SOME PHASES OF NARRATIVE ART

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CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter I - Narrative Art Distinguished from Other	
Forms of Representative Art -----	1
1. Symbolism -----	1
2. Illustration -----	5
3. Portraiture and Landscape -----	7
4. Image Representation -----	8
5. Decoration -----	8
6. Description -----	9
7. Narration -----	9
Chapter II- Time in Narrative Art -----	11
1. The Extent to which Time is a Decisive Element -----	11
2. Divisions of Narrative Art According to the Length of Time Represented -----	12
3. Means of Indicating Progression in Time -----	14
Chapter III- Spatial Arrangement -----	17
1. The Entire Narration in One Pictorial Field -----	17
2. Each Stage of the Narration Placed in a Separate Pictorial Field -----	23
Chapter IV- Origin of Narrative Art -----	26
Chapter V - Purposes that Narrative Art has been made to Serve -----	30
1. Pure Narration -----	31

	Page
2. Moralizing -----	39
3. Decoration -----	44
4. Devotion -----	58
5. Imperial Glorification -----	61
Chapter VI- Justification of Narrative Art -----	64
Chapter VII- Progress of Narrative Art,Particularly in its Relation to Naturalism -----	66
Conclusion-----	75
Bibliography -----	78

CHAPTER I
NARRATIVE ART DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER FORMS OF
REPRESENTATIVE ART

In considering the subject of narrative art it is necessary first of all to distinguish it from other forms of representative art. This has nothing to do with a distinction between the different material forms which representative art assumes, such as painting and sculpture. The problem is to define as clearly as possible the various intents and purposes that rule in this art. No one purpose, and therefore no one form of representative art has ever existed, probably, in an isolated or independent state. Different forms are continually combined. An attempt, therefore, to draw a definite line between them is justified only in so far as one form is usually predominant.

From this point of view representative art falls into seven principal divisions, according as it best serves the purpose of symbolism, illustration, portraiture, landscape, decoration, description, or narration.

1. Symbolism

Symbolism, as Hegel in his treatise on aesthetics¹ points out, seems to be the most primitive type of art. The unsophisticated artist, his mind visited by new ideas which are still rather vague and fluctuating, seeks to put them

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1. Kedney, Hegel's Aesthetics, pp. 126 ff.

into material^{form} in such manner that they may be understood by his fellows. In this early stage the artist has not learned how to suit the external forms to his ideas, so that these are smothered. Symbolic art has, then, as we are accustomed to say, a hidden meaning. We must familiarize ourselves with the traditions, learning and culture under which the artist worked before we can read the message in his work. But symbolic art did not pass entirely away with primitive folk. Wherever the artist is confronted with novel problems, where he has new ideas to express, we find the employment of symbolism in greater or less degree. Thus the mural decorator of a state capitol is called upon to represent the dispensing of justice, charity, and prosperity by the state. Such ideas as these have not even yet found clear and adequate material forms for their expression.

But frequently symbolism is deliberately chosen by the artist in order to make a short cut in the telling of a story. Thus the saint's symbol is made to take the place of the story of his martyrdom. Again, the artist may employ symbols to produce a more mystical effect or to hide his message from the uninitiated. This latter reason, as well as the struggle with new ideas, must be taken into consideration in an explanation of much of early Christian art. Where the early Christian artist could, he based his forms on pagan art,² but some of the ideas the Christian had to express were so entirely foreign to anything pagan art had known that he must necessarily find new methods of expression. Again, the

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2. Northcote & Brownlow, Roman Sotter^Ianea, pp. 17-38.

early Christians could not openly profess their beliefs, which were in direct opposition to the imperial policy of the Roman Government. So we find them decorating their places of secret worship, the Roman Catacombs, for example, with obscure³ symbolism.

Though the narrative quality of some of the⁴ decorations in the catacombs can not be overlooked, symbolism predominates. Both natural and conventional symbols were used. We understand immediately, for example, that spring and summer are indicative of youth, sunset and winter of old age⁵ and death, and a lamb of innocence. Other symbols are conventional and demand explanation. The fish, for example, when used alone was the symbol both of Christ and a Christian, but when combined with bread it stood for the sacrament of the⁶ Holy Eucharist.

Incidents having no historical connection and arranged with no regard to historical sequence often occur together because they symbolize one belief. The miracles of the loaves and fishes, the changing of water into wine at the wedding feast of Cana, and the feast of the seven disciples beside the sea of Tiberias are combined because they all⁷ refer to the mystery of the Last Supper. Not only is the chronology of the incidents violated, but the representations themselves do not follow the historical narrative. "Thus, --- a number of baskets of bread always forms the foreground of -----

3. Northcote & Brownlow, Rom. Sot., pp. 39-40.

4. Below, p. 31.

5. , Symbolism in Early Christian Art, p.51.

6. , Symbolism in Early Christian Art, p.58.

7. , Symbolism in Early Christian Art, pp.70,71.

the picture of the feast of the seven disciples. Moreover, because they desired that the minds of those who saw their paintings should not rest in the outward semblance of the scene, but be carried forward to the hidden and mystical meaning, they continually departed, more or less, from its literal truth: for example, we rarely find either seven or twelve baskets of bread, but eight, a number which does not occur in either narrative, and not six water-pots of wine, but seven. It was the symbolism of a religious idea they aimed at, and not the representation of a real history.⁸"

When the artists became more accustomed to their new subjects and when it was no longer necessary that the beliefs be kept secret, the symbols which represented the more general fact or sentiment began to be used less frequently, while individual characters continued to be represented by individual symbols. This continuation of the use of symbols was due, once more, to the artists' inability to cope with the ideas with which they had to deal. While they could, with more or less success, embody purity and saintliness in a figure, it was beyond their ability to distinguish between various characters in their sacred history. So Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John came to be known by their four symbols, the cherub, lion, ox, and eagle. On down through the art of the Renaissance we find Saint Catherine with her wheel and Saint Sebastian pierced by arrows.

Even colors had a symbolic meaning in Christian

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art. The Virgin in her truth, constancy and fidelity wears blue. The Savior after his resurrection is clad in white, and the Virgin of the assumption wears white. Red indicates royalty, fire, divine love, Holy Spirit, creative power, and heat.⁹

So the symbolism so characteristic of Jesus' teaching by parables and of the Christian religion in general found a very definite and continued use in Christian art.

It has seemed necessary to give this rather long account of symbolic art because of the close relationship it often shows with the narrative form, the two being frequently quite hard to distinguish from each other.

2. Illustration

Purely illustrative art must be clearly distinguished from narrative. The distinction may escape notice if one is not on the lookout for it, for the illustrative type may often have the general appearance of the narrative. The test that determines the question is a comparison of the representation with the subject matter.

The illustration of Psalm XII in the famous
¹⁰ Utrecht Psalter is an example to the point. This, one might think at first sight a splendid example of narrative art. A series of episodes is here shown in one pictorial field and at least one figure, that of Christ's executive angel, appears more than once; first, as Christ gives him a commission and arms him for the performance of that command, and second, as

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9. Clement, Ch. Sym. and Stories of the Sts., pp. 8 and 9.
10. Michel, His. De L' Art, I, 1, p. 363.

he carries out the commission to "cut off all flattering lips and the tongue that speaketh proud things." But the subjective elements essential to narration are wholly lacking. In the first place, there is no consideration of time, neither the one instant that we find in most descriptive panels where the problem is to describe a single moment in a single episode, nor a succeeding series of points in time that we find in the true narrative. One recognizes at once the distinction between the Psalms and such a narrative book as that of Esther. In the passage under present consideration the Psalmist is bewailing the misfortunes and sufferings of the righteous, the sinfulness of the wicked, and telling of the Lord's help of the needy and his punishment of the wicked, with some comments thrown in as to the purity and perfection of the Lord's judgments. It is not a narration or story, but a song of supplication and praise which the very clever artist has illustrated with literal representations of the metaphorical expressions of the Psalmist. He shows us an angel actually cutting off the lips of the flatterers, the evil men puffing at their neighbors, the needy fallen and dejected, the trying of the Lord's words like silver in a furnace - and the Psalmist beholding all.

It might seem on first thought that pictures in our books of fiction belong to the narrative style. But there is a wide distinction between these and the true narrative form of art. For here the burden of telling the story is not borne by the pictures. The literary narration does that, while the pictures only illustrate certain parts. There

is no attempt to tell all the essential steps in the narration in pictorial form. Often only one or two illustrations are used. And when there is a large number, they rarely attempt to give the full development of the story. Their purpose is not to take the place of the literary narration, but merely to supplement it.

Occasionally, however, the illustration develops into true narration. This frequently happened in the miniature illustrations of manuscripts in mediaeval times. To the naïve mind the representation of the whole story pictorially in addition to the literary narration was more important than we find it in modern times. Such an example is afforded in Carolingian times by the creation scenes in the Bamberg Bible,¹¹ where all the principal incidents in the story of the creation and fall of man are shown one following immediately upon another.

3. Portraiture and Landscape

Both portraiture and landscape have become such distinct and well-defined forms of representation that only a few words need be said about them. Both, however, have a broader meaning than the recording of physical details in the person or in natural scenery. No longer is the merit of a work based upon the accuracy with which the artist has reproduced these peculiarities, but it depends rather upon the interpretation of the sitter's character and the meaning and sentiment of the landscape. The cataloguer of facts who does not offer at the same time his impression of the subject, and who does not bring before us the beauty which we have failed

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11. Michel, His. De L' Art, I, 1, p. 351.

to see does not produce a living and vital work.. This wider^t meaning of portraiture and landscape has lifed^A them from imitative to creative arts..

Though these two forms of art, when presented in their independent purity,, can never be in any way confused with the narrative, nevertheless, when used subordinately, they prove themselves of great importance in the service of story-telling art.. This will become more evident when we take up the consideration of specific examples..

4.. Image Representation

Throughout all times there have been representations of saints and deities which stand as individual forms of representative art. The passive figures of the Greek and Roman gods, the santa conversazione of Italian art and the panels of individual saints are examples. These served as images to inspire worship in the observers. The same figures occur in narrative art, but here the emphasis is placed upon the action in which they are engaged and devotion to the saint is inspired primarily by the action. It is not directly dependent upon the character written upon the face as is the case with the so-called images. The primary aim in the images was not to give a physical likeness, though this was sometimes attempted, but to inspire admiration and worship by expressing in the type the peculiar quality of the god or saint, the power or virtue which it had.

5. Decoration

Decorative is the least independent of all the different forms of representation. Pure decorative art ,

the decoration consisting of cleverly arranged lines, angles, and colors is comparatively rare. Other forms of representation have come to be used. Landscape is frequently called into service and in later chapters it will be shown that narration is peculiarly well adapted to decorative use. Decorative art, as we know it, then, can not be limited to its narrowest sense, but includes all art where every other interest is subordinated to the decorative idea.

6. Description

In a class which may be called ~~descriptive~~ art come all forms of incident telling. A great number of pictures belong in this class. It shows no particular development in style, the range of subjects is unlimited, and there is no need for regard of chronology. Several incidents may be portrayed, but they occur at the same time.¹² The picture is descriptive and the connecting links are the "during" and "at the same time" of the literary description and not the "then" and "afterward" of the narration. In one sense portraiture and landscape are descriptive, but there is a difference, in that, ^{they} do not generally suggest a story while what has been arbitrarily named the descriptive panel causes the observer immediately to construct a story in his own mind.

7. Narration

The term narrative is borrowed from literature and its meaning has not been essentially altered in its application to art. Narration as a form of expression in literature presupposes a series of events taking place in successive moments, as distinguished from description where the actions are acknowledged as occurring at one definite time.

12.. See The Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel, by Michelangelo.

So in art, as in literature, narration as a form of representation presupposes the time element. No distinction, then, can be made between narration and "continuous" narration. ^{13.}

A point in which pictorial differs in its requirements from literary narrative is in the repetition of identical characters or objects. While such repetition is usual in literary narrative, it is not absolutely necessary. We might, for example, write a description of a battle in which we tell of the roar of cannon followed by a charge of cavalrymen, then came a great storm of schrapnel from another quarter. In such a case progression in time is indicated by the mention of succeeding moments. But in the pictorial narrative the only guarantee that the various incidents are not events of only one moment of time is the recurrence of certain parts, that is, the recurrence of a specific character, object, or the continuous development in a basic idea.

We shall consider as narrative, or what may be called, for the sake of a more familiar term, "continuous" narrative, only those representations which imply an obvious progression in time, clearly indicated by the recurrence of fundamental characters, objects or ideas.

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13. Such a distinction is suggested by Wickhoff, Rom. Art, p. 112; Walters, Art of the Rom., p. 72; Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 161-2.

CHAPTER II

TIME IN NARRATIVE ART

1. The extent to which time is a decisive element.

With the time element as a deciding feature in the question of whether a representation is or is not "continuous" narrative we shall be concerned in the present discussion only in as far as mere succession in time is, as has been pointed out above, an essential feature. The length of intermediate intervals is immaterial. The points of time must in any case be arbitrary since the artist does not follow the method of the kinematograph. Such representation is never undertaken by the painter for obvious physical and artistic reasons.¹ Since the treatment of time must be ideal it makes no difference how much time is allowed to elapse between each episode as long as the sequence is obvious.

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1. The closest approach we can find in art, probably, to the kinematographic method of representation is to be seen in the prehistoric cave paintings of the Magdalenian epoch. The primitive decorators of these caves, who have been called the Greeks of Paleolithic times (Prof. Ellwood), developed a remarkably high form of art, the most striking characteristic of which is its expression of motion. As an extreme example of the manner in which this effect of movement was obtained we have in the cave of the Altamira in Spain a painting of a running boar. Not only is the action of the running expressed in the whole body, but the animal is given three sets of legs, the extra two being painted in lighter color to show the position of the legs in two immediately preceding moments. (See Spearing, The Childhood of Art, p. 10.)

2. Divisions of narrative art according to the length of time represented.

Within the field of narrative art itself one classification of the various examples may be made according to the amount of time covered by the representation. In the first place, we may have that narrative which treats of the various moments in one incident, which we shall find illustrated in the Orestes sarcophagus in the Lateran and the Troilus vase of Euphronius.

A larger amount of time is covered when the artist deals with the life of some saint such as is shown in Giotto's Life of Christ in the Arena Chapel at Padua or with some long series of events such as we find on Trajan's column and in Edwin A. Abbey's Quest of the Holy Grail in the Boston Public Library. Here the representation is not confined to moments in one incident but to incidents in one period, for example in the life of an individual. A final division, illustrated by John W. Alexander's Evolution of the Book, in the Library of Congress, deals with periods in long

2. Below, p. 22. 3. Below, p. 27; See also Gentile da Fabriano's Journey of the Three Kings, U. P. B 112, Botticelli's Moses in the Wilderness, Hamann, Die Früh-ren. Der Ital. Mal., abb. 187. (Not all the scenes in this composition pertain to the one incident, though several do.)
4. Below, p. 34; See also Giotto's Life of S. Francis in the Upper Church at Assisi; Perkins, Giotto, pp. 76-8, 80, 82, Life of the Virgin in the Arena Chapel at Padua; Perkins, Giotto, p. 92, 98; Le Sueur's Life of S. Bruno, in the Louvre in Paris, U. P. E16.
5. Below, p. 61. 6. Below, p. 54; See also column of Marcus Aurelius, Strong, Pls. LXXXIII, IX; also many series by Renaissance artists representing the Joys of Mary, Sorrows of Mary, and the Passion of Christ.
7. Below, p. 56.

centuries of development. A striking example of this form is
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Michelangelo's Sistine ceiling which has for its theme the
history of man from the creation of light through the fall
and redemption of man to the Last Judgment. No wider scope
of time can be imagined.

In the first of these divisions is found the simplest and most primitive development because it does not draw upon the imagination as do the representations where a greater amount of time is allowed to elapse between the incidents or periods shown. The action is described as accurately and minutely as would be necessary for comprehension by the mind of a child. But in the second and third divisions, which cover a longer period of time, one moment must be allowed to stand for the incident and the weaving together into a complete story is left to the imagination. In comparison with the first division the presentation of such a series requires more foresight and knowledge on the part of the artist also, for it necessitates a choice from many incidents. Unless he chooses the most significant and essential scenes the story will be lacking in coherence and completeness.

The third division gives more opportunity for interpretation than either the first or second. The time between events in an extensive period of development may include centuries and to cover this space the one scene must not allude to one action only, but must suggest and imply an entire series. It must contain a central idea, a powerful idea which will imply a wide range of related thought. This is found in most perfect development in the Sistine ceiling.

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8. Below, p.45.

The vast range of the subject here is astounding, but by adequately representing in a few scenes the outstanding periods in the history of man the great gulf of time is bridged and there seems not a break in the entire series.

3. Means of indicating progression in time..

Progression in time is shown, first, by indicating the increasing age of the principal character who appears again and again. This is used most extensively where the life of an individual is represented, as in Puvis de Chavannes' Life of St. Genevieve, in the Pantheon in Paris,⁹ where she at first appears as a child and later as the mature patron saint of Paris. This progression in age is also shown in Giotto's Life of the Virgin in the Arena Chapel in Padua,¹⁰ and Le Sueur's Life of St. Bruno in the Louvre in Paris.¹¹ A rather unusual example is found in a fresco in the cemetery of St. Callixtus representing two scenes in the life of Moses.¹² The scenes are in one panel, the first showing Moses removing his sandals before he ventures upon the holy ground, and the second representing him striking the rock from which water gushes forth. The second representation of the patriarch is only a pace beyond the first, the ground on which the two stand is continuous, with the same kind of shrubbery growing on it. But the long period of time that intervened between these two incidents in the life of Moses is indicated by the greater age given to the patriarch in the second representation. In the first he is a smooth-faced, short-haired

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9. Below, p. 52.

11. Below, p. 37.

10. Above, p. 12, note 4.

12. Northcote & Brownlow, Rom. Sot. p. 108.

youth. In the second he is bearded and has longer hair. This is an unusual and remarkable feature, for though, as we have pointed out, in a series of scenes where the whole life of a character is represented he is shown first as a child and later as grown, when only incidents of the grown man's life are given, differences in time are rarely thus indicated.¹³

Where moments in one incident are represented no such method can be used. Here progression in time is shown only by logical development in the incident which may easily be followed, and by spatial sequence of the momentary actions. Where neither of these is adhered to, there is confusion, and it is very difficult to trace out the line of action. This is true in the Orestes sarcophagus, mentioned above, where the logical arrangement of the incidents is sacrificed to rhythm of line.¹⁴

When the incidents and periods form the units, time is most frequently shown by a combination of the logical development in the action or process and the spatial sequence of the various representations. Very often the theme is a familiar one and then the development is easily traced. To take a simple example, let us look at The Chalk Merchant¹⁵ by the modern Belgian painter, Leon Frederic. Here in the three panels of the triptych the peasants go to their work,

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13. Related to this method of indicating progression in time by change of age of the characters concerned is that of change in such accessories as clothing. This is illustrated by Duccio's paintings from the life of Christ in the Duomo at Siena. Before his resurrection Christ wears a dark robe. After the resurrection his drapery is covered by bright stripes. See Kraus, Ges. Der Chr. K., II, 2, p. 120.
14. Below, p. 22.   15. Below, pp. 42. ff.

eat dinner, and return home, a logical and familiar series of incidents. While we do not know so intimately all the stages in John W. Alexander's Evolution of the Book,¹⁶ for example, yet we are acquainted with them in a general way and could grasp the movement of time without a more specific means of indication.

The following of one stage immediately upon the other on the pictorial field may be combined, then, with any of the methods mentioned above. This is the most simple and sure way of giving us the time element without bringing it into our consciousness to the partial exclusion of the real theme the artist has in mind.

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16. Below, p. 56.

CHAPTER III. SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT

Another classification of narrative art may be based upon the arrangement in space. From this point of view two distinct divisions appear: first, that in which the different incidents in a series occur upon the same pictorial field; and second, that in which they are found upon separate and distinct fields.

1. The entire narration in one pictorial field.

The first of these two forms, that in which successive moments of time are represented in one division of the pictorial field, is remarkably illustrated in the sculptured reliefs from the inclosing wall of Trajan's Forum,¹ which now, the original continuous frieze being torn apart,² have a place in the decoration of the Arch of Constantine. It is the emperor himself who forms the connecting link between the various scenes. Now he is charging forward at the head of his troops, now standing quietly while he is crowned by victory.³ Between these two extremes are represented various battle scenes which are no doubt meant to portray succeeding action, not action of one moment. This succession is strongly suggested by the first and last scenes, which are so widely separated in point of time. But were it not for these two

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1. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., p. 160.
2. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 157-165.
3. Wickhoff, Rom. Art, p. 113.

definitely marked parts, we could not be at all certain of succession of time in the others.

The frieze was originally continuous and the eye passed from one end to the other without encountering a break in the composition. And yet there is no confusing of incidents. Occasionally the direction of movement is changed, thus indicating the beginning of a new scene, but this change is skilfully managed so that the composition remains an unbroken whole. The column of Trajan, which will be discussed in a later connection,⁴ is a parallel example. Here the divisions are indicated by change of activity and setting.

The artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries in Italy employed a type of spatial arrangement similar to that just discussed. In the church of Santa Croce in Florence are frescos by Taddeo Gaddi having for the theme two scenes from the life of Joachim.⁵ On the left he is being driven from the temple, and at the right the angel appears to him as he tends his sheep. The change from one scene to the other is indicated both by the arrangement of the scenes on the two sides of the pictorial space and by laying one within a temple and the other on a mountain side. Though the mountain apparently is only a step beyond the temple, we have no difficulty in separating the two scenes. A similar example is found in Masolino's Raising of Tabitha, a fresco in the Brancacci Chapel in the Carmine in Florence.⁶ This incident

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4. Below, p. 61 ff.

5. Crowe & Cavalcaselle, Hist. of Ptg. in Ital., II, p. 126.

6. Crowe & Cavalcaselle, Hist. of Ptg. in Ital., IV, p. 28.

occupies the right hand side, while on the left St. Peter is performing another miracle. There is but little indication of change of scene by a change of setting, but the grouping of the figures makes it impossible that the composition should be regarded as one scene. St. Peter, marked by a halo, appears in both and the action moves in opposite directions. In the fresco by Taddeo Gaddi, as well as in this one by Masolino, the two scenes are of equal importance.

A slightly different arrangement is found in a fresco by Masolino in the Baptistery of Castiglione d'Olona.⁷ At the left is a table at which sit Herod and his court; at the right Salome presents the head of John the Baptist to Herodias, while in the background is pictured the burial of the martyred saint. The two principal scenes in the foreground are separated by a street along which a portico lined with columns extends into the background. The burial of the saint which is taking place on a mountain side in the distance is subordinated to the two scenes in the foreground.

Another instance of the subordination of one scene to another is found in the Brancacci Chapel.⁸ It was done by Masaccio and has for the central subject Christ commanding St. Peter to take money from the fish's mouth. This central group is composed of a number of figures. At the right is another comparatively unimportant group showing St. Peter paying the tribute. These scenes are not so distinctly separated as are those in the frescoes just mentioned, and were it not for the very characteristic appear-

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7. U.P. B 130.

8. Crowe & Cavalcaselle, Hist. of Ptg. in I. IV, p. 46

ance of S. Peter we should have some difficulty in distinguishing them.

On a lower wall in the Sistine Chapel is a fresco by Botticelli containing a number of scenes from the life of Moses.⁹ At the right he is seen killing the Egyptian and fleeing into the wilderness. The next scene occupies the central foreground. Here Moses is watering the sheep of Jethro's daughters. In the background at the left he removes his shoes and kneels before the burning bush, while in the foreground he is at the head of his family leading them back to Egypt. The scene portraying the meeting of Moses and the daughters of Jethro is given the most prominent position, but the other scenes are not subordinated to the degree that the accessory scenes were subordinated in the Tribute Money by Masaccio. We are attracted to them almost as quickly as to the central group. There is no marked division between the scenes. All are laid in the same general landscape, yet each incident is so completely a unit in itself that it is a simple matter to¹⁰ trace the development in the story of Moses.

A similar but a much more complex example is found in the Royal Museum in Munich. It is a painting on wood by Hans Memling and is commonly known as The Seven Joys of Mary.¹¹ Here, as in the preceding painting, a number of scenes are placed in a common landscape setting, with one

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9. Hamann, Die Früh-ren. Der Ital. Mal., abb. 187.

10. See also The Last Testament of Moses, perhaps by Signorelli, Hamann, Die Früh-ren. Der Ital. Mal., abb. 186.

11. Weale, H. Memling, p. 24.

scene, the Adoration of the Magi, predominant. But while each scene is distinctly separated from the rest by change in the direction of action and immediate setting, there is no logical arrangement so that one unfamiliar with the incidents represented would have difficulty in reading the story. Memling has relied upon universal knowledge of his theme. It begins with the Annunciation and goes on through to the Ascension, picturing in between such well known incidents as the Nativity, Annunciation to the Shepherds, the Journey of the Wise Men,¹² and the Resurrection.

In the Narbonne altar cover of the late fourteenth century we find only slight suggestion of division between the scenes. On the right side there are three scenes from Christ's life,¹³ the Lamentation, Christ in Limbo, and Christ Appearing to Mary. Within the series itself there is no indication of change from one incident to another. The only proof that it is not one scene is the reappearance of Jesus and the slight reversion of action, though this is by no means clearly indicated. The divisions between the scenes are, however, strongly suggested by Gothic arches forming decorations above. The joining of the arches comes just between the scenes and thus aids very materially in making the

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12. See also in this connection: Melchior Broederlam, Presentation and Flight into Egypt, Annunciation and Visitation, Fierens-Gevaert, La Ren. Sep., pp. 44 and 45; Gentile da Fabriano, Journey of the Three Kings, U.P. B 112; Giotto, Feast of Herod, Thode, Giotto, p. 140; Memling, Passion of Christ, Weale, Memling, p. 20.
13. Michel, Hist. de L' Art, III, p. 117.

succession of incidents clear.

The change from one scene to another is not invariably indicated. In Roman art, where narration had such a wide use, we find this style well developed in the sarcophagi of the reign of Hadrian, that group of monuments that goes to such extremes in deep round cutting of the reliefs, in multiplicity of figures, and complication and interweaving of movement. An elaborate example is found in the Orestes sarcophagus^{in the Lateran}. The principal subject is the vengeance of Orestes, with a subordinate consideration given to the adventures of Orestes in Tauris. It is with the vengeance of Orestes that we are here concerned.¹⁵ The divisions between the different stages of the story are are not clearly marked, as in the forum wall of Trajan, by a sharp reversion in direction of the movement, or by a complete change of activity, as from raging battle to quiet coronation. Nor are the divisions indicated as in the Trajanic column by change of activity and setting. The progression of action is all in one direction as if we had a procession of figures moving along. But the figure of Orestes appears four times. In the center Orestes, with the aid of Pylades, has murdered Aegæsthus and Clytemnestra and they lie dying upon the floor. Orestes is already being pursued by the furies who rush toward him from the right. At the left he and his companion hurry out to make their escape. At the extreme right Orestes is seen holding a spear

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14. See also: Jean Malouel, Martyrdom and Last Communion of S. Denis, Fierens-Gevaert, La Ren. Sep. p. 89.
Tapestry, Episodes from the Life of the Virgin, Rooses, Art in Flanders, p. 142.
15. Strong, Rom. Sculpt. p. 256.

in his right hand and grasping in his left the tripod of Apollo,
the Deliverer.¹⁶ This sarcophagus shows probably the greatest
extreme that the intermingling of scenes in narrative art
ever did, or, indeed, ever could reach. It is no longer mere
juxtaposition but actual intermingling. The result is highly
vigorous and dramatic, but not so clear as when the scenes
are in some way marked off or limited.

2. Each stage of the narration placed in
a separate pictorial field.

In this consideration of the pictorial field
of narrative art, the second style, that whose various scenes
~~are~~ contained in separate fields, may be illustrated in Roman
art by the sculptured reliefs decorating the arch of Beneventum.
The reliefs here are not in a continuous line, but are placed
in various positions on the monument.¹⁷ On one side of the
arch the scenes represent the home policies of Trajan and on
the other side his provincial policies.¹⁸ All are linked to-
gether by the imperial personage who appears in the different
scenes. This arch was a glorification of Trajan's reign as
was his column, but the decorator understood very well that
scenes so closely related as campaign incidents would not fit
the arch so well as they did the column, for on the arch they
would be more widely separated.

Other examples of this second division, where
the various incidents of a series are pictured upon separate
pictorial fields, are to be found in The Life of the Virgin
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16. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., p. 257.

17. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 216, 217, 218, 221; U.P. A 338.

18. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 214-227.

by Giotto, The Life of St. Genevieve by Puvis de Chavannes, and The Evolution of the Book by J.W. Alexander, discussed in a later connection.

Often the paintings of a series occupy entirely separate fields as do those of the above mentioned work of Alexander. Each step in the evolution occupies a lunette. Again, the members of a series may be separated from each other by such divisions as columns, either painted or structural. The great ceiling of the Sistine Chapel is a flat vault with no architectural supports aside from the plain walls. The necessity for artificial divisions is obvious. Michelangelo might have divided the ceiling into harmonious sections with narrow bands, but this would have been foreign both to his temperament and to the theme of the proposed decoration. He was primarily a sculptor and as such loved large, bold lines and firm surfaces with strong tactile values. Further, small bands which might serve well enough to divide episodes which in point of time are comparatively closely connected did not seem suitable divisions where the different ideas of the theme were so astoundingly big and so widely separated in time. But the large beams and cornices which Michelangelo constructed in paint so skilfully that they deceive the eye of an architect are so splendid that we cannot conceive of the ceiling reaching half way to its present ^{summit} of perfection without them.

Also belonging to the division dealing with separate pictorial fields we have the vast number of panel pictures which are brought together to form various series.

Holbein's several passion series, the parts of which are done on separate panels, some series on canvas and some for stained¹⁹ glass designs are examples. The various panels of each series were then to be viewed together to form a complete narrative. This is also true of Fragonard's Comedy of Love done on separate pieces of canvas to be placed side by side in their order.²⁰ Leon Frederic's triptych, The Chalk Merchant, and ^{many} altar pieces are some of the numerous examples which might be cited.

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19. Below, pp. 42 f.

20. Dilke, Fr. Pters., p. 68.

CHAPTER IV
ORIGIN OF NARRATIVE ART

Wickhoff maintains that Roman art of the period of Trajan represents the beginning of this peculiar¹ "continuous" narrative art. Walters does not admit such origin for it, nor does he consider the use of it particularly complimentary to Roman artistic genius. "It has, in fact, been pointed out that it is an essentially childish idea, and as such is a universal factor in early and savage art. That is why it is admitted by the Romans, who had less artistic perception than the Greeks, and it is also the reason why the early Christians took to it so naturally."² Walters further explains that "what Wickhoff really means is that Roman artists of the time of Trajan were the first to introduce a method of telling a story in which not only successive actions were represented as all taking place together, but the same personage³ was represented as taking part in all or several at once." Such an explanation of Wickhoff's meaning, however, does not account for Wickhoff's exclusion of Greek art from any use of this "continuous" narrative. To quote Walters again, "Greek art, he says (i.e., Wickhoff), knew only two methods of telling a story, the isolating and the complementary. The latter aims at the complete expression of everything happening before and after

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1. Walters, Art of Rom., p.71.
2. Walters, Art of Rom., p.72.
3. Walters, Art of Rom., p.72.

the central event, or which concerns the main subject; some figures are not necessarily repeated, but others are introduced to express the different actions; but the point is that all are united in one space without regard to time. This was of Oriental origin, and is to be seen in the description of the shield of Achilles. The other method, the isolating, is developed from it, and is purely Greek. The subject is composed of single isolated events, collected together as in the red-figured cups with the labors of Theseus made at Athens in the fifth century."⁴

Now in the fifth century Greek vases with the labors of Theseus (e.g., the one assigned to Euphronius) the same personage is represented as taking part in all the successive actions at once, the requirement which Walters considers as essential in Wickhoff's definition of continuous narrative.⁵ Perhaps Wickhoff and Walters would object to the term successive here. But these labors are certainly successive actions in the life of Theseus, not, indeed successive actions in the one event.⁶ But if that is what is wanted, look at the Troilus vase,⁷ which has been assigned to the same painter as the preceding. Here are represented two successive actions in the same event, and

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4. Walters, Art of Rom., p. 72. For a description of the shield of Achilles see Botsford, Source-Book of Anc. Hist., pp. 81-85.
5. Harrison & MacColl, Gk. Vase Ptg., Pl. X.
6. This style is further illustrated in fifth century Greek sculpture by the metopes on the Zeus temple at Olympia (460 B.C.). Above the inner row of columns in the front and rear porticoes are twelve metopes picturing twelve great deeds of Hercules.
7. Harrison & MacColl, Gk. Vase Ptg., Pls. XVII and XVIII A.

the same characters take part in the two. In the first, which is on the exterior of the cylix, Achilles drags Troilus toward the altar of Apollo. In the second, which decorates the interior, Achilles has brought the boy to the altar and is about to deal him his death blow.

We can go back even to Egyptian art and find what are unmistakably phases of this continuous style. Perrot and Chipiez tell us that, though it was rare, sometimes there was figured on Egyptian tombs "an illustrated biography of the deceased, a representation of his achievements."⁸ Much more usually the decorations were meant to insure the deceased a happy existence beyond the tomb. "The double shut up in his σύργῳ saw himself going to the chase upon the surrounding walls, --- eating and drinking with his wife, --- crossing in safety the terrible gulfs of the lower world in the barque of the gods."⁹ Thus are narrated the events which take place for the enjoyment of the dead. Egyptian figures are in large part so stereotyped that^{it} is quite impossible to tell without a thorough knowledge of the accompanying inscriptions and the customs connected with such decorations whether the same or different characters are represented in the various activities that take place.¹⁰ In an Abydos stele of the eleventh dynasty there is at one side a large drawing of the deceased man and his wife. At

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8. Perrot & Chipiez, Hist. of Art in Egypt, I, p. 148.

9. Perrot & Chipiez, Hist. of Art in Egypt, I, p. 152.

10. Perrot & Chipiez, Hist. of Art in Egypt, I, p. 246.

the other side are three scenes in which, to all appearances, this same man and woman take part. Scenes illustrating various stages in the preparation of animals for funereal ceremonies are common.¹¹ These are represented one following another in space and were no doubt thought of as successive in point of time also. The same may be said of representations of successive stages in the carving of¹² statues.

Therefore, though for well-developed illustrations of the narrative style we start as late as the age of Trajan, we find that the essentials of the style are present in Greek art of the fifth century B.C. and in¹³ less obvious form even in the art of ancient Egypt.

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11. Perrot & Chipiez, Hist. of Art in Egypt, I, p. 185.
12. Perrot & Chipiez, Hist. of Art in Egypt, II, p. 306.
13. Reliefs from the temples, palaces, and tombs of Egypt and Assyria show extensive use of the narrative style. The walls were covered with narrations of events in the lives of the people and especially the rulers. These are done with remarkable feeling for the story. Lübke, Hist. of Art, I, p.34 ff; p.55 ff.

CHAPTER V

PURPOSES THAT NARRATIVE ART HAS BEEN MADE TO SERVE

Throughout its history narrative art has been used in various ways. It is the aim of this chapter to point out some of the outstanding purposes that it has served and to give pertinent examples. An exhaustive list of all instances where narration has been used would be of excessive length. Therefore, only characteristic examples will be cited.

No instance will be found where one purpose alone has been in the mind of the artist. If no other reason for the production, ^{aside} from the one purpose under which it is discussed, is evident, there is always the fact that an artist is a student of certain fundamental laws of composition and procedure. For some artists a mastery of technique is the object of all their striving. This, indeed, is not true of artists who have created the most lasting works of art. Some more vital purpose must have inspired one whose work is admired by all generations. It will happen very frequently, then, that an example given here under one head is the result of complex interests on the part of the artist. But in the last analysis it will be found that each example emphasizes one purpose above others. We shall discuss first those series which have for their purpose the telling of a story.

1. Pure narration

For our first typical example of art whose principal purpose is narration we shall go to early Christian work. It is true that most of the representations of very early Christian art are symbolical in character. This type was adapted both because of the mysticism with which religion was becoming saturated, and in order that the significance of the decorations might escape the detection of Christian persecutors. Nevertheless, in some of the earliest extant paintings of this period narrative art was used along with the symbolical. Thus, in a work of the late second or early third century in one of the sacramental chambers of the Roman Catacombs is represented the story of Jonah and the whale.¹ On the upper part of the wall at the left as one enters the door of the chamber is a long narrow space in which we see Jonah being thrown overboard as the whale, a curious dragon-like creature, comes up to receive him. Occupying a corresponding position on the opposite wall are two acts in the story. The whale is seen first at the edge of the water belching up Jonah. Then a little farther on the rebellious prophet lies resting on the shore in the shade of a vine-covered arbor.

No more detail is given than is necessary for telling the story. All the figures are quite naïve and simple, indeed, little more than symbols. Yet the story could not be more plainly told. The essential acts are all here. But the

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1. Northcote & Brownlow, Rom. Sot., p. 87, U.P. B 42.

work is not without artistic merit. The colors are harmonious and pleasing, and the compositions are well-balanced. In the one panel the vertical lines of the standing and seated figures in the boat are repeated in the upright forepart of the whale's body, while the curve of the boat is repeated by the curves of the monster's tail. Similarly corresponding and balancing lines may be found in the other compositions.

The paintings of the catacombs were in part based upon the antique, suggestions being taken from pagan art wherever possible,² and it was not until Christianity became the state religion that a true Christian art developed. This new spirit is found in the mosaics which, though technically known by the Romans and used on floors, mark in their use as mural decorations a new development. The type of God the Father and Jesus became established as stern, unloving, unrelenting executors of justice. During this early period we find little narrative art, for the relation of Christ and his followers was not an intimate one, and the idea of representing scenes from his life was almost unthought³ of by Christian artists. The figures of Christ and the saints are arranged in symmetrical positions in long rows and are as immovable and lifeless as the stone of which they are made. Their stiff formalism is expressive of the power of the church at this time, when it exacted such stern devotion from its members. The symbolism of the earliest

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2. Northcote & Brownlow, Rom. Sot., pp. 17-38.

3. Muther, Hist. of Ptg. from 4th to 19th Cent., I, pp. 1-7.

Christian art is still evident in the mosaics. Nearly every apse has its sheep signifying the saved, those who have⁴ obeyed the stern Father, who is almost always present. Narrative art did have, however, a limited use, as may be illustrated by a mosaic from the arch and apse of Santa⁵ Maria in Trastevere in Rome. Here are represented six scenes from the life of the Virgin, beginning with her birth and closing with her death. Between these two are the Annunciation, Nativity, Adoration of the Magi, and presentation in the Temple. These are ^{usually} scenes, included in the life of Jesus, but here the significance lies in the connection of the story with the life of the Virgin. The miraculous incidents surrounding Christ's birth meant more to this mystic religion than his life of love and sacrifice. The scenes in the apse follow closely upon each other, while the two scenes on the arch from the beginning and the ending of the story. The main incidents in the Virgin's life are simply told and form a well-balanced narration. The figures here have lost little of their rigidity; they assume postures suitable for the scenes in which they appear, but remain lifeless and unmoved.

The decadent art of the Middle Ages offers little that is new or important in the field under present consideration. After the stirring events of the crusades were over and a normal life once more prevailed, Christians

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4. Crowe & Cavalcaselle, Hist. of Ptg. in Italy, I, pp.14,18,20.
5. U.P. B.35-36.

began to long for love and sympathy, the elements on which the Christian religion had been founded. This was given back to the people by St. Francis of Assisi, who preached a God of love and feeling instead of a God of vengeance which the past centuries had been fearing. ⁶ "Not only did he deepen by his sermons the religious life of the period, thus creating the soil for mystic painting; but by replacing the dogmatic by a personal Christ as His early life had shown Him, a man among other men, he added the 'Life of Christ' as a new subject of art. An epic was furnished which could be related only by painters. Especially did the life of the saint with its self-denial and miraculous occurrences, call for presentation with epic breadth in great monumental paintings."⁷

Giotto, the Florentine, became the founder of this new epic art in Christendom and carried it, indeed, to a state of such great perfection that he stands after all these centuries as one of the greatest of the world's dramatic artists. His ability is nowhere better shown than in his Life of Christ in the Arena Chapel in Padua. Giotto was hailed in his day as a naturalist, and he was a naturalist to the extent that his figures have tactile value and are instinct with life, and his backgrounds are no longer the conventional gilded ones of the mosaics and the panel pictures in art just before him, but are made up of archi-

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6. Muther, Hist. of Ptg. from 4th to 19th Cent., I, p.9f.

7. Muther, Hist. of Ptg. from 4th to 19th Cent., I, p.20.

tectural and landscape settings. But it is not his naturalism that arrests our attention upon viewing the frescoes of the Arena Chapel. It is rather the clarity and directness with which the story is told. The series is composed of twenty-two scenes from Christ's life, beginning with the Nativity (here the series is joined to a similar one of fifteen frescoes representing the life of the Virgin) and extending to the Ascension. Within these limits are the scenes which are usually shown from Christ's life, Adoration, Presentation, Baptism, along with some more unusual ones, such as the Massacre of the Innocents, Marriage at Cana, the Expulsion from the Temple, and the Hiring of Judas. These scenes all occur in historical sequence and are not widely separated in point of time. We have no difficulty in reading the story from first to last, both because the theme is familiar and is arranged in spatial sequence and because Giotto has linked together clearly-told incidents.

The power of the individual scenes in the series may be understood by an examination of one example, the Raising of Lazarus.⁸ What could be finer than this! There is not one figure too many, and yet there are enough. The hand of Christ, a splendid stately figure who really lives and moves, is raised in a commanding attitude, and Lazarus, with the pallor of the tomb still upon his face, has obeyed the command. At Christ's feet kneel Mary and Martha, deeply moved by devotion and thankfulness. In the center, subordinate to the figures at either side, are the incredulous

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observers. Their hands are raised in honest surprise, they were not prepared for this new sign of the Savior's power. In the foreground at the right Giotto has treated a small incident with remarkable realism. Two servants are removing the stone from the mouth of the tomb and are just about to lay it down. Every part of the story is told, but the minor incidents are properly subordinated and the power of Christ is the central theme.

The knowledge gained by centuries of artists since the time of Giotto, has in this fresco by no means been fully developed, but for almost the first time in Christian art the figures begin to live and move. In every picture of the series the essentials are handled in a straightforward, convincing manner. Not less striking, however, than the excellence of the individual compositions, is the ability the artist has shown in linking them together. By representing only very important events in Christ's life, by emphasizing in each scene only the essentials, by keeping each simple and clear in composition, and by using flat, neutral tones of color throughout, with no striking contrasts, the progression through succeeding scenes is made unusually easy.

In the church of the Eremitani in Padua is a series of four pictures by Mantegna representing incidents in the life of St. James. These are the Baptism of Hermogenes.

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9. Parallel examples are Giotto's Life of St. Francis in the Upper Church of Assisi and the Life of the Virgin in the Arena Chapel, also his work in the Bardi and Peruzzi chapels in Santa Croce.

10. Crutwell, Mantegna, pp. 48, 49, 50 and 52.

St. James before Caesar, St. James being led to Execution, and the Martyrdom of St. James. In the first Mantegna seems to be groping after the power which he later attains. The figures are almost lacking in movement. The last scene is the best and shows the triumph in Mantegna's art of the human interest. His scientific interest, has not, indeed, abated, but is subordinated.¹¹ In the preceding frescoes of this series we are impressed with the great amount of architecture and detail while here it is the story centering about the saint who is being martyred with which we are concerned. It is told with remarkable realism and power. Notice the executioner who raises his hand with such force that his sleeve is ripped, the officer at the right who draws his horse back out of range of the hammer and the one at the left who leans over the railing. But the painter's interest in technical problems is as keen as ever. The horse at the left is boldly foreshortened and in the background is a distant and detailed scene. The story is not so purely and exclusively told as Giotto would have told it, but it is quite clear.

In the seventeenth century in France we have a series of the life of St. Bruno by LeSueur. The series consists of twenty-two pictures painted for the Chartreuse of Paris where LeSueur took refuge after some official trouble in 1645. In the first painting the founder of the order, St. Bruno, as a youth receives instruction from Raymond, a celebrated teacher and preacher. On through his

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11. Crutwell, Mantegna, p. 52 f.

life we follow him. First he is a teacher and preacher, later he retires to a monastery, goes to aid Urban II in administering the affairs of the church, and warns Count Roger of the treachery of an officer. The last two panels show his death¹² and apotheosis.

LeSueur understood the life of the monks. To him they are not ordinary men in monks' clothing, but men of holiness and purity. They are pallid and emaciated, show the effects of hardship and endurance, but glowing with happiness and contentment because of the unusual vision which is theirs. The death of St. Bruno is one of the most striking.¹³ The grief of the monks as they surround the cot of the saint is sincere. They are already beginning to realize the magnitude of their loss and to feel their helplessness without this example of purity and saintliness.

The purpose of the series is primarily narrative. It decorated, indeed, the walls of the monastery and relieved the bareness, but it was not put there to be observed casually and its presence to be felt in the resulting atmosphere of the room. It was primarily for the contemplation of the monks. With the example of their founder always before them the best that was in them, the desire for the highest and noblest, was kept always in mind and never allowed to slip into the background. The story of

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12. Stranahan, Fr. Ptg., p. 54.

13. U.P. E 16.

St. Bruno is not an excuse but the ruling purpose of the
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series.

2. Moralizing

It is not Italy with all her culture and learning in the fine arts, nor indeed continental Europe, that so often has been the slave of Italy and her traditions, but ^{it} is England that is found employing narrative art for the purpose now to be considered. Here, in the eighteenth century she takes her place as an innovator, the first of the
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moderns. The continent had scarcely felt the social and political unrest that later swept over it when England had established herself as a free state. But when the middle classes had come into their own, they found the literature and art that were so well adapted to their continental neighbors who still clung to the ancient Italian traditions wholly foreign to their need. "Books were required which people could read by their fireside, in the seclusion of the
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family circles, in country districts." Art, too, had to change its course and follow the more human and practical trend of the people's lives. To get close to their lives the artist had to become acquainted with their characters, he had to know them, and thus the good and bad in them

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14. Other examples: Sodoma, Life of St. Benedict, U.P. C 53; Duccio, Scenes from the Life of Christ, U.P. B 88 & 89; Pinturicchio, Life of Aeneas Silvius, U.P. B 274-276; Ghirlandaio, Life of John the Baptist, U.P. B 196; Führich, Legend of St. Gwendolyn, Muther, Mod. Ptg., I, pp. 209-236.

15. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, p. 15..

16. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, p. 16.

will show forth in his paintings. He had to become a moral-
ist.¹⁷ And so it follows that Hogarth, the great guiding spirit
of English art in the eighteenth century, gives back to the
people all their dissoluteness and sensuality that they had
acquired along with their liberty.¹⁸ The cities were full
of it. Immorality and drunkenness became the fashion.
Hogarth copies no academic and time-worn examples in the
museum, but goes directly to London and finds his characters
amid its hurried and bustling streets. Some he finds among
the wealthy and elegantly dressed and some are poor and
ragged, but all are living the same life.

The first series which Hogarth attempted was
entitled The Harlot's Progress. It has for its theme the fall
of a country girl, Mary Hackabout. She comes to town in
search of employment as a servant girl. She soon becomes the
mistress of a Jew, then a thief, and later comes to a work-
house. After her release she becomes the companion^{of a highwayman}, and ends
her life in a disorderly house, leaving behind her a crippled
boy. The other women in the death scene are unmoved and to
keep up their courage drink from a bottle of spirits which
stands upon the casket of their dead companion. While they
are drinking, the priest comes to give his blessing.¹⁹

The story is told simply and convincingly.
There are a great many interesting things which no doubt
would occur in a real life of this kind that Hogarth has
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17. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, pp. 18-20.

18. Singleton, Great Pictures, p. 221.

19. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, pp. 21 and 24.

omitted, because they would not add directly to the desired effect of the story. There were many times, no doubt, when the young girl's heart was filled with remorse and longing for the simple and pure life she had lived in the country; there were moments when she loathed the life she was living. But we are not allowed to catch these glimpses into the better part of her nature. While they are interesting and do find place in the literature of this type, Hogarth is interested only in the main out-standing moral. One must pay the price of one's first sin over and over, and as sure as a certain path is chosen a certain end comes.²⁰

Not all of the characters in this series of canvases are fictitious. It is said that some of the most dissolute and best known infamous characters of the day may be recognized in them.²¹ But after all they represent types. Hogarth, indeed, recognized the fact that England was full of characters just as bad as these whose faces he had painted here, but ^{he} could not let pass so good an opportunity to aim a blow directly.

The success of Hogarth's first series was the moulding influence of his later career. The Harlot's Progress was speedily followed by The Rake's Progress told in eight panels. Ten years later, in 1745, came the artist's most famous series, The Marriage à-la Mode, consisting of six paintings. The execution here is better and the canvases less crowded and confused. The series tells the following

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20. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, pp. 27, and 28.

21. Dobson, Hogarth, p. 23.

story. A poor lord has married his degraded son to the strong daughter of a city alderman. After the birth of a daughter they both live their own lives, and when the husband surprises his wife and her lover on one occasion, the lover kills the husband. The wife then begs pardon of her dying husband, and goes back to her father's house where she kills herself when she finds that her lover has been executed for his crime. The alderman does not forget to take a valuable ring from his daughter's finger as she is dying.
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As in The Harlot's Progress, we are arrested by the subject content of the picture and by Hogarth's clear and unusual insight into the life of this kind, rather than by the pictorial qualities. Hazlitt, a critic of Hogarth, says of his work in this series: "He does not represent folly or vice in its incipient, or dormant or grub state; but full-grown, with wings, pampered into all sorts of affectation, airy, ostentatious and extravagant -----.

There is a perpetual collision of eccentricities - a tilt and tournament of absurdities; the prejudices and caprices of mankind are let loose, and set together by the ears,
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as in a bear-garden." Once more Hogarth is content if he has impressed upon us the inevitable end of crime.

A modern Belgian painter, Leon Frederic, though not so strictly moralizing as Hogarth, paints scenes from the life of Belgian peasants, and by his paintings strives to give an understanding of their life and arouse

22. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., pp. 26 and 27.

23. Singleton, Great Pictures, pp. 230 and 231.

sympathy for them. In his triptych, The Chalk Merchant,²⁴
the left panel shows a family of three plodding down the road
to their work. ^{the central panel,} in the manner of triptychs, is larger, and
shows the peasants at their noon-day meal. In the panel at
the right they are on their way home. The interest of the
artist did not lie in the incidents alone, but in the in-
cidents just as far as they told something about the
characters. The important thing here is not the bare fact
that peasants go to work, eat dinner, and return home. The
artist's insight into their lives is deeper than this. The
suffering and fatigue that goes along with their work, the
hopelessness of their situation is there. We feel that to-
morrow and the next day and the next these peasants will
plod on in the same way. The three scenes which Frederic
has chosen are particularly adapted to the theme which he
has in mind. They are the simplest scenes, with little
action, so that our attention is not detracted from the
serious intent of the work with which these inactive scenes
are in harmony. The figures are not inactive in the sense
that they are wooden; they are not engaged in any vigorous
action which would demand the use of reserve energy. The
sight of a man taxing his strength to the utmost gives the
onlooker the feeling that he is working toward rest in the
future when the task is completed. The plodding man who
goes at his work with a dogged persistence makes one feel
that his task is endless, that his life will be spent in
just this way. It is of this condition that Frederic has
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24. See the collection of slides in the Department of The
History of Art in the University of Missouri.

striven to tell us.²⁵

3. Decoration

One purpose for which narrative art has been most widely used is that of decoration. Not only has it been applied to mural decoration, but it has been used in numerous other places, such as on vases, as is shown in the Troilus vase,²⁶ on monuments such as Trajan's column²⁷ and the shrine of S. Ursula,²⁸ and for numerous altar-pieces. Narration, however, is not so strikingly adapted to these forms as to mural decoration. The one thing demanded of a successfully decorated room or wall is that it shall be a unit, not only in rhythm of line and composition, but in conception also. This, of course, can be done successfully without recourse to the narrative style, as is so well shown by Raphael.²⁹ A narration, however, insures unity in the theme. Only the most mediocre artist would fail to weave the various incidents into an unbroken whole. With one thought at the base of the entire decoration it becomes a unit, and the effect is more pleasing than where one is forced to look upon a decoration whose parts are not related.

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25. Similar examples are Thomas A. Cole's Voyage of Life and The Course of an Empire. Both are series having for their themes ^{certainty} the ^{of} death. Contemplation of the possible shortness of life brings one to self-conscious action, and it is this which it is Cole's purpose to bring about. See the collection of slides in the Department of The History of Art in the University of Missouri.
26. Above, pp. 27 f.   27. Below, pp. 61 f.
28. Below, pp. 60 f.   29. For example, his decorations in the Farnese Palace and the Loggia of the Vatican.
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Again, the narrative subject is especially well adapted to mural decoration because a long, continuous theme emphasizes the continuous and stable quality of the wall. This is an essential feature; for, no matter how pleasing the decorations in themselves may be, if they interfere with the architectural purpose of the wall, they are unsuccessful and even offensive. ³⁰ Where a connected series is used, we are carried on from part to part without any abrupt break, which sometimes gives one the uneasy feeling that the wall stops and begins again intermittently.

The Sistine Chapel affords one of the most unique examples of the narrative used with a decorative purpose. When Michelangelo was given the commission to decorate the pope's private chapel, there were, on the lower walls of the chapel, a series of paintings from the lives of Moses and Christ. Michelangelo wove these into his story so that the theme of the entire decoration becomes the same. It is a great epic poem, and, carrying the literary analogy still further, may be divided into cantos. The first of these is the Creation and Fall of Man and occupies the nine central panels of the ceiling. The second, made up of four triangular

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30. The reliefs on the Arch of Titus are an example. Here the illusion is so complete that the procession seems to be moving before our eyes and, as Wickhoff remarks, air seems to circulate freely about the figures (Roman Art, p. 78). The relief is remarkable in the degree to which the sculptor has made the procession appear real, but as an architectural decoration it is somewhat disconcerting. It interferes with the solidity of the structure. A flatter design would have made a more pleasing decoration. See Strong, Rom. Sculpt. pp. 116, 117, Pl. XXXIV, and Lübke, Hist. of Art, I, p. 283.

spaces, shows Israel's need for a redeeming power outside herself. The Prophets and Sibyls make up the canto of the Prophecy, the Ancestors in the lunettes and the Gentiles in the smaller triangles form the canto of the Awaiting, and the scenes from the lives of Moses and Christ on the lower walls compose the canto of the Fulfilment. That of the Present is made up of representations of the Popes, which occupy the spaces between the windows. The Last Judgment, which fills the entire altar wall is the seventh and last canto.

It would have been monotonous, inartistic, and altogether impossible for the various cantos to have been represented in their entirety in spatial succession. But, while they cannot occupy such a position interpreted in its narrowest sense, they are arranged in systematic order; the central part is a unit, canto II occupies the four corners, and so on down through the succeeding divisions, so that the appearance of stability of the whole is preserved. No architectural necessity has been disregarded. The fitness of the decoration is emphasized by the superficial architectural supports which Michaelangelo has constructed.

It is important to emphasize once more the fact that the chapel is made a whole by the theme which runs through the entire decoration. It is the history of mankind from his creation to his fall, his redemption, and the day on which he shall be judged. It is an idea of tremendous

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31. Thode, Michaelangelo, III, 1, p. 304.

import, and yet one with which all are acquainted, so that no one finds difficulty in following its development. It would, however, be impossible to make for oneself a satisfactory connection between the scenes if the treatment of the incidents chosen were not broad and far-reaching. It is upon this point that the unity of the theme depends. It might, it is true, be a unit in name and fail because of the artist's failure to be comprehensive. Here, once more, the chapel excels. Michaelangelo, a sculptor, with a sculptor's love of the compact, links all the steps in the theme together. The power of God is the connecting link of the series. How strong and mighty is the Creator, and his power extends even to the Last Judgment! Man's life is impossible without this power. Where it is not found, strife and sin hold sway, and with its coming redemption is offered to all. On the last day God will come again and judge men according to the way in which they have used his gifts to mankind. He is not the same benign God of the Creation but an exacting Lord who demands an account of that which he has created. He is still the all-powerful, all-commanding Father, beside whose strength man's will is as nothing.

Michaelangelo's aim was to decorate the Sistine Chapel, but he has given to the term decoration a broader and finer meaning. Not only is the Sistine decoration a pleasing and harmonious composition which fits well the place for which it was made, it is, besides, a beautiful and inspiring interpretation and impresses upon us with

renewed force the tremendous genius of this "titan" of the Renaissance.

The rococo spirit of eighteenth century France furnishes us, in the work of Fragonard, a pleasing and characteristic example of the narrative style which borders upon the allegorical used for decoration.^{It is a} 32 A series of five scenes representing the Comedy of Love. In the first panel, La Vierge et L' Amour, a maiden lies dreaming at the foot of a column toward which Love flies and beckons to a lover, whom the girl seems to see in her dreams. In the next panel the lover approaches, but is checked by the maiden. This is followed by L' Offrande de La Rose. The lover surprises the maiden in the garden and when she becomes angry, he brings a rose as a peace offering. In the following picture the conquest has been completed and the two are reading a letter together. In the fifth and final panel the maiden crowns 33 her lover.

The series is purely decorative. Its primary purpose was to make the room which it adorned more pleasant and livable. Fragonard lived in a century of gaiety and love-making. Life was given over to the artificial; perpetual pleasure and eternal youth were the highest aims of the

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32. See Ladies' Home Journal, v. XXXIII, no. 10, 1916, pp. 18, 19. Four of these panels were made originally for Mme. Dubarry's Pavillion of Louvenciennes, but are now in the collection of J.P. Morgan. At one time they formed the decoration of a salon in the painter's house in Grasse. See Dilke, French Painters, p. 68.

33. Dilke, French Painters, pp. 68 and 69.

court and its subjects. This life was reflected in the art of the period, and Watteau and his school were the guiding influences of the time. Thus, the Comedy of Love as a decoration for a private dwelling becomes an expected subject. The treatment, wholly in accord with the theme, contains no hint of meditation or serious thought. It is joyous and gay, and we enjoy it because before it we live over again some of the gaiety of this century and forget for a few moments the striving for gain and the alertness to more serious matters which we must practice to exist in the twentieth century.

Again, in accordance with the age, the narration is general, rather than specific. It deals not with one lover and his maiden, but with Love in general, put into human form in order to make it comprehensible to the ordinary mortal. To a people devoted to sentiment and emotion the life of one person would hardly appeal as it did to people of the earlier centuries. Everyone experienced love and lived the life of pleasure. So we have the Comedy of Love, Fêtes Galantes, and subjects dealing with the essence of joy, rather than actual incidents.

Schwind, the greatest of the German Romanticists, lived in a world of beauty, and in his work is shown that loveliness for which the Romanticists were seeking. Subjects that did not give him an opportunity to make a dainty, light, airy picture did not appeal to him, and when he treated such themes, his work was inferior. But he excels in fairy subjects, love, and the like. His most famous work is not, indeed, of these classes, but is treated as daintily as if

it were a fairy story. It is a series of frescoes in the Wartburg, portraying scenes from the life of St. Elizabeth.³⁴ Throughout her country St. Elizabeth, from the time of her birth, was famed for her beauty. Hermann of Thuringia, hearing of her extraordinary loveliness, sent an embassy to her father, the king of Hungary, asking her hand in marriage with his son, Louis. So it came about that at the age of four years Elizabeth went to the Wartburg to be brought up with the child Louis. From her early childhood she practiced unusual deeds of charity, and became a pious and humble benefactor of the inhabitants of Eisenach. In due time she married Louis, who, though he reproved her zeal for the relief of the poor, sometimes secretly felt that her prayers and pious living were a great benefit to all about her. Upon his death, while taking part in a crusade, she fled from the castle with her children to escape persecution and died a few years later at the age of twenty-four.³⁵ Though the whole story is told in this series of frescoes, it is secondary in importance to the decorative quality just as has been the case in the foregoing examples. Forming a background to the scenes and emphasizing the daintiness and delicacy of them is a design of foliage in which are birds and flowers. The effect is charming, and one is reminded of similar decorations in early Christian art and on the walls of Pompeii.

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34. Muther, Hist. of Mod. Ptg., I, pp. 278 and 279.

35. Clement, Sts. in Art, pp. 343-353.

In 1876 the English painter, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, completed a series of panels representing the Angels of Creation, originally designed for a window erected in Tamworth church two years before. There are six panels, representing the six days of creation. ³⁶ In the first the angel holds a globe divided into spheres of light and darkness. The beautiful angel, a characteristic Burne-Jones type, is enveloped by wings of a gorgeous harmony of purple, blue, and gold. The succeeding panels are very similar; in each an angel holds a globe on which are pictured the results of one of the six days of creation. At the foot of the angel of the sixth day sits a seventh angel signifying the day of rest. She sits upon a bower of flowers and plays upon a many stringed instrument. The series is narrative in a different sense from any we have seen, and yet it is undoubtedly narrative; for it tells the story of the creation from the first to the last day. The usual manner of indicating succession in time, by the recurrence of certain figures, is not followed, for each angel is different from all the rest. Succession is, however, indicated by the appearance of the globe in progressive stages of developing. It is quite evident in each succeeding panel that time has elapsed since the preceding one, for to the earth has been added some new creation.

As decorations these panels are wonderfully pleasing and attractive. They are uniform in composition, yet varied and of delicate and harmonious line. The colors are highly praised by Malcolm Bell in his work on Sir Edward

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36. Bell, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, p. 52 (six pictures).

37

Burne-Jones.

The greatest of French mural painters, and one of the greatest decorators in the history of all art, was Puvis de Chavannes. Very characteristic of him is his series of the Life of St. Genevieve, which decorates the Pantheon in Paris. St. Genevieve was the daughter of a shepherd, but because of her pious character she was urged by two bishops to give herself to the church. She became a nun, and when Attila was threatening Paris in 450, she encouraged the inhabitants, saying that the foe would not come near. Attila did change his course, and from that time St. Genevieve was hailed as a prophetess and became the patron saint and savior of Paris.

This story Puvis de Chavannes has told in a series of panels.³⁸ His treatment of the scenes is in some respects idealistic, and yet there is no figure nor landscape that is not based upon a study and an intimate knowledge of nature. His decorations have been criticized as flat in modeling, imperfect in drawing, and showing an ignorance of color.³⁹ As a decorator Puvis recalls Giotto, whose power lay in his appreciation of the significant and in his clear and exact knowledge of the requirements for a good decoration.⁴⁰ Puvis understood that the success of a decoration does not lie in the artist's ability to copy accurately from nature and to fill his pictorial space with

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37. Bell, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, p. 53.

38. Mauclair, Great French Pters., pp. 142-156. U.P. E 138, 143.

39. Kingsley, Hist. of French Art, pp. 415 and 416.

40. Kingsley, Hist. of French Art, pp. 415 and 416.

unusual and intricate poses. He realizes that this success lies rather in the ability to condense all the particulars in nature, which are intelligible to only a few, into the broad and general characteristics, which are familiar to all. He was an idealist without departing from nature and a realist⁴¹ without copying anything.

For a wall decoration Puvis' figures, which seem to be stenciled upon the background, are unusually pleasing. They do not interfere with the flat, durable appearance of the wall, which must be preserved. The color, which has a narrow range, is not unfitting for a decoration so simply designed. Keeping the color neutral and much the same emphasizes the flatness of the wall. The light tones of coloring also are appropriate for interior decoration. Often the effect of the decoration is lessened greatly by the failure of the artist to suit the color to the dark interior. Decorations done in high values of color, as are those of Puvis', seem to cast light upon the interior, rather⁴² than to intensify the darkness.

The artist's choice of subjects is, again, suitable for a decoration. He does not use scenes full of violent action, but quiet and reposeful ones. All these facts prove the character of Puvis as a decorator. His series, it is true, does not carry with it the message for all mankind, which the Sistine Chapel contains; but it is a
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41. Mauclair. Great French Pters., p. 144.

42. Mauclair. Great French Pters., p. 144.

most pleasing decoration. Michaelangelo would never have been content with the methods of Puvis, but as a pure decorator, the latter is more pleasing than his great predecessor.

In the delivery room of the Boston Public Library is a decorative series by Edwin A. Abbey. The subject is the Quest of the Holy Grail and tells the story of Sir Galahad from infancy. Miss King, in her discussion of the five paintings which were in place at the time her book on American Mural Painting was written, finds the virtue of the paintings in their pictorial rather than in their decorative quality.⁴³ The story is told so clearly and the theme is one so familiar that one may find much pleasure in this side alone. But the series^{is} essentially decorative. True, there is not found here the rigid observance of decorative laws which is found in the work of Puvis de Chavannes, but the fundamentals are not neglected, and, as a whole, the decorative effect is very pleasing. For example, let us look at the first of the series, the panel showing a nun holding the infant Sir Galahad to whom an angel with the Holy Grail appears.⁴⁴ The balance is almost rigid, the mass of white at the left and above is balanced by the kneeling nun and the child. These figures are projected against a background hung with fantastic blue tapestry. A purer piece of decoration could hardly be found. The later panels give more of a true pictorial perspective, and yet the background

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43. King, Am. Mural Ptg., p. 112.

44. King, Am. Mural Ptg., p. 113.

never seems really to be more than a screen against which to project the more important figures of the foreground.⁴⁵ Note the long panel of the Round Table. The long horizontal line formed by the knights gathered about the king's table and the angels arranged in a semicircle above them contrast with the upright lines emphasized in the foreground. The note of white which fills the upper part is carried down into the lower by the white-clad figure of Joseph of Arimathea, who leads Sir Galahad forward to the magic seat by the King's throne. Miss King criticizes the color of Sir Galahad's robe. She contends that it is not only a literary defect, but also an artistic one.⁴⁶ This use of red might be explained, perhaps, by Abbey's decorative sense. The coloring in a decoration must be more rigidly balanced than in a picture where conventionality is not demanded. A white-clad knight would have emphasized too strongly the white note and would not have furnished the amount of warm color necessary to balance that of the king and his attendants at the right.

The lyric quality has added much to the success of the series as a decoration. There is something uplifting and inspiring in this story of Sir Galahad, and it is not in the story alone, but in the thought which is symbolized by the story. The search for truth and the protection afforded to the one who searches and is pure, and

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45. King, Am. Mural Ptg., pp. 116 and 117.

46. King, Am. Mural Ptg., p. 116.

the failure that comes when he has become spotted by the sins of the world is a theme that interests any observer. We follow this theme along in the story of Sir Galahad, and at the end find that our attention has not been arrested by the literary content, but by the beauty of line, harmony of color and by the inspiration we have gained.

In the Library of Congress John W. Alexander⁴⁷ has decorated a corridor with The Evolution of The Book, a series of six lunettes following out the development in transmitting knowledge from the Gairn to the Modern Printing Press. The four between these represent Egyptian Hieroglyphics where a man watched by a maiden is chiseling an inscription upon a ^{temple} ~~tomb~~, Oral Tradition, picturing an Arab chief reciting to a group seated about him, Picture Writing, indicated by two Indians writing upon a skin, and The Manuscript Book, showing a monk diligently at work at his copying. The liveliness and vigor with which each is done⁴⁸ accounts largely, as Miss King points out, for the admiration which they call forth. In a decorative sense the series is not entirely successful; the figures stand out almost as in the round, and the very positive color employed emphasizes the pictorial effect thus produced. The various lunettes have not the flat appearance that characterizes the most truly decorative panel. This lack of feeling for true decoration in the case of Alexander

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47. King, Am. Mural Ptg., pp. 184-186.

48. King, Am. Mural Ptg., p. 184.

may be due, in large part, to the fact that he applied to mural painting the methods of panel and portrait painting,⁴⁹ in which he had previously excelled.

In the work of Burne-Jones we found succession in time indicated by the appearance of a globe in progressive stages of development, rather than by the reappearance of a certain character. In this decoration by Alexander we find no method similar to either of these. The figures are in each stage widely different, belonging to different ages and races. Neither is there an evolution in a material way which may be compared to the wonders of creation, which were added each day. Here,^{it} is the evolution of an ideal, the connecting link is formed by the representation of the development in the technique of the transmission of ideas.⁵⁰

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49. King, Am. Mural Ptg., p. 184.

50. It might seem to one, on first thought, that the Parthenon frieze is an example of narration used for the purpose of decoration. It belongs, however, not in the class of narration, but in the class of description. It is not a view of the procession as it passes the observer, but a view of the procession taken as a whole and at one moment of time. The part nearest the destination of the procession is in order, while, as we pass on around the frieze, we see that at the same time the latter part is in disorder.

E.H. Blashfield's Evolution of Civilization is not, as the name suggests, a narration. It does not represent how various contributions were made to civilization by different countries in successive epochs of time, but shows rather the contribution of the various nations, regardless of the time element. See King, Am. Mural Ptg., pp. 198 and 199.

4. Devotion

Another purpose to which narrative art has been adapted is that which may be called, for lack of a better term, devotional. Our examples for this will be taken from early Netherland altar pieces, for here the narrative style was more frequently used than it was in Italy, though the altar piece originated in the south. The reason for this more frequent use ^{of narration} in the north, no doubt, is to be found in the fact that the Italians, having become accustomed to decorate large wall spaces, divided the altar piece into rather large divisions, seldom making more than three. In the north the wall spaces were small, and, accustomed to making pictures on a smaller scale, artists divided their altar pieces into small divisions. Having increased the number of spaces to be filled, they could now portray more scenes, and, indeed, might illustrate in a single altar piece the entire life of some sacred person. Take, for example, a triptych (Royal Museum, Brussels) representing the Life of St. Anna, by Quentin Massys, a
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sixteenth century artist. Here are represented five scenes from the saint's life, three of which are on the central panel and wings. The other two occupy the backs of the wings. This altar piece was not made to tell the life of the saint alone, but more particularly to awaken the minds of those who frequented the church whose altar this adorned to a keener appreciation and admiration of the saint's life. Its object was to inspire devotion.

An altar piece from one of the greatest of German painters furnishes an example even more elaborate. This is a series of Passion scenes by Hans Holbein (Basle Museum).⁵² It was painted around the years 1524-25 and⁵³ was for centuries considered Holbein's greatest work.⁵⁴ Though the coloring has suffered from restoration, the drawing is still admirable, and the wonderful skill with which the eight individual compositions, each splendid in itself, are combined to form a large composition equally ~~as~~ complete is still evident. In the left upper division is Christ in the Garden of Gethsamene. He is kneeling in prayer while Peter sleeps in the foreground. Above, surrounded by the rosy light of dawn, an angel floats downward. In the two central panels Christ is betrayed and led away. Here the light is produced by torches. The Scourging completes the upper four panels of the altar piece. The lower row is made up of the Mocking, Christ Bearing the Cross, the Crucifixion, and the Entombment.

The composition of the eight panels together is complete, as has been noted. This unity is obtained by arranging the more closely filled panels together in the center and the ones with fewer figures about these, and by balancing a diagonal range of light composed of the two left lower panels and the two upper ones at the right with a diagonal range of dark made up of the remaining four

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52. Knackfuss, Holbein, p. 55.

53. Knackfuss, Holbein, p. 78.

54. Knackfuss, Holbein, p. 78.

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panels. It is a clever and pleasing arrangement.

We know that Holbein was not a religious man and that he probably was not inspired by any feeling within himself to create such an altar piece. But we know also that he was a man with sufficient power and genius to create a work with a religious theme so that all who knelt before it were inspired and uplifted.

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The small shrine of St. Ursula, which was made to house the relics of this saint, was decorated with scenes by Hans Memling, a fifteenth century artist. St. Ursula was the daughter of a Christian British King. She was directed by Heaven to leave England and escape a pagan prince who was courting her. With knights and virgins she set sail, stopped at Cologne, where the Christian faith was tolerated, preparing immediately for her journey to Rome. On her way to Rome she stopped at Bâle. At Rome the pope resolved to accompany her on her homeward journey. When they arrived once more at Cologne, the throne was occupied by a pagan emperor and the whole company was massacred.
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The little shrine has three pictures on each side, representing these scenes from the saint's life. The ends represent St. Ursula with her thousand virgins under her robe and St. Ursula with two donors in adoration. The most unique is the scene which depicts not only the arrival of St. Ursula at Cologne, but shows her also through a window,

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55. Knackfuss, Holbein, pp. 79 and 80.

56. Now in the Hospital of Bruges. Kaemmerer, Memling, pp. 86-94.

57. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, Early Fl. Pters., p. 259.

dreaming of her journey which she was directed by an angel to take. She is seeing the vision of the virgins who are to accompany her and the Holy Father whom she is to see. In this little shrine Memling is seen at his best. In works requiring more power and vigor Memling is not so attractive, but in this legend, which has for its theme a life that forsook worldly passions for a life of pure devotion, a theme so like the life of Memling himself,⁵⁸ he becomes both fascinating and significant. St. Ursula's character is clearly depicted in her face, and her purpose never wavers from the first to the last scene. Memling has accomplished his purpose, which was to decorate this little reliquary with scenes that would show the beauty and sincerity of St. Ursula's life, and so inspire devotion to the saint, whose relics are enclosed within the shrine.

5. Imperial Glorification

In the sculpture of the Trajanic column⁵⁹ is found an example of the last class into which we divide the purposes that narrative art has been made to serve. It is that class which has for its purpose the glorification of some royal personage. The style of the sculpture in this towering column is similar to that which we found on the wall of Trajan's forum,⁶⁰ except that on the column, because of the vast extent of the frieze, much more detail is given, many more episodes represented, and the localities

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58. Muther, Hist. of Ptg. from 4th to 19th Cent., pp. 230, 231.

59. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 276-280, 286 and 287.

60. Above, p. 17.

indicated. This indication is not kept in correct proportion to the representation of the human figures. It is, for the most part, quite diminutive in size, subordinated always to the human element, and yet worked out with great naturalness as far as it alone is concerned.

In this spiral band, two hundred meters in length, with its numerous scenes illustrating the two Dacian campaigns of the Emperor Trajan, any monotony is avoided by introducing a great variety of episodes. Not only the stirring scenes of battle are portrayed, but also processes of preparation, quiet, homely scenes of camp life, sacrificial ceremonies, and consultations of chieftains. Further, the importance of the emperor is not over-emphasized by placing him in every scene. Occasionally he is omitted, so that at his reappearance his importance is the more strongly emphasized.⁶¹

"No biography, not the panegyric of Pliny, can give so complete and harmonious a picture of the great emperor as that which results from the reliefs of the Trajan column. He is by turn the Emperor marching at the head of his troops; the priest who offers sacrifice; like a scout he goes out reconnoitring; he surveys the building of camps, cities, and bridges; he exhorts and rewards his soldiers; he discourages acts of barbarism, though he feels perhaps that it would be unwise to check these altogether or too suddenly."⁶²

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61. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., pp. 273-291.

62. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., p. 209. See also Column of Marcus Aurelius in U.P. A 342 and 343, and Strong, Rom. Sculpt., Pls. LXXXIII-IX.

In the Luxembourg in Paris is a series of twenty-four panels which has for its subject the Life of Marie de Medici. The series was designed by Rubens and carried out by his pupils. The theme is, indeed, the life of the queen, but it is not done in a realistic way. For example, in the panel of Henry the Fourth receiving the
63 portrait of Marie de Medici, the framed portrait forms the center of the composition and supporting it are winged nude figures outlined against an ideal landscape, while the king assumes an admiring attitude as he looks upon the portrait. Again, in the Arrival of the Queen at Marseilles
64 the beautiful figure of Marie de Medici forms the center of interest as she disembarks, while near the ship are the sea nymphs who have guarded her passage. The queen is doing no deeds of valor such as those in which the emperor was engaged on Trajan's Column, but in each case the surroundings and the attention given to her indicate that in the series Rubens is paying a great tribute to the queen. It was to honor her that the panels found a place in the
65 Luxembourg Palace.

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63. U.P. D 121.

64. U.P. D. 122. The series is now in the Louvre.

65. Rubens began work on a series relating in a similar manner the Life of Henry IV, but died before completing it. The series was to have decorated another gallery in the Luxembourg Palace. Kett, Rubens, p. 81.

CHAPTER VI
JUSTIFICATION OF NARRATIVE ART

Narrative art, for whatever purpose it is used, whether for pure story telling, moralizing, decoration, devotion, or imperial glorification, puts strong emphasis upon the literary content of the work. Such emphasis is particularly marked in that class which is done primarily for the purpose of telling a story. This literary style is frequently looked upon as an unworthy and wholly inartistic form of expression. If the story is the only thing the artist is interested in, if he cares nothing for artistic composition or form, then the condemnation of the work as art is justified. For, as has been pointed out above, the style of composition must not be neglected. Yet surely the artist may justly demand consideration for the content of his work. We do not maintain that our enjoyment of poetry is based alone upon the rhythm of the meter. The subject-matter adds much. Indeed, the poet so combines his thought and rhythm that one is incomplete without the other. Again, when words are set to music, we do not regard the music as perfect without the words. Both words and notes must be taken into consideration before the composition is complete. In the same way, whether the artist uses his story for some purpose exterior to narration, as a musician may use words primarily to emphasize the rhythm

of his tones, or, whether the story and another purpose are equally joined, as the musician frequently links together words and notes of equal importance, or whether he tells the story primarily for its own sake, as is characteristic also of some types of songs, the artist is justified in exacting regard for the content of his picture.

It is true, however, that forms of art other than the narrative may be employed without complete sacrifice of content. The distinguishing feature of the narrative is that it lays special emphasis upon this content, and is the most simple and evident means of giving that emphasis. Other styles of art, as is shown in the next chapter, may show forth the subject-matter in a less distinct, but more subtle manner.

While the more subtle interpretation may appeal to some classes of people, the narrative is particularly well adapted to others. It cannot be condemned or justified merely on the grounds that it is narrative. Just as the virtue of a portrait lies not in the subject represented, but in the worth of the work as an interpretation of that subject and as an artistically conceived composition, so the supreme test of the narrative's claim to be reckoned as art must be based upon the success with which the narration, both in regard to content and style of composition, is presented.

CHAPTER VII
PROGRESS OF NARRATIVE ART; PARTICULARLY
IN ITS RELATION TO NATURALISM

Naturalistic periods in art seem to foster the narrative style. It can not be said, indeed, that every realistic age produces this form of art. Before the time of Trajan, when we have, apparently, the first development in Rome of the narrative style, Roman sculpture contained much of naturalism. Its portraiture particularly¹ is a witness to this fact. The great bloom of naturalism in Flemish art at the time of the Van Eycks was not accompanied by any great dominance of the narrative. And in our own day, with naturalism extending its power in all directions through art, we find but little pure narration.

Yet, in a comparative sense, it may safely be maintained that naturalism is favorable to the development of the narrative style. The career of Euphronius marked a high point in an epic of naturalism in Greek vase painting. Studies of the anatomy of the human body were being made, facial expressions were carefully delineated, details of features were represented, bold experiments in foreshortening were made, and the stiff, stereotyped forms of earlier times being abandoned, the whole body² became instinct with vital movement. It is to this time

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1. Strong, Rom. Sculpt., p. 346 ff.

2. Harrison and MacColl, Gk. Vase Ptg., Pls. XI, XIII, XVII.

that belong the beautiful examples of the narrative in the Theseus and Troilus vases.

Again, the reign of Trajan shows in Roman art no mean degree of naturalism. On the Trajanic Column itself, our finest example at this time of the narrative style, the scenes are treated quite naturalistically in respect of subject, individual forms, and background. As has been explained above, the most ordinary scenes of campaign life are not rejected. Simple, unpretentious scenes of life about the camp are deemed as worthy of attention as are the dashing excitement of battle or the glories of victory, and a fitting and appropriate spirit is given to each. But casual attention to the monument is needed to impress one with the naturalistic spirit in which individual figures are treated. Look, for example, at the contortions of the bodies and the painful expressions on the faces of the Roman prisoners undergoing torture at the hands of Dacian women (Strong, Pl. LIV), the inflated cheeks of the trumpeters in the procession of the Suovetaurilia (Strong, Pl. LIX), or at the clear characterizations which throw the Roman and Dacian soldiers' heads into such sharp contrast (Strong, Pl. LXIX). As to the background, it is not, for artistic reasons, in true scale to the human figures. But the clear indication of the setting by buildings, trees, and accessories, which are very realistic in all but size, is a long step from the ideal background of, for example, the Parthenon frieze.

In the other periods of Roman art in which the practice of this narrative style is found there has been a strong strain of naturalism.

Coming down to very early Christian art, we are not struck by any great degree of naturalism. Indeed, we have noted above that classic forms were frequently taken directly from pagan art and made to do service in setting forth the Christian doctrine. Yet this gives only a clearer demonstration of our thesis, for it is only when the artist abandons these forms, when he becomes more independent, that he uses the narrative style. The Catacomb decoration of Jonah and the Whale is free from antique influence. It would not be pronounced remarkably naturalistic, but the artist is doing his best to show us the scene as he conceives it to have taken place. He is inexperienced in representing the human form, he does not know how to show the waves of the sea realistically, and he must draw on his imagination for the form of the monster that could afford such a safe transit for Jonah. Yet the whole is done in a very convincing manner, and there are various details that show quite charming touches of realism, such as the gourd vine and the manner in which the prophet dives into the sea.

No one would think of using the term naturalism as an appropriate characterization of the great mass of mosaic art in early Christian and mediaeval times. Those solemn, elongated Byzantine forms impress the spectator always with their other-worldliness, rather than with any

degree of naturalism. But in the mosaics of these centuries we found the employment of narrative art very rare. It does not thrive where there is too much mysticism and where there is not the desire for simple, straightforward story telling.

Giotto was hailed by his countrymen as the naturalist of naturalists. They called him the "ape of nature". In the eyes of the modern man he would hardly appear deserving of such epithets. Looking at his work, however, in the light of what had preceded him, the claims of his contemporaries find justification. How different his rounded, three-dimensional figures from the flat, paste-board forms of his master, Cimabue! Movement is much more natural. The saints no longer stand wrapped in solemn contemplation. Incidents of the human life are considered worthy of representation; sometimes even genre subjects are introduced. Background accessories are, as in the Trajanic Column, out of proportion to the figures, but this is done, again, for the purpose of making the human element dominant. The mere use of such accessories as mountains and vegetable and animal life, however far short of naturalism the treatment is in many cases, is a new and bold step in Christian art. The sympathetically human life of St. Francis of Assisi had opened up the whole world of nature to the artist. He could now bend his efforts as much as he pleased toward the imitation of human and natural forms. And Giotto was quick to make use of the opportunity offered. And it is Giotto to whom is given the

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honor of being the founder of the epic style in Christian art. He, as has been shown, gives us narration in its purest form.

The whole early Renaissance was filled with feverish investigation and experiments. Once started in the search of the treasures of nature, artists could not be content until they had fathomed all her depths. Lives were devoted to studies of perspective, atmosphere, light and shade, space, the human anatomy, and all sorts of accessories. These investigations brought new subjects, as well as new methods of treatment. For instance, portraiture became in the fifteenth century a work of great importance. It was this, together with interest in minute treatment of detail that so occupied interest in the art of the Van Eycks and crowded out narration. Even when the subject did not have to do with portraiture, when it was the representation of some religious incident, the interest was so bound up in the representation of individual forms with their microscopic details that all else dwindled in comparative attractiveness. These remarks apply in a slightly less degree to many Italian artists of the fifteenth century. By the time, however, that we get to Mantegna, and particularly to Michaelangelo, the results of the investigations in new fields have been so mastered as to be assigned their proper places. The artist no longer struggles over technical problems, nor is he so delighted with the new solution of one that he must lay his main stress on its exhibition in everything he does. Michaelangelo is interest-

ed in his great theme, the drama of human existence, and he gives us his wonderful narrative, not a simple narration of Giotto's type; but nevertheless narrative in fundamental outline.

Such artists as Holbein in northern art have a corresponding control of material and can use it at will.

In the grandiose, pompous age of Louis XIV in France it is to the solitary group that turns aside from all the pretensions and insincerity of the age that we go for our representatives of the narrative style. Le Sueur strikes quite a different note from that which we naturally associate with the age of Louis XIV.

There is much that is ideal in the rococo period in France, but the narrative produced is not a simple, unaffected story. It is, as has been pointed out, bordering on the allegorical.

Hogarth in English eighteenth century art was an untiring investigator. He devoted part of his work, indeed, to ridiculing those who had no understanding of nature, for example, its perspective.⁴

In modern art there is no lack of naturalism in so far as is meant by this a knowledge of problems connected with nature. Artists of today do not use that knowledge for the imitation of nature, but the fact that most classes of modern artists base their work upon this understanding makes the epoch one which may be truthfully

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4. See the collection of slides in the Department of The History of Art in the University of Missouri.

called naturalistic. We have found, however, very few examples of narration in it.

When we come to seek the reason for the scarcity of the narrative style in modern art, we encounter a complication of conditions. The first, and perhaps the most general, reason is to be found in the change of viewpoint in modern times. Until the end of the Renaissance period the human element was dominant in art. Investigations were made, as we have noted, in many other branches, but nothing was allowed to overshadow the human interest. Consequently a series of incidents in the life of a man was a very natural subject for the artist. But in the present day, with the general tendency to specialization in all phases of life, have come new specializations in art also. There is a class of artists who devote their entire lives to landscape painting, others study only water scenes, architecture, various species of animals or still life. The human element is not entirely crowded out, to be sure, but it does not hold the place of importance that it once held.

For more special reasons we may look to the use made of the human element when it is retained. A large proportion of it is devoted to pure portraiture; much is allegorical or symbolical. These latter forms are used to a great extent in our public buildings, in such places as narrative art once played a large part. And it is in this connection, particularly, that we see how the small

amount of religious art of today compared to that of previous times cuts down the supply of narrative representations. Religious subjects from the beginning of the Christian era down to the end of the Renaissance formed the great bulk of topics for artistic representation. The lives of Christ and the saints offered, as we have found, splendid opportunity for the narrative style.

We still glorify great statesmen, but because of our more sophisticated turn of mind we do it in a different manner from that of the artist of the Trajanic Column. We try to express in a portrait of the hero the valor and courage that the Trajanic artists pictured in the narration of the actual events of his life. We erect an obelisk in an open space in our national capital, and it stands to us for the lofty acts, virtues and ideals of the Father of our Country.

Narration does, no doubt, as Walters points
5 out, represent a comparatively primitive form of thought, in so far as its purpose is the relation of various incidents or steps in a story. But we of today, if we are concerned at all with the portrayal of thought, would have it deeply significant, not the naive type involved in simple story telling. And we have a much greater liking for the expression of moods and feelings. With all our theories of aesthetics we have an ever-increasing disdain for the subject matter as such. We do not want art to preach to
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us or to entertain us with stories. We want it to induce certain moods within us; we want to enjoy the pure beauty of it.

CONCLUSION

In the foregoing discussion it has been found that the narrative is a clearly defined form of representative art. Its chief point of distinction from other forms of representation lies in the time element. Indication of progression in time is never lacking in the true narrative. But while, in making one classification of this art, we have considered the amount of time covered, this is a consideration that is immaterial as far as concerns mere distinction of the narration from other forms of representation. Examples of the narrative have been found that involve only a few seconds of time, successive moments in a single incident being shown. More common is the portrayal of various incidents in one period, as the life of an individual. And even the development of centuries has not seemed impossible to the productive mind of the artist.

Study has been made also of the means artists have adopted for indicating the necessary progression in time. The indication of increasing age in the successive appearances of the principal character has proved an obvious means of showing such progression. But in many cases the logical development of incidents and spatial sequence must be depended upon.

A second classification of narrative art we have based upon the arrangement in space. Representations

have been found in which the whole narration occupies but one pictorial field, various forms of arrangement being followed within the field. But others occupy a number of pictorial fields, each stage in the narration being placed in a separate space.

Narrative art, it has been found, did not originate with the Romans, as Wickhoff has maintained. Unmistakable instances of its use are found in the art of Greece, Egypt and Assyria.

Beginning with Roman art and continuing on down through art periods to the present time, a classification has been made according as the example best served the purpose of pure story-telling, moral teaching, decoration, devotional inspiration or imperial glorification. In many instances the example chosen serves more than one purpose, but it has been pointed out that one purpose is usually predominant.

From a study of these examples we have found that the justification or condemnation of narrative art rests not upon the feature which makes the work a narration, but upon the quality of the work as an expression of beauty through conception and form.

Finally, the progress of narrative art, especially in its relation to naturalism, has been traced. Though it cannot be maintained that narrative art is characteristic of naturalistic periods, it has been shown that naturalism is favorable to the development of such a style. The scarcity of narration in the present period of

naturalistic tendencies is due, probably, to two reasons: the presence of interests other than the human element, which must dominate narrative art, and the symbolical and allegorical treatment of the human element when it is retained by the modern artist.

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