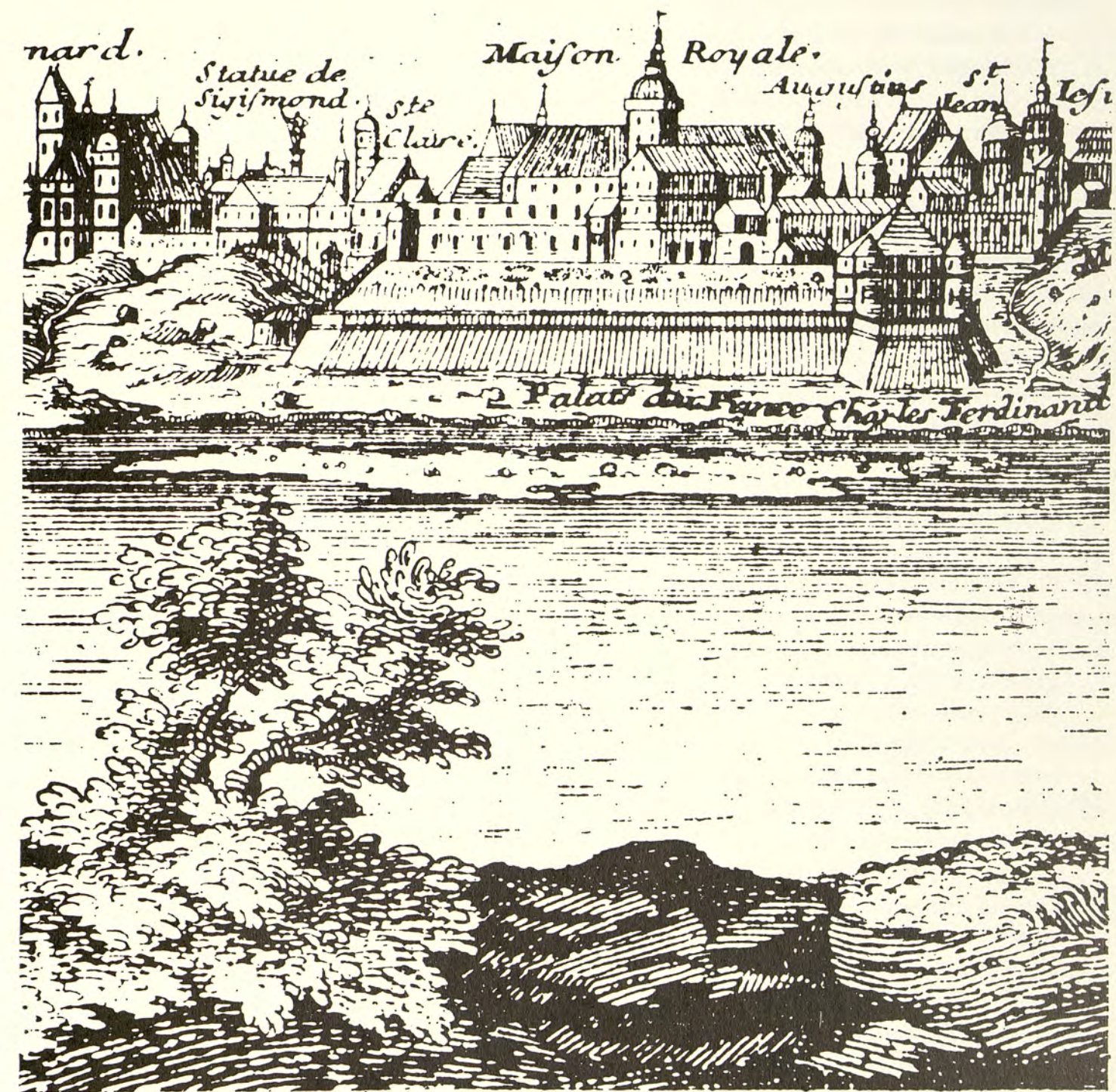
If it is true that the view paintings of the Venetian artists represent both in quantity and in quality the most important aspect of the genre, the fact remains that other parts of Italy, and elsewhere in Europe, produce, and not only occasionally, original paintings. The London views of Canaletto would not be conceivable in the climate of Venice, and still more, the northern views of Bellotto owe their modernity at least in part to the fact that the painter had moved away from the classic centre of *vedutismo*. From this point of view Naples too is a special case, offering an example of individual characteristics.

'In Naples, the recent sensational archaeological discoveries had drawn general interest to the present reality of that part of the country, and its distant heritage, Roman and Greek, lived again in a glamorous present similar to that of Rome but still further enriched by the beauty of the views which readily lent themselves to full elaboration by the imminent wave of romanticism. During these years the city became one of the obligatory goals, and the most attractive one, for the stream of foreigners who travelled from the north in search of those sunny lands "where the lemon trees flower". Already by the middle of the eighteenth century there was a

growing eagerness to become the possessor of a landscape painting which would both convey the new poetic feeling of the *veduta* and retain the subtle aura of a historical curiosity, in such a way that the suggestion of antiquity of the land of Virgil, surviving the enormous cataclysms of Vesuvius, merged with the bright myth of a southern land still primitive and happy. This new factor cut short the last possibilities of survival of the local tradition, now deprived of authority and worn into increasingly conventional cyphers, and it restricted also the possibility of modernization, a tendency emanating from Rome as a result of the work of Panini and Locatelli and making an appearance in Naples in the undoubtedly important works of Bonavia... And even if it is not yet firmly proved that the spread of the English landscape tradition and its importance on a European scale had made the desire for innovation felt even on the furthest fringe of the Campania, nevertheless it seems to be confirmed by the number of works by the greatest painters of that school which were inspired by the Neapolitan countryside.

'...There had been, at the very beginning of the eighteenth century, the great figure of Van Wittel in Naples to demonstrate the potentialities of the painting of landscape in terms of the Dutch school, accurate yet not devoid of the elements of the poetry of light and episode. This was indeed a notable precedent, but it was to have its effect in a totally indirect manner, in so far as all that was new and fertile which Van Wittel had brought to the artistic life of Venice, from Canale to Marieschi, Carlevarijs and Bellotto, passed into a tradition which, becoming European, was only then received in Naples. His presence in the city was unlikely to have had any direct influence at a time and in a milieu that was dominated by the successes of Roman scenographic painting, originating with Rosa; but the weight of his achievement made itself felt there half a century later, when the Modenese artist, Antonio Joli, who had received his training in Venice in contact with the greatest manifestations of that school, moved to Naples as scenographer of the Teatro San Carlo, and remained there, with few absences, from 1762 to 1777, the year of his death. Art historians have paid little attention to Joli, and his life and work still await a full study. He has been treated mainly as an architectural and perspective painter, but far greater is his achievement as a view painter in the style of Canaletto, enlivened with a decorative flourish which was the result of his contact with the Roman school. His *Views of Naples*, always convincing with subtly observed treatment of light and obvious documentary value, are preserved in the collection of Lord Montagu, in the Museo di S. Martino, Naples and in the Royal Palace at Caserta, and they not infrequently appear on the market. These works are significant enough to restore to Joli a position of prime importance among the view painters of his time, and also to establish that his residence in Naples must have had some influence on the development of landscape painting in that city, almost achieving an abrupt change of direction, a call to the treatment of natural reality in the face of the Arcadian scenes and the theatricality of current taste.

'The fact that the lesson had to come from an artist who was officially a professional scenographic painter is a fact not without significance, and a warning against an over-simplified classification of schools, genres and tendencies. But in comparison with the elegant, courtly, terse renderings of the ruin-fantasies of a Coccorante, the true-to-life ruins of Joli offered different values — immediacy and rational observation; and his work is distinguished by conventions, an unexceptionable decisiveness and severity, which are peculiar to him, if they are considered without reference



View of Warsaw, from a print of 1705.

Milan, Bertarelli Collection.

to the new climate of opinion which was developing. Painters of lesser distinction who are nevertheless worthy of note, such as Gabriele Ricciardelli and Pio Fabris, took their inspiration from Joli, although its mark is visible in only a few known works. In his paintings there are signs which anticipate by a few years the other great personality in the renewal of Neapolitan landscape painting in the second half of the eighteenth century, the German Philipp Hackert. Joli's work was sufficiently developed for Hackert not to need to break new ground, so that his influence flowed along channels that were already established, but to Hackert fell the task of making a substantial change in the character of Neapolitan painting, propagating with a nordic serenity which has too often been held against him in accusations of purely calligraphic painting and empty decoration, the new principle of documentary fidelity in the reproduction of landscape, without recourse to the conventional formulae and romantic vagueness of the old school.

'1770 was the significant year in which Sir William Hamilton summoned Hackert to Naples to draw views of Vesuvius; and an important role should be attributed to the English diplomat in the development of art in Naples, particularly when the *Campi Phlaegraei* and his patronage of other painters in the same field are borne in mind. Kniep, also a member of the Hamilton circle before his friendship with Goethe, is too superficial a painter to be treated beside these more important figures, but the case of Pio Fabris is rather different, and to him belongs the credit for having been among the first to draw attention to the picturesque and colourful life of the lower classes in Naples, initiating a taste for paintings of small scenes of folkloric interest, the life of the people, which was later to form one of the basic themes of Neapolitan painting. 'Hamilton and Goethe are only extreme cases, because it is clear that it is the ever-increasing number of foreign patrons and buyers in the city that fertilised the artistic life of Naples, awakening energies that had lain dormant and injecting a new fund of sensibilities and ideas which would have consequences not only in the history of painting but also in political history, contributing to turn Neapolitan society towards heroic and unfortunate adventures from which it was to emerge impoverished and, in its best aspects, cruelly so' (R. Causa, 1956).²³

Naples, an obligatory stop on the Grand Tour, is naturally, after Venice, one of the subjects most frequently portrayed in the geography of *vedutismo*. The contribution of Van Wittel, who visited Naples several times from the beginning of the eighteenth century onwards and painted a variety of views of the city, was certainly fundamental, but its effect was a delayed one and not fully felt until his works had been reinforced by the authority of the great Venetian view painters and the establishment of an European tradition. It was only in the second half of the century that painters such as Antonio Joli, Pio Fabris, Carlo Bonavia, Gabriele Ricciardelli and Pietro Antoniani created what can be called a Neapolitan school of view painting, which was given an international character by its association with largescale undertakings such as the illustrations for Sir William Hamilton's *Campi Phlaegraei*, begun in 1777, or the *Voyage Pittoresque de Naples et de Sicilie* of the Abbé de Saint-Non, published in 1781, with many views contributed by Hubert Robert, Chatelet, Renard, Paris and Desprez.

'...Antoniani appears as a good view painter closely concerned in the cultural scene in Naples in the second half of the eighteenth century. He can be compared to some extent with the "Canaletto of Naples", the Modenese Antonio Joli, even if his touch is somewhat external, calligra-

phic, mechanical, and his perspective diagrams freer and sometimes distorted. There is, in short, a noticeable difference of generation between Joli and Antoniani, and a difference of interests, passing from the optical objectivity of the first, still warmly enthusiastic for the new discoveries of Canaletto, to the cursive illustration of the second, tending to the externally spectacular and in any case concerned with the unusual' (A. Martini, 1965).²⁴

French view painting, which alone can worthily stand beside the great Venetian school, has been examined and discussed by acute and accurate critics who have defined its particular characteristics, its relationship with contemporary developments and its practical aims.

'...It is strange that the Italians felt no urge to paint or draw the ancient monuments among which they lived: they admired them, true, but this only led them to reproduce them in another fashion, by building new ones which were to be the equal of the old, and they were ready to do this fearlessly, even destroying them, using as stone quarries the Septizonium of the Palatine or the Colosseum, of which little would remain today had not Benedict XIV saved it from ruin by consecrating it to the memory of the Christian martyrs who died there. In this destruction of Rome for Rome's sake can be glimpsed the neoplatonic concept which was always implicit in Italy, that the true essence of a thing is its idea rather than its nature; whereas North Europeans remain faithful to reality...

'In Rome, when the French began to study there regularly, the chief painters of ruins were Andrea Locatelli, a close follower of the Flemish Jan Frans van Bloemen, known as l'Orizzonte, who had made the pastoral genre of Claude into an academic form, and Giovanni Paolo Panini, the Baroque representative among ruin painters. The preceding generation of view painters had had as its champion an artist of Dutch origin, Gaspar Van Wittel, known as Vanvitelli, who, as Briganti has shown, derives directly from the seventeenth-century Dutch tradition of view painting.

'Pierre de Nolhac in his *Peintres français en Italie* appears to attribute to Hubert Robert and Fragonard the merit of having first encouraged the painting of landscape from nature, in Rome and the country villas around it, among the French artists who were studying at the French Academy there. He adds "it is amusing to see them leading the director, Natoire, astray, and persuading him in his old age to turn to landscape painting". The correspondence between the Director of the French Academy in Rome and the Directeur des Bâtiments in Paris provides ample proof that this form of exercise was in fact part of the normal routine of the *pensionnaires*. Natoire himself recommended it, seeing it as a useful corrective to an excess of the alternative exercise of copying from the Renaissance masters. "Most of them," writes Natoire to Marigny, the Directeur des Bâtiments, "are afraid of lowering themselves by practising this kind of painting (landscape) and prefer to do what they can in the other (copying) rather than to seek to distinguish themselves in the first".

'...As early as 1724 Wleughels, on his arrival in Rome, and even before he had officially taken up the post of Director of the Academy, had begun to take his students out into the country, to Frascati and Tivoli, with the purpose of reviving the declining genre of historical landscape... Wleughels had also close connections with Panini, who had married his sister and was under the protection of Cardinal Polignac. The strength of Panini's influence in French circles may be

judged from the fact that on the death of Wleughels on 11 December 1737 he was for a time considered a possible successor as Director. This demonstrates also the importance that must be given to the revival of historical landscape as a genre. The example of the great Roman view painter clearly contributed to the orientation of the Academy in the direction of painting 'on the spot', which took its place beside the wearisome exercise of copying from ancient and Renaissance masters.

'...Wleughels' interest in landscape is also shown in his encouragement of Joseph Vernet. Sent to Rome in 1734, he was welcomed by the Director all the more warmly because he carried letters of recommendation from the Directeur Général and an introduction from the Bishop of Cavaillon, who was a friend of Wleughels. Since he was above all interested in marine painting, was it necessary for him to copy from the antique? The sensible Wleughels wrote: "He is a marine painter, and must study in sea-ports", and elsewhere "I have advised [Vernet] to follow his bent, especially now that he has shown me two of his sea pieces". The Duc d'Antin approved: "You are very right to advise him to follow his own inclination, for otherwise he would be wasting his time without achieving anything".

'Joseph Vernet, who was to remain in Italy for eighteen years (1734-52) soon lost interest in painting reality in favour of imaginary landscapes in the wake of Claude Lorrain, Salvator Rosa, Adrien Manglard; and in his paintings of seascapes, by day and by night, he substituted for the mythical figures of Claude the soldiers, washerwomen, fishermen and shipwrecked sailors of Salvator Rosa. This was a type of painting which was very successful and paying, which pleased tourists and attracted imitators, such as Carlo Labruzzi (1748-1817) whose works often pass under Vernet's name.

'Meanwhile, in the years towards 1760, drawing 'on the spot' scenes of Rome and its surroundings became increasingly important, largely on account of the meeting together of two artists and a connoisseur, who were to take it up with enthusiasm: Fragonard, Hubert Robert and the Abbé de Saint-Non' (G. Bazin, 1961).²⁵

'The journey of the Abbé de Saint-Non, which followed that of Vandières by a few years but was in a relatively minor key, had nevertheless consequences that were no less important: it definitely created and gave direction to the modern school of French landscape painting, intimated by Desportes. The attraction exercised by archaeological excavation in Italy had provoked a new discovery, apart from that of ancient objects: the discovery of landscape, of nature's architecture. This interest revealed the beauty of everyday scenes, reviving after two centuries the forgotten achievement of the Flemish Paul Bril. The present was discovered together with the past, and eyes which were sharpened by the darkness of the excavations were opened also to the incomparable luminosity of the Italian countryside. While many painters flocked to the studio of Raphael Mengs and aspired to learn a way of reviving painting through the study of sculpture, three Frenchmen rediscovered for mankind the appearance and the spirit of the Mediterranean landscape, its horizon, trees, gardens, ancient ruins, its daily life and its crumbling monuments, the posthumous evidence of the permanence of man. These three Frenchmen, who thus deliberately turned their back on archaeology in favour of life, were Hubert Robert, Fragonard and their brilliant guide Jean Claude Richard de Saint-Non, abbé *in commendam* of Poultières

in the diocese of Langres, deacon and formerly conseiller de Parlement, too often absent from Paris. Their choice determined, within the limits of European art, the particular originality of French art, which alone did not lose itself in the labyrinth of antiquity.

'...Hubert Robert admired Piranesi and was an enthusiastic pupil of the great Panini, but when he painted ancient ruins he was careful not to use them as a pretext for grandiose architectural drawing nor for pre-romantic meditation: he wished neither to be moved by a dead past nor to reconstruct a departed vision. He considered antiquity as a kind of luminous décor into which he was to insert familiar everyday life. Antiquity was for him the root of the human plant; he painted not ruins but the flowers of the Italian soil.

'The wish to see antiquities drew Robert to Rome, where he arrived in the retinue of the future Duc de Choiseul who had been appointed French Ambassador to the Papal See. He was not, therefore, a pupil of the Academy at Palazzo Mancini, although he was freely welcomed there; and this position, on the fringes of the Rome school, allowed him to profit from the advantages it offered without having to submit to the paralysing discipline, and to enjoy a freedom which he used to plunge himself into the glorious life of the Mediterranean region.

'He would certainly not have been able to achieve this equilibrium without the presence of the Abbé de Saint-Non, who had also been drawn by Herculaneum and Pompeii. Robert needed a sort of manager and spiritual director, and the intelligent and well-informed abbé willingly filled this role for him, especially as he was ready to welcome all requests from artists.

'...But these architectural illustrations, these pencil-drawn anecdotes, these travellers' tales in the form of engravings, even the verse letters and poems which celebrated them can only be considered stories, collector's pieces or material for scientific study. This raw material was, however, by the fortunate conjunction of Hubert Robert, Fragonard and Saint-Non transformed into living matter. From the almost providential association of these three artists was to be born a first school of French landscapists and painters of everyday life, containing *in fieri* the whole of the eighteenth century and, in the case of Fragonard, even of Romanticism.

'...If chronological considerations call for the treatment of the landscape of Joseph Vernet before the Roman period of Hubert Robert and Fragonard, his development was too much on the margin of the evolution of French art, his aesthetic appeals too much bound to that of the preceding century, for it to have been studied earlier. The originality of Vernet can only be seen when the new phase has already begun, and understanding of his work must be retrospective. '...Vernet in Italy, Vernet the painter of the ports of France, seems to herald nothing, his art seems empty. Only in the light of a young school can he be explained and brought into focus. Then he appears to complete and conclude an art of the past, without the strength to regenerate it and lacking the energy to secure for it a new beginning.

'The method of Vernet consists entirely in an accurate physical record, in the memory of the seeing eye, of the clear and precise form of objects, the nuances of light, the reflections of the water, the appearance of a place or of a building that can be recognized...

'His *Ports of France* are like solutions of a puzzle; the elements which make up his shipwrecks, his stormy mornings, his nocturnal fires, are interchangeable, and the different combinations of rock, wreck, mountain and cascade are infinite. Dully wedded to a nature which he is inca-

pable of dominating, he imitates without personalizing it, he cannot transform it either into the ancient world of Poussin nor the lyrical world of Watteau nor a personal world of his own, a creation of his own mind and soul. He is a literal portraitist — one might almost say a photographer — of landscape in which truth surpasses beauty; and even in his more fantastic combinations of buildings or mountains each element can be identified, as in a collection of documents each paper can be recognized. (In the twentieth century Vernet would have been an excellent producer of travel documentaries). In Claude, on the other hand, the buildings, which are also accurately painted, acquire a flavour of unreality and eternity and form an ideal universe. Vernet's subjects belong to this side of his work, those of Hubert Robert do not say what they should, but they do not say less than that. Hubert Robert, when he returned to France, frequently made use of Vernet's method when obsessed by his memories or obliged by commissions; he detaches himself from everyday reality, but the classicism of Hubert Robert's last manner is lacking in all ambition to greatness, he offers a complete and pleasing compendium of all the recognized formulae of the great periods of art. Three or four times, however, Vernet overcomes his limitations with a stroke of genius, and then he shows himself as a link between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries, and the flame appears to pass from Claude to Corot by his hand' (M. Florisoone, 1948).²⁶

NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Giuliano Briganti, *Gaspar Van Wittel e l'origine della veduta settecentesca*. Rome, Ugo Bozzi editore, 1966.
2. Letter of the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani to Theodor Ameyden, about 1625.
3. Alberto Martini, 'Notizia su Pietro Antoniani milanese a Napoli', *Paragone*, March 1965, pp. 81-2.
4. Roberto Longhi, 'Viviano Codazzi e l'invenzione della veduta realistica', *Paragone*, November 1955, pp. 41-2.
5. Cesare Brandi, *Canaletto*, Milan, 1960, p. 23.
6. Rodolfo Pallucchini, *La Pittura Veneziana del Settecento*, Venice-Rome, 1960, pp. 205-06.
7. Roberto Longhi, 'Velazquez 1630: La « rissa all'Ambasciata di Spagna »', *Paragone*, January 1950, pp. 30-40.
8. Roberto Longhi, *op. cit.*, p. 71.
9. Estella Brunetti, 'Situazione di Viviano Codazzi', *Paragone*, July 1956, pp. 52, 54.
10. Denys Sutton, Introduction to: *Artists in 17th Century Rome*. Catalogue of loan exhibition, Wildenstein and Co. Ltd., London, June-July 1955.
11. Francesco Algarotti, *Raccolte di lettere sopra la Pittura e l'Architettura*, Leghorn, 1765, vol. II, pp. 151-5.
12. Anton Maria Zanetti, *Della pittura veneziana e delle opere pubbliche dei veneziani maestri*, 1792, vol. II, p. 597.
13. Terisio Pignatti, *Il Quaderno del Canaletto alle Gallerie di Venezia*, Milan, 1958, pp. 20-21.
14. Giuliano Briganti, *op. cit.*
15. Alberto Martini, *op. cit.*, pp. 82-3.
16. William G. Constable, 'Venice and England in the XVIIIth century', *Venezia e l'Europa, Atti del Congresso Internazionale di Storia dell'Arte*, 1955, pp. 95-103.
17. Léon Lagrange, *Joseph Vernet*, Paris, 1864, pp. 85-6.
18. Roberto Longhi, *Viatico per cinque secoli di pittura veneziana*, Venice, 1946, pp. 37-8.
19. Estella Brunetti, *op. cit.*, p. 55.
20. Michael Levey, *Painting in XVIII Century Venice*, London, 1959, pp. 70-2.
21. Cesare Brandi, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-34.
22. Giuliano Briganti, 'La mostra del Bellotto a Vienna: diventò grande quando lasciò Venezia', *L'Espresso*, no. 31, 1965.
23. Raffaello Causa, *Pitloo*, Naples, 1956, pp. 33-8.
24. Alberto Martini, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
25. Germain Bazin, *L'Italia vista dai pittori francesi del XVIII e XIX secolo*, Catalogue of the Exhibition, February-March 1961, pp. 6-13.
26. Michael Florisoone, *Le Dix-huitième siècle*, Paris, 1948, pp. 94-7, 100.