

Poussin Studies-I: Self-Portraits

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POUSSIN STUDIES—I: SELF-PORTRAITS

BY ANTHONY BLUNT



WHEN Walter Friedlaender, Grautoff and Magne published their monographs on Poussin in 1914 the only self-portrait of the artist known was the picture in the Louvre painted in 1650 [PLATE II, B], although at least one other was recorded in engravings, and a mysterious portrait belonging to the Marquess of Bute was also mentioned as a possible candidate. In 1924, however, Léon Coutil¹ published the drawing in the British Museum [PLATE I, B]; a few years before the war Max Rothschild acquired the portrait of 1649, already known from engravings [PLATE II, A]; and in the last year two new portraits have been discovered, the early painting in the collection of Sir William Worsley at Hovingham, Yorkshire [PLATE I, A], and a drawing belonging to Dr. A. Scharf [PLATE I, C], which was connected with another engraving [PLATE I, D]. In addition several other paintings have been wrongly identified as self-portraits of Poussin. It may, therefore, be worth while to consider all this material in order to sort out those pictures which may properly be identified as self-portraits, and also to clear up a certain confusion which still exists about the portrait of 1649.

One fact must be borne in mind in dealing with the various claimants. In a letter to Chantelou, dated 13.III.1650,² Poussin states that he had not executed a portrait for 28 years, that is to say since 1622. We cannot, therefore, expect to find anything like a full-dress self-portrait in the intervening years.

The earliest claimant to be a self-portrait is the newly discovered Hovingham picture [PLATE I, A].³ In connection with Poussin's statement just quoted, it must be pointed out that this is an oil portrait and, if genuine, would seem to conflict with his own assertion, since the strong Roman and Venetian elements preclude the possibility of its having been painted as early as 1622. There is however no real conflict, for when he wrote the letter of 1650, he was thinking of formal, finished portraits of the kind that he was then executing for his friends in Paris, and I do not believe that he would have included this roughly painted head, which was probably executed for his own pleasure as a study.

The evidence about the Hovingham picture must be carefully considered, because at first sight no one would guess that it might be a self-portrait of Poussin, nor probably even that it was by Poussin at all. There is, however, much to support this

view. First of all there is external evidence. The picture is mentioned as a self-portrait of Poussin in the manuscript inventory of the Worsley pictures, which was made about 1770. This in itself proves nothing, but the inventory was made at a time when the artist was much admired and studied in England and an attribution of that date deserves attention if it can be supported by internal evidence. There is, moreover, one further piece of external evidence. We know that Cassiano del Pozzo owned a self-portrait of the artist⁴ which is not traceable in any other collection. Now most of Cassiano's Poussins were bought by English collectors in the later eighteenth century. The *Sacraments* and the *Baptism* were acquired by the Duke of Rutland in 1785;⁵ two of his landscapes in the collection of the late Sir George Leon probably belonged to Lord Grenville about 1790-1800;⁶ his *Mars and Venus*, now in Boston, belonged to Lord Harcourt in 1758;⁷ his *Pyramus and Thisbe*, now in Frankfurt, belonged to Lord Ashburnham;⁸ and his *Rebecca* is probably the picture in the possession of the writer, which seems to have appeared in 1795 in the sale of Calonne, who formed the greater part of his collection in this country.⁹ There is, therefore, a reasonable probability that Cassiano's self-portrait should have passed to an English collection, and the Worsley collection is particularly indicated by the fact that another Poussin there, the *Cephalus and Aurora*, described in detail by Bellori, is almost certainly the one mentioned in Cassiano's collection.¹⁰

The external evidence, therefore, points to the fact that the Hovingham picture is the self-portrait which belonged to Cassiano del Pozzo. The internal evidence tends in the same direction. First let us consider the identity of the sitter. It is notoriously difficult to be certain whether two portraits represent the same person, especially when they show him at different ages. But in spite of that it is possible to say in this case that the essential and unchanging features of the face in the Hovingham picture reappear almost unchanged in the Louvre portrait of 1650. The most conspicuous are the thick nose with the marked dip at the top,

⁴ P. DE CHENNEVIÈRES-POINTEL: *Peintres Provinciaux*, iii, p. 151.

⁵ Cf. R.A., 17th Century Art, 1938, No. 318.

⁶ Cf. A. BLUNT: *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, vol. lxxxvii [1945], p. 186.

⁷ Cf. O. GRAUTOFF: *Nicolas Poussin*, Munich [1914], No. 32.

⁸ Cf. SMITH, No. 304, and ROGER FRY: *THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE*, vol. xliii [1923], p. 53.

⁹ Cf. W. FRIEDLAENDER: *The Drawings of Nicolas Poussin*, London [1939], p. 4.

¹⁰ This picture, hitherto unpublished, will be dealt with in a later article. The composition is described by BELLORI: *Vite* [1672], p. 444. A picture of this subject is mentioned in Cassiano's collection (CHENNEVIÈRES-POINTEL: *op. cit.*, iii, p. 153), and it is almost certainly Cassiano's composition, since Bellori describes most of the pictures which belonged to him.

¹ *Nicolas Poussin*, i, Evreux [1924], p. 17.

² *Correspondance de Nicolas Poussin*, ed. Jouanny, Paris [1911], p. 142.

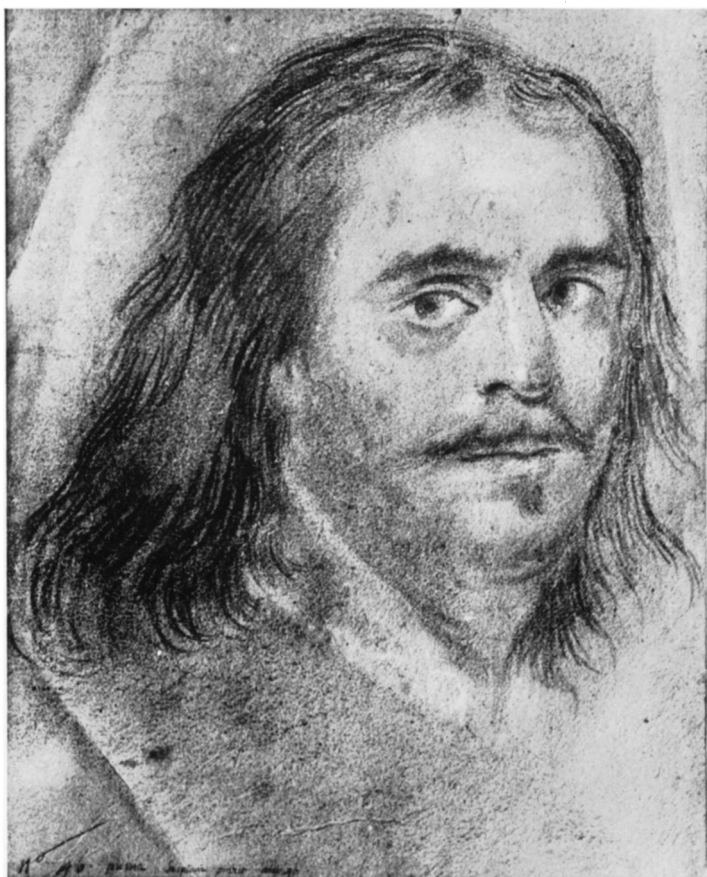
³ Exhibited at Messrs. Wildenstein, "French Painting of the 17th Century," June 1947, No. 39. Originally on a rectangular canvas but now enlarged to an oval, 21½ x 18 in.



A—PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST. BY NICOLAS POUSSIN. ABOUT 1624. CANVAS 55 BY 46 CM. (SIR WILLIAM WORSLEY, Bt., HOVINGHAM)



B—PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST. BY POUSSIN. ABOUT 1630. RED CHALK. 26 BY 20 CM. (BRITISH MUSEUM)



C—NICOLAS POUSSIN. CHALK DRAWING AFTER A SELF-PORTRAIT BY POUSSIN. 33 BY 26.8 CM, (DR. ALFRED SCHARF)



D—NICOLAS POUSSIN. BY N. DUPUIS. ENGRAVING, 15 BY 10.5 CM. PROBABLY AFTER A SELF-PORTRAIT BY POUSSIN AT THE AGE OF 40

PLATE I. POUSSIN STUDIES—I : SELF-PORTRAITS

and the straight eyebrow turning sharply down at the end. The mouth and chin are less set in the early picture as might be expected in a much younger man, but the general form is similar, although in the later portrait the lower lip is conspicuously thinner. On the other hand the thick lower lip appears in the British museum drawing [PLATE I, B]. Naturally the marked wrinkles in the middle of the forehead in the later portrait do not appear in the earlier, since these are the result of age, but there is already a hint—hardly visible in the photograph—of the lines leading from the nose to the sides of the mouth.

The features could, therefore, well be Poussin's and the general character of the picture would also fit with the hypothesis that it represents him. The age of the sitter is difficult to determine exactly, but it cannot be much over thirty, which would place the portrait soon after the artist's arrival in Rome in 1624. At this time Poussin was a poor and unknown artist, which is the impression conveyed by this simple and unostentatious presentation of a young man in artisan's dress.¹¹

Finally, if the portrait represents Poussin, does it appear to be by his own hand? The picture conveys strongly the impression of a self-portrait, but at first sight one would not connect it with the style of Poussin. It suggests rather the manner of the various portraits now attributed to the early period of Bernini;¹² but this is not in itself an argument against the possibility of its being a Poussin, since the style of Bernini's portraits derives from Annibale Carracci,¹³ whom Poussin greatly admired, and the early years in Rome were the time when he approached most closely to the early baroque manner which was just being created by Bernini and others. Moreover, the thick paint, laid on roughly so that the dark underpainting shows in many places can be paralleled in many of his early paintings, such as the two battle pieces in Russia,¹⁴ the fragment of the *Golden Calf* belonging to Mr. Cecil Liddell,¹⁵ and some of the heads in the *Marriage of St. Catherine* till recently in the Cook collection.¹⁶ In fact all the evidence, external and internal, whether of features or style, points strongly to the conclusion that this is a self-portrait by Poussin painted in his first years in Rome, soon after 1624. This would incidentally agree with the hypothesis that the picture belonged to Cassiano del

Pozzo, who was the artist's only regular patron and friend at this time.

The drawing in the British Museum [PLATE I, B], needs much less careful analysis, because there the external evidence is more obviously cogent. The drawing has below it a long inscription in Italian in a late seventeenth century hand¹⁷ stating that it was made by Poussin in a mirror about the year 1630 when he was recovering from a serious illness, and that it was given to Cardinal Massimi, who died in 1677 and had been for many years one of Poussin's best patrons. It is likely that he was taking lessons from the artist about 1639-40, when he published with his own name the engravings for Francesco Barberino's *Documenti d'Amore*, which are directly based on Poussin's drawings.¹⁸ The evidence for the genuineness of the drawing comes therefore from a first-rate source and can hardly be challenged. The features, too, of the head agree strikingly with those of the Louvre portrait. No useful evidence can in this case be derived from stylistic analysis, for there are no drawings by Poussin which give any basis for comparison. No large scale drawings of heads are preserved, and even the few other drawings in red chalk are studies of groups and are too different in character to be relevant.

The date "circa 1630" given in the inscription is confirmed by other evidence, for the illness mentioned must be that referred to by Passeri¹⁹ as resulting from an attack on Poussin by anti-French Papal soldiers. In this illness the artist was looked after by the Dughet family. On his recovery he married Anne Marie Dughet, daughter of his host,²⁰ and the date of the wedding, 9.VIII.1630,²¹ therefore gives an upper limit for that of the drawing. Poussin certainly here looks more than thirty-six and considerably older than in the Hovingham picture. His illness may have made him look worn and old, but even so his appearance in the drawing is an argument for dating the Hovingham portrait as far back as possible, that is to say to the very first years in Rome.

The portrait next in date has much less good credentials. An engraving by N. Dupuis, published by Odieuvre [PLATE I, D],²² has the inscription "Seipsum Pinx aetatis Suae an. 40." The style of the engraving and the dates of Dupuis (1698-1771) and Michel Odieuvre (1687-1756) point to the second third of the eighteenth century as the probable date of the engraving. But it seems likely that it goes back to an original. A drawing

¹¹ It has been suggested that the portrait cannot represent Poussin, because the cap which he is wearing is that of a sculptor. The cap, however, is not the paper hat usual in sculptors' studios, but a black edged stuff cap of a kind which appears in various forms in painters' self-portraits of all periods, cf. L. GOLDSCHIEDER: *Fünfhundert Selbstporträts* [1936], pls. 62, 87, 203, 270, etc.

¹² Cf. LUIGI GRASSI: *Bernini Pittore*, Rome [1945], figs. 1, 3, 21, etc.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 21, and fig. 8.

¹⁴ GRAUTOFF: Nos. 4, 5.

¹⁵ A newly identified painting to be discussed in a later article. Exhibited at Wildenstein, "French Painting of the 17th Century," June 1947, No. 40.

¹⁶ R.A., French Art, 1932, Commemorative catalogue, No. 115.

¹⁷ The inscription must date from after 1672, for it includes a mention of a published biography of Poussin containing his portrait, which can only refer to Bellori's *Vite*, issued in that year.

¹⁸ Cf. A. BLUNT: *French Drawings at Windsor* [1945], p. 43.

¹⁹ *Vite* [1772], p. 349.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 350. Passeri gives the date of the marriage as 1629, instead of 1630.

²¹ See GRAUTOFF: *op. cit.*, p. 445, note 126.

²² A. ANDRESEN: *N. Poussin. Verzeichnis der nach seinen Gemälden gefertigten Kupferstiche* [1863], No. 15.

in black, red and white chalks has recently been discovered by Dr. A. Scharf [PLATE I, c], which shows exactly the same head and bears the inscription "No. 46. pussin Seipsum pinxit aetat 40." This drawing is too feeble to be an original by Poussin, but the pose suggests that it is based on a lost self-portrait drawing. It shows the head only, whereas the engraving includes the shoulder, covered with eighteenth century conventional drapery, and it looks as though Dupuis was working from the present drawing or its original and added the drapery and the frame to complete his design. Here again the features agree with the authentic portraits, though they are so feebly drawn that the engraving may actually have been made from the surviving copy and not from the lost original.

This portrait would, according to the inscription, date from 1634, and the next document to be considered can be placed six years later, in 1640. This is an oil painting in Dresden [PLATE III, A], inscribed: "Si Nomen a me quaeris N. Poussin./ 1640 F.", which has on occasions been described as a self-portrait, but which certainly is not by Poussin.²³ It is also recorded in an engraving [PLATE III, B] with the inscriptions: "V.E. pinxit. L. Ferdinand fecit. P. Ferdinand excudit." The L. Ferdinand in question must be Louis Elle, called Ferdinand le Vieux (1612-1689) and the P. Ferdinand his elder brother Pierre (1609-1665). The print must, therefore, have been published during Poussin's lifetime, and this, combined with the inscription on the picture, makes it likely that the latter actually represents the artist. At first sight the features in the painting do not agree with those of Poussin, particularly in the straight, fine nose and the small beard. In the engraving, however, these points are both different. The nose is thicker and has the dip at the top, which is so marked even in the full face portraits, and the beard is absent. The explanation of this difference is hard to find. But it is possible either that the painting has been badly restored, or that the engraving is based on a drawing for the picture and that in the latter the artist has altered Poussin's features in accordance with current conventions of good looks. There is in fact a drawing which formerly belonged to Reiset, Chennevières and Léon Coutil,²⁴ and which repeats exactly the features of the engraving. But it cannot be the original of the print, since it does not show the hand and book which appear in both painting and print.

The authorship of the Dresden portrait presents a problem for which at the moment no solution

seems possible. Mariette,²⁵ who appears to have known it only from the print, attributed it to Valentin and suggested ingeniously but without evidence that the letter "E" in the signature V. E. stood for Valentin's surname which is unknown. The theory is, however, untenable for various reasons, of which the most important is the fact that Valentin died at latest in 1634. A more recent suggestion²⁶ is that the letters stand for Ferdinand Elle, father of Louis Elle, under whom Poussin studied in Paris before 1624. But the arguments against this view are very strong. First of all, Elle usually signed with the name "Ferdinand," which he adopted in France; secondly, he seems never to have called himself *van Elle*, which is the supposition to explain the "V" of the signature; thirdly, the style of the picture does not conform with what little that we know of the manner of Elle, who was formed as an artist in Flanders and Paris about 1600 to 1620; finally, Elle is said to have died between 1637 and 1640, which makes it unlikely that he could have seen Poussin, who arrived in Paris in December 1640.²⁷ Indeed this last fact indicates that a portrait of the artist dated 1640 would have been executed in Rome and not in Paris. We do not know the exact date of his departure from Rome, but it cannot have been before October 1640, since on the 10th of that month Mazarin was writing from Turin to Chantelou in Rome and sending messages to Poussin.²⁸ We must, therefore, look for an artist with initials V. E. working in Rome in 1640, but there is no such person recorded by Thieme-Becker, and for the present his identity must remain a mystery.

The history of the self-portraits painted in 1649 and 1650 can be traced exactly in the letters. On 22.XII.1647 Poussin, writing to Chantelou, says that he will try and satisfy his request for a portrait,²⁹ but from another letter to the same correspondent of 2.VIII.1648³⁰ it becomes clear that at this stage Poussin was not planning a self-portrait, but proposed to have himself painted by another artist, since he complains that it seems waste to pay ten *pistoles* for a head by Mignard, who is the best portrait painter in Rome, since his works are "frois, pilés, fardés et sans aucune facilité ni vigueur." By the next year, however, he has changed his plan, since he writes to Chantelou on 20.VI.49,³¹ saying that he has finished one of his portraits and will soon begin the other, and that he will send the more successful of the two to Chantelou. By September 19th³² the second

²³ Coutil, for instance, *op. cit.*, p. 24, argues that the inscription proves that it is a self-portrait, but the words *a me* would according to the usual convention refer simply to the person represented. The form of the dating: "1640 F" is best explained by supposing that the artist's name or initials have disappeared. This would also account for the VE on the engraving. E. DENIO (*Nicolas Poussin* [1899], p. 16) noted that the picture was already much damaged.

²⁴ Reproduced by COUTIL: *op. cit.*, p. 25.

²⁵ *Abcario*, v., 1858-9, p. 358.

²⁶ See E. H. DENIO, *op. cit.* [1899], p. 16. The authoress further confuses the matter by muddling up two members of the Elle family.

²⁷ *Correspondance*, p. 43, note 1.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 402.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 405.

portrait is begun, and on 29.V.1650³³ he writes that it is finished, but that he is not sending it yet because it is being copied.³⁴ From the same letter it becomes clear that Chantelou's rival, who was to have the less good portrait, was Pointel, another of Poussin's patrons in Paris. On June 19th 1650³⁵ he tells Chantelou that Pointel's portrait should arrive within a week, and that Chantelou's is being sent off to Lyons, where Serisier will forward it to Paris. On August 29th³⁶ he acknowledges the letter in which Chantelou had expressed his delight at the portrait.

Chantelou's picture is undoubtedly that in the Louvre [PLATE II, B], since it was acquired indirectly from his heirs in 1797³⁷, and was engraved by Jean Pesne in the seventeenth century with a dedication to Chantelou.³⁸

The Pointel portrait [PLATE II, A], which has never been fully discussed, is the picture now in the possession of Gimpel Fils in London³⁹. It was bought by the late René Gimpel from Max Rothschild about 1937.⁴⁰ It can be traced back to two Christie's sales: Sir Richard Leighton 1.VI.1934, lot 44, and Matthew Anderson, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, 7.VI.1861, lot 141.⁴¹ Surprisingly enough at the Anderson sale it was bought in for five guineas. It did not, however, appear in his sale at Phillips on 28.XI.1871, and may have been acquired from him privately by Sir Baldwin Leighton (1836-97), grandfather of Sir Richard.

Its previous history cannot be established with any certainty, but it is likely to be the picture which appeared in Lord Montfort's sale at Christie's, 16.II.1776, lot 8, bought by "Van d.G.", i.e. Gerard van der Gucht, in whose sale on 6.III.1777 it reappears as lot 33. In this case it is stated that the portrait was engraved, and the size is given (34 in. x 27 in.), which agrees with the dimensions of the Gimpel picture. It is, however, possible that the Montfort-Van der Gucht picture was a copy of exactly the same size, since it fetched fourteen

guineas in 1776 and only 28 shillings in 1777, that is to say at a time when Poussin prices in England were high. Another self-portrait, which may or may not be identical with the above, appeared in the Charles Jennens' sale at Langford's on 27.IV.1774 (lot 53).

The Gimpel picture is inscribed: "NICOLAUS POUSSINUS ANDELIENSIS ACADEMICUS ROMANUS PRIMUS/PICTOR ORDINARIUS LUDOVICI IUSTI REGIS GALLIAE ANNO DOMINI/1649 Romae AETATIS Suae 55." The inscription is evidently a somewhat later addition and has been rather incompetently executed, since the painter has miscalculated the space needed and has had to change from capitals to small letters in the words *Primus* and *Suae* in order to get them into the line. It cannot, however, be much later since the inscription appears in the same words on the engraving after the picture by Jean Pesne, with the small difference of *Endeliensis* for *Andeliensis*.

The painting and engraving are in opposite senses, and in one particular the engraving is more logical than the painting, since it shows the artist with his chalk-holder in his right hand, whereas in the painting he holds it in his left. This might, at first sight, suggest that the painting was based on a reversed engraving, the original being in the same sense as the Pesne print. But there is no engraving known in the sense of the Gimpel picture, and one must therefore assume that the latter represents the correct form of the original and that Pesne reversed it, perhaps partly on the ground that it would then turn out to look more logical. In any case the painting represents what the artist would actually have seen in the mirror, and it would be in accordance with Poussin's scrupulousness that he should represent himself with this precision. In the Chantelou portrait he evades the difficulty in the traditional way by concealing his painting hand altogether.

The quality of the Gimpel picture points almost conclusively against its being a copy. It has been rubbed in parts and has therefore in some places lost that precision which we expect in Poussin at that period. But the subtlety of the drawing, particularly in the foreshortened hand, and the convincing quality of the modelling in those parts which are perfectly preserved are more than even Poussin's most skilful copyists ever attained.

The conception of the Chantelou and Pointel portraits has no direct parallel in painting. The pose of the head in the Pointel version recalls the self-portrait of Giorgione in Brunswick, which Poussin may have known from copies or engravings, but the background in both versions is a pure and happy invention of Poussin. The shadowy and apparently sleeping putti supporting the tablet in the background of the Pointel picture probably had some special significance for Poussin which escapes us. He may later have found them too ornamental, for in the Chantelou version he replaces them by a

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 414.

³⁴ It is not clear whether one or more copies were made. In this letter Poussin refers to copies being made for "quelques uns de mes amis," but in one of 19.VI.1650 he speaks of "quelqu'un de mes amis" and continues to refer to him in the singular. Walter Friedlaender (*Nicolas Poussin* [1914], p. 121) supposes that a copy was made at this time for Serisier, but the reasons for doubting this will be discussed below. It is probable that the copy of the Chantelou portrait in the Palazzo Rospigliosi (mentioned by FRIEDLAENDER: *ibid.*) was made at this time. It may even have been executed for Cardinal Rospigliosi, later Pope Clement IX, who had been a patron of Poussin for some years and had commissioned the *Dance* now in the Wallace Collection, (GRAUTOFF, No. 73). For other copies, see GRAUTOFF: *op. cit.*, i., p. 264.

³⁵ *Correspondance*, p. 416.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 418.

³⁷ According to E. MAGNE (*Nicolas Poussin* [1914], p. 218, who, however, does not give his authority for his statement.

³⁸ ANDRESEN; No. 1.

³⁹ Exhibited at their galleries and reproduced in THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, vol. lxxxix (January, 1947), p. 24.

⁴⁰ My attention was first called to this picture by Dr. Friedlaender in 1936 when it belonged to Max Rothschild.

⁴¹ The Christie's chalk-mark "June 7/61" is still faintly visible on the back of the stretcher.



A—*Portrait of the Artist*. By Poussin. 1649. 89 by 67 cm. (Messrs. GimpeL Fils)

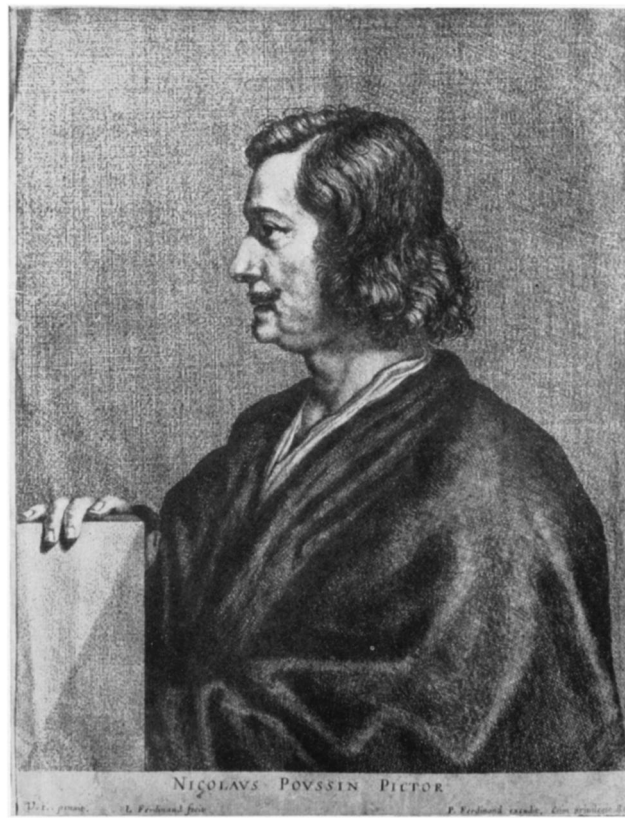


B—*Portrait of the Artist*. By Nicolas Poussin. 1650. Canvas 98 by 65 cm. (Louvre, Paris)

PLATE II. POUSSIN STUDIES—I: SELF-PORTRAITS



A—NICOLAS POUSSIN. BY "V.E." DATED 1640. CANVAS, 75.5 BY 59 CM. (STAATL. GEMÄLDEGALERIE, DRESDEN)



B—NICOLAS POUSSIN. ENGRAVING BY LOUIS ELLE AFTER THE PAINTING REPRODUCED IN PLATE A. 26 BY 20.3 CM.



C—SEATED LADY. PAINTED POTTERY FROM A SIX DYNASTIES TOMB. (MUSÉE GUIMET, PARIS)



D—INDIAN IVORY PANEL FROM BEGRAM. ABOUT 2ND CENTURY A.D. (MUSÉE GUIMET, PARIS)

PLATE III. POUSSIN STUDIES—I: SELF-PORTRAITS

SHORTER NOTICE: ASIATIC ART IN PARIS

background of framed canvases and a door, which pattern out the composition in a series of simple rectangles strictly in accordance with Poussin's rigidly mathematical principles of composition at this period. At the same time they present a sort of abstraction of the artist's studio, which is Poussin's equivalent for the glimpses of studio properties which are common in self-portraits of the seventeenth century. On one of the canvases we can see the head and shoulders of a woman, wearing a diadem with an eye in the centre, and with the two hands of an invisible figure clasping her shoulders. Bellori⁴² tells us that the woman is painting, and the two clasping hands represent love of painting and friendship, a delicate reference to the two qualities which the artist recognised in the patron for whom the portrait was executed.

Some confusion has arisen over the portrait of 1649 owing to the fact that Pesne's engraving after it bears an inscription to Serisier which states that the original was in the collection of the latter. This has led Friedlaender to suppose that Serisier owned a copy of Pointel's version,⁴³ and Coutil to state that the 1649 portrait was painted for Serisier and that Pointel's was yet a third version, which he identifies, arbitrarily, with a composition engraved by A. Clouwet.⁴⁴ The solution, however, is quite simple. There is no evidence that Serisier owned a self-portrait before 1665, when Bernini saw it in his collection,⁴⁵ and it is almost certain that he had bought the painting executed for Pointel, for we know that the latter's pictures were already scattered by 1665.⁴⁶

The paintings, drawing and engravings so far discussed are those which, I believe, genuinely represent Poussin. They are all supported by external evidence, of varying degrees of cogency, and they form a series which could reasonably be taken to depict a single man at various moments of his life. There are, however, various other portraits which have been proposed as representing the artist, which in my opinion have no claims to do so, and it seems advisable to set out my reasons for doubting them.

The most generally, but not universally, accepted is a picture in the collection of Lord Bute, reproduced and discussed by Coutil⁴⁷ and by L. Hourticq.⁴⁸ It was engraved by Patch in 1759 as a self-portrait of Poussin, when in the possession of Sir Horace Mann. It shows a youngish man whose

features in no way resemble those of Poussin at any period. It does not conform to any known type of self-portrait, since the sitter holds a roll of paper, which is hardly the symbol for a painter, and his left hand, i.e. his painting hand in the mirror, is visible, whereas his right hand is concealed. Basing their argument on Poussin's statement that in 1650 he had not painted a portrait for 28 years, Coutil and Hourticq maintain that this is a self-portrait executed in Paris in 1622. But at that time Poussin was poor—too poor to undertake successfully the journey to Rome—whereas the sitter here wears an opulent brocaded gown and lace cuffs. Further, the long hair falling over the shoulders suggests a date nearer 1640 than 1622. In this case the internal evidence is so strong that it must override the traditional attribution.

A second claimant, reproduced by Coutil,⁴⁹ was in 1924 in the collection of M. Léon Louvet of Rouen. It bears an old inscription: "Portrait original de Poussin peint par luy même." This picture gives the impression of being a self-portrait since the sitter faces the spectator directly and the left hand is concealed. But the features are unlike Poussin's, and both hair and dress suggest the generation of Lebrun rather than of his master. Even from the poor reproduction given by Coutil it is clear that the portrait is altogether too feeble and conventional for the name of Poussin to be considered in connection with it.

Finally mention must be made of a gallant attempt made by Ulysse Moussali recently⁵⁰ to prove that a portrait by Philippe de Champaigne in the Musée Jacquemart-André represents Poussin. The portrait is dated 1624 and is inscribed: "Aetatis suae 32." By an ingenious manipulation of the traditional dates of Poussin's birth⁵¹ and of his arrival in Rome the author tries to reconcile the inscription with his identification of the sitter as Poussin. But, even if we accept his very strained arguments, the author's view is quite untenable since the features of the portrait do not resemble those of Poussin—it is noteworthy that the closest likeness which he claims to find is with the Bute

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, p. 11; Coutil suggests the date 1626-8 for the portrait, which is quite impossible considering the style of dress.

⁵⁰ See *Les Arts*, 4, iv [1947].

⁵¹ M. Moussali tries to prove that Bellori made a mistake of a year and that Poussin was born in June 1593 and not in June 1594. It is worth while pointing out that the evidence about the exact date is conflicting. Grautoff discusses it at length (*op. cit.* i, p. 323f) and concludes in favour of 1594; but his argument contains one fallacy. Poussin wrote: *Aetatis suae* 56 on the portrait finished in May 1650, and this shows that, if he was born in June, it must have been in June 1593 and not 1594 as Grautoff concludes. Moreover, the record of his burial states that he died on 19.XI.1665 at the age of 72, which again would point to 1593. Bellori's statement is difficult to set aside, but the evidence on both sides is strong, and till further documentary evidence is discovered the matter must be left open.

But, even if we suppose with M. Moussali that Poussin was born in June 1593, and further if we accept his unconvincing arguments to prove that Poussin arrived in Rome in the spring of 1625 and not that of 1624, the inscription on the picture would still not fit with Poussin's dates, because he could not sign *Aetatis suae* 32 till his thirty-second birthday in June 1625.

⁴² *Vite*, p. 440.

⁴³ *N. Poussin*, p. 121.

⁴⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 33 ff. The Clouwet engraving is actually based on a combination of elements from the two other portraits.

⁴⁵ CHANTELOU: *Journal du Voyage du Cavalier Bernin en France*, ed. L. Lalanne [1885], p. 90.

⁴⁶ Bernini saw several paintings which had belonged to Pointel in other collections, e.g. the *Judgment of Solomon* and the *Man with a Serpent*, which at that time belonged to Duplessis-Rambouillet (*Voyage*, p. 159).

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 8 ff. The Bute picture is Smith No. 3.

⁴⁸ *La Jeunesse de Poussin*, reproduction on the cover; cf. also p. 257 ff.

picture—and the portrait is evidently of a well-to-do bourgeois and not of a struggling artist.⁵²

The information about Poussin's personal ap-

⁵² It is perhaps worth recording the following entry in an anonymous sale at Christie's, 8/9.III.1771, second day, lot 16: "N. Poussin. His own portrait, with that of Mary du Guet, his wife, purchased from the family of that artist; 24 x 18 in." Too much importance must not be attached to this item, as the sale contains some thirty other pictures attributed to Poussin, most of which are manifestly reduced copies or imitations. They include (lot 53) a self-portrait 5 x 3 in.

A further self portrait is recorded in the sale of Pierre Vigné de Vigny (Rémy, I.IV.1773, lot 80). The catalogue says: "On prétend que c'est celui qu'il fit pour le sieur Pointel," but this cautious phrasing, the small size (19 x 14 in.) and the low price (18 livres) all point to its being a copy (cf. *Réunion des Sociétés des Beaux-Arts des Départements* [1894], p. 644).

Yet another, 18 by 23 in., appeared in an anonymous sale by private contract, Spring Gardens, 28. IV.1794, lot 318.

pearance supplied by the portraits can be supplemented by Bernini's statement that the Chantelou portrait was a better likeness than the Pointel-Serisier version,⁵³ and by Bellori's description of him: "Fu egli di statura grande, proportionato in tutte le parti del corpo, con raro temperamento; era il suo colore alquanto olivastro, e negri erano i capelli, in gran parte canuti per l'età. Gli occhi havevano alquanto del cilestre; il naso affilato, e la fronte spatiosa rendevano nobile il suo volto con aspetto modesto."⁵⁴

⁵³ *Voyage*, p. 90.

⁵⁴ *Vite*, p. 440. The adjective *affilato* applied to Poussin's nose may seem surprising, but it can mean *long* as well as *fine*, and Félibien, who does little more than translate Bellori's account, uses the phrase "le nez long et bien fait" (*Entretiens* [1725], p. 70).

SHORTER NOTICES

ASIATIC ART IN PARIS.

By Basil Gray.

On June 19th there took place in Paris one of those simple ceremonies which mark the reopening to the public of the Museums which closed their doors in 1939. But this occasion had a greater significance for it marked the effective first stage in the realisation of the plan of an Asiatic Museum for France which Monsieur Georges Salles, the Director-General, had initiated in 1945. Although Paris led the Western world in the appreciation of Asiatic art, its discovery came too late for it to have a chance of finding much space at the Louvre. Consequently the collection of Chinese and Japanese porcelain formed by Grandidier, the Salting of France, found a home in an entresol and was known to very few: the Chinese bronzes, the archaic jades of Gieseler, and the Japanese woodcuts of Koechlin were distributed in several corners or only to be seen at special exhibitions. Meanwhile at the Place d'Iéna another Asiatic collection was being built up at the Musée Guimet, which was founded in 1885 as a museum of eastern religions but, receiving the rich fruits of the French archaeological missions in Indo-China, in Central Asia and in Afghanistan, had become more and more the museum of Asiatic sculpture. The ground floor galleries were reconstructed in the years immediately before the war and are now admirably suited for the Indian, Khmer, Cham and Indonesian sculpture and bronzes which are now arranged there. The first floor has also now been completely rearranged, around the nucleus of the Guimet's well-known library, to show the arts of China, of Central Asia and of Afghanistan. The scale and lighting of these rooms are far better suited to oriental art than the great galleries of the Palace of the Louvre could ever be, and the isolation of the more important pieces, especially the archaic Chinese bronzes, shown on simple stands without glass shades, gives them the consideration which they deserve without making them remote and dead. The magnificent large Hu of the middle Chou period which, with the famous Comondo elephant, dominates the collection, is a new acquisition; and so is the beautifully patinated Kuei. A whole room is devoted to the archaic jades. The collection is also especially rich in Buddhist bronzes. In the next room is arranged the collection of sculptures from the Han dynasty to the Sung. In this field also the new department has received

a charming acquisition, the seated lady in painted pottery from a Six Dynasties tomb [PLATE C] which is the fellow of the Eumorfopoulos standing figure in the British Museum.

The remaining galleries are consecrated to three great names in French orientalism, Pelliot, Foucher and Hackin. The Central Asian collections are in fact shown as a memorial to Paul Pelliot whose unexpected death in 1945 deprived sinology of the best scholar of our time. For the first time really representative parts of the collections which he brought back from Central Asia from his mission of 1906-9 are shown together, including a notable series of manuscripts of the fourth to tenth centuries A.D. in Sanskrit, Chinese, Tibetan, Khotanese, and Sogdian, which has been specially lent by the Bibliothèque Nationale until October of this year. The paintings hitherto divided between the Louvre and the Guimet are here united and a critical survey of them by Madame Nicole Nicolas-Vandier is shortly to be published by the Museum. Parenthetically what a pity it is that the parallel collections brought to this country by Sir Aurel Stein and even more varied and extensive cannot be shown in a similar memorial exhibition at the same time. But for that we must wait.

The Foucher room contains the collections of Gandhara art which gain a new accent by being shown not with the Indian but with the Central Asian and Afghan collections. Many visitors will be inclined to go first to the Salle Hackin having heard rumours of the finds which were made in the years just before the war at Begram. There beside the originals and casts of the astonishing ivory boxes of the season 1936-37, are some of the finds lately arrived in Paris of the season 1939-40 [PLATE D] which was to be the last under the leadership of Joseph Hackin. The ceremony of reopening of the Museum of which he was Director from 1913-1941 was linked with another ceremony, the unveiling of a tablet setting out with a simplicity most moving and eloquent, his services to scholarship and to France up to the time of his death by enemy action in February, 1941, in which his wife also shared.

The new ivories strengthen the impression previously gained of an art passing from the decorative art of the torana gateways at Sanchi (first century B.C.) to the Kushan sculpture of Mathura (second century A.D.).