Poussin and Nature
Figure 1 Nicolas Poussin. Self-Portrait. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7302)
Poussin and Nature
Arcadian Visions

Edited by Pierre Rosenberg and Keith Christiansen

Essays by Keith Christiansen, Anna Ottani Cavina, Alain Mèrot, Claire Pace, René Démoris, and Willibald Sauerländer

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Page vi: Nicolas Poussin. Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain, also called Landscape with a Dirt Road (detail). National Gallery, London [cat. 38]

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Directors’ Foreword

That Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) was one of the major figures of seventeenth-century painting and the founder of French classicism is well known. That he was also one of the great painters of landscape, and that his landscape paintings have had a profound impact on European art, are far less widely recognized. This is the first exhibition devoted exclusively to Poussin as a painter of landscapes, and we fully expect that these supremely poetic works of art will come as a revelation to many viewers.

Landscape painting was an activity that engaged Poussin only sporadically, and more so at the end of his career than at the beginning. Visitors will discover, however, that from the outset Poussin was as concerned with the landscape settings of his pictures as he was with their narrative subjects. An ardent student of nature, he transformed the genre to suit his elevated notion of the maniera magnifica, or Grand Manner, and in so doing conferred on it a new status. The mere recording of visual experience—landscape as an imitation or transcription of the world around us—did not interest him. He painted no topographical “views,” and even in his drawn oeuvre—abundantly represented here—identifiable sites are few; rather, in his landscapes we encounter nature reconfigured and ennobled—not as we encounter it in our everyday life, but as we might imagine it to be (to paraphrase the seventeenth-century critic Roger de Piles). Dense with literary associations and profoundly poetic, the artist’s landscapes propose—again in the words of de Piles—“an agreeable illusion, and a sort of enchantment.” In his conception of landscape painting, Poussin represented the polar opposite of most of his contemporaries in Holland, and also of those later, nineteenth-century traditions of realism that have so influenced our own ideas about landscape painting.

As in the work of his great compatriot Claude Lorrain, Poussin’s pastoral landscapes are embellished with subjects derived from classical and Renaissance literary sources. Although the two artists were friends and made excursions together into the Roman Campagna to draw from nature, the spirit of their drawings and paintings could not be more different. Almost invariably, a Claude landscape presents us with a light-filled vista set off by a dark coulis of trees, a hillock, or the noble forms of a classical temple or Roman villa. The luminous distance is often measured by the rays of the setting sun reflecting off the eddying waves of a harbor. Light—whether the soft, suffused light of dawn, the golden light of late afternoon, or the intensely colored light of evening—is the leitmotif of Claude’s art. His clouds hang in the sky like airy puffs; his trees are feathery, their leaves gently moving in the breeze. There is a pervasive and deeply lyrical serenity in his landscapes that is further enhanced by the delicate detail of buildings and those curiously tall, spindly figures that add a nostalgic, dreamlike quality to the whole.

In contrast with Claude’s vision, Poussin’s rigorously critical frame of mind confers on nature an air of order and permanence. If his early landscapes remind us of and were inspired by the sensual world of Titian, his mature landscapes—those produced after about 1640—are the products of an intense and even mystical reverence for the Roman Campagna that is as great as Claude’s.
Poussin’s counterbalance to this engagement with nature was a no less intense critical detachment and a remarkable sense of artistic purpose. He orders his responses by employing a careful sequence of solids and voids to construct space and by emphasizing vertical and horizontal elements that meet at right angles to each other. A placid lake—its mirrorlike surface magically reflecting the buildings and figures along its edges—or a curving road or river defines the middle ground, and a distant mountain range closes off the composition. Trees and the cubic forms of buildings—sometimes humble, sometimes majestic—confer an architectural solidity on the composition, and the clouds are arranged in sequential planes that create a further sense of order and compositional unity. It is by these means, as much as by the subjects he introduces, that Poussin’s landscapes acquire a moral as well as poetic dimension. The quality of permanence and inevitability in his paintings, which deeply impressed Cézanne, made Poussin a crucial figure in the genesis of modern painting. (The importance of Poussin’s landscapes for Cézanne was the subject of a memorable exhibition held in Edinburgh in 1990; remarkably enough, it is the only exhibition prior to this one to deal specifically with Poussin as a painter of landscapes.)

Poussin’s involvement with landscape painting may have been sporadic, but it was not casual, and his landscape works have had an influence out of proportion to their number. They are, indeed, central to any history of European painting, which is why an exhibition attempting to understand the artist’s engagement with nature is so important—and long overdue.

As early as 1649, the French printmaker Abraham Bosse observed, “I have even seen landscapes that he [Poussin] made for pleasure, that should hold the first rank for this kind of work.” What Bosse could not have imagined was the admiration Poussin’s landscapes would continue to garner over the next three hundred years, for the list of artists who studied and learned from Poussin’s landscapes is as impressive for its variety as it is for its length. In the seventeenth century, he had both imitators and followers, the most accomplished of whom was his brother-in-law Gaspar Dughet (also known as Gaspard Poussin). In France, Francisque Millet and Sébastien Bourdon built their reputations as landscape painters upon the esteem Poussin’s work enjoyed among collectors.

What may come as a surprise to many is Poussin’s pervasive impact on nineteenth-century artists, to the point that French painters studying in Rome sought out the sites his landscapes evoked—the so-called promenade du Poussin (on this subject, see Anna Ottani Cavina’s essay in this catalogue). In his treatise on landscape published in 1800, Pierre-Henri Valenciennes laid down the challenge: “If, after this great man [Poussin], no one to equal him can be found, do not believe the thing impossible: the flame of genius has not gone out.” That flame was rekindled by Camille Corot, who sought to endow his landscapes with that aura of a mythic past recaptured—he was sometimes criticized for being too slavishly reverential toward his great forebear. Remarkably, Jean-François Millet—an artist with a very different sense of artistic purpose, though not lacking in a sense of nos-
talgia for the past—was scarcely less admiring: his Harveters Resting (Museum of Fine Arts, Boston) pays obvious homage to Poussin’s Ruth and Boaz: Summer (cat. 67). J. M. W. Turner and Théodore Géricault found their romantic vision of nature confirmed in Winter: The Flood (alas, too fragile to be lent to this exhibition; see fig. 42), in which they discovered hints of the sublime. If John Constable responded to the naturalistic effects of the Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain (cat. 38), Samuel Palmer was captivated by the visionary quality of Poussin’s Landscape with Polyphemus (fig. 36)—and so, it would seem, was the Swiss symbolist Arnold Böcklin.

Viewed through the lens of Böcklin, Poussin’s work appeared to be a prelude to early twentieth-century metaphysical painting. Giorgio de Chirico, for one, discerned disquieting associations within Poussin’s landscapes: “The trunks, and branches, studied like human bodies, make one think of certain nudes by antique sculptors, or of certain perfectly muscled limbs.” Cézanne passed on a very different response to the creators of modernism in France. At a generation removed from each other, Matisse and Balthus set up their easels in the Louvre before Poussin’s haunting Echo and Narcissus (fig. 25)—that masterpiece of his Venetian style—recollections of which can be detected in Matisse’s La Bonheur de vivre (Barnes Foundation, Merion, Pennsylvania) as well as in Balthus’s The Mountain (The Metropolitan Museum of Art).

This broad and remarkably varied response to Poussin’s achievement alerts us to the richness of his vision—one for which the terms classical or ideal seem completely insufficient. As Kenneth Clark observed in his masterful book Landscape into Art, Poussin “combined in such full measure the ideal and the real. His scrupulous sense of design was nourished on observation; his most exalted visions remain concrete. [. . .] And it is this sensuous grasp of organic as well as abstract form that makes Poussin’s late landscapes so inexhaustibly satisfying.” The constant dialogue between observation and poetic vision that is the basis of the artist’s finest work will be apparent to visitors to this exhibition as they move from drawings to paintings and back again.

It is important to understand that for Poussin observation was not a passive act: it implied critical evaluation. His paintings incorporate then-current ideas about ways of perceiving nature: of, for example, the transformation of color with distance—what is commonly referred to as atmospheric perspective—or the laws governing reflection. They are also based on a theory of poetic invention first elaborated in the Renaissance.

The notion of Poussin as a cerebral artist—the quintessential peintre-philosophe—has been a mixed blessing, contributing in no small degree to the idea that his work is accessible only to an intellectual elite and that the key to his work lies in the unraveling of the subjects he treats. Few have seen the dilemma more clearly than André Gide, who in his 1945 book on the artist observed: “I would go even further: as often happens, Poussin ran the risk of being hindered by intelligence. The miracle is that Poussin was painter enough, great painter enough, so that the container, under
the excessive weight of its contents, did not give way; so that his triumphant conception knew how to subdue the material even while glorifying it.”

Above and beyond whatever significance we may read into his often haunting and mysterious subjects—the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44) has elicited a flood of interpretation without any final resolution to the matter—what was important to Poussin was the act of poetic invention: the Horatian view of painting as a kind of mute poetry. As Wilibald Sauerländer demonstrates in his eloquent essay in this catalogue, Poussin found his most important sources of inspiration—his paradigms—in the poetry of Ovid and Virgil. His is an Arcadian vision, but it is of an Arcadia that has not escaped intimations of mortality and death: Et in Arcadia Ego—the ego signifying both the presence of Death in Arcadia and Poussin’s projection of himself into his paintings. As with poetry, his work demands serious engagement on the part of the viewer, but in return it promises an intensity of aesthetic as well as intellectual pleasure. In one of his last letters, Poussin declared that the aim of painting is delectation, the object of its subject matter to enable the painter to demonstrate his talent and industry, and that its various parts “spring from the talent of the painter and cannot be learned. They are like Virgil’s Golden Bough which none can find or pick, unless he is guided by destiny.”

It has been the aim of the organizers of this exhibition to give the fullest possible representation of Poussin as a painter of landscapes so as to provide a unique occasion to encounter the most personal side of this great artist’s creative achievement. For this we have been dependent on the goodwill and supportive collaboration of museums and private collectors throughout Europe and America. Inevitably, there have been disappointments due to lending restrictions, prior commitments, or issues of condition. And it proved impossible to secure everything for both institutions. Thus, some of Poussin’s most beautiful drawings will be seen only in Bilbao, and some key paintings will be shown only in New York. We were especially sorry that it proved impossible to borrow the Landscape with Polyphemus from Saint Petersburg (a work whose fragile condition does not allow it to travel) and the Landscape with Hercules and Cacus from Moscow, for these are among the greatest of Poussin’s mature landscapes. On the other hand, thanks to a special arrangement with the Ministry of Culture in Serbia and His Royal Highness Crown Prince Alexander II, the Landscape with Three Monks, also known as La Solitude—a work not exhibited outside Serbia since 1931—will be shown in New York following its cleaning and conservation. It is the closest thing to a pure landscape that Poussin ever painted and will come as a revelation. Special thanks is owed the Prado in Madrid, the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, the National Gallery in London, and the Louvre in Paris, which have been extraordinarily generous with multiple loans, but to all the lenders listed in these pages we extend our heartfelt gratitude.
Although this exhibition has been a collaborative venture, the initiative for it originated with the Museo de Bellas Artes in Bilbao. Pierre Rosenberg was invited to be the guest curator, and it is to him that we owe the selection of the works as well as the entries in the catalogue. He has been actively engaged at every stage of its organization. Indeed, the project would have been inconceivable without his enthusiastic commitment. To him goes our deepest appreciation. Miriam Alzuri and Keith Christiansen were the organizers at Bilbao and New York, respectively.

At Bilbao, the exhibition has been generously supported by the Fundación Bilbao Bizkaia Kutx, a regular sponsor of the Museo de Bellas Artes, in celebration of the centennial of both institutions.

The exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum has been made possible thanks to generous grants from The Florence Gould Foundation and The Isaacson-Draper Foundation. All visitors to the exhibition in New York are in their debt.

Philippe de Montebello
Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

Javier Viar
Director, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao
Preface

Poussin and Nature: odd as it seems, no monographic exhibition has yet addressed this theme, one that from the seventeenth century onward has attracted the attention of writers and poets, painters and art historians. Since the end of World War II, there has been a resurgence of interest in the subject, with an ever-increasing number of publications taking up the issue. These publications have concerned Poussin’s landscape drawings as well as his paintings; they have explored questions of authorship, dating, interpretation (more or less esoteric), and even, sometimes, beauty. If pressed to name only one specialist fascinated by the connections between Poussin and nature, I would cite Anthony Blunt. His work on the artist’s drawings—for example, chapters 9 and 11 of his Mellon Lectures, delivered in 1958 and published in 1967—remains exemplary. (I nonetheless confess that my own approach to Poussin is closest to that of Denis Mahon rather than to Blunt’s.)

How did the present exhibition come about? The Museo de Bellas Artes in Bilbao celebrates its centennial in 2008. To recognize this landmark, its director, Javier Viar Olloqui, and its director of exhibitions, Miriam Alzuri, wished to organize an important event. I suggested an exhibition on the place of landscape in Poussin’s work. Such an exhibition would provide an opportunity to tackle, visually, certain issues still vigorously debated today: Poussin’s early work in Rome before 1630; his ambitious approach to landscape after 1630 and prior to 1640; the great poetic examples of his final years, which are without parallel in European painting of the seventeenth century; and his accepted landscape drawings as well as those that had often been attributed to him in the past.

It might be noted here, as an aside, that interest in Poussin has a long history in Spain. The Prado possesses many key works by Poussin, which have been well studied by Spanish specialists—Juan J. Luna in particular—and frequently exhibited. (The magisterial monograph on Poussin by Otto Grautoff, which appeared in German in 1914, was published in Spanish in 1945, whereas neither French nor English editions exist. Similarly, Jacques Thuiller’s 1974 monograph on Poussin, part of the Classique de l’Art series, appeared in Spanish in 1975.)

One painting seemed to me crucial as the focal point of the exhibition: Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun, in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (cat. 63). I brought up the matter with Keith Christiansen. Not only was he favorably inclined to grant the loan, but for some time he had been nurturing the idea of an exhibition on Poussin and nature. Philippe de Montebello, director of the Metropolitan Museum (with whom I share the same birthday as well as a tremendous admiration for Poussin), also considered such a project highly appealing. Various museums and other art institutions in the United States have devoted important exhibitions to Poussin—Knoedler & Co. Galleries in New York in 1940 (whose catalogue I refer to in my entries, not only because of the exhibition’s organizer, the great Poussin scholar Walter Friedlaender, but also for the fine text by Marguerite Yourcenar, which has otherwise remained unpublished); The Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Toledo Art Museum in 1959; and The Kimbell Art Museum, Fort Worth,
in 1988, among others. Yet the curious fact remains that, until now, the artist has been neglected by New York museums, despite the fact that the first authentic Poussin to enter the United States (in 1871) was the Metropolitan Museum’s *Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus* (cat. 20), and that today there are in America about thirty works by the artist. (Perhaps one day these works will be reunited with pictures whose attribution has been questioned.)

The history of Poussin’s paintings in America—including *The Death of Germanicus* in the Minneapolis Institute of Art and the *Holy Family on the Steps* in the Cleveland Museum of Art—would be worth recounting, and there is still no study of the history of Poussin scholarship in America, stretching from the first generation of Jewish-German refugees (how can I not again mention Walter Friedlaender, whom I had the privilege of knowing?) to today’s specialists, whose writings find a welcome place in the columns of *The Art Bulletin*. Here I must express my sorrow at learning of the death of Konrad Oberhuber, a brilliant connoisseur and Poussin scholar whose ideas were as bold as they were unorthodox.

With the addition of a second venue, in New York, the exhibition acquired an entirely new breadth and ambition. My colleagues and I knew that the restrictions of various drawing collections would require us to split their loans between Bilbao and New York, but we also realized that the Metropolitan Museum’s participation would make it easier to obtain many of the desired loans. We set out to make the venues in Bilbao and New York as alike as possible, but in a number of key cases this objective was not obtainable.

In the end, the exhibitions in Bilbao and New York fulfill my wishes and our dreams. It is true that the Musée Condé at Chantilly as well as the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne are prohibited from lending their wonderful drawings, and that, for the same reason, the notable but little-known painting *Landscape with Three Nymphs* at Chantilly is likewise absent. We had also hoped for the loan of the *Kingdom of Flora* in Dresden; the *Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion* from the collection of the earl of Plymouth (fortunately, its companion [cat. 43] is here); the *Landscape with Polyphemus* from The Hermitage in Saint Petersburg (it was also absent from the monographic exhibition in Paris in 1994–95); the *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* from the Pushkin Museum in Moscow; and, from the Louvre (which, it must be noted, has been exceptionally generous), the *Echo and Narcissus* and the canvases depicting autumn and winter from the series of the Four Seasons. Yet there have been welcome surprises as well: the *Landscape with Three Monks*, also known as *La Solitude* (cat. 53) makes its first appearance outside Serbia since 1931. Thus the exhibition really has satisfied my expectations.

The number of individuals I must thank for their help is considerable: their names will be found in the Acknowledgments (as always, I fear I have inadvertently omitted some names, for which I am truly sorry). In addition:
My mother, who just turned ninety-nine, has read my manuscript with her usual sharpness.

I would like to thank my two colleagues Miriam Alzuri and Keith Christiansen, who not only gave me encouragement and daily assistance, but who also, and above all, joined their efforts to obtain the desired loans.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to Olivier Lefevre. He was my collaborator from the very beginning of the project. To him fell the heavy responsibility of keeping records on each work to be shown, ferreting out information from the library, correcting my mistakes, and rectifying my omissions.

To all I give my warm thanks.

Pierre Rosenberg
Member of the Académie française
Honorary president-director of the Musée du Louvre
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Poussin and Nature
Encountering Poussin

Pierre Rosenberg

Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) is a “difficult” painter. He has placed the bar of greatness high. Unquestionably one of the finest artists of the seventeenth century and, together with Cézanne, the greatest of all French painters, he does not reveal himself at first glance or disclose himself when first encountered. Poussin’s work requires a mediator—whether a person, book, or “event”—to open the eyes of the viewer. And if such a mediator is necessary for his paintings with biblical, mythological, or historical subjects, it is even more so with his landscape paintings and drawings. Exhibitions assume, or should assume, this role, for by definition they bring together a substantial number of works by the same artist, making it possible to ascertain the evolution of an artist’s style, and to measure the changes in his ambitions and the transformations in his thinking.

Poussin devoted himself to landscape from his earliest years in Rome. At that point in his career, landscapes formed only the background, however magnificent, of his compositions. The Venetian quality of these early landscapes has often been emphasized (without examining precisely what that term might mean). Toward the middle of the 1630s, Poussin changed direction, and landscapes begin to play a very different role in his work; they were different also from what we find in the work of his contemporaries in Rome. For Poussin, landscape became a direct and active participant in the painting, whether the subject was mythological (cats. 26, 47, 54), historical (cat. 43), literary (cat. 57), or biblical (cats. 35, 36). Occasionally, nature was the primary actor (cats. 53, 55, 56). These landscapes, in which the world of antiquity is so strongly evoked, are usually characterized as heroic (I don’t much like the all-purpose term “classical”). They were followed by those admirable poetic landscapes in which Poussin gives free reign (or so it seems) to his imagination and the wanderings of his mind.

These few lines make no pretense to encapsulate what was one of the greatest adventures a painter could have. They are meant merely to draw attention to the place of the mediator, a place...
even more crucial today, when familiarity with the worlds of the Bible, mythology, and fable is no longer what it once was.

Sometimes Poussin himself assumed the role of mediator, as when, in a letter to his fellow painter Jacques Stella, he described his Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57). In 1767 Denis Diderot played the part incomparably in describing (albeit from an engraving) the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44; see also p. 166 for a translation of Diderot's description).

What neither Poussin nor Diderot mentions, yet what is essential, is that a canvas by an old master, especially one by Poussin, requires the viewer to devote time to it—indeed, a great deal of time. Since the triumph of Impressionism, we have lost the habit of taking time to study paintings. We look at them in the same way we leaf through a book, which is to say, distractedly. It is important, then, to learn to stand before Poussin's works for a long time, to relearn how to take one's time—that time to which Poussin paid so much attention.

Take, for example, Summer: Ruth and Boaz (cat. 67; happily, it is shown in both Bilbao and New York), painted between 1660 and 1664, shortly before the artist's death, as one of the Four Seasons now in the Louvre (it is indeed difficult to fully appreciate it without knowing the three other canvases in the series; see figs. 42 and 48 and cat. 66). In the center, seen in profile, her arms outstretched, a young woman on her knees pleads with a man wearing a turban who stands above her, undoubtedly a powerful man. With his left hand he gives an order to his servant, who bows his head in a sign of respect and obedience; with his right he gestures to the young woman. Peasants, both men and women, are harvesting a vast field of wheat to the accompaniment of bagpipes. One man carries a sheaf on his shoulder. A thirsty woman raises a gourd of water to her lips. Two women on the left hasten to prepare lunch. It is high noon in summertime. Why does the woman kneel? She is Ruth. She is poor and has come from afar to ask the wealthy Boaz, the lord of the place, permission to glean. Boaz gives the order granting Ruth's request. He falls in love with her and they marry. From their lineage will be born David, the ancestor of Christ.

Noontime is evoked by the bright light of the noonday sun (which is not actually portrayed); summer, by yellows as opposed to the tender greens of spring; the yellow of the wheat and of Boaz's toga. Two people widely separated by age, social background, and origin of birth, never destined to meet were it not for the accidents of Providence: the story is conveyed not with words but by means of the painter's brush. The splendid field of wheat traversed by a classical quadriga; the distant mountains; the clouds that hide the sun, which nonetheless makes itself felt; the fortified buildings; the deeply rooted tree in the foreground that casts a parsimonious shadow; the suffocating heat of summer (what a contrast to Winter: The Flood): all these things require time to absorb. The eye discovers this detail or that one—the sheaf of wheat at Boaz's feet, the loaves of bread for the workers' lunch, the intriguing scarlet cloak at bottom left. Only then comes the imposing lesson of History and the various interpretations that the series of the Seasons has given rise to: the hours of the day, the stages of life, the primordial colors. Is the view of the world we encounter here narrowly religious or pantheistic and Stoic? Does it represent an optimistic or a pessimistic vision of human destiny? Is it a meditation on the meaning of human life, or does it portray a harmonious coexistence between humans and nature in her ceaselessly recurring cycles? . . .

On the one hand, there is what one sees—the visualization of a biblical narrative. On the other, there is what Poussin wants to tell us. And then there is the interpretation of that account—an interpretation that is sometimes ambiguous, leaving to each viewer the freedom to choose a meaning. It is to this (intentional?) ambiguity that we owe the innumerable "readings" of Poussin's paintings that have succeeded one another at an ever-increasing pace during the last half-century. Let us confess the truth without acrimony: these readings have not always done Poussin a service. They often create a screen that distances viewers from the work, alienating them. For in "reading" Poussin's paintings too much, one ceases to "see" them. In overanalyzing them, one forgets to look at them, to contemplate them, take delight in them, be swept up in their enchantment. For Poussin's constant joy was in painting, even though for him—obviously—painting was not limited to the faithful representation of what he had before his eyes.

Poussin cultivated special bonds with nature, and it is to these very singular bonds, unique in the history of painting, that this exhibition is devoted. The authors of the six essays
that accompany the catalogue entries, all from different geographic and
table, address, each according to his or her way of seeing, the character, the
originality, the specificity of Poussin’s unique relationship with nature.

Unlike his brother-in-law Gaspar Dughet (1615–1675),
known as le Guaspre, Poussin painted no “pure” landscapes,
having no human presence. Poussin’s friend Claude Gellée—
Claude Lorrain, or Claude—several years his younger, also
devoted himself exclusively to landscape. Visitors to the
Städelches Kunstinstitut in Frankfurt can see together in the
same room Poussin’s astounding Landscape with Pyramus and
Thisbe (cat. 57) and Claude’s moving Noli me tangere (fig. 91),
painted in 1681, thirty years after Poussin’s canvas. In front of
these works, the viewer can only remain transfixed in admir-
ation, unable to break away from the contemplation of the
one or the other of these absolute masterpieces.

What distinguishes Poussin from his two contemporaries
in Rome? We find in him an ambition that few painters have
been able to satisfy. Not that painters are not ambitious by
definition: all of them are. But Poussin’s ambition is singu-
lar, it is his alone. Indeed, it proved disadvantageous in that
it distanced his work from those who refused to make the effort
it demanded. Yet this ambition, which Poussin soon realized
distinguished him from the painters of his time, also ensured
his immortality. It encompasses a dual purpose: on the one
hand, the artist’s goal was to recount a fable, a myth, a bibli-
cal narrative, human passions, or nature’s furies and ineffable
beauty, and to do so using the means of the painter; on the
other hand, he sought to do that task in the way it was
done by the authors of antiquity and the Renaissance, refer-
ring to Ovid, Virgil, Plutarch, the Bible, Tasso, Montaigne,
and others.

Poussin took the leap. He wanted the time one might
spend reading and absorbing a text and in understanding its
significance or its message to be spent contemplating his paint-
ings, with the same complete attention, the same concentra-
tion, the same reflection, the same emotional engagement.

I would like to end these remarks with two short quo-
tations. The first comes from an essay by Jacques Cambry
(or de Cambry), first published in 1783: “All the Landscapes
of this great Man [Poussin] have a character of majesty that
is all his own: always simple, he does not divert himself
by seeking and assembling so many small effects of light, by
drawing small jets of water, little waterfalls; all the riches of
Egyptian and Greek Architecture, all the tranquil and sub-
limine beauties of Nature are transposed into his paintings.
Always there is an interesting Episode that speaks to the soul,
that indicates the emotion that the Viewer should experience;
it is Diogenes in the outskirts of Athens, breaking a useless
cup, after seeing a young man drink from the hollow of his
hand [cat. 62]. It is Saint John, amid the ruins and ravages
of time, writing the Gospel [cat. 36]. It is an old man under a
leafy tree, giving himself up to philosophical reflections, after
having hung up the arms and the lyre of his youth, in the
tree that lends him its shade [cat. 38].”

The second quotation brings us back to Cézanne, whom
I mentioned in the opening lines of this text. He had this to
say: “I would like, as in the Triumph of Flora, to join the curves
of the women to the shoulders of the hills. . . . Like Poussin,
I would like to put reason in the grass and tears in the sky.”
The Critical Fortunes of Poussin's Landscapes

KEITH CHRISTIANSEN

His landscapes, which he probably took from nature, are superior as paintings to his historical pieces.
—William Hazlitt

The View of Poussin's Contemporaries

Mention the name Nicolas Poussin (1594–1665) and the kind of picture that comes to mind is likely to be one with classically draped figures in a richly articulated architectural setting who enact with studied gesture and emphatic expression a solemn story culled from ancient history or the scriptures. It is an art in which naturalistic details, improvisation, or artistic caprice seem to have been programatically excluded in favor of a higher purpose. As Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) noted in his Discourses, "[Poussin] transports us to the environs of ancient Rome, with all the objects which a literary education makes so precious and interesting to man." Elsewhere, Reynolds observed that the artist's "best performances have a remarkable dryness of manner, which though by no means to be recommended for imitation, yet seems perfectly correspondent to that ancient simplicity which distinguishes his style." It was for the antiquarian erudition and deliberation Poussin brought to subjects of great import, whether biblical, historical, or based on Greek and Roman literary sources, that he was admired by his two principal seventeenth-century biographers—Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1613–1696) and André Félibien, sieur des Avaux et de Javercy (1619–1695)—both of whom knew Poussin personally. Nor is this view contradicted by the many notices we have documenting Poussin's own ideas about art and his sense of high purpose. (How many artists, we might ask, would have had the audacity to instruct an important patron and a steward to the king—Paul Fréart de Chantelou [1609–1694]—on the criteria he should apply to the evaluation of a painting that evidently pleased
him less than one sent by the artist to a rival collector? Poussin even went so far as to suggest that Chantelou’s judgment had been contaminated by “the frequentation of the many insensible and ignorant people that surround you.”

Not that Bellori and Félibien were insensitive to Poussin’s idyllic masterpieces of the 1620s and 1630s, inspired by the poetry of Ovid and Tasso, in which the artist took Titian rather than Raphael as his model. Nor did they ignore altogether his achievement in the realm of landscape painting—the subject of this exhibition. But Poussin’s biographers accepted the conventional hierarchy that considered landscape painting secondary to those high-minded history paintings carried out in the measured, idealizing language of classicism. Landscape interested them as a setting for figural action rather than as an end in itself. Thus, when Bellori expressed admiration for the background of the painting of Christ Healing the Blind (fig. 2), with its combination of city and mountains, it was because the landscape provided suitable embellishment and located the miracle in Jericho. Or so he thought: the actual identification of the city was discussed at length in a conférence at the Académie Royale in 1667, where it was argued by one participant that Capernaum, not Jericho, was intended. That conférence gives an idea of the rigorous analysis, often bordering on pedantry, to which Poussin’s work was subjected, even by his fellow artists in France, who seized the occasion to display their own erudition.

Bellori was no less keen to point out the accoutrements of the Egyptian city and the procession of priests in The Holy Family in Egypt (fig. 3): these were details that had, he knew, been taken from a Roman mosaic in the Temple of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina and that Poussin said he had included “to delight by their novelty and variety, and to show that the
Virgin who is there depicted is in Egypt." It is indicative of the cultural divide that separates Poussin’s seventeenth-century admirers from most museum visitors today that details such as these are now likely to register as the curious products of antiquarianism rather than the mainspring of creativity. Bellori leaves no doubt in the reader’s mind that he admired these landscape backgrounds less for their artistic effectiveness than for the learning they displayed. So we should not be surprised that it is only at the very end of his biography—almost as an afterthought—that the Roman biographer notes, “Nicolas [Poussin] is due great praise for his excellence in landscapes.” We get an idea of just how low landscape stood in his hierarchy when he adds, “Today, in this imitation of the countryside [‘imitation’ connoting mere skill], Gaspard Dughet, the pupil and relative of Poussin, is his successor in fame.” (Dughet [1615–1675], of course, based his career on landscape rather than history painting, and no one would have given him equal status with his famous relation.) Almost in passing, Bellori mentions that for “Michel Passart, chamberlain to his most Christian majesty, [Poussin] painted two landscapes: in one is the fable of Orion, a blind giant, whose size can be judged by [the inclusion of] a little man who guides him standing on his shoulders and by another who gazes at him.” This is, of course, the Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun now in the Metropolitan Museum (cat. 63), a work that—as we shall see—stood at the very center of a re-evaluation of Poussin’s work in the nineteenth century. Bellori then gives his one sustained description of a

Figure 3 Nicolas Poussin, The Holy Family in Egypt. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE-6741)
landscape: the great *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* (cat. 57), painted for Poussin’s most avid Roman patron, the multifaceted Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657). Typically, it is the subject and gesture of Thisbe he remarks on first: the very things that Poussin, in a letter to his friend and fellow painter Jacques Stella (1596–1657), mentioned last, as though there had been a reversal in his mind concerning the hierarchies of academic practice and the action in the foreground had become a subordinate adjunct to the storm. Poussin described the task he had set himself as “imitating as well as I could the effect of a violent wind, of air filled with darkness, with rain, with lightnings and with thunderbolts which fall here and there, not without producing disorder. All the figures to be seen play their part in relation to the weather...” In other words, the figures of Pyramus and Thisbe—notably divorced from the setting Ovid describes in the *Metamorphoses* and thus indicating that the painting is about something other than the mere illustration of a story—functioned as an easily recognizable literary motif, or key, that made Poussin’s pictorial invention more readily accessible. (X-rays demonstrate that the two mythological figures were, in fact, added last and painted over the landscape.) Although Félibien can sometimes sound of one mind with Bellori, he was better informed about the quantity and character of the landscapes Poussin had painted and to whom they were sent in France. (During the time he spent in Rome, between 1647 and 1649, Félibien befriended Poussin and gained access to the artist’s studio, where he watched the great man paint, and he even took up the brush himself.) Moreover, Félibien had a more genuine response to landscapes, as well as a real sense of the importance they played in establishing the dramatic or lyrical tone or mood of a painting. Yet, once again, it is only at the very end of his biography of the artist, in the eighth *Entretien* (or “conversation,” as the text is conceived as a dialogue), that Félibien remarks to his interlocutor, Pymander, “I have often spoken to you of [Poussin’s] intelligence in making all sorts of landscapes, and in rendering them so pleasant and natural that one could say that excepting only Titan there is no other painter who did anything comparable to his.” It is a comment that reminds us of the overriding importance of Titian in the creation of the pastoral or Arcadian landscape, though in Poussin’s case the example of Giovanni Bellini was no less important. Félibien goes on to describe the various effects Poussin was able to achieve in his landscapes, noting the contrast between the *Landscape with a Storm* and the *Landscape with a Calm* (cats. 55, 56), painted for Poussin’s patron and friend Jean Pointel, and transcribing the letter to which reference has already been made regarding the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*. It was the variety of themes that Poussin treated in his landscapes—“even the most extraordinary effects of nature, however difficult to represent”—that really won Félibien’s admiration. So it is not surprising that he dutifully noted how Poussin always included a story or action appropriate to the type of landscape he was treating (Félibien naturally prized the “expressions des passions” as much as Bellori did). Yet Félibien was too sensitive a critic not to be aware that inspiration for a landscape as evocative as that in the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* came from a genuine experience of nature. This emerges quite clearly in his account of a violent storm he had occasion to view from the terrace of the château at Saint-Cloud. “Do you not think it must have been on a similar clash that Monsieur Poussin based that painting which you showed me some while ago in which he portrays a storm like this one?” he has Pymander say. Casual though this observation may seem, it contains the seed of a revolution in judgment.

Reversing the Hierarchy

Not everyone felt as strongly as Bellori and Félibien that the scholar’s cloak of erudition guaranteed artistic greatness, or that a learned viewer had a corner on critical appraisal. As early as 1699, the art critic and theorist Roger de Piles (1635–1709) lauded painting as “une espèce de creation” and landscape as a primary demonstration of this. He thereby set in motion the eventual reversal of the prevailing academic hierarchies. No less boldly, he indicated what he saw as a polarity in Poussin’s production: “However great [Poussin’s] genius was, he was not competent in every aspect of painting; for his love of the antique was so great that it dominated his mind and prevented him from considering his art from every side. I mean to say that he neglected color... Indeed the colors
which we see him use are only general tones instead of imitating the colors of nature, which he saw only rarely: I am talking about his figures, not his landscapes, where he seems to have been more careful to consult nature, the reason being obvious, that since no landscape is represented in classical sculpture, he was obliged to go and look at the real thing.\(^\text{[17]}\)

It is not difficult to sympathize with de Piles’s distinction between Poussin’s conflicting sources of inspiration—the world of antiquity on the one hand and, on the other, nature—and the results he attained.

How many viewers today, contemplating that master-piece of figurative arrangement and expository invention, *Eliezer and Rebecca* (fig. 4), find their eyes wandering beyond the densely grouped, statuesque women in the foreground that so captivated Le Brun, Ingres, and Picasso and past the sunlit city in the middle distance, its towering buildings silhouetted against a cloud-streaked sky, toward the distant landscape so hauntingly evocative of the Sabine Hills? A landscape, incidentally, that Bellori passed over in total silence, though Félibien remarked appreciatively on its effect.\(^\text{[18]}\)

The same is true of *Christ Healing the Blind* (fig. 2)—a work copied by the twelve-year-old Jacques-Louis David—in which Poussin has contrasted the friezelike figural composition with, at the extreme right, a vertical strip of an unobstructed landscape view that seems to celebrate the pleasures of sight soon to be restored to the two supplicants (at least this was the opinion of the painter Sébastien Bourdon [1616–1671] in the *conférence* at the Académie Royale, cited above). Seated on a mound is a male figure—significantly, he appears to be blind—who turns his head toward the unfolding miracle. A meandering path leads into a softly lit middle distance where two figures walk along the banks of a river. (The inclusion of someone who reacts—a surrogate for the actual viewer of the painting?—and others oblivious of the event staged in the foreground is a staple of Poussin’s approach to narration and a comment on the continuous flow of life.) As we have
seen, even Bellori was captivated, and, in his introduction to
the seventh *conférence* at the Académie Royale, Félibien
developed a memorable description to the landscape: “As the
sun has not yet risen very high above the horizon, the rocks
and buildings cast long shadows; and the trees and the foot of
the mountains appear still heavy with that cool vapor that
rises in the mornings like a light smoke.”99 It is one of those
passages—others will be cited as we proceed—that alert us to
the kinds of enraptured responses Poussin’s landscapes were
intended to evoke.

In the noble *Holy Family with Six Putti* (fig. 5) it is again
the landscape, with the glassy surface of a lake backed by the
cubic forms of a villa complex, rather than the Raphaelesque
figure group, that seduces us. Similarly, although the composi-
tions of *The Ecstasy of Saint Paul* (fig. 6) and *The Assump-
tion of the Virgin* (Louvre) are dominated by compact figure
groups ascending to heaven, the perspective structure in the
first leads our gaze ineluctably past an exquisite still life of
a book and sword—the emblems of Saint Paul—and into a
distant landscape that even Corot must have admired, so
strongly does it convey a specific quality of time and place.20
In the latter work, the dangling feet of an angel, ingeniously
crossed one over the other, draw our attention to a strip of
landscape along the bottom edge of the picture in which a
Figure 6 Nicolas Poussin, The Ecstasy of Saint Paul. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7288)
series of hills frame a turreted city, tinted by the blue atmosphere and set against the light-streaked horizon. Janis Bell has called our attention to the importance to Poussin of the writings on optics and color by the Theatine painter-theorist Matteo Zaccocini (1574–1650) for these extraordinary atmospheric effects, but this knowledge only adds to our understanding of Poussin’s intention to re-create a truthful visual experience, one based on an understanding of the processes of nature and not mere appearance.\footnote{21}

**Toward the Sublime**

These pictures all date from after Poussin’s return from Paris to Rome in 1642, and it is in the last two decades of his life that his interest in landscape painting—present from the very beginning and abundantly recorded in his drawings—crescendos to the incomparable masterpieces *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (cat. 63), *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* (fig. 44), and the paintings of the Four Seasons (see figs. 42, 45, cats. 66, 67). William Hazlitt’s novel essay on Poussin, published in 1821, took Poussin’s *Orion* as its point of departure, and it is to Hazlitt—a failed painter but gifted critic and essayist—that we owe perhaps the most eloquent assessment of the importance of Poussin’s landscape paintings: one that reversed the old hierarchies that held landscape painting to be decidedly inferior to history painting or, at best, its handmaid. It might, indeed, be said that Hazlitt’s short essay does for Poussin what Walter Pater’s later did for Botticelli, borrowing from but ever so subtly subverting then-current assessments of the artist, and establishing a new lens for appreciating his achievement as an artist and devotee of nature rather than as the prize student of antiquity and the essential fixture of French academic tradition.\footnote{22}

In asserting the superiority of landscape over history painting, Hazlitt was expressing a peculiarly English point of view, though at the same time in France the painter-theorist Jean-Baptiste Deperthes (1761–1833) was arguing the case for landscape painting and the central position of Poussin.\footnote{23} It is, in any case, remarkable how many of Poussin’s landscapes crossed the Channel and entered British collections in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These include, among others, the pendant landscapes of a storm and a calm (cats. 55, 56), the *Landscape with Saint John on Patmos* (cat. 36), the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* (cat. 57), *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (cat. 63), the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (cat. 44), and the great, twin landscapes with the story of Phoebinus (see fig. 38, cat. 43)—a remarkable testament to British taste.

Yet Hazlitt did not question the intellectual aspect of Poussin’s work. That was too much a part of the artist’s legacy to be contested. As early as about 1627—barely three years after the artist had arrived in Rome—the papal physician-connoisseur Giulio Mancini remarked on Poussin’s “literary erudition” and his capacity to express any fable or story in paint.\footnote{24} Years later, when Poussin’s European reputation was well established, we know that there was always a group of admirers ready to listen to the artist, who ended his carefully regulated day with an evening stroll in what is now the Piazza di Spagna. Bellori, who was present at these *passeggiate*, remarks that “his words and ideas were so just and well ordered that they seemed the product of study and reflection rather than conceived on the spur of the moment.”\footnote{25} And Gian Lorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) was simply giving memorable testimony to a widely held opinion when, after his examination of the *Landscape with the Ashes of Phoebinus* (cat. 43), he pointed to his head and declared to Chantelou, his cicerone in Paris, that Poussin was an artist who “works from up here.”\footnote{26} (Chantelou kept a careful diary of the sculptor’s visit and recorded his responses to the monuments and collections he saw in the French capital.) The great sculptor and architect was certainly referring to the antiquarian knowledge Poussin employed in treating this recondite subject taken from Plutarch and not to the landscape that justifies its presence in this exhibition. As we have seen, this view was not universal: it is as a landscape that the picture is referred to by Félibien, while François Fénélon, archbishop of Cambrai (1651–1715), in an imaginary dialogue about the picture written about 1695 or 1696 and published in 1731, has the ancient painter Parrhasius observe that “the embellishment of a naturally beautiful countryside makes a happier image than all the magnificences that art can invent.”\footnote{27}

Yet even the comments of Félibien and Fénélon are no preparation for Hazlitt, who shifted fundamentally our
experience of the artist’s paintings. In an age when the mask-like faces of classical sculpture had begun to seem mere ciphers of emotion, and the rhetorical gestures advocated by Cicero and Quintilian in their treatises on oratory appeared stiff and artificial rather than communicative, he declared without hesitation that “the faces of Poussin want natural expression, as his figures want grace; but the backgrounds of his historical compositions can scarcely be surpassed.”

What Hazlitt emphasized was what we might think of as the proto-romantic Poussin: Poussin the painter of nature and master of the sublime. It was a view he shared with Wordsworth, who, Hazlitt informs us, deeply admired Poussin’s landscapes, “pointing out the unity of design that pervades the superintending mind, the imaginative principle that brings all to bear on the same end; and declaring he would not give a rush for any landscape that did not express the time of day, the climate, the period of the world it was meant to illustrate, or had not this character of wholeness in it.” Of Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun—a picture that, incidentally, had been owned by Reynolds—Hazlitt wrote, “Nothing was ever more finely conceived or done. It breathes the spirit of the morning; its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, waiting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles; the whole is, like the principal figure in it, ‘a forerunner of the dawn.’ The same atmosphere tinges and imbues every object, the same dull light ‘shadowy sets off’ the face of nature: one feeling of vastness, of strangeness, and of primeval forms pervades the painter’s canvas, and we are thrown back upon the first integrity of things. This great and learned man might be said to see nature through the glass of time.”

It is difficult to believe that Poussin himself would have found fault with this idea of nature seen through the glass of time, for his landscapes speak the poetic language of the ancients—Virgil in particular—even when the subject is his own invention (on this, see Willibald Sauerländer’s essay in this catalogue). The Horatian analogy of painting to poetry—“ut pictura poesis”—had been a staple of humanist critical thought since the fifteenth century, but Hazlitt, not content with the analogy with ancient literary sources, drew a specific analogy between Poussin and a contemporary poet. Typically, he did not select a French figure, as we might have expected him to do. Whereas the eighteenth-century writer the abbé Jean-Baptiste Du Bos drew a comparison between Corneille and Poussin to illustrate the expressive limits of painting, and later critics, such as Paul Desjardins, Roger Fry, and Anthony Blunt, have seen analogies of approach between the art of Poussin and the theater of Racine and Corneille, they were mostly concerned with the artist’s figurative compositions. Hazlitt’s interest was specifically in the landscapes. Moreover, he sought analogies that encompassed aesthetic weaknesses as well as strengths, and a writer whose work answered to the requisites of the sublime—John Milton. Poussin, he observed, “was among painters (more than any one else) what Milton was among poets. There is in both something of the same pedantry, the same stiffness, the same elevation, the same grandeur, the same mixture of art and nature, the same richness of borrowed material, the same unity of character.” He then identified the very mainspring of Poussin’s art: “At his touch, words start up into images, thought becomes things. He clothes a dream, a phantom, with form and colour and the wholesome attributes of reality. His art is a second nature; not a different one.” (The last comment may be seen as an expansion on the seventeenth-century notion of landscape painted in le stile hééroique, showing nature “not as we see her casually, every day, [but] represented as we imagine her to be.”)

In short, Hazlitt refashioned Poussin for an audience for whom the classical/allegorical subject matter of his paintings held no intrinsic interest, and certainly did not necessarily elevate his canvases to a higher realm, but who could respond to the pictures as the products of a prodigious imagination re-creating a vision of nature. Writing in 1932, Roger Fry, the great promoter of Cézanne and Post-Impressionism in England, was surely dependent on Hazlitt for his recognition that, as with Milton, “Poussin’s feeling for nature was intense in its restrained and contemplative lyricism.” And it is no surprise that Kenneth Clark, in his 1949 survey of European landscape painting, so rich in critical insights, quoted from Hazlitt in his appreciation of Poussin’s contribution: “Poussin ‘could give to the scenery of his heroic fables that unimpaired look of original nature, full, solid, large, luxuriant, teeming with life and power.’ And it is this sensuous grasp of organic as well as abstract form which makes Poussin’s latest landscapes so inexhaustibly satisfying.” At a crucial moment in
the changing tides of taste, Hazlitt identified the painter of
nature beneath the academic’s robes: the painter with an
almost mystical reverence for the past that extended beyond
its architectural monuments and fragmentary sculpture to
the very soil of Italy; 42 the artist whose lucidly composed
landscapes—“Nature . . . as we imagine her to be”—inspired
Cézanne to declare that he wanted to “redo Poussin over
again according to nature.” 41

Hazlitt’s vision is only the most eloquent signal of a
decisive shift, on both sides of the Channel, in the way
Poussin’s art was viewed. 42 His declaration that Winter: The
Flood (fig. 42)—one of four landscapes commissioned by
the young duc de Richelieu, grandnephew of the famous card-
inal—was “the finest historical landscape in the world” was
already widely shared (alas, the picture was deemed too frag-
ile to travel to this exhibition). By the early nineteenth cen-
tury, Winter: The Flood was the most admired and influential
of all of Poussin’s landscapes. “It’s no longer painting, it’s the
distress of nature herself. . . . It is no longer the product of art,
the work of the brush; it’s a fiction, a dream, . . .” declared
Baron Dominique Vivant Denon (1747–1825) in a revealing
essay published in 1821, only a few years after Géricault had
made a copy, now lost, of Poussin’s painting and had com-
pleted his own Scene of the Deluge (fig. 7). 43 Constable
counted it among the “four works marking four memorable
points in the history of landscape” (the others were Titian’s
Martyrdom of Saint Peter Martyr, Rubens’s Landscape with a
Rainbow [fig. 8], and Rembrandt’s The Mill). 44 Indeed, he
went so far as to declare that in this work Poussin “has sur-
passed every other painter who has attempted the subject.” 45
By 1853, in an essay on Poussin, Delacroix referred to the pic-
ture simply as “le fameux Déluge.” 46 This kind of admiration,
bordering on awe, was motivated by a set of values very dif-
ferent from those that animated the “long and learned” dis-
cussions about these four paintings of the seasons, as
recorded by Louis-Henri de Lamétrie, comte de Brienne,
upon delivery of the paintings to the duc de Richelieu. 47 We
get a premonition of the lens through which Poussin’s art
would be viewed in the nineteenth century in Reynolds’s
judgment that “his eye was always steadily fixed on the
Sublime,” 48 and in Diderot’s exclamation in his Salon of
1767: “Note how Poussin is sublime and affecting when, at

Figure 7 Théodore Géricault
(1791–1824). Scene of the
Deluge. Musée du Louvre,
Paris, Département des
Peintures (R.F. 1950-40)
the side of a smiling rustic scene he draws my eyes to a tomb on which I read: *Et in Arcadia ego*. Note how terrible he is when, in another work, he shows me a woman encircled by a snake that’s dragging her into the water!⁴⁹ (This is the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* [cat. 44]: Diderot misread the gender of the victim, but he probably knew the composition from Étienne Baudet’s engraving of 1701 [fig. 85], in which the figure could be misinterpreted as a female with trailing hair.)⁵⁰ What was crucial to Diderot’s response was Poussin’s depiction of the unexpected: the encounter with death even in Arcadia or in an otherwise idyllic landscape. (Interestingly, in the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, the figures of the frightened man running and the alarmed woman were, once again, painted over in the completed landscape, and they do not appear in the related drawings.)

What we find emerging alongside the traditional image of Poussin the academician—a term that, as time passed, increasingly carried with it an aura of disapprobation—is Poussin the proto-romantic, a *peintre d’esprit* whose brush was able to convey the awesome power of nature as well as evoke the ruined monuments of antiquity. In short, someone whom the young Turner, committed to the idea of sublimely poetic painting, attempted to emulate in his apocalyptic *Fifth Plague of Egypt* (fig. 9). For Turner, Poussin’s compositions commanded admiration for their “grandeur and sublimity by simple forms and lines.”⁵¹ (Even before his visit to the Louvre in 1802, in the company of Hazlitt, Turner had had occasion to study Poussin’s *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, then in the collection of Lord Ashburnham, and, in about 1798–99, he drew a copy of the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, which then belonged to Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn.)

Walter Rex has acutely analyzed the character of this transformation of taste in the contrasting responses to Poussin’s *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* by
Fénelon, writing about 1695, some thirty years after the artist’s death, and Diderot, writing a century later. 52 Fénelon saw in the picture a mastery of psychological description through gesture and expression, enhanced by the contrast of the gruesome subject in the foreground with the idyllic background landscape. 53 “As a Classicist,” explains Rex, “Fénelon was not interested in creating tensions, but in resolving them. Naturally, [in describing the picture] he began with the stream and the snake, thus eliminating from the start any possibility of suspense, and he offset the stark, terrifying drama of the foreground by emotions of peaceful consolation in the background. […] Diderot goes in the opposite direction, and he proceeds further, increasing the drama to the point of involving the viewer, too, in its horror. The images function performatively.” 54 We recognize in Diderot’s engaged but ultimately manipulative—and highly theatrical—analysis the seed for a brand of modern scholarship that approaches Poussin’s paintings less as carefully wrought compositions incorporating specific aesthetic and theoretical ideas, as laid out by the artist himself, than as “a text on which successive readings are deposited. These readings displace the painting’s elements, modify their relationships, create zones of intense visibility and also blind spots, blanks; they make a given element stand out or fade away, take on more or less importance, in relation to the other elements.” 55

But this is to get ahead of ourselves. It is over the course of the nineteenth century that two complementary views of Poussin took shape. In his subject, or history, pictures he continued to be revered as the founder of French painting and the high priest of classicism. But increasingly he was
also admired as a painter of nature whose works could be appreciated with little or no literary knowledge. (Ingres naturally studied Poussin's history paintings closely, but he also owned a copy of the Landscape with Three Monks [cat. 53, now in Belgrade].) Once again, it is a painter—Constable—who reminds us of just how sensitive to the effects of nature Poussin was. He described the Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain (cat. 38) in the following terms: “There is a noble N[icolas] Poussin at the Academy, a solemn, deep, still summer’s noon, with large umbrageous trees, and a man washing his feet at a fountain near them. Through the breaks in the trees are mountains, and the clouds collecting about them with the most enchanting effects possible.” He added, “It cannot be too much to say that this landscape is full of religious and moral feeling.” Constable was of course referring to the effect of the painting on the viewer rather than to any hypothetical subject. Subjective response had displaced critical approbation.

The Problem of Interpretation

That Poussin’s landscapes give an added dimension to the conventional image of him as an erudite artist inspired by literary texts is attested by his contemporaries. The printmaker Abraham Bosse (1602–1676), writing in 1649, found in them the proof of Poussin’s universality, notably declaring that—unlike his history paintings—they were done “par divertissement”: “I have even seen landscapes that he made for pleasure, that should hold the first rank for this kind of work.”

In other words, Bosse thought of the landscapes as casual, more personal works. Fénélon tells us that the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake—a work central to Poussin’s critical fortunes as well as to our understanding of his imaginative processes—is based on no specific literary source but is a caprice. (“C’est un caprice,” he has the artist explain to his interlocutor, none other than Leonardo da Vinci, whose Treatise on Painting Poussin illustrated.) Fénélon understood the work as the unique product of the painter’s imagination, an assertion of Poussin’s ability to compete with poets when it came to fashioning a subject worthy of depiction, in this case the unexpected confrontation with death in an Arcadian landscape. It is significant that Félébien contrasted the anxiety this landscape inspired in the viewer with the feeling of repose and solitude he experienced from the Landscape with Three Monks. Poussin consciously sought such differences through his mastery of the modes, “by which [those fine old Greeks] produced these marvelous effects.” Félébien evidently saw a subversive element in this desire to inspire an emotional response, for he has Pymander comment that “it would be dangerous if painting had the same power as music to move the emotions; excellent painters would be in a position to create havoc.” These observations should caution us against the temptation to explain every detail in Poussin’s landscapes in semiotic terms or with reference to some recondite text, though there can be no doubt that a literary source—or, in the case of the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake, an actual incident—often provided Poussin with his inspiration or point of departure (what in his time would have been called his concetto).

It is Poussin’s particular ability to build out from a story or incident through a process of considered generalization and association that distinguishes his landscapes. As Blunt has remarked, “He forged a technique by which he could express in his landscapes a series of different moods, each distinguishable from the other, and each clearly related to the particular theme which he was illustrating.” There is the “grave and severe” style—what Poussin, in a much-cited letter, refers to as the Dorian mode—of the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion (cat. 43), in which the dark shadows engulfing the foreground figures make nature complicit in the noble deed of Phocion’s widow. There is also the sublime style—in Poussin’s words, “this vehement, furious, and highly severe Mode that strikes the spectator with awe”—of the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57); Winter: The Flood (fig. 42); and the Landscape with a Storm (cat. 55), suggestive, in Blunt’s words, of “the overwhelming force of nature and man’s impotence in the face of it.” (Painted as a pendant to the Landscape with a Calm [cat. 56]—a work conforming to Poussin’s Hypolydian mode—the Landscape with a Storm served by its contrasting mood to emphasize the capriciousness of nature.) Then there is the inappropriately idyllic calm of the Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice (cat. 47), in which a viper, emerging from an ominously
advancing shadow, surprises Eurydice and destroys the pervading harmony. Is this a combination of the Hypolydian with the Lydian mode, “most proper for mournful subjects”? And there is the rustic eloquence of the Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun and the Landscape with Hercules and Cactus (fig. 44), suggestive—to quote again from Blunt—of “the richness of nature in its primitive, untamed state.”

The reason Poussin’s landscapes have inspired so much learned interpretation is precisely because they suggest so much more than they ostensibly depict. In this lies their real claim to be considered silent poetry: in them an allusive visual language is used to move painting beyond the prosaic task of mere illustration. In a work such as The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus (cat. 58), Poussin transforms the subject—which Bellori tells us was taken from Ovid’s Metamorphoses—into an allegory of nature by meaningfully juxtaposing and drawing out contrasts between two otherwise disconnected stories. One he sets within a lush, vine-covered grotto seen against the rising sun (in the preparatory drawing [cat. 59], Apollo was shown in his chariot), while behind the expiring figures of Echo and Narcissus, whose forms have already become part of the rocky foreground, is a distant sunlit vista. The creative process at work was less dependent on profound learning than on a supremely poetic frame of mind. Of course, through his learned acquaintances and friends Poussin had easy access to any necessary literary material and advice, but the key texts were also readily available: in Natale Conti’s handbook of mythology, in which the myths are interpreted in terms of natural history and moral philosophy, and in a French edition of Philostratus’s Imagines. In a painting such as this one, Poussin seems not only to explore the parameters of artistic creativity as conceived in the seventeenth century, but also, not unlike Leonardo da Vinci, to embrace the complexity of nature itself, seeking to understand its governing principles even as he resigns himself to its unpredictability—those fateful storms of life to which he refers in his later correspondence. Given Poussin’s interest in optics, it should come as no surprise that in The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa he showed his awareness of the difference between reflection, in the mirrored image of the nymphs receiving the infant Bacchus, and transparency and refraction, in the way we see pebbles and the limbs of the nymphs in the foreground through the water’s transparent surface. (Poussin studied the effect in the preliminary drawing [cat. 59]).

For this combined interest in classical culture and optics, Poussin was indebted to his association with Cassiano dal Pozzo, who was as avidly interested in the natural sciences as in classical archaeology and art. (Poussin’s incorporation of the science of optics in his mature landscape paintings with mythological subjects should surprise us no more than it would in the work of Leonardo da Vinci, a copy of whose treatise on painting Cassiano owned.) The secret of these haunting pictures thus resides in a poetics of painting that employs, on the one hand, an allegorical language permeated by classical literature and antiquarian knowledge and, on the other, a mode of representation informed by an interest in vision and the natural sciences. It is this that has made these works as important to students of cultural history as to painters.

Grappling with Poussin’s art is no easy task, for Poussin intended that they should both seduce the eye and engage the mind (in a letter of March 1, 1665, Poussin declared that the object of painting was “délectation”). If we are to do justice to their complexity, we must remember that their compositional details and their expressive and formal qualities grow out of the artist’s engagement with his subject matter. The way in which they exemplify his theoretical ideas is perhaps most eloquently articulated in an influential essay by Marc Fumaroli. Yet, after more than half a century of intense scholarship elucidating the culture of Poussin and his stature as a peintre-philosophe—indeed, as the peintre-philosophe—it is worth recalling the sage observation of Denis Mahon, one of the most eloquent defenders of Poussin as a painter: “With the continued appearance of more and more evidence which confirms, in matters of detail, the accepted characterization of Poussin as a learned painter, that concept becomes paradoxically less and less convincing as a comprehensive generalization: that is to say, in so far as it tends to become mistaken (even though tacitly) for a kind of ‘explanation’ of one of history’s outstanding artistic phenomena. For Poussin was, of course, not a philosopher whose medium was paint, but a painter of the highest rank in whose art there can often be discerned (particularly by comparison with that of most other painters) an element
which can loosely be termed ‘philosophical’.” No less appositely, in his groundbreaking article on the literary sources Poussin employed in painting the Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun, Ernst Gombrich observed: “It constitutes the true achievement of Poussin’s genius that he succeeded in turning a literary curiosity into a living vision, that his picture expresses in pictorial terms what it signifies in terms of allegory.”

In a radical, revisionist article intended to clear the table for a fresh look at the artist in the twenty-first century, H.-W. van Helsdingen courageously reminds us that, after decades of arduous research, and despite the testimony of the artist’s letters and those who knew him, the landscapes still pose basic questions about Poussin and his art. In seeking answers, scholarship has sometimes pursued its own course—as though the paintings might be diminished as works of art if they were not discovered that they were not, after all, quite the monuments to arcane erudition they have sometimes been supposed to be. In this endeavor Van Helsdingen has bravely contested the multilayered interpretations of such outstanding scholars as Panofsky, Blunt, Bätschmann, and Cropper and Dempsey—whose contributions have shaped our view of Poussin as much as the testimony of his contemporaries. “Disregarding a plethora of complicated interpretations,” writes Van Helsdingen, “we can return to the essential question: how did Poussin treat the literary material for his compositions, and what were his intentions with the landscape genre?” The answer, he boldly proposes, “is undoubtedly to be found not in Poussin’s learning but in a better understanding of his working methods,” by which he means identifying the ways Poussin recasts his literary sources as compelling visual images. The emphasis is shifted from detailed iconographic study to the seventeenth-century notion of invention and creativity, and to Poussin’s own conception of novelty, which according to Bellori consisted not in “choosing a subject that has never been seen before but upon a good and novel arrangement and expression, thanks to which the subject, though in itself ordinary and worn, becomes new and singular.” We need not agree with Van Helsdingen’s radical—some might call it naive—revisionism to appreciate the invitation to return to the magic of the pictures themselves and to Poussin’s creative imagination.

The Two Faces of Poussin’s Art

In this discussion, it is worth recalling that Poussin himself bequeathed to us two very different images of himself in his two self-portraits, and that the recipients of these two portraits collected very different kinds of pictures by their favored artist. The more famous portrait was painted in 1650 and was presented to Paul Fréart de Chantelou (see fig. 1). The other was completed the preceding year and given to Jean Pointel (fig. 10). It is not necessary to embrace the conceitful, heady language of Louis Marin’s tour-de-force essay on these two portraits, in which interpretation verges on performance and words and concepts are juggled with almost breathtaking sophistica(tion), to appreciate his assertion that in these two portraits we encounter “…two modal variations of the expression of self, of the painter-subject, in which what is at stake is nothing less than ‘the artifice of painting,’ as Poussin says, that is, painting itself.” What needs to be emphasized is that the two portraits reveal different aspects of Poussin’s character and that these aspects find expression in his history and landscape paintings.

In one portrait we see embodied the painter familiar from so many textbooks: formal and stern faced. (Or, in the words of André Gide, “autoritaire et quelque peu bougon.”) On one of the canvases carefully stacked behind the artist is shown a personification of Painting wearing a crown embellished with the eye of discrimination and embraced by the outstretched arms of Friendship. The framed canvases—the largest one seen turned against the wall so that the back of the frame and stretcher are visible—create a geometric grid firmly locking the portrait in place and emphasizing the artist’s penetrating gaze. This is the painting Poussin sent to Chantelou—the friend and patron he so assiduously lectured on the Greek modes and chastised for allowing his taste to be corrupted. Conceived as a sort of visual disquisition on their friendship—scholars have drawn analogies with Michel de Montaigne’s essay De l’Amitié—it was, according to Poussin, the more successful of the two portraits as well as the better likeness (“le plus ressemblant”). The factor of resemblance is underscored by the inscription declaring the picture to be an “effigies,” or effigy—a likeness of the artist in his fifty-sixth year.
In the other portrait, destined for his “bon ami” Jean Pointel—a merchant-banker rather than a figure at court86—Poussin’s head is simply framed by a rectangular tablet and carved garland of laurels held by putti decorating a classical funerary relief (a cippus). A contrast is thereby established between the commemorative function of the portrait and what Leon Battista Alberti, in his treatise on painting, referred to as the “divine power” of painting to “make the absent present (as they say of friendship).”87 Through his talent, Poussin represents himself as a living presence, as though engaged in informal conversation about art, as indicated by the drawing implement and bound album he holds.88 The collar of his shirt is slightly wrinkled, his hair casually parted, and the diamond ring that he wears in Chantelou’s portrait to symbolize constancy or virtue has been removed. His angled head is animated by an intelligent but not overbearing gaze. The portrait suggests a relationship altogether less formal and less abstracted than that conveyed in Chantelou’s.89 (Would that we possessed Poussin’s correspondence with Pointel so that we could better judge his friendship with this key patron, who in 1654 was an executor of his will.)

That each portrait presented a carefully constructed image of Poussin’s character, revealed individually to each friend, receives support from the very different collections of the two men. We think of Chantelou, above all, as the owner of the second series of the Seven Sacraments—unquestionably Poussin’s most arduous and magnificent endeavor and one of the great landmarks of Western art. (After examining one of them, Bernini declared that it “made the same effect as a beautiful sermon that one listens to attentively, and then one leaves without having said a thing, but the effect is felt within.”)90 Equally significant is the fact that Chantelou owned not a single landscape by the artist. By contrast, of Pointel’s astonishing collection of twenty-one paintings by Poussin, nine were landscapes, including the pendant Landscape with a Storm and Landscape with a Calm (cats. 55, 56), the Landscape with Polyphemus (fig. 36), the Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice (cat. 47), the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44), and possibly the Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain (cat. 38).91 (Of the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake Hazlitt was later to comment, “Even inanimate and dumb things speak a language all their own. His snakes, the messengers of fate, are inspired with human intellect.”)92 Moreover, several of Poussin’s subject or history pictures painted for Pointel featured broad expanses of landscape: the Holy Family with St. Anne and St. Elizabeth (National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin), as well as the Eliezer and Rebecca (fig. 4) and The Finding of Moses (cat. 41), in the latter of which is the haunting reflection of the sun on the water and dark clouds gathering around a mountain summit. (Fénelon noted that Poussin included such effects not for symbolic reasons, but to demonstrate his mastery of light.) Nor does it omit antiquarian details, such as the Egyptian buildings and hippopotamus hunt in the background, derived from the same ancient mosaic in Palestrina the artist later used for The Holy Family in Egypt (fig. 3).

So jealous was Chantelou when he saw The Finding of Moses that, in the fall of 1647, he accused Poussin of valuing Pointel’s friendship more than his own—another notice that should alert us to the competitive and possibly very different relationship the artist had with these two major patrons. Certainly, Chantelou owned nothing similar to any of these paintings, but then, unlike Pointel, Chantelou would never have had the genial idea of suggesting to Poussin that he paint a picture filled with young women of varying kinds of beauty, on the model of a work by Guido Reni. The result of this suggestion was the incomparable Eliezer and Rebecca.93 It has been proposed, plausibly, that the idea for the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake also originated with Jean Pointel (Pointel was in close touch with Poussin in Rome between 1645 and 1647 as well as later, in 1654 and 1655).94 By comparison, we might recall that Chantelou’s Seven Sacraments series began as a request for a copy of the series Poussin was completing for Cassiano dal Pozzo: it was the artist who, after much hesitation and haggling, proposed making an independent series “painted with the same care and pleasure” as the first. That this decision resulted in such densely conceived works seems more a testament to Poussin’s ambition than to his affection for Chantelou, whose responses, as we have seen, could not be counted on, whereas the artist was keenly aware of the scrutiny to which his works would be subjected in Paris by his fellow artists. The very special nature of Pointel’s activity as a collector and his admiration for
Figure 10 Nicolas Poussin, Self-Portrait. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (Inv. 1488)
Poussin’s work is indicated by the eighty drawings he owned by the master, complemented by an equal number of drawings by Annibale Carracci (1560–1609) and forty-four by Domenichino (1581–1641). (One wonders how many of these may have been purchased in Rome on the advice of Poussin.) In view of the above, it is worth questioning whether one ought to accept at face value Poussin’s declaration to Chantelou that he would receive the finer of the two portraits (“le meilleur et le plus ressemblant”), as so many scholars have done. Was Poussin merely attempting to forestall the kind of jealous reaction Chantelou had expressed about Pointel’s Finding of Moses? Here is what we know. In 1647 Chantelou had expressed his desire to have someone do a portrait of Poussin, but the artist was unhappy with the available portraitists in Rome. No progress is reported until May 1649, when Poussin unexpectedly writes that he will send the portrait when it is done. A month later he writes to inform Chantelou of the surprising fact that he has “made one of my portraits and soon I will begin the other.” In other words, at some unspecified point he had agreed to paint two portraits for his two most important French patrons. Can there really be any question that the request that transformed the situation was Pointel’s for a self-portrait rather than merely a portrait of Poussin? In fact, we know Pointel was in touch with Poussin during this time (the artist had received a letter from Pointel prior to May 2, 1649). We can safely accept, then, that from the outset the Berlin portrait was destined for Pointel and reflects the character of their relationship, just as the far more formal and programmatic portrait in Paris reflects Poussin’s relationship with Chantelou as it emerges from their correspondence. Viewed in this light, the portraits offer remarkable insight into Poussin’s art, his complex character, his relations with his patrons, and the way these factors find expression in his art.

Landscape as a Reflection of Personality

Claire Pace has wisely drawn attention to the ambiguity that Poussin’s character presents, noting that

[he] came to be revered, almost canonized, both during his lifetime and immediately afterwards, as the
doyen of painters, the “new Raphael,” the “Apelles of our century”; the embodiment, in fact, of the perfect painter, and of a correspondingly noble and virtuous way of life. [. . .] But present also are strong elements of conflict, of struggle, of fear and tension—in addition to the romantic exuberance or quasi-baroque complexities of the early years—which persist throughout his career and are exemplified in the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake and in the Deluge [Winter: The Flood]. The serenity is precious precisely because it is hard-won; the reminder [that] mortality stands even in Arcadia (“la felicità soggetta alla morte”) and a snake lurks in the most apparently calm of landscapes. Both aspects of his art, the stormy and the serene, are valid, and neither should be denied, just as the very human voice of a man in anguish may be distinguished, tersely and movingly, in some of the comments in the last letters of Poussin.95

How remarkable that her observations on Poussin’s hard-to-read character should take their analogy from three landscapes. But then, is it not in the landscapes—particularly those of the last two decades of his career—that we seem to be closest to Poussin, or at least to Poussin as he presented himself to his “bon ami” Pointel in the Berlin portrait?

Aside from Chantelou and Pointel, who else owned Poussin’s landscapes?96 Through the silk trade, Pointel developed business associations in Lyon, and Jacques Thuillier and Claude Mignot have commented on the remarkable fact that a circle of Poussin’s patrons either were from Lyon or had connections with that city: Jacques Serisier, the owner of the two Phocion landscapes, and the Lyonnais banker Lumague, who owned the Landscape with Diogenes (cat. 62).97 There is also Poussin’s friend the Lyonnais-born painter Jacques Stella, who owned The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nyssa and an Exposing of Moses with an extensive landscape setting (fig. 11). It was to Stella that Poussin described his intentions in painting the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe. Thanks to the archival work of Schnapper and Massat, we can construct a reasonably good image of Michel Passart, owner of seven works by Poussin, including four landscapes: the Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun, the Landscape
with a Woman Washing Her Feet (Vertumnus and Pomona?) (cat. 54), and two compositions no longer identifiable—one showing “the Virgin in a landscape,” the other “representing the four seasons.” More than half of Passart’s collection consisted of landscapes, among which were copies after Poussin together with a large number of landscapes by other artists, including a “large landscape by Rubens.” Passart was in Rome in 1643 and was a client of Claude Lorrain (1604/5–1682) as well as of Poussin. He was also art adviser to the prince de Condé and was present for the discussion of Poussin’s Four Seasons (he preferred Winter: The Flood). Interestingly, he was related to Lumagne through his mother.

For the most part, however, we know little about Poussin’s personal relations with the owners of his mature landscapes, for example the young duc de Richelieu, who commissioned the Four Seasons—which were sold to Louis XIV together with nine other canvases by Poussin. The person who commissioned the astonishing Landscape with Three Monks (cat. 53)—whose theme was aptly characterized by Félibien as “La Solitude”—is still uncertain because of the way paintings changed hands. Is there sufficient basis for the notion that at least some of the pictures grow out of political sympathies, shared by Poussin and his patrons, for the Fronde, the civil war that broke out in 1648 over Cardinal Mazarin’s arrest of the leaders of the French parliament? Tod Olson has interpreted the landscapes as paintings of refuge, works that gave solace to those forced into exile. By contrast, Sheila McTighe has argued for associating the storm scenes—tempests of
Fortune—more broadly with the ideology of libertinage (clandestine freethinking). That Poussin’s landscapes provided their owners with a sense of respite from their daily occupations, whether political or financial, and may also have caused them to reflect on the vicissitudes of life—possibly even with a sense of Stoic detachment and resignation—goes without saying. But that they carried any coded political message remains highly speculative. The genre of landscape painting traces its origins back to Pliny’s descriptions of the decoration of ancient Roman villas, and Poussin’s landscapes with secular themes belong to a well-established culture of leisure, or otium, just as his landscapes with religious themes relate to the complementary tradition of religious retreat for devotional practice. (These traditions are treated by Claire Pace in her essay in this catalogue.) Who does not recall those still-intact rooms in Palazzo Doria and Palazzo Colonna in Rome decorated with landscape vistas, some by Poussin’s brother-in-law, Gaspard Dughet? What was the effect of Pointel’s collection of Poussin’s landscapes when installed in his quarters in the parish of Saint-Germain-l’Auxerrois? Were they shown in a way that encouraged individual study—similar to the way Chantelou displayed his series of the Seven Sacraments in a special room, with each painting kept behind a curtain? We can’t say because, by the time the inventory was drawn up in 1660, Pointel had moved to more modest accommodations and his collection was kept—stored might be a more accurate description—in a small room, with many of the frames removed. We do know that Passart displayed all of his landscapes together, regardless of authorship. Similarly, we know that the Landscape with Saint Jerome (cat. 30) was part of a series of more than twenty-four landscapes that Philip IV installed in a long, narrow gallery in the Buen Retiro—his richly decorated palace that began life as a small royal apartment, or retreat, attached to the monastery of San Jerónimo in Madrid. In such settings, coded readings seem unlikely. Like all of Poussin’s paintings, these were intended to delight the eyes and engage the minds of those with the leisure and the cultivation and financial means to own them. (Knowingly or not, modern art historians as well as visitors to this exhibition are the fortunate heirs of this legacy of privileged viewing and reflection.)

As for Poussin’s landscapes in Italian collections, the pendant ones with Saint John on Patmos and Saint Matthew belonged to Giovanni Maria Roscioli (1609–1644), who was closely associated with the Barberini family and who in 1643 became chamberlain to Pope Urban VIII (Roscioli also owned two works by Poussin with subjects taken from Plutarch). The Landscape with Juno, Argus, and Io (cat. 26) belonged to the discerning Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564–1637), who hung it over a door. The unfinished Apollo and Daphne (fig. 12)—like Stella’s The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa (cat. 58), less a landscape than an allegory of the regenerative power of nature—was given by Poussin to Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677), who was much attached to the artist (he took drawing lessons from him), by whom he owned drawings as well as paintings (including cats. 20 and 21). The Apollo and Daphne is Poussin’s last painting and, like the Landscape with Hagar and the Angel (cat. 65), an exception to the observation that Roman collectors lost interest in Poussin’s work after about 1640—when landscapes assumed a more prominent place in his production. In this discussion, Cassiano dal Pozzo stands apart. As we have seen, his erudition, curiosity, and patronage were crucial to Poussin, and he owned more landscapes by the artist than any other collector—Italian or French. His special relationship with the artist can be gleaned from a letter sent to Cassiano by the abbé Bourdelot during Poussin’s stay in Paris in 1642. In it, Bourdelot declares, “Poussin is a man who adores you and lives for Italy, but most of all for you, his great patron.” Cassiano was, in fact, the only patron whose collection of Poussin’s works spanned the artist’s entire career. Not only did he possess the lion’s share of Poussin’s early, Titianesque landscapes (see below), but he also owned the Landscape with a Man Pursued by a Snake (cat. 27), and the extraordinary Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57). He displayed these in a single room together with only a few other works, including a portrait of the artist and, evidently for variety, some pictures with mythological and religious subjects. (His series of the Seven Sacraments was displayed in an adjacent room.) It was, moreover, the antiquarian interests of Cassiano and like-minded Roman collectors that inform Poussin’s Landscape with an Ancient Tomb (cat. 40)—a work that must have been appreciated as a reinterpretation.
of such ancient paintings as the celebrated fresco from a Roman nymphaeum that was discovered in 1625–27, during the building of Palazzo Barberini, or the fragmentary frescoes of landscapes in the collections of Cardinals Massimi and Rospigliosi (1600–1669), other admirers of Poussin (the frescoes do not survive but are known through drawings). In 1629 Cassiano referred to paintings of this kind—he had in mind especially the work of Poussin’s friend, onetime roommate, and sometime collaborator Jean Lemaire (1601–1659)—as “paesaggi di anticaglie,” or landscapes embellished with ancient structures and sculpture. Taking up Cézanne’s famous dictum, we might think of them in terms of Poussin’s redoing antiquity after nature. (The Landscape with an Ancient Tomb reminds us that antiquarianism and the natural sciences were complementary, not competing, interests, without which the re-creative imagination at work in the background of the great historical landscapes, such as the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion, cannot be fully understood.)

The Thread of Continuity

Cassiano dal Pozzo’s collection indicates that, from his earliest years in Rome, Poussin was interested in landscape painting,
to which he was introduced by the canvases of Titian to be seen in the city—above all by the great series of mythologies in the Aldobrandini collection—as well as by those painted by Annibale Carracci and Domenichino. As Anthony Blunt observed, “[Poussin] is already referred to as a painter of landscapes in a letter of 1630, and although neither drawings nor paintings survive to confirm the evidence, there are works which can probably be dated a few years later which show his interest in landscape fully developed.”656 Visitors to the exhibition for which this catalogue was created will encounter paintings in which landscape is the principal theme from Poussin’s first years in Rome, where he arrived in 1624, and they will find in his drawings the evidence of an artist who was as enraptured by the beauties of the Roman Campagna as Claude Lorrain or Bartolomeus Breenbergh (ca. 1598–1657). It is easy to think of Poussin’s early, Titianesque landscapes painted for Cassiano as purely imaginary—exercises in the Venetian genre of poésie, or pastoral landscapes. Yet the seventeenth-century inscription on the reverse of the Venus and Adonis from Montpellier (cat. 7) identifies the site as Grottaferrata, and some early landscape drawings leave little doubt that the poetic effects of light playing across the hills and trees are anchored in the study of nature, albeit seen through the lens of Titian’s Bacchanals.657 The very early pair of landscapes depicting the stories of Apollo and a nymph and, apparently, Eurydice (cats. 1, 2)658 constitute an enchanting prelude to those mature meditations on nature; they also underscore the degree to which Cassiano’s cultural and literary interests helped form Poussin’s vision. In both works, the mythological figures are fully integrated into the landscape composition: the nymph’s upraised arms are repeated in the branches of the trees behind her, and the distant hill echoes the heap of Eurydice’s collapsed body. No less remarkable is the way the cloud formations and quality of light are used to enhance the mood of the stories. The same is true of the elegiac Venus Anointing the Dead Adonis (cat. 8), with its distant vista and sunset. In these works Poussin has already moved beyond mere storytelling or narration to embrace the Ovidian theme of the transformative power of nature. The masterpiece of this Venetian style exploring the theme of metamorphosis is the Echo and Narcissus (fig. 25), which, like the Venus Anointing the Dead Adonis, was owned by Cardinal Angelo Giori (1585/1662). It is a work such as this one that calls into question the common division of Poussin’s landscapes into tidy periods or types and suggests, instead, a thread of continuity.

Landscape as Reflection

All the same, there is no denying that, as Poussin approached the age of fifty, he turned increasingly to nature as a means of reflection. In this he was not unlike Peter Paul Rubens—the artist whom later generations liked to view as his polar opposite. Rubens was, if anything, even more learned than Poussin—the two knew some of the same neo-Stoic scholars—but his landscapes, with their plunging vistas and forests and fields populated with hunters or peasants, make no attempt to transpose experience into the structured cadence of a Latin hexameter. Instead, they conform to what de Piles called the pastoral or rural landscape (le style champêtre): “nature simple, without ornament, and without artifice; but with all those graces with which she adorns herself much more, when left to herself, than when constrained by art.”659 Yet, despite this fundamental difference of approach to landscape painting, both artists were ardent students of nature, which they embraced in all her moods. For Poussin this meant the tranquillity of the Roman Campagna traversed by the Tiber River and dotted with the ruins of antiquity (cat. 35) or a rugged terrain backed by rocky cliffs (fig. 36); the idyllic calm of a summer day on the shore of a crystalline lake (cat. 56) or the terrors of a sudden storm sweeping down from the mountains (cat. 55); the rocky retreat of an ascetic (cats. 30, 53) or the straight lines of a Roman road leading into the distance (cat. 39); cultivated fields (cat. 67) or the devastation of a flood (fig. 42). His purpose was not merely to depict the changing aspects of nature but rather to use these aspects to describe what at some level was a philosophy—or at any rate a meditated view on life. What the essay was for Michel de Montaigne, landscape became for Poussin: a means of reflection.660

The Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57) exemplifies his approach. On one level, the painting can be seen as Poussin vying with the ghost of the famed Greek painter
Apelles, who Pliny tells us, “even painted things that cannot be represented in pictures—thunder, lightning and thunderbolts.” On another, it is among Poussin’s most astonishing explorations of the nascent idea of the sublime in painting. Anyone who has stood before it, however, is led inevitably to consider the larger subject of fate and the subservience of humankind to the capriciousness of nature (for Poussin, a storm was synonymous with Fate or Fortune). There is the lion, that, having bloodied Thisbe’s cloak but left her unharmed, turns instead on a horse, whose rider, aided by a companion, desperately tries to repel the beast. There is a herdsman fleeing this scene in terror while two others try desperately to drive their cattle and sheep to safety, and a man on a donkey, who, with head bowed and eyes covered, moves against the wind—blindly going toward the danger. Two other figures flee up a hill toward a group of buildings, and a dog barks from a safe distance. Poussin emphasizes the suddenness of the storm—“l’effet d’un vent impétueux,” in his own words—by the clearing in the sky in the upper left and the still surface of the water (the proverbial calm in the midst of the storm?). Thus the viewer is drawn into the picture and, through the various parts, confronts the unpredictability of life and its subjugation to the whims of nature. We are reminded of Poussin’s observation on the uncertainties of Fortune: “Only great wisdom or great simplicity can exempt man from these storms. . . . The ordinary man is subject to her rigors.”

In his treatise on the art of poetry (line 179), Horace noted, “Less vividly is the mind stirred by what finds entrance through the ears than by what is brought before the trusty eyes, and what the spectator can see for himself.” He was speaking of the stage, but his observation applies aptly to Poussin’s approach to painting. We are indeed reminded of the artist’s practice of studying his compositions from small figures modeled in wax or clay and placed within a box with controlled lighting conditions—in effect staging the scene he wished to represent. What about the mood of the late landscapes—which gave Constable the sense of being “full of religious and moral feeling”? Can we detect in them a streak of pessimism or of Stoic detachment, a reflection of the artist’s response to his own personal losses and illness, as expressed in his last letters? Can works such as the *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* or the *Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa*; *The Death of Echo and Narcissus* be read as Poussin’s meditation on the contrast between life and death, fertility and sterility, as Blunt believed, or do they affirm a more positive belief in the eternal cycle of Nature, the theme Gombrich revealed in the *Blind Orion*? Ought we to read these pictures through the pantheistic lens of the Dominican philosopher Tommaso Campanella (1568–1639), who was associated with both Poussin’s Italian and French clientele? Might they convey, in the words of one scholar, “a libertine vision of the junction between natural process and human ethics?” Such questions seem especially acute with those extraordinary canvases showing the Four Seasons in the guise of Old Testament stories (figs. 42, 48: cats. 66, 67), with their unforgettable contrasts between the lush landscape of spring and the destructive floods of winter, or the Virgilian evocation of a late summer afternoon and the coolness of an autumn evening. Ought we, together with Sauerländer, in his eloquent exposition of the series in this catalogue, to see in their richly contrasted imagery allegories of Christian salvation, or do the contrasts indicate a more broadly based meditation on life and nature? What was Poussin really about in *Winter: The Flood*, with its pervasive gloom—the bolt of lightning, the survivors hopelessly attempting to find safety, the menacing snake (snakes became something of an obsession with the artist) making its way up a rocky cliff? Could he really have intended Noah’s hopelessly diminutive ark, seen in the melancholic gray light of the moon, as a reassuring promise of renewal? Alas, we know nothing about the factors governing the commission of this remarkable artistic testament. It may have been that it was merely for a cycle of pictures illustrating the seasons, and that we owe to Poussin’s sublimité de pensée their transformation into something seemingly far more complex. On analogy with Pointel’s *Eliezer and Rebecca*—ostensibly a painting about the varieties of female beauty—Poussin may initially have chosen the biblical themes for the way they exemplified a particular season rather than for their interconnections. As Félibien reminds us, only the truly knowledgeable painter—“le scavant peintre”—knows how to “ennoble the most common subjects by the sublimity of his ideas, and finds in his imagination and memory . . . everything that can make his paintings entirely perfect.”
Life and Art

There is a persistent temptation to make life and art intersect, but with an artist such as Poussin, the matter is far from simple. In November 1664, following a long silence, he wrote to Chantelou in the following, self-pitying terms. “For the past nine months I have nursed my good wife in bed, sick with a cough and fever that, after a thousand useless remedies, consumed her to the very bones and worried me in the extreme. She has died when I have more need of her help, seeing as how she has left me burdened with age, paralytic, full of infirmities of all sorts, a stranger without friends (for in this city I have none). Such is the state I am in. . . . They preach me patience, which is a remedy for all ills, and I take it as a medicine that costs little but that also heals nothing.” He had given up painting, but not his engagement with art—or his pitiness. He wrote Félibien of his low opinion of someone who was writing a collection of lives of modern painters. “His style is high-flown, without salt and without doctrine. He deals with the art of painting as someone who has neither theory nor practice. Many who have dared to put their hand to it have been rewarded by mockery, as they deserve to be.”

That spring he also found time to read with pleasure—or so he said (“like a sweet pasture to my afflicted heart”)—the Idée de la perfection en peinture sent him by Chantelou (it was written by Chantelou’s brother Roland Fréart de Chambray ([1666–1676]). His response to Chambray became an opportunity for expressing his own views on painting. Was this an example of professional interests surmounting personal woes, or of the committed artist rising to the occasion? As in Poussin’s correspondence with Chantelou, the letter to Chambray is not without a formal tone that contrasts with another, far more sympathetic image we receive from the Flemish still-life painter Abraham Brueghel (ca. 1631–1690/97), who reported that Claude Lorrain occasionally stopped by Poussin’s studio to take a glass of wine—and, doubtless, to engage in conversation. Did they recall their excursions together, in the company of the German painter Joachim von Sandrart (1605/6–1688), into the Roman Campagna to draw from nature? We are reminded, again, of the different personalities revealed in those two self-portraits sent to Chantelou and to Pointel and of the very different paintings collected by the two men.

It is Poussin’s genius to have found within the conventions of the stile héroïque a way of inscribing his more personal reflections on life and art into his landscapes, and it is this, surely, that distinguishes them from even the most poetic productions of his contemporaries, including Claude Lorrain, and that contributes to the enormous prestige they have enjoyed among scholars, collectors, and artists for more than three and a half centuries.

1. This essay cannot pretend to be a review of the enormous Poussin literature. It does not even attempt to encompass the books and articles that have appeared since the great 1994 Poussin exhibition in Paris. For the literature prior to 1994–95, see Pierre Rosenberg’s introduction to the Paris exhibition catalogue. For books that appeared between 1994 and 1998, see Carrier 1998. Elizabeth Cropper and Charles Dempsey’s study, Nicolas Poussin: Friendship and the Love of Painting, of 1996, sets Poussin firmly within the cultural milieu of his Roman patrons, and the book constitutes a major landmark in Poussin studies, to be set alongside Anthony Blunt’s groundbreaking and still fundamental monograph of 1967 (for which see especially Kitton 1999). Marc Fumaroli (1994a, pp. 53–65) provides a brilliant introduction to the critical reception of Poussin in the twentieth century as well as an eloquent introduction to the poetics of his art (pp. 149–51). Perhaps the two most radical books, for completely different reasons, are those of Louis Marin (1995) and Sheila McTighe (1996). For a response to McTighe’s view of Poussin as a freethinker, see the review by Peter Miller (1998, pp. 470–72). Tod Olson (2002, pp. 214–44) interprets the landscapes in terms of the political movement of the Fronde: see the observations of Anne-Marie Lecoq (2003, pp. 191–92 n. 226). Lecoq’s approach, which takes as its point of departure the two dialogues of Fénelon, composed about 1695–96, serves as a counterweight to McTighe and Olson, and is one of the most notable contributions to our understanding of Poussin and French culture at a turning point. The most recent reconsideration of the landscapes and their interpretation is that of Willibald Sauerländer 2005. Katie Scott and Genevieve Warwick’s 1999 collection of essays provides a convenient introduction to some of the approaches to Poussin’s work. I would like to thank Claire Pace for kindly reading this essay in draft and making suggestions.


4. Ibid., p. 147.

5. Such is the case with the celebrated letter Poussin wrote to his friend and patron Fréart de Chantelou regarding the Greek modes (November 24,

6. See Cropper and Dempsey 1996, pp. 206–9. The conférences at the Académie Royale invariably proceeded from the position that every detail in Poussin’s paintings could be explained by some learned text or archaeological source. The error of this position—and it is a significant one—emerges from the heated discussion about Poussin’s omission of camels in his great painting of Eliezer and Rebecca (fig. 4). What the participants seem not to have been aware of was that the subject was chosen by Poussin as a vehicle for depicting varieties of female beauty, as requested by his friend and patron Jean Pointel. The picture was not principally conceived as an exegetical commentary on or an illustration of the biblical text. In two other canvases treating the same subject—one in a private collection, the other in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge—camels are shown, and Rebecca gives Eliezer water, the act that leads to her marriage with Isaac. In Pointel’s picture, Eliezer gives Rebecca jewelry, thereby singling her out for her deeds and beauty.

The conférences created a dynamic familiar from modern-day classrooms and scholarly symposia: the end result was often at odds with their stated goal, as the occasion was seized to establish the intellectual standing of the participant rather than to elucidate the intention behind a painting. Perhaps the extreme testimony to this tendency is found in Le Brun’s elaborately symbolic interpretation of The Ecstasy of Saint Paul (fig. 6) in terms of three kinds of Grace. Unlike Dempsey (1999), I am far from convinced that this sort of thinking can be assumed to have played a significant part in Poussin’s conception of the picture. For while there can be no doubt that Poussin intended his paintings to inspire discussion as well as admiration by an inside circle of amateurs—an emerging category of collectors in the seventeenth century—this does not mean they were conceived as textual exegesis. Nowhere in Poussin’s letters do we find him hinting at hidden meanings as opposed to general theoretical and philosophical positions.


9. Ibid., p. 472.


12. Van Helsdinck (2002, pp. 174–77), argues against the current tendency of scholars to interpret the scene in terms of Poussin’s presumed philosophical beliefs—especially Stoicism—or political events, and emphasizes instead the importance of poetic invention. This was, of course, a key component of artistic theory. Thus, he notes that in the popular Italian translation of Ovid by Anguillara an analogy is drawn between Thoibe’s mounting grief and a gale: Poussin, in other words, is taking a poetic analogy and giving it his own poetic interpretation. See also below, in text.


16. Félibien 1725, Entretien 5, p. 54.

17. De Piles 1715, pp. 68–69, excerpted in Mérat 1990, p. 317. As Claire Pace has kindly reminded me, we find a similar distinction made by Dezallier d’Argenville (1762, vol. 4, p. 32). De Piles was not without criticism of Poussin’s use of color in his landscapes: “Ses peintures sont admirables pour les sites, par la nouveauté des objets qui les com- posent, par la vérité des terrains, par la variété des arbres, & la légèreté de leurs touches, enfin par la singularité des sujets qu’il yfait entrer. De sorte qu’il les aurait rendus parfaits s’il les avait un peu plus fortifiés par les couleurs locales par l’artifice du clair-obscure . . .”


19. Félibien 1669, p. 209 [i.e., p. 109].

20. Corot’s work was often compared with that of Poussin in the nineteenth century, and Corot owned a landscape ascribed to his great predecessor: see Verdi 1993, pp. 26–27. See also Clarke 1995.


23. One is reminded of Pater’s brilliant insight regarding Botticelli to the effect that “the more you come to understand what imaginative colouring really is, that all colour is no mere delightful quality of natural things, but a spirit upon them by which they become expressive to the spirit, the better you will like this peculiar quality of colour; and you will find that quaint design of Botticelli’s a more direct inlet into the Greek temper than the works of the Greeks themselves even of the finest period.” How far we are from a mere iconographic interpretation that runs the risk of reducing the Primavera to a rebus and is satisfied with identifying the literary texts and antiquarian details from which Botticelli drew inspiration for the Birth of Venus, the central figure of which reminded Pater of “the faultless nude studies of Ingres.” Pater (1870) 1986, p. 38.


28. Fénelon 1731, p. 179.


30. Although the ancient treatise on the sublime by the so-called pseudo-Longinus was known to seventeenth-century writers—it was translated into French by Nicolas Boileau—the term seems mostly to have indicated excellence. In the 1612 edition of the Vocabolario della Crusca, sublime is defined as “alto, eccelsa,” on the example of Dante and Boccaccio. It is this notion of an exalted imagination—the dignity and elevation that pseudo-Longinus identified as one of the five sources of the sublime (6)—that Félibien (1725, Entretien 9, p. 166) intends when he speaks of the sublimité de ses peintures. According to the abbe Du Bos (in his 1719 treatise, part 2, section 1 [1993, p. 171]), “Le sublime de la poésie et de la peinture est de toucher et de plaire, comme celui de
l’éloue is the last and greatest of Miltonics; and in contemplating the work of Poussin it is Milton who comes most often to mind.” The subject of Poussin and English poetry is treated by Jack 1967.

40. Bellori (1672) 1976, p. 456) recounts the story of how Poussin gave a handful of earth to a visitor as a precious antiquity, declaring, “Here, sir, put this in your museum and say: this is ancient Rome.”

41. For a discussion of the relation of Cézanne’s art to that of Poussin, see Verdi in Edinburgh 1990, pp. 35–55, and Verdi 1993, pp. 28–29.

42. See Verdi 1994, pp. 101–3.


44. Quoted in Leslie (1951) 1995, p. 267–68. Constable went on to laud the way Poussin’s good sense “taught him that by simplicity of treatment, the most awful subjects may be made far more affecting than by overloading them with imagery. In painting the ‘Deluge’ [Winter: The Flood], he has not allowed his imagination to wander from the Mosaic account.

45. Ibid., p. 255.


47. Loménie de Brienne’s comments are reprinted in Thuiller 1994a, p. 204. Brienne recounts that a gathering of artists and amateurs held a long and erudite discussion about the Four Seasons. Brienne preferred Winter: The Flood, as did Pusart (the owner of the Blind Orion); Le Brun argued for Summer: Ruth and Boaz; Bourdon favored Spring: Adam and Eve.

48. Reynolds (1757) 1992, Discourse 4, p. 128. As noted above (notes 30 and 37), in his Principles of Painting, published in 1768 and translated into English in 1784, Roger de Piles had distinguished two kinds of landscape painting: the historical and the pastoral or rural. The heroic style involved “a composition of objects, which, in their kinds, draw both from art and nature, everything that is great and extraordinary in either.” The other kind of landscape—the rural or pastoral—depicts “nature simple, without ornament, and without artifice; but with all those graces with which she adorns herself much more, when left to herself, than when constrained by art.” See de Piles in Holt 1982, p. 178. Poussin’s pendant landscapes depicting a calm and a storm are his claim to being a master of both types, and it was this that enabled him to be admired by Turner and Delacroix, on the one hand, and Cézanne, on the other.


50. For the provenance of the picture, see Wine 2001, p. 324. It was purchased by the engraver-dealer Robert Strange prior to 1773.


53. For Fénelon’s response to the picture, see Lecoq 2003, pp. 105–32.

54. Rex 1997, pp. 413–14. For Diderot’s analysis, see Diderot (1757) 1983, pp. 267–68. It is worth noting that whereas Diderot reads the reactions of the three principal figures to the dead man as a dramatic and sequential crescendo—“he listens,” “she heard,” “he saw”—Fénelon read them as expressive contrasts: descriptions of various degrees of fear.


58. For a balanced review of the dense literature that has grown up around this painting, see Wine 2001, pp. 324–35, and Lecoq 2003, pp. 105–31.
59. Fénélon 1731, p. 190. Fénélon goes on to have Poussin explain: “This kind of work succeeds so long as the caprice is measured, and that it in no way departs from true nature.”

60. In his Vocabulario toscano dell’arte del disegno di 1681, p. 25, Filippo Baldinucci defines capriccio as “one’s own idea or invention.” On the matter of caprice and Poussin, see Stanić 1994, pp. 49–56, and Lecoq 2003, pp. 19–22.


62. Félibien 1725, Entretien 8, p. 57.

63. The idea that the picture was inspired by a specific incident derives from a now-lost letter from Poussin to Pointel cited at the time of the sale of the painting in 1773. On this, see Blunt (1967) 1995, p. 287; Wine 2001, pp. 326–27; and Lecoq 2003, p. 105. Cropper and Dempsey (1996, pp. 289–94) specifically deny that the subject can have been inspired by a contemporary incident, pointing to a visual source for the painting in two funerary urns then in the Barberini collection, the subject of which was only identified in the next century. On the other hand, Bull (1968, p. 729) has suggested that the inspiration came from a French translation of the tale of Tylos told in Nonnos’ Dionysiaca. Is this not a case in which, inspired by a contemporary incident, Poussin turned to a classical/visual source to transform what might have been read as a topical event into a more universal story? As Blunt (1967) 1995, p. 285, notes: “Now if Poussin had intended to portray a story from classical history or mythology, Félibien or Fénélon would almost certainly have known it and identified it . . . .” Félibien was in Rome and closely associated with Poussin in the years 1647 to 1649. Conceivably, he observed Poussin working on the picture for Pointel. Obviously, the picture has an altogether different place in Poussin’s oeuvre if it is viewed as having a precise subject rather than a broad theme.


67. These are the words Poussin uses—not without a certain contradiction—to describe one of the aspects of the Phrygian mode, which otherwise was suitable to “pleasant and joyous things”: see Poussin’s letter, in Jouanny 1911, p. 374. Cropper and Dempsey (1996, p. 337 n. 42) make an attempt to resolve the obvious contradictions in Poussin’s use of this term—not successfully, to my mind.


69. Ibid., p. 309.

70. For three very different interpretations of the picture, see Cropper and Dempsey 1996, pp. 295–302; McTighe 1996, pp. 163–71; and Van Helsingdon 2002, pp. 160–67. Blunt (1967) 1996, pp. 350–51) pointed out the analogy of Poussin’s allegorical approach to Gabriele Zimano’s treatise on poetry, the relevant portion of which he reprints (pp. 377–79).


72. The distinction between reflections and refraction is discussed in detail by Félibien 1725, Entretien 5, pp. 47–52. The same phenomenon had been explored two centuries earlier by another artist fascinated with perspective and optics: Piero della Francesca. See Shearman 1995. As Félibien notes, Poussin makes this kind of distinction in the beautiful Exposing of Moses in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (painted for Jacques Stella). He does the same thing in the Landscape with Diogenes in the Louvre. It would appear, however, that the science of optics was always modified by aesthetic considerations, for as Allen and Jaffe (1996, p. 30) note, in the case of refraction, “[Poussin] studiously avoided the distortion, even when it was ‘required,’ as in the view of figures seen below the water. . . .” Curiously, Batschmann (1990, p. 107) saw Poussin’s depiction of the transparent and reflective properties of water, which depend on the distance and angle of vision as well as on lighting conditions, as violating the laws of verismulitude. This misunderstanding led him, in turn, to interpret the water in this and the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe as the “mirror of Bacchus.” For a corrective to this sort of interpretation of Poussin’s landscapes, see Van Helsingdon 2002 and Lecoq 2003.

73. See above, note 10.

74. At the same time, it is well known that, in a letter to Abraham Bosse, Poussin very much played down his interest in Leonardo’s treatise: see Jouanny 1911, pp. 410–21.

75. “Muta eloquenta: La vision de la parole dans la peinture de Nicolas Poussin,” in Fumal 1944, pp. 149–77.

76. Mahon 1965, p. 113.

77. Gombrich 1944, p. 141. Gombrich’s remarks concerned the allegory he deciphered in the Blind Orion associating Orion with the formation of rain clouds. What deserves notice is that the association of Orion with storms was something of a commonality, for, as Miller (2000, p. 124) has pointed out, Edmund Spenser, in the Faerie Queene (book 4, canto 11), refers to “huge Orin, that doth tempests still pretend.” Regarding the tension many have seen between the supposed complexity of Poussin’s subjects and their status as works of art, André Gide (1945, unpaged) remarked, “l’intelligence même risquait d’empêcher Poussin, comme il advient souvent. Le miracle est ici que Poussin ai été assez peintre, assez grand peintre, pour que chez lui le contenant, sous le poids exécrable du contenu, n’ait pas sombré, pour que la pensee triomphe ait su s’assujettir la matière tout en glorifiant celle-ci. Et c’est qu’en lui la pensée se faisait aussitôt image, naissait plastique, et qu’ici intention, emotion, forme, métier, tout convergeait et conspirait à l’oeuvre d’art.”

78. Van Helsingdon 2002. In his examination of scholarly interpretations for the Paris 1994–95 Poussin exhibition catalogue, Oskar Batschmann (1994, p. 97) sagely remarked, “Perhaps art historians would not study Poussin’s works so readily were it not that the problems they pose reaffirm their role as scholars.” Carrier (1998, p. 570), further remarks that “although only a minority of Poussin’s paintings pose obvious puzzles, there is a long-standing tendency for most of his champions to treat his art as highly esoteric. . . .” Very often Poussin scholars seek the most complex possible readings of his words (and art); after all, he was the philosopher-painter. It might be noted that Carrier himself later produced a book that in no way simplifies our image of the artist!

79. It is indicative of the complexity—not to say diversity—of Poussin scholarship that Van Helsingdon does not take up the interpretations of McTighe and Olsen.
Van Helder[ing]en 2002, pp. 155, 173. See also the critique of the literature offered by Carrier 1993, pp. 145–74; and the important 2005 article of Sauerländer.

Bellori (1672) 1776, p. 481.

See the very interesting comments of McCuthe 1996, pp. 146–51, which are not unrelated to my interpretation of the differences between the two portraits.


See especially Bäckman 1990, pp. 49–52, and Cropper and Dempsey 1996, pp. 182–85. Montaigne actually begins his essay on friendship with an anecdote about a painter and remarks, “I felt tempted to imitate him.” But perhaps most important is his observation that “my skill is not such that I dare undertake a fine, finished picture that follows the rules of art.” That Poussin was a reader of Montaigne’s essays is attested in his letters. See Blunt (1967) 1995, pp. 168–69.

Bäckman (1990, p. 53) has argued that by the word effigies Poussin intended to incorporate as well the idea of “shadow picture.” It is, of course, true that ancient sources trace the origins of painting to a silhouette drawn around the cast shadow of the beloved, but effigies was a perfectly common term of reference and I see no reason to burden the compositional features of the picture with erudite wordplays that have more to do with the vogue of twentieth-century literary criticism than with seventeenth-century thought.

In addition to Thuiller and Mignot 1978, see McCuthe 1996, pp. 71–73.

Alberti, De picture, 2.25 (1973, p. 61).

Prior to its cleaning for the 1994 exhibition, the album was inscribed De lumine et color and this is how it is shown in Jean Pene’s engraving; see Paris 1994–95, p. 425. Poussin was thus shown holding a treatise on light and color rather than an album. It is perhaps curious that Poussin would show himself holding a drawing tool with sharpened pieces of white and black chalk he had wanted to illustrate his mastery of light and color.

Blunt (1967) 1995, p. 218 contrasted the image conveyed by Chantelou’s portrait—“not a lovable face”—with that of Rubens in his self-portrait in Windsor Castle, in which “an equally lively intelligence shines forth, but of a less severe, more human kind.” Surely the latter description fits the image Poussin conveys in the Berlin portrait, underscoring the ways in which the personality he reveals to his friends and patrons is carefully constructed one. It is also worth quoting Blunt’s assessment of Chantelou, as it emerges from Poussin’s correspondence: “We have the impression of a solid, possibly dull, but kindly and honorable man. He occasionally became impatient with the painter, and Poussin was sometimes irritated by his failure to appreciate an artistic subtlety, but he was a completely reliable friend and someone to whom the artist could turn in trouble” (ibid., p. 216).

Chantelou (1665) 1985, p. 79.


Hazzluff 1844, p. 196.

For the discussion of this picture at a conference held in 1668, see note 6 above.

Blunt (1967) 1995, p. 290, lays out the circumstantial evidence for a trip to Naples in 1647 by Poussin and Pointel.

Pace 1981, p. 11.

Apart from individual studies, for observations on Poussin’s French patrons, see Blunt (1967) 1995, pp. 208–28; the convenient snapshot biographies in Merot 1990, pp. 298–327; and Schnapper 1994, pp. 70–73.

Thuiller and Mignot 1978, pp. 41–42.

Schnapper and Massat 1995. See also Harris 2003.

Olson 2002, pp. 213–44.

McCuthe 1996, esp. pp. 1–52. McCuthe takes as her point of departure Poussin’s letter to Chantelou in June 1648 in which he states his desire to paint a series of canvases in which he would counter the theme of the Seven Sacraments by showing the vagaries of fortune: “Le plus étranges tours que la Fortune ait jamais joués aux hommes, et particulièrement a ceux qui se sont moqués de ses efforts.” There can be little doubt of the relevance this comment has for the storm landscapes, or that these paintings express a philosophic view of life. What is at issue is whether these extraordinary works—the declared products of the artist’s imagination—can be interpreted as political allegories or statements of freethinking. On this, see the review of McCuthe’s book by Miller (1998, pp. 470–72). Blunt (1967) 1995, pp. 211–17 broached the issue of libertinage, remarking that Poussin’s relations with the movement need to be “defined rather carefully.” For a well-rounded treatment of European neo-Stoicism, libertinism thought, antiquarianism, and religious belief, see Miller 2000. Linked with this discussion is the figure of the Dominican Tommaso Campanella, whose ideas about the spiritus of nature governing the universe were well known to Poussin. Thuiller (1994) has addressed the issue of Poussin’s religious beliefs. For an interpretation of Poussin’s paintings as dynastic celebrations, see Bernstock 2000.

For a brief survey of early landscape traditions and the bibliography concerned with them, see Cavazzoni 2001, pp. 208–12.

T. J. Clark’s extended and often self-absorbed reflections on two of Poussin’s landscapes on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum during his tenure as a fellow there are an obvious example, and his concern with safeguarding his leftist political views strikes one as arrogant and self-serving: see T. J. Clark 2006. See the review of Lewis (2006).

Fumagalli 1994, p. 57. Her essay provides a summary of what we know about Poussin’s Roman collectors.

See note 10 above.


Blunt (1967) 1995, p. 268. Lagerlöf (1990, pp. 53–72) provides a concise survey of Poussin’s activity as a painter of landscapes and touches on the different interpretations attached to it.

Bajou (1999, p. 123) has noted that in 1626 Francesco Barberini, who employed Cassiano dal Pozzo, was made protector of the famous abbey there: was this the moment Poussin visited the area?

The two paintings, pendants known to have come from the dal Pozzo collection, were first illustrated in Pierre Rosenberg’s 1994 Poussin exhibition catalogue (Paris 1994–95, p. 16). See also Standing 1988, pp. 624–25, and Jerusalem 1999, p. 25, figs. 13, 14, where they are reproduced in color.


Blunt (1967) 1995, pp. 168–70) and Cropper and Dempsey 1996, pp. 182–88, 217–41, 246–49, especially, have made eloquent cases for the importance of Montaigne’s essays on Poussin; however, I would caution against exaggerating Poussin’s intellectual independence or the depth of the neo-Stoic ideas he occasionally expresses in his letters. Although the Montaigneinske value placed on learned conversation and self-knowledge, as promoted by that closely knit group of scholars and antiquarians belonging to the Republic of Letters, unquestionably
informs Poussin’s work, it is doubtful that the artist’s own ideas—his philosophy of life—went much beyond ubiquitous generalities. For example, in an address delivered in Rome and published in Venice in 1630, a member of the Republic of Letters, Girolamo Alessandro, commented on how rational self-control—that motivating force in Poussin’s well-regulated life as well as his artistic credo—enabled one to enjoy “a sweet tranquility amidst the perturbations, a clear sky amidst the clouds, a secure place amidst the storms” (taken from Miller 2000, p. 65). Alessandro could have been describing one of Poussin’s landscapes were it not that the metaphor with nature was little more than a trope of neo-Stoic discourse—one that Poussin himself employed.

111. Pliny, Natural History 35.36.96.

112. The same was true of Leonardo da Vinci, whose recommendations for representing a storm appear under the heading “come si de[v]e figurare una fortuna.” The analogy of the effects of tempests and the capriciousness of Fortune is found throughout Natale Conti’s Mythologie, which Poussin is known to have consulted, perhaps using the 1627 French edition of J. Baudoin. Conti cites Seneca’s Agamemnon: “Tousjours nouvelle tempeste / Leur vient rechoir sur la teste: / Tousjours un nouvel assaut / Coup desus coup les assaut.”

113. The haunting effect of the reflective surface of the water has prompted the most extravagant explanations: as an emblem of the eye of the artist (Marin) or the mirror of Bacchus (Bächmann). See note 72 above.


115. Examination of the Abduction of the Sabine Women at the Metropolitan Museum has revealed that this careful staging was transferred to the canvas by use of an Albertian perspective grid. The grid is visible as an underdrawing with infrared reflectography. A pinpoint in the paint surface marks the vanishing point. Whether a similar system was occasionally used in mapping out the space of a landscape, such as the Landscape with Saint Matthew, with architectural elements dispersed throughout, cannot be said.


117. McTighe 1996, p. 169. Bull (1992, pp. 32–37) warns against ascribing to Poussin a seriously considered Stoic philosophy—let alone libertine ones. He overstates the case, but he is correct to point out that we must be careful not to read too much into the often generic views Poussin expresses in his correspondence.

118. On the cycle, see now Sauerländer 2005, pp. 124–33. Mèrot (1990, pp. 237–49) and Rosenberg (in Paris 1994–95, p. 515) review the various, often contradictory, interpretations.


121. Blunt 1989, p. 172. This is the abbé Nicaise, who wrote a Vies des artistes. Interestingly, when Poussin wrote to Nicaise in July 1665, he assumed quite a different tone, and ended the letter with, “[M. de Chamilly] me permettra de lui baiser très humblement les mains, comme je fais à vous de tout mon coeur.” This is a conventional enough closing, but it does underscore the degree to which Poussin was perfectly capable of playing the courtier in his correspondence. His letters should be read with this in mind.

122. The fundamental essay on Poussin and Claude remains that of Kitson (1961).
Poussin and the Roman Campagna: In Search of the Absolute

Anna Ottani Cavina

There can be no doubt that, beginning in the 1640s and with increasing intensity thereafter, Poussin was one of the most profound explorers of nature, in all its mysterious, Pan-like qualities. Nor can it be doubted that his was a landscape of ideas rather than a mirror of nature, something that, in subjective and diverse ways, almost always happens in art—whether painting, music, or literature—as the outgrowth of a history of ideas concerned with the theme of nature, whether in classical times or today.¹

Yet one of the leitmotifs of the historiography and mythography surrounding Poussin, in both primary sources and legend, has been the Roman Campagna—traversed on foot or on horseback, alone or with friends.² It is something that merits reflection, especially if we think of the later crystallization in painting of the famous promenade du Poussin along the northern banks of the Tiber.³ Corot created one of its most celebrated interpretations in La Promenade du Poussin (fig. 13), as well as the so-called La Fabrique du Poussin, of 1826 (fig. 14)⁴—a view of the towered castle of La Crescenza on the Via Flaminia. In works such as these, Corot awakened in nineteenth-century landscape painters an awareness of a great past founded in the cult of Poussin and its symbolic legacy on the banks of the Tiber.

Poussin’s position as inspirational figure—the tutelary deity of plein-air painting—was given concrete expression in Paul Flandrin’s 1843 painting (now lost) Poussin on the Banks of the Tiber (figs. 15, 16), where the artist appears in person, armed with pencil and paper and seeking inspiration along the bends of the Tiber—a typical reflection of the nineteenth-century Romantic view of history.⁵ It has been noted that a striking connection exists between Flandrin’s image and the evocative words of his brother Hippolyte, who had preceded him in Rome: “You will find Poussin every step of the way.”⁶

But to return to Poussin’s personal experience of nature, which this exhibition reveals in all its touching beauty, one may ask whether it is possible to measure the gap between actual places and
those in his paintings. What were the principles followed in that process of purifying nature of the signs of the passage of time and human endeavor? To put it another way, do analogies exist between the architectural and the landscape conventions Poussin employed in constructing a setting for the story he wanted to portray?

La Promenade du Poussin

Following the Tiber upstream to where it enters Rome by the Ponte Milvio—or Ponte Molle, as it was called then—one comes across various sites of the promenade du Poussin. These sites were also dear to Claude Lorrain, Joseph Vernet, and Corot and other painters of the early nineteenth century (including Carl Rottmann, Constantin Hansen, Joseph Anton Koch, and Martinus Røbye), as attested by a diary entry of Étienne-Jean Delécluze from February 8, 1824: “I left the city by the Porta del Popolo and took the route called la promenade du Poussin. It is a road that follows the banks of the Tiber up to the Ponte Molle [. . .] This solitary spot pleased me; the memory of Poussin associated with the place was agreeable; it recalled to me my childhood, my earliest studies, my friend Lullin, and I was at Rome more then ever.”

North of the city, the path followed the river along the banks of the Acqua Acetosa, in the area of Tor di Quinto, not far from the Via Flaminia—a path also described with great emotion by Goethe and Adrian Ludwig Richter. It crossed a landscape of pastures, tree-strewn scrubland, marshes, and the rare field in open cultivation—all part of an agrarian system that provided for fields and grass, and where, in the mid-seventeenth century, wild grazing had prevailed over land shaped by human labor.
The decline of the Agro Romano, overwhelmed by marshland and endemic malaria, was in Poussin’s day just one aspect of the refeudalization of Italian society, marked by a return to large estates and open fields and the consequent spread of pastures, woods, and marshes.\(^8\) Harvesting grains proved less productive than raising animals, and arable land decreased throughout Europe. In England, sheep were so much more viable from an economic standpoint (through the production of wool) that the spread of enclosures—pastures forbidden to peasants—had already prompted Thomas More (\textit{Utopia}, 1516) to see them as a cause of social disorder, and England as a land where “sheep are devouring men.”\(^9\)

In Poussin’s time, the Agro Romano must have seemed inhospitable and deserted—similar to what we see in the frescoes by Gaspard Dughet in San Martino ai Monti, with their prophets set within extensive landscapes where men and oxen are described in the primordial business of vanquishing a marshy, hostile earth (fig. 17).\(^{10}\) Dughet’s grand pictures also reveal a materialistic view of nature: a place where history intersects with human endeavor, where what counts are economic uses of the environment and the exhausting process of colonizing uncultivated, desolate areas.\(^{11}\) The San Martino ai Monti frescoes also reflect the reality of the Italian countryside, or territory, to use a word that de-emphasizes those cultural and aesthetic dimensions that make the modern landscape so “visible.”

Trees and Buildings

Even though he frequented and loved its sites throughout his life, Poussin did not seek to reflect the Agro Romano in his painted landscapes. There is nothing real or contemporary about his settings for the stories of Phocion, Diogenes, Orpheus and Eurydice, Pyramus and Thisbe, or Christ Healing the Blind Men of Jericho. Poussin’s view of nature was not inspired by the unhealthy, desolate terrains—“intensely sad and hideous” (tristes et horribles au dernier point)\(^{12}\)—that lay just beyond the gates of Rome. Nor was he motivated by the ploughed fields of the Italian agrarian landscape. Rather,
Figure 15. Paul Flandrin (1811–1902), La Promenade du Poussin, 1835. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (R.F. 2796, recto)
the painter sought to create the rhythmic, intact forms of an
elegiac, ideal landscape.

A botanical study alone, even in summary form, would
suffice to give us an objective reading of the artist’s painted
scenes of Italian hills, populated by vineyards and olives, or
the plains of Lazio, punctuated by poplars, cypresses, and
umbrella pines. Poussin’s botany does not reflect the variety
actually found in the Roman Campagna. This is because
Poussin’s gaze is not that of a naturalist, and his level of
definition is not founded on science—that is, analytical
recognition, precise perception, and organized visual data.\(^\text{13}\)

In Poussin’s paintings, the recurring typology is that
of an oak tree, represented in its most frequently occurring
species—Quercus robur, Quercus ilex, and Quercus cerris. We
find it depicted in all its magnitude (Landscape with the
Ashes of Phocion, cat. 43) or as a fragile sapling, leaning in the
wind. It is a natural, unpruned oak, recognizable for its
expansive and thick foliage and dentate leaves, that the
painter includes, albeit somewhat freely, either respecting the
character of the foliage but not the trunk (Acis and Galatea,
National Gallery, Dublin), or painting the foliage on the
branches in an approximate, generic way (Venus Bringing
Arms to Aeneas, Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen). The extremely
few exceptions to this majestic, sacred paradigm include
the white poplar with its sparkling, silvery foliage, as in The
Triumph of Flora (Louvre) and Echo and Narcissus (fig. 25);
the trembling poplars behind Pan and Syrinx (Staatliche
Kunstsammlungen, Dresden); and the morello cherry to the
left of Aeneas as he receives the armor from Venus (Rouen). A
sweet acacia—at least its features suggest this identification—
frames the right side of the Landscape with the Funeral of
Phocion (fig. 38). And there are the white willow in the
Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57) and the
alder in Summer: Ruth and Boaz (cat. 67), if I am not mis-
taken in interpreting the slender trunk on the right as a
member of the birch family. This little botanical exercise
is empirical and might seem playful, yet it helps to identify
the presence of a dominant model in Poussin’s arboreal
vocabulary, and thus to measure the distance between observed and painted landscapes.

Thus, Poussin’s view of nature does not take in the varieties of Mediterranean scrubland, but is constructed through the repeated presence of the oak tree, with splendid foliage, which the painter uses for its powerful visual impact and symbolic value. Sacred to Jupiter, the oak was evocative of strength and heroic, invincible virtue (Quercus/For
titudo: the equivalence is already there in Latin because, in Latin, a single word, robur, indicates both “strength” and a type of oak). As a tangible presence of the divine in nature, and an instrument of communication between heaven and earth, the oak could claim a noble pictorial ancestry from such artists as Annibale Carracci and Domenichino.

These marginal but incontrovertible clues tell us that even if Poussin’s landscapes do not pass a reality test (that is, if they do not involve verisimilitude), they nonetheless play a different and more elevated role, not as background or framing elements based on a real place but as commentary on the painted narrative. Landscape contributed to the deciphering of the narrative and therefore had to be in harmony with the subject, introducing as a contrast to actuality (the vero) a “principle of falsehood” as a means of emphasizing the speculative dimension of a painting: “In the world of the spirit, everything must unfold in a deliberately ‘false’ manner by comparison to reality [. . .] such ‘falsehood’ constituted the very principle of Poussin’s universe [. . .] a painter for whom a work was first and foremost a construction of the mind.”

But what if the landscape is constructed of marble and stone and the setting of the story is architectural?

The theme of architecture in Poussin has been treated from different points of view, but there is a consensus among scholars on the importance of his architecture as both a key to reading the subject and an essential element within its narrative.

Did Poussin have a city of choice, and what was the relation between his painted cities and those known through quotidian experience? On the one hand, there is an antiquarian city packed with columns, obelisks, sarcophagi—as in the perspective vistas of Jean Lemaire, described by Cassiano dal Pozzo to the Florentine banker Agnolo Galli as “paintings with perspective scenes of Roman antiquities adorned with very refined statuettes and figures” (quadri di prospettive di anticaglie di Roma adorne con statuette e figurine assai gentili). On the other is a grand, imposing city as represented by Poussin—impeccably geometrical, enclosed within rectilinear walls, and perfectly formed in its volumes. Poussin’s city is one where archaeological elements are minimal, but the presence of classicism and history is ubiquitous, a city where
the past is evoked not through the ruins of antiquity but through its great Renaissance interpreters Raphael and Palladio.

Here I would like to cite a specific example used in scholarly analysis. The architectural perspective that forms the lateral enfilade of The Death of Sapphira (fig. 18) evinces scarcely any archaeological interest on Poussin’s part. What is striking, however, is the artist’s return to sixteenth-century architectural prototypes (recognizable buildings include Michelangelo’s Palazzo dei Conservatori, Baldassarre Peruzzi’s Villa Farnesina, Palladio’s Palazzo Thiene, and the Palazzo Alberini by Raphael and Giulio Romano).

This vision was steeped in that notion of the antique that Raphael communicated in his renovations of Rome—the renovatio urbis—his primary cultural project as well as a deliberate policy aimed at restoring the past grandeur of Rome.

At this point another question arises: To what extent did Poussin’s architecture echo the painting’s story, becoming a metaphor for its deep significance?

It is likely that the shining city on the hill with the Vatican Belvedere in its midst alludes to the magnificence and splendor rejected by Diogenes (Landscape with Diogenes, cat. 62). It is also likely that the Castel Sant’Angelo, which burns while death interrupts the contented life of Eurydice, functions as an allusion to the imminent drama (Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice, cat. 47). Further, the hyperbolic fragments of antiquity next to the Evangelists John and Matthew could be read as a memento, or remembrance, of the collapse of pagan religion before the revelations of the Gospel (Landscape with Saint Matthew, cat. 35; Landscape with Saint John on Patmos, cat. 36); moreover, that apologia in stone, shown in every possible form in the “cubist” city of Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery (Louvre), could express the latent meaning of the woman’s condemnation to death by stoning.

We may thus conclude that, even after the 1640s, when nature made its resounding appearance and gradually under-

Figure 18 Nicolas Poussin, The Death of Sapphira. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7286)
mined Poussin’s landscapes of stone, his architecture was far from providing a mere frame for the narrative; rather, it served as a metaphor for nature’s most profound meanings.

Geometry: The Source and Guide for All the Arts

We have seen that the prominence of perspectival architecture and geometric squaring in Poussin’s compositions does not necessarily point toward historical truth. Likewise, the “heroic” quality of the artist’s landscapes is not a mere reflection of that need for reality attested to by his wanderings and immersion in the Roman Campagna, even though it was countryside he explored and knew empirically, and empiricism was an attitude prominent among seventeenth-century painters, whether naturalists, classicists, or Baroque. “The new feeling for Nature, which emerged from the most avantgarde thinking of the Seicento,” was the common denominator in a universe that science had newly made positive and mighty.

Contemporary sources confirm this empirical bent: “On another occasion we rode out on horseback—Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Pieter van Laer and I (Joachim von Sandrart)—going as far as Tivoli to paint or draw the landscape.” It is worth citing Sandrart’s well-known account because it is historically reliable and suggestive, culturally, of the figure of the wandering traveler immersed in nature, which was to assume great significance in the era of Romanticism, from Rousseau (Reveries of the Solitary Walker) to Schubert (Die Winterreise, Der Wanderer), Schumann, and Mahler. It is a figure that connects two moments of our dialogue with nature—observation and reflection—and unites in them a profoundly intellectual manner of seeing: the eye recording with the clarity of a camera lens and the mind selecting and elaborating.

Sanderart’s record of the painters’ excursion to Tivoli refers to nature as something to be traversed on foot or on horseback—a nature of which we, as modern children of the automobile and jet, have no inkling. This was the nature later explored by the sentimental flaneurs of Rousseau, who made the solitary promenade his primary method of investigation and the catalyst for pensive experience: “I have never thought as much, existed as much, lived as much—or been myself, if I may put it that way—as in those journeys I have made alone and on foot[...]. The sight of the countryside, the succession of agreeable views[...], all this releases my soul, and gives me greater audacity when I think.” Rousseau was naturally at one with the plein-air painters, who found a mouthpiece in Valenciennes: “The artist must travel in short stages / and most often on foot, like [Rousseau’s protagonist] Émile.” Indeed, the fragmented topography of Italy demanded travel through different settings, landscapes, and cultures, walking between woods and houses in a mosaic of rich and varied experiences. The same truth is contained in one of Shakespeare’s lines—“a local habitation and a name”—with its suggestion of identifying differences within a defined territory.

Like many painters of the seventeenth century, Poussin was moved by the need to know nature firsthand. This is borne out by his studies from nature and the oft-quoted testimony of a French traveler of about 1650: “I have run into [Poussin] among the ruins of ancient Rome, and sometimes in the country and on the banks of the Tiber, where he was drawing[...]. I saw him collect in his kerchief some pebbles, moss, flowers and other similar things that he wanted to paint exactly from nature.” But this was not the canon that regulated the representation of nature in Poussin’s paintings; he was an artist for whom visual experience was inseparable from the principles of artistic order and the regularizing of forms: “My nature constrains me to seek and love well-ordered things, escaping confusion, which is as contrary and inimical to me as light is to the tenebrous darkness” (Mon nature me contraint de chercher et aimer les choses bien ordonnées, fuyant la confusion, qui m’est aussi contraire et ennemie comme est la lumière des obscures ténèbres). Consequently, the poetry of a real, mutable place—drawn on-site with economy of means and close attention to how its forms are organized (see Group of Five Trees, fig. 35)—is synthesized on canvas through the laconic recurring forms of a universal language, in which the constant element in each phenomenon becomes a paradigm—part of an alphabet that spells out nature as a rational, organic entity. As Roland Fréart, sieur de Chambray, put it: “Order[...] is the father of Beauty” (L’Ordre est le père de la Beauté).
This insistence on the universal or constant element is what makes an indelible mark on Poussin’s vision of nature, which is at once ideal and heroic. It is ideal in its conception of art as essentially intellectual: a painter’s pilgrimage to a place becomes a pilgrimage in search of the absolute, the object being to weave the variants of reality into a regular pattern of thought, making the organic vitality of nature flow into the harmonious forms of geometry.30

This is why Poussin’s studies of landscape d’après nature (see The Aventine, cat. 80)—never plentiful but now even rarer after the scholarly decimation of his graphic œuvre31—were not used literally, and do not migrate directly into his paintings. His was a slow, meditative process, and, as far as we can judge from his method, his paintings were constructed with the help of an optical box— with landscape backgrounds arranged according to the requirements of the figures.32

Study d’après nature was certainly essential for Poussin, who had a genuine need to understand land, light, and the forms of trees. Yet the construction of his paintings was engendered by combined reflections on nature, mathematical order, and geometry, all of which nourished the philosophical speculation of his contemporaries, from Descartes to Roland Fréart de Chambry and Galileo.

In a historically significant passage of Il Saggiatore (1623), Galileo expresses his idea of the world as a book written in mathematical characters: “Philosophy is written in this great book that is continuously open before us (I mean the universe), but it cannot be understood without first learning to understand the language and characters in which it is written. It is written in mathematical language, and its characters are triangles, circles and other geometrical figures [. . .] without these it is a vain wandering through a dark maze.”33 In a letter of 1611, he also writes of “this great book, which nature continuously holds open before those who have eyes in their forehead and in their brain,”34 where “vedere con il cervello” connotes not only capturing the appearance of things, but also deducing an order of relationships and grasping the laws of how things are structured, passing from a “dark labyrinth” to a clear, measurable space.

As the seventeenth century progressed, knowledge based on a mathematical reading of reality became a shared, contemporary notion. The dissemination of this idea in France was indebted to the treatise by Roland Fréart de Chambry, who recognized geometry as the “source and guide for all the arts” (source et guide de tous les arts). Fréart de Chambry singled out Poussin as “a great Eagle of his profession, or to express this more clearly, without figures of speech, he is the most evolved and perfect of all the Modern painters. This is not hard to convey to the Wise, who examine and judge things as Geometricians do.”35

Thus, it is its distance from reality that helps us define the ideal aspect of nature in Poussin’s paintings. His landscapes are remote from places experienced, places in which one lives and works, places narrated from below, or, as it were, from the piazza or the field.

Organized according to perspective, with a habitually central axis, the landscapes painted by Poussin achieve a heroic, atemporal dimension through the horizontal layering of planes, made rhythmic by the majestic presence of oak trees (see Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion, cat. 43). As essential instruments in the construction of space, the great oaks serve to contain a scene, to provide contrasts of shadow and light, and to create depth between vegetal mass and distant horizon by offering an essentially plastic form that is also symbolic. As André Gide wrote, “His thoughts emerged at once as images; they were born as plastic art.”36

In this way, Poussin makes botanical reality secondary to the primary visual function of the tree as anchored to the ground and powerfully inscribed against the sky. A tree of might as well as heroic value,37 the oak is not intended as a decorative element. It contributes to the proportional scale of the picture and to the structuring of space, and it also provides a means of locating the subject within a system of modes such as the ancients associated with the moral sphere and the passions. For it is at this point that the theme of the distance between actual and painted nature (and between real and represented architecture) in Poussin’s paintings dovetails with his reflections expressed in a letter of November 24, 1647, to his patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou.38 Writing of The Finding of Moses (cat. 41), Poussin introduced “une chose d’importance”: the ancient Greek doctrine of the modes and the need to adapt one’s style to the subject in order
to better harmonize the elements of a painting. In applying the musical theory of the modes—Phrygian, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian—to painting, Poussin constructs his composition around a key that, as in music, is dominant, and establishes a formal and unsurpassable limit, because “he wished that everything in his painting should be in reciprocal harmony and combine in creating one end.”

It is within this framework that we find the explanation for Poussin’s choice and depiction of trees, which, like architecture, he relates to a certain key, be it vehemence, fury, austerity, or gravity. For this key the oak offers a cyclical, recurring model and a quintessential form that contains and sublimates every other species of tree.

This critical reading of Poussin’s approach to nature is not novel or unsettling. Quite the contrary, it accords with the elevated, ideal philosophical interpretation of Poussin’s landscapes that has always been recognized. The essential point here is not to measure Poussin’s ability to “portray” the nature as it existed around him, but rather to evaluate how nature penetrated his pictorial thought: how the painter who, in *promenade* through the desolate Agro Romano, “invented” the religious beauty of the Acqua Acetosa as a counterpart to the religious intimacy of Matthew and the Angel (see cat. 35), and how places that no one before him had painted could be seen again only through the eyes of the artist: laden with unreality but full of poetry.

1. The extensive literature on this subject includes Hadot 2004, and the earlier 1966 text by Lenoble.

2. One should first mention early sources, starting with Joachim von Sandrart, whose biography of Poussin contains the following passage: “He always carried with him a small book in which he annotated all that struck him, in drawings or words” (Teutsche Academie, 1675–79, vol. 2, p. 368). There is also Sandrart’s celebrated eyewitness account in his biography of Pieter van Laer, cited below in the text, followed by Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1672) 1796, pp. 419–81 and André Félibien: “He avoided social gatherings as much as he could so that he could retire alone to the vineyards and the most remote places of Rome, where he could freely […] observe the most beautiful effects of nature. It was during these retreats and solitary walks that he made light sketches of things he came across, whether for landscapes, such as terraces, trees, or some beautiful effects of light, or for history compositions” (Il évitait autant qu’il pouvait les compagnies pour se retirer seul dans les vignes et dans les lieux les plus écartés de Rome, où il pouvait avec liberté […] observer les plus beaux effets de la Nature. C’était dans ces retraites et ces promenades solitaires, qu’il faisait de légers esquisses des choses qu’il rencontrait propres, soit pour le paysage, comme des terrasses, des arbres, ou quelques beaux accidents de luminaires; soit pour des compositions d’histoire); Félibien 1666–88, vol. 4, Entretien 8 (1685), p. 14. In his biography of Gaspard Dughet, Filippo Baldinucci also wrote in this vein, underlining the value of “disegnar vedute dal naturale” as taught by Poussin (1681–1728, vol. 4, p. 473ff).

3. Painted celebrations of sites frequented by Poussin along the Tiber began to appear in the early nineteenth century as part of a more general revival of his image in both artistic and moral terms. For references to artists inspired by Poussin, see below, note 6.

4. Oil on canvas, 7⅓ x 13⅙ in. (18.7 x 33.3 cm), dated at lower right: *Janvier 1826*. The name used by nineteenth-century painters (*La Fabrique du Poussin ou Casal Pusino*) brought to mind the legendary strolls taken by Poussin in his search for inspirational motifs in the Roman Campagna. The castle of the Crescenzi family, painted by Claude Lorrain on a canvas now in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (1778), is datable to about 1688; 15½ x 22¼ in. (39.7 x 58.1 cm), was drawn from reality by Achille Etna Michallon in a pencil study now in the Louvre, inscribed by the artist: “Fabrique dite du Poussin / Rome 1826” (see also Galassi 1991, pp. 146–48).

5. Paul Flandrin’s painting, presented at the Salon of 1843, is lost. The Dепartement des Arts Graphiques of the Louvre owns a preparatory study in pencil with the autograph inscription “Rome mars 1835 promenade du Poussin” (13½ x 11¾ in. [342 x 295 mm]; fig. 15).

6. Quoted in Delaborde 1865, p. 216, cited in Verdi 1969, p. 742. This article lists the versions of paintings inspired by *La Promenade du Poussin* and *La Fabrique du Poussin* presented at the Paris Salon during the nineteenth century.


8. Sereni 1984, pp. 108–81. The Agro Romano is what in Latin is indicated as “Latium Vetus,” a clearly defined geographical area that extended south along the lower Tiber as far as the edges of the Sabine region and the Tiburtine and Penestine hills, reaching out toward the Alban Hills and the Ardeatine region.


10. The cycle consists of eighteen frescoes, the first two painted by Giovanni Francesco Grimaldi, the remaining sixteen by Gaspard Dughet. Each fresco measures 95½ in. (244 cm) at its base, and their heights vary between 48¾ and 107¾ in. (124 and 273 cm). This was the first important public work executed by Dughet, whose patron was the Carmelite prior Giovanni Antonio Filippini. The reconstruction of chronology through documents has proved controversial; one may presume that Dughet’s first seven frescoes were completed by 1646 and the other nine painted between 1650 and 1651: see Heideman 1980 and Boisclair 1986.
11. The land around Rome retained its inhospitable and unhealthy character into the twentieth century (that is, until the reclamation projects carried out by the Fascist government during the 1920s), as is dramatically expressed in a report of 1903: “Rome is encircled by a desert that encloses it like a shroud [. . .] a bare, dismal countryside, without villages or houses, interrupted by marshes and populated by herds of oxen and buffalos [. . .] a nearly prehistoric solitude” (Orlani 1921). Notwithstanding these conditions, authors of the Romantic tradition from Chateaubriand to Théophile Gautier had to some extent reversed the notion of a desolate, lonely Agro Romano, celebrating the wild beauty that induced meditation and silence (Girard 1997).

12. These disenchanted words were written by the Président de Brosses, who made the following remarks on the Roman Campagna in 1739: “Do you know what this famous campagna consists of? It is a continuous mass of small hills—sterile, uncultivated, absolutely deserted, and intensely sad and hideous” (Brosses 1958) 1778, vol. 1, p. 298).


14. Latin has two synonymous words for “oak”: quercus (as in quercia, in Italian) and robur. See A. Ermout and A. Meillet, Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine (Paris, 2001), pp. 555, 575; and Oxford Latin Dictionary, fasc. 7, ed. P. G. W. Clarke (Oxford, 1980), pp. 1546, 1698. On the symbolism of the oak in Greek, Roman, and Celtic mythology, as well as in Judaism and Christianity (where this tree also denotes spiritual grandeur), see Tervarent 1997, p. 118.

15. Thullier 1974, pp. 6–7; Thullier’s original text is in Italian.


18. Frommel (1996, p. 111) recognized the double appearance, on the left of the picture, of Michelangelo’s Palazzo dei Conservatori, Palladio’s Palazzo Thiene (integrated by Poussin with an attic floor), a variant of Palladio’s Palazzo Iseppo da Porto, and a more classical variation of the Palazzo della Cancelleria in Rome. The present author’s proposed identification is the Villa Farnesina by Baldassarre Peruzzi and the Palazzo dei Conservatori by Michelangelo on the left; and the Palazzo Alberini by Raphael and Giulio Romano on the right (Ottani Cavina 1994, p. 50).


24. “Jamais je n’ai tant pensé, tant existé, tant vécu, tant été moi, si j’ose ainsi dire, que dans ceux voyages que j’ai faits seul et à pied. . . . La vue de la campagne, la succession des aspects agréables . . . tout cela dégage mon âme, me donne une plus grande audace de penser”: Les Confessions, in Rousseau 1959, p. 162.


28. The sheet (pen, lead point, and brown ink, 254 x 300 mm), stolen in the 1970s, is datable to about 1650 (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, vol. 1, no. 331).

29. Roland Fréart de Chambray was—as is well known—close to Poussin and a proponent of the theoretical principles of classicism (Fréart de Chambray 1662, p. 19).

30. “God as a geomter was a recurrent refrain, particularly for those of Platonizing inclination” (Kemp 2006, p. 168).


32. Ibid., vol. 1, p. 216.

33. “La filosofia è scritta in questo grandissimo libro che continuamente ci sta aperto innanzi a gli occhi (io dico l’universo), ma non si può intendere se prima non s’impara a intendere la lingua, e conoscere i caratteri, ne’ quali è scritto. Egli è scritto in lingua matematica, e i caratteri sono triangoli, cerchi, ed altre figure geometriche. . . . senza questi è un aggiunto vanamente per un oscuro labirinto”. Galilei 1633, p. 25.


35. “Poussin est en effet un grand Aigle dans sa profession, ou pour en parler plus nettement et sans figure, c’est le peintre le plus achevé et le plus parfait de tous les Modernes. Cela n’est pas difficile à faire voir aux Savants, qui examinent et jugent des choses à la manière des Géometers”: Fréart de Chambray 1662, p. 122.


37. See above, note 14.

38. It was Anthony Blunt who first drew attention to this passage and revealed that Poussin’s text depended on Gioseffo Zarlino’s sixteenth-century musical treatise (Blunt 1967, vol. 1, pp. 367–70). Fundamental contributions to this subject appear in Cropper 1984; Montagu 1992; Fumaroli 1994; and Hammond 1996.

39. This view was expressed by Charles Le Brun; cited by Montagu 1994, pp. 190–91.
The Conquest of Space: Poussin’s Early Attempts at Landscape

ALAIN MEROT

There was little at first to suggest that Nicolas Poussin would become one of the greatest landscape painters in Western art. Many of the works he painted shortly after his arrival in Rome in 1624, on mythological subjects, do feature a rustic setting and reflect his predilection for the poetic sensuality of Venetian Renaissance painting, but it was not until the late 1630s, when he was well past forty, that landscapes as such appeared in his canvases. Only at that point, notably with the pair of Evangelists for Giovanni Maria Roscioli (cats. 35, 36), did Poussin compose paintings in which the natural surroundings take precedence over the figures. And only at that point did he begin grappling with problems largely ignored until then, such as how to place his characters in a complex setting, how to create a sense of depth with this new space, and how to light an outdoor scene adequately—in short, how to make nature not merely an allusive and casually rendered stage decor, but rather the essential element of the composition, the factor that tightly coordinates (if not actually governs) the story and action.

While it might initially seem that the young Poussin received his training in an artistic milieu that gave short shrift to landscape, the reality is that this genre was not entirely ignored. Before examining the few works Poussin produced prior to moving to Rome, therefore, we should briefly discuss the masters under whom he trained and the models he was given to study.

The Examples of Varin and Lallemant

According to the most reliable sources, Poussin’s initial contact with “great” painting dates back to 1612, when Quentin Varin painted in Les Andelys (40 kilometers [about 25 miles] southeast of Rouen) the two signed and dated canvases now at the Collégiale Notre-Dame: The Martyrdom of Saint Vincent
were a major source of detailed panoramas for painters in need of accessories.

Several of Varin’s works subsequent to the Andelys canvases—The Wedding at Cana, painted about 1618–20 for Saint-Gervais in Paris (today in the Musée de Rennes); Jesus Healing the Paralytic, which Louis XIII gave in 1624 to the cathedral in Fontainebleau; and Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, painted that same year for the Convent of Discalced Carmelites in Paris—show that he had grown much more comfortable with handling space and was now arranging his figures in adroit perspectives reminiscent of the Flemish painter Marten de Vos (1532–1603). We can see how useful an interior setting could be to a painter of historical scenes—and, by contrast, how difficult it was to arrange an outdoor scene. Varin does the best he can. Careful to avoid too sudden a break between the proscenium, on which the two martyrs are depicted, and the backgrounds with their related episodes, he makes the ground look uneven, lowering it behind Saint Clair and raising it in tiers behind Saint Vincent. Despite the clumsy execution, one can sense a desire to resolve the problem of uniting story with landscape, as we would later find in Poussin’s work.

Soon afterward, Poussin arrived in Paris, where, according to Bellori and Félibien, he studied, without learning much of use, with one master after another—notably with Georges Lallemant, then a well-known religious painter and head of the city’s most active studio, and with Ferdinand Elle (ca. 1585–1637/40), a Flemish portraitist who might also have painted the series of six subjects from the Old Testament now at Notre-Dame-des-Blancs-Manteaux. Several of the episodes in this series contain, if not landscapes per se, at least distant vistas, rendered with a lighter touch and softer colors than were the massive figures in the foreground. A similar compositional approach, characteristic of late Mannerism, can be found in works by Lallemant such as The Charity of Saint Martin (Musée Carnavalet) or The Good Samaritan (Musée de Nancy), their powdery distances enlivened with minuscule impastoed figures. Lallemant’s way of conceiving space is quite different from Varin’s: here, there is little concern with construction and no attempt to relate the various planes; instead, strong discontinuities of scale among the figures are meant to give the viewer a feeling of depth. This imprecise
but poetic evocation of a legendary countryside bathed in vaporous light calls to mind the art of Niccolo dell’Abbate, Primaticcio’s assistant at Fontainebleau from 1550 to 1570, who is known for his mythological landscapes.

So it was that, from the outset, Poussin was confronted with two possible ways of treating landscapes: the more rational and scenic approach of Varin and the more approximate and poetic approach of Lallemant and his circle. Which approach did he choose for his earliest attempts? One of two canvases that have survived from his early Paris years—the monumental Saint Denis Crowned by an Angel (fig. 20)—includes a modest partial landscape reminiscent of the sculptural figures of Frans Pourbus the Younger. A vista on the left shows the saint after his martyrdom, holding aloft his own head to terrorize his executioners. The episode takes place at the foot of a tree, beneath a blue (and heavily reworked) sky; far in the distance one can make out a line of mountains and a hint of a river. Depth is suggested only in the most cursory way. The landscape, apart from softening the severe figure of the saint, evokes the primary scene of the miracle that followed his beheading by integrating it into the whole, thereby eschewing the old-fashioned device of medallions that Varin had used in Les Andelys.

Poussin’s interest in landscape in those early years is confirmed by a comment of Félibien’s. It concerns Poussin’s meeting and friendship with Philippe de Champaigne (1602–1674), who came to Paris in 1621 from Brussels, where he had trained with Jacques Fouquiquières. He, too, worked for a while at Lallemant’s studio but soon left him to “work on his own . . . because Lallemant got annoyed with him for observing too precisely the rules of perspective, and also for using natural models when he committed his light preparatory sketches to canvas.” The two young men took a room together at the Collège de Laon, probably in 1622: “It was there that they started getting to know each other and that Poussin, having confided to Champaigne that he wanted to create paintings of his own, made him a landscape.” Both men worked for a while at the Palais de Luxembourg, under the direction of Nicolas Duchesne (d. 1628), premier peintre to Marie de Médicis. It was possibly during this period that they created small views—some realistic, some imaginary—to decorate the wainscoting of fine homes, beneath the grand historical

scenes. The Flemish painter’s skill in this type of work was already well known. Unlike Poussin’s, Champaigne’s landscapes, skillfully composed and imbued with the “natural” quality his master disdained, remained influenced by his early training.

The Drawings for Marino

The fifteen pen-and-wash drawings inspired by Ovid’s Metamorphoses, made for the poet Giambattista Marino (most likely between August 1622 and April 1623), show Poussin breaking away from his post-Mannerist models and looking
for new solutions. The artist’s arrangements of figures in a shallow space, at surface level, took their inspiration from ancient bas-reliefs, and were the result of repeated experiments that he would continue to pursue in Rome after 1624. In these “tales,” where the characters occupy almost the entire area, nature and countryside generally take up little space. We can set aside the four jumbled battle scenes, which leave no room at all for background—or, in the case of The Death of Camillus, show only a few ruins and the outline of a tree. More relevant to our discussion are the mythological scenes: these reflect a young artist’s poetic universe, strongly marked by Marino’s concept, and help us understand how Poussin conceived of landscape at the time.

In the only two vertical compositions in the series, Mercury Killing Argus and Minerva and the Muses, the main groupings stand out against rapidly sketched backgrounds. In the first painting, a steep slope is topped with trees; in the second, a cluster of trees stands before a not-very-tall mountain, presumably Parnassus. We again see traces of Mannerism in these two works on paper. Depth is suggested by the powerful modeling of the bodies and by the minimal presence of nature. Similarly, in Polyphemus Spying On Acis and Galatea (fig. 21), the jumps in scale and the foreshortening bring to mind the art of the Fontainebleau School. Huge boulders and imposing trees provide a necessary frame for the figures. These three drawings, which might predate the others, show evidence of a style widely represented in prints from Antwerp and Prague published throughout Europe; and especially in the decorations of the Château de Fontainebleau, commonly reproduced in drawings and prints and certainly familiar to Poussin. His visual culture seems to have included many Franco-Flemish artists who worked for Henry IV, such as Ambroise Dubois (1543–1614), Toussaint Dubreuil, and their students and collaborators.

Indeed, Polyphemus has been likened to several studies by Dubreuil, preparatory sketches made about 1600 for decorations in the gallery of the Château Neuf in Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Poussin most likely knew this series of
paintings, illustrations for Ronsard’s *La Franciade.* Could he have had access to some of the sketches for this cycle, which have now been lost? It is tempting to think so. Drawings such as *Hyante Showing Francus the Valley Where She Will Reveal His Ancestry* (fig. 22) or *Hyante Gathering Magic Herbs* (Louvre), with their angled views of wooded landscapes rendered in wash, present striking similarities with Poussin’s composition. One can also compare the central grouping of *Minerva and the Muses* to the drawing *Hyante’s Companions* (Besançon) by a collaborator of Dubreuil’s in Saint-Germain, Guillaume Dumée (1571–1646); the allusive character of its treatment of bodies and landscape recurs on the drawing at Windsor Castle.

In the other drawings for Marino, landscape is given a smaller role and becomes almost symbolic. A few parallel tree trunks, vaguely sketched leaves, and the occasional boulder punctuate these compositions. They barely indicate the rustic context of the action in *Apollo Tending Sheep for Admetus, The Birth of Priapus,* or *Acis Transformed into a River God.* The artist has carefully arranged his actors on an almost bare stage, in dramatic proximity: Orpheus in the middle of Pluto’s cavern, Acis surging from the rocks with the springs. In *The Death of Chione* (fig. 23), a mere few strokes evoke a sort of clearing, giving the scene ample breathing room. It is as if Poussin were turning his back on the detailed landscapes of the Flemish painters, retaining only a few elements to give an allusive, even enigmatic twist to episodes such as *Thetis and Achilles* or *Dryopus Transformed into a Tree.* The artist humanizes nature by including the occasional accessory: a bed and a sheet in *The Birth of Priapus,* other sheets attached.
to tree trunks in *The Birth of Adonis* and *Thetis and Achilles*—
an approach that allows him to delimit space and reinforce
the parallels between the figures at surface level. This economi-
cal way of evoking settings in the various episodes of the fable
would be used by Poussin well into the 1630s, from *Cephalus
and Aurora* (fig. 24) to the Bacchanals for Richelieu, via the
Dresden *Kingdom of Flora* (fig. 53). The drawings show this
even more than the paintings: a group of trees and a few
rocks are enough to suggest place and rhythm in *The Origin
of Coral* (Windsor Castle), *Apollo and the Muses on Mount
Parnassus* (cat. 17), and *Acis and Galatea* (Chantilly), three
drawings from the late 1620s.\(^5\)

First Attempts in Rome: The Evocation of Place

We should not conclude from the apparently minor role
accorded landscape that the young Poussin was not interested
in the genre. For many history painters, landscape simply
didn’t exist, or was at most considered a peripheral detail, a
*parergon* (incidental work) best left to specialists primarily
from the North, but for Poussin it was more than a simple
ornament. His literary education led him to harmonize the
tenor of the episode he was illustrating with the spirit of a
given place, much as the ancient and modern poets did. A
few carefully chosen details are used to complete and focus
the subject in an allusive and symbolic way, so that they
become an integral and necessary part of the scene.

Denis Mahon has advanced the hypothesis that *Cephalus
and Aurora*,\(^4\) a wide and ambitious composition that can
indeed be related to the drawings for Marino, was painted as
eye as 1624 for the poet, who was then in Rome. (Marino
soon left for Naples and died there the following year.) It is
probably one of the first works Poussin painted in Italy. The
reddish coloring and the languor of the figures bespeak a
strong Venetian influence. A slightly later version of the same
episode from Ovid (in which the figures are larger within a
more restricted format) is at the National Gallery in London.
In the first version, there is a marked contrast between a dark mass of trees on one side and a lighter vista on the other. This procedure, which allowed the artist to plant his figures solidly while opening the space on either side, was borrowed from Titian, notably from his famous Martyrdom of Saint Peter Martyr, widely known in prints. In the later version of Cephalus and Aurora, as in the drawings for Marino, both the landscape and the effect of contrast have been reduced to almost nothing: some trees on the right, to which a sheet has been tied to conceal the goddess and the common mortal she is trying to seduce; a vague glimmer on the sea in the distance at left; and near the center, a reclining river god whom we can make out in the reddish shadows, a symbolic element borrowed from ancient statuary that Poussin would use over and over again.15

As in other works from this early Roman period, Poussin clearly had difficulty constructing a coherent space in which to arrange his figures. He often contented himself with an approximate setting, barely sufficient to contain his characters, especially when there were many of them. This has been noted in the biblical battle scenes in Saint Petersburg, Moscow, and the Vatican, in which one can barely make out the ground on which his myriad warriors overlap one another. In the Bacchus and Ariadne at the Prado,16 the ground rises opportunely to allow their superimposition on two tiers. In various subjects of the Bacchanals, as in the Dublin Acis and Galatea and the Louvre Triumph of Flora, the figures massed in the foreground obscure the middle ground: we pass without transition from the proscenium, so to speak, to a vague suggestion of hills in the distance. The warm harmony of colors dispels any sense we might have of approximation and disparateness. Even when Poussin works hard at suggesting spatial continuity, he is caught short. Thus, in the early canvas of Eliezer and Rebecca (in a private collection),17 he tries to highlight a flat area in the center, delineated by several buildings, some of them in ruins; to sketch out a stage setting; and to relate the foreground to the background via a figure walking away from the viewer. Yet the ensemble remains vague and the architecture hazy; there is nothing here to foreshadow the remarkable precision that the painter would display several years later.

In this period, Poussin created numerous medium-size canvases in which small groups of figures stand out against sparse elements of a natural setting—for example, Olympus and Marsyas (private collection, Geneva) or the two episodes from the life of King Midas: Midas at the Source of the River Pactolus (cat. 15) and Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus (cat. 20, fig. 70). A bit of ground, a few rocks, some angled trunks, and occasionally a spring or a river god are all he uses to situate the story. In Echo and Narcissus (fig. 25), one of the masterpieces from that period, a tree with silvery foliage, a boulder, and a few plants around the fountain

Figure 24. Nicolas Poussin, Cephalus and Aurora. Private collection
evoke the mystery of a place haunted by nymphs—in the spirit of the “abridged” landscapes that Roman painting borrowed from Hellenistic Alexandria. The arrangement of space is reminiscent of The Death of Chione drawing for Marino. This economy of means is all the more noticeable when we compare the Louvre canvas with the text of Ovid’s Metamorphoses (3.339–510), and especially with the engraving of Narcissus in the 1614 edition of Philostratus’s Imagines, an edition that Poussin surely knew and consulted. Ignoring the precision advocated by both text and image, he does not attempt to depict the grotto of Achelous, or the statues, ivy, and vines that decorate it. The fountain and the reflections in the water are merely suggested. The painter retains for his evocation only the flowers blooming next to the dying youth’s head. Much later, in 1657, when he again depicted the legend of Echo and Narcissus in The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus (cat. 58), of much more complex iconography, he would prove more faithful to Philostratus’s prescriptions. Even then, however, he did not adopt the style of the engraving, which even at the time of the first Narcissus must have struck him as dry and old-fashioned.

Neo-Venetian Inspiration

Poussin’s first years in Rome, from his arrival in 1624 to the early 1630s, are among the most difficult to study: the works
are neither dated nor documented, posing many problems in attribution—all the more so in that Poussin was surrounded by other artists who painted in the same style. The surest references from that period are several history paintings, important commissions that helped the artist establish his reputation: The Death of Germanicus (1627), The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus (1628–29), and The Plague at Ashdod and The Kingdom of Flora (both 1631). His landscapes (or more precisely, the subjects in which landscapes predominate) were at first mainly bread-and-butter works. Still, there was a growing market for landscapes among Roman collectors, and not only those of modest means. Paul Bril, Agostino Tassi, Claude Lorrain, and Gaspard Dughet worked for princes or prelates who commissioned them either to design frescoes or paint cabinet paintings. Wealthier Romans also liked large-scale canvases created in pairs or even in series, which they used to decorate the galleries and salons of their palaces. Although Poussin’s first attempts were generally of modest dimensions, some large-scale horizontal works suggest that he also created paintings intended to hang above doorways (see cats. 6 and 7).

Landscapes offered fledgling painters a more reliable source of income, as they were easier to sell than history paintings, which usually depended on ecclesiastical or private commissions. Poussin earned his daily bread by following a fashion that many others exploited as well. In a letter of March 23, 1650, Cassiano dal Pozzo, his primary patron at the time, wrote that Poussin could paint landscapes “superior in manner to those of Filippo [Napoletano] and Paul Bril,” and estimated their value at “fifteen to twenty écus apiece.”99 We now know that dal Pozzo was a great admirer of landscapes and that he owned many, not only by Poussin but also by a few of his other protégés. Thirty or forty years ago, this production was still almost entirely unknown. Thanks to Denis Mahon, Pierre Rosenberg, Clovis Whitfield, and several others, many such works have since come to light, and it is now possible to draw up a catalogue for this period that, although not entirely complete, distinguishes between Poussin’s works and those attributable to other painters in his circle.

These first Roman canvases were inspired by pastoral subjects that had been popular in Venice since about 1500, in works by Giovanni Bellini and especially Giorgione and Titian. These compositions were published as both drawings and etchings, mainly by the Campagnola; some of them, such as Titian’s Bacchanales for Alfonso d’Este, could even be seen in Roman collections. But it is also likely, even if not definitively established, that Poussin passed through or even stayed for a while in the city of the doges, probably before settling in Rome. In 1627, Giulio Mancini stated that the painter had come to Rome “after supporting himself for a while in Venice by painting in the Venetian style and spirit.” Jacques Thuillier has stressed that, while it is hard to dispute this contemporary account, it could just as well apply to Poussin’s first trip to Florence, in 1618–19.10 Was it Marino who advised his protégé to stop on the way? In that case, he would have left Paris in the fall of 1623 and spent the winter in Venice before arriving in Rome in April 1624, the date given by Passeri.

Poussin began painting landscapes in emulation of other painters—first and foremost Claude Lorain, but also Bolognese painters such as Domenichino, who adopted and clarified the Venetian models. At first he was fascinated by the sensuality of Titian’s canvases, by the harmony they established between the human figure and nature, and by their warm and saturated colors. Titian’s Bacchanales in the Aldobrandini Collection inspired him to create a number of relatively ambitious scenes in which nymphs and satyrs gather around Bacchus (fig. 26). The rustic setting is evoked in brown and gold tones (which have darkened with time), over which are lighter notes of red and orange, contrasting with intense blues. The sky is overcast, as if a storm were approaching. Handsome nude bodies offer themselves to our gaze, as in Venus Spied On by Shepherds in Dresden (cat. 11) or The Nurture of Bacchus in the Louvre (cat. 9). But the figures do not show the same joie de vivre as in Titian; everything seems more restrained and already meditative. Such is the case with The Youth of Bacchus at Chantilly (fig. 67) or the Bacchanales with Guitar Player in the Louvre (fig. 26), skillful compositions that group together figures at rest. More than the pleasures of the senses, these paintings glorify the fecundity of nature under the deity’s invocation—a nature evoked by vines and clusters of grapes intertwined with tree branches, in the setting sunlight. We again find these themes and tones in The Triumph of Flora in the Louvre, but here,
instead of Bacchus, are characters from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* posthumously transformed into flowers.

Denis Mahon has seen in these quasiromantic landscapes, in their way of using light and suggesting atmosphere, the influence of Giovanni Lanfranco (1582/83–1647), of whom Bellori wrote (perhaps thinking of Lanfranco’s *Ecstasy of Mary Magdalene*, painted for the Casino Farnese about 1615 and today in the Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Naples): “He was able to color his landscapes in grand style, particularly the distant backgrounds: he liked to say that the air did his painting for him.” This orientation seems to have been a response to the tastes of collectors, as is further demonstrated by works from other disciples of the Carraccis, such as Guercino, with his intimate naturalism, and especially Francesco Albani, who created idyllic landscapes for a prominent clientele. Albani’s mythological *tondi*, painted in 1617 for Cardinal Scipione Borghese, were inspired by Titian’s Bacchanals, though he later moved away from them in the series of the Four Elements of 1625–28 (Galleria Sabauda, Turin). In the 1630s, Pietro Testa placed his amorous couples amid an encroaching nature, with dramatically lit, distant vistas. In his *Massacre of the Innocents* (fig. 27), he includes a backdrop not unlike that in Poussin’s landscapes *alla veneziana*: to the right, a sparkling background with the Holy Family fleeing in a boat contrasts with the darker tones of the foreground. This strongly stressed distinction between the violent pathos of the main motif and its optimistic, even idyllic counterpart denotes a desire to reinvigorate, via a new “invention,” a theme that Marino set to verse in 1624 and that Poussin treated in his awesome canvas on the same subject at Chantilly.
During this time, Poussin frequented the circle of the Barberinis, in which the dominant intellectual was Cassiano dal Pozzo. For this learned patron, the artist painted what are referred to in documents as \textit{paesi con figure}—that is, landscapes with a figurative component. These have been identified through the publication of inventories as well as through the block-letter Latin inscriptions that appear on the reverse sides of the canvases.\textsuperscript{23} A member of the erudite Accademia dei Lincei, dal Pozzo was interested in history—not only pagan and Christian antiquity but also natural history, as shown by his correspondence with the Aix-en-Provence-born scientist Nicolas-Claude Fabri de Peiresc. His \textit{Museo Cartaceo} (Paper Museum), contains many watercolor sketches of plants, animals, minerals, and fossils,\textsuperscript{24} and he encouraged some of the young artists in his entourage to include animals in their landscapes. So it was that Poussin painted for him—in addition to several canvases depicting birds, which are now lost\textsuperscript{25}—a depiction of Hannibal crossing the Alps on the back of a huge elephant, and the early \textit{Eliezer and Rebecca}, in which he gave a prominent place to camels. These paintings are at once “historical” and documentary.

The landscapes painted for dal Pozzo, with their often complex themes, bear the hallmarks of true ambition. Their decorative function is sometimes apparent. The \textit{Landscape with a River God} (cat. 6) and the \textit{Venus and Adonis} (cat. 7), though now separated, originally formed an overdoor.\textsuperscript{26} A plenitude of ripe fruit, too intense to last, emanates from this grand, asymmetrical composition, over which there hovers

Figure 27. Pietro Testa (1612–1650), \textit{The Massacre of the Innocents} ca. 1639–42. Galleria Spada, Rome
the dual threat of storm and death. The painter tightly links his figures to the nature surrounding them. Trees and ground are rendered in a wide spectrum of fused colors, with a delectable impastoed surface. We can situate in the same period the Numa Pompius and the Nymph Egeria (fig. 37), along with other canvases of the same poetic quality that have recently been reattributed to Poussin: Apollo and a Nymph, The Death of Eurydice ([or Alpheus and Arachne?]), cat. 1, 2, and the Landscape with a Nymph and Sleeping Satyr (cat. 3), the latter incorporating references to ancient statues and paintings that could then be seen in Rome. Such works endeavor to combine learned allusions with visual enjoyment. In them, the immediate, emotional character of the Venetian landscape again predominates; lyrical sensuality takes precedence over rigorous construction. The same sensuality would imbue so intensely nostalgic a scene as the marvelous Diana and Endymion in the Detroit Institute of Arts, painted shortly before 1650.

The encounter and dialogue between a lively sensibility and a desire for order characterize Poussin in those years—a dialogue between Dionysus and Apollo, the Bacchans, and The Inspiration of the Epic Poet (Louvre). Apropos the latter and an earlier version of the theme in Hanover, Marc Fumaroli has shown how they might reflect, at several years’ remove, the opposition of two conceptions of antiquity and two forms of poetry current in Rome in the 1620s. Marino’s epic poem, Adone, celebrates a sensual, secular antiquity, derived from Ovid’s Metamorphoses and pagan fables, while the Poemata of Pope Urban VIII Barberini (1631) represents a shift toward an antiquity purified by Christianity. It is surely no coincidence that landscape, however allusive, occupies a significant place in the canvas at Hanover, whereas it disappears almost entirely in the second version, which is more serious in tone. In the Hanover canvas, boulders enclose the scene to the right, an allusion to Mount Parnassus and the spring from which the young Apollo-Bacchus drew the water he gives to the poet. In the Louvre version, the figures are arranged as if on a bas-relief and occupy almost the entire surface, leaving room only for the trunks of three symbolic laurel trees and a vista of hills under a vast, cloud-filled sky. Here, the accompaniment is a luminous atmosphere, a warm and vibrant envelope that brings the classically posed, statuesque figures to life. This is truly the mark of a painter who has appropriated and transformed the firmness of sculpture and the harmony of music and poetry into a sublime synthesis of the arts.

Landscape as Staged Setting

In Poussin’s stylistic evolution, the decade of the 1630s has long been considered a crucial crossroads. It is characterized in particular by the adoption of a classical model of scenic design, which ensured spatial coherence while allowing for changes in register and thematic decor, ranging from historical tragedy to the pastoral. Not only did this transformation affect history painting, but we also find a concern with more rigorous compositions in the landscapes: a transition from Venetian-style backgrounds, with their lively brushwork, to the more solidly constructed schemes of Annibale Carracci and Domenichino. The rectangular framework that encloses the scene—the limited “stage” on which the actors move, the “stage flats” on either side, the flies and “backdrops” of painted canvas—was tailor-made for arranging the details provided by nature into a decor. Gradually, such backgrounds replaced the more relaxed arrangements that tended to push the figures forward toward the surface of the canvas without creating much sense of depth, apart from a few cursory, sloping vistas. It was only in 1650 and 1651, with The Plague at Ashdod (Louvre) and The Kingdom of Flora, that this new manner of construction clearly appeared, in concert with a new poetic complexity that took its cue from the subjects being treated.

The urban setting in The Plague at Ashdod has often been compared to Vitruvius’s tragic stage set, as engraved by Sebastiano Serlio (fig. 28). From this the painting borrows its arrangement of a street that leads the viewer’s gaze toward the central vanishing point and the majestic Tuscan basilica on the right. But we also find echoes of the work of Renaissance masters such as Raphael and, especially, Baldassare Peruzzi (specifically, his fresco of the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple in Santa Maria della Pace, Rome). This harsh and oppressive cityscape is well matched to the lugubrious character of the subject and governs the expressive use of the affetti, on which the painter has lavished all his care. It contrasts
with the elegiac sensuality of The Kingdom of Flora. Here, the scene is a garden, delimited at left by a grotto and fountain and at the right by a small pergola. The setting might be interpreted as Poussin’s answer to the satyric stage set of Vitruvius and Serlio, except that he has replaced the leafy forest and rustic cabins with something much more refined. This “flower garden” (as it was called in early documents) was inspired by two etchings that reproduced the decorations in the Pavillon de Pomone at the Jardin des Pins in Fontainebleau. David Freedberg has related it to De florum cultura by Giovanni Battista Ferrari, a Jesuit who was close to the Barberinis. In the painting, nature is evoked metaphorically through the ancient fables of Ovid, reprinted by Marino, of the transformation of handsome youths into flowers (Ajax, Adonis, Narcissus...). The deities present—Flora, Apollo, Pan, Priapus—symbolize the fecundity of nature and the vegetation that grows from the fortuitous conjunction of earth, water, and sunlight.

Strictly speaking, neither The Plague at Ashdod nor The Kingdom of Flora is a landscape. But both of these masterworks mark that moment in Poussin’s career when he felt the need to explore historical events in all their complexity, distributing the figures relating the event harmoniously and effectively within an appropriate setting: in one case an ancient forum struck by divine malediction, in the other an elegant garden bathed in light. The structures depicted are more than simple accessories haphazardly scattered about: the temple, basilica, pergola, fountain, or statue are made part of the overall concept. A fusion, comprising various natural or man-made elements, is effected between the staged action and the setting. Both are necessary to this kind of “historical” landscape, which Poussin was one of the first to produce. The articulation of this union, which changes from work to work, defines one of the major aspects of Poussin’s landscapes.

The deliberate, meditated character of this spatial organization appears all the more clearly when we compare it with how Poussin’s contemporaries were using architecture. It has nothing in common with the many landscapes decorated with monuments and ancient ruins produced by Jean and Pierre Lemaire (fig. 29), who were in Rome from 1632 to 1639 and who also worked for Cassiano dal Pozzo, or those by Thomas Blanchet, who might have collaborated with them, or those by Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy, who also painted ruins. Their vision of antiquity was at once decorative and nostalgic—descendants of the Northern painters, the “Fiamminghi”—who were active in Rome in the second half of the sixteenth century and who specialized in painting ruins with figures, adding erudition to the genre of realistic “vistas” or imaginary landscapes. The work of the Lemairs, who depicted their monuments with fastidious care even as they took liberties with rudimentary ideas of archaeological accuracy, give the odd impression of being fantastic collages. The massive structures seem to crush the small figures, who are placed around the scene arbitrarily, with little thought to telling a story. Linear perspective is respected (albeit somewhat stiffly), but the discontinuities in scale eliminate any homogeneity and, consequently, any power of illusion in the scene. There is an evident attempt at integration in Theseus Finding His Father’s Arms (ca. 1633, Chantilly), for which Poussin painted the figures and Pierre Lemaire the architecture—more effectively than usual, as it was kept to a strict minimum. But in The Plague at Ashdod, the expressive gestures of the dying or weeping figures seem almost magnified by the monuments surrounding them. What
bifocal construction, Claude never cared much for Alberti’s notion of perspective, with its central vanishing point, which he found too restrictive for a landscape painter. Scenographic models appear in his work, at the end of the 1630s, only in relation to grand subjects such as The Embarkation of Saint Paula Romana at Ostia (fig. 30), commissioned by Philip IV of Spain for the Buen Retiro, a model for the majestic seaports the artist painted in the 1640s and 1650s.

Stage and Setting

It was essentially through architecture that Poussin obtained a new spatial coherence. He had a harder time achieving this

Charles Le Brun would later call the painting’s “general expression” enhances the force of conviction of the characters’ “specific expression.”

It is equally instructive to compare these paintings with those of Claude Lorrain. In his work prior to 1630, architecture and ruins do not frame the scenes. Often engulfed by an opulent nature, they simply provide picturesque motifs, relegated to the sides and serving as reference points or foils, as is the case with the paintings of Poelenburgh and Breenberg, Dutch painters also active in Rome. And, as with Paul Bril, the composition rests on contrasts in color and lighting—a method foreign to Poussin. Claude Lorrain’s practice merges with the recommendations of his friend Joachim von Sandart, who placed the accent less on the subject (even though he advised beginning by painting the figures) than on the background and its progressive fading through the use of aerial perspective. A believer in more empirical recipes, such as a
coherence when his story was set in nature. When forced to
develop a true landscape, as opposed to a cityscape or subur-
ban garden, he becomes less sure, and we again see a divide
between the “stage” and the surrounding “decor.”

In this regard, chronology, which is often highly uncer-
tain for works produced in Poussin’s early years, takes on
great significance and has given rise to a number of debat-
able and even untenable speculations.37 To give just one ex-
ample, Poussin painted two versions of The Return of the
Holy Family from Egypt.38 In both, the main figures are
placed in a small boat in front of a landscape. The version at
Dulwich (fig. 31) is usually dated about 1628–30, whereas the
one in the Cleveland Museum of Art (fig. 32) is placed much
later: about 1637–38 by Anthony Blunt, about 1632–33 by
Jacques Thuillier. By reversing this generally accepted order,
Denis Mahon raised an important question. He retained the
date of 1628–29 for the Dulwich canvas but placed the
Cleveland one earlier, about 1626, thereby forcing us to think
further about how much control the painter exerted over
landscape and the relationship between landscape and figure
at two different stages of his development. Declaring the
Cleveland version less adroit—it features a simpler arrange-
ment of characters in front of a more autonomous back-
drop—Mahon compared it with the Dulwich version, in
which he discerned “a much more forceful and dynamic
combination of the robust figures placed in a landscape
which, though impressive, is subordinated to the actions
of the figures rather in the nature of a stage setting.” And
indeed, the figures in this version occupy more space, are
weightier, and look more monumental (this is even true of
the flying cherubs around the cross), authorizing a compari-
son with paintings like The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus and
the sculptures of Bernini. But the treatment of the landscape
is abridged and perfunctory, with a unified tone that harks
back to the neo-Venetian experiments of the preceding years.
Though certainly more powerful than is the case with the
Cleveland version, the landscape seems no better related to
the figures.

The more precise and ambitious landscape is in the
Cleveland version. Composed in the manner of the Bolognese
painters, with a clear distinction between the various areas, it
seems to me a renewed effort on Poussin’s part to master a
genre that he was still handling poorly before 1630—and that
in 1632 and 1633 still hampered him from producing coher-
ent compositions. Despite his progress and the concern with
depth and variety, the landscape in the Cleveland Return of
the Holy Family from Egypt is still a kind of backdrop behind
the figures. This impression is reinforced by the arrange-
ment of elements in the composition, all in the foreground: the
Holy Family’s boat and the boatman, as well as the cherubs
above them and the trees symmetrically framing them.
Nonetheless, and keeping in mind the painting’s poor state
of conservation,39 it seems quite likely that this version was
painted later and that the landscape, even if not yet related
satisfactorily to the figures, is, as a landscape, more elaborate
than what is found in the Dulwich version.

Poussin’s research into his subjects was long and pain-
staking. Let us take, for example, works carried out in the
1630s: what sometimes predominates is the impression of a
backdrop behind carefully aligned figures, as in the two
versions of the Baptism of Christ (Getty, Louvre)40 or the
Ordination from the series of the Seven Sacraments painted
for dal Pozzo. For the latter, Poussin borrowed the frieze
of figures in front of a tree-lined landscape from Giovanni
Bellini’s Feast of the Gods (fig. 33),41 then in the Aldobrandini
Collection, Rome, together with Titian’s Bacchanals. He
used this scheme again, even more rigorously, in The Triumph
of Pan (National Gallery, London), from a series carried out
for Cardinal Richelieu (1634–36), in which the effect of depth
is more accentuated. Sometimes, by contrast, stress is laid on
the stage on which the actors of the istoria are arranged and
around which the elements of the setting are distributed. In
interior scenes or those set in a public space, such as The
Abduction of the Sabine Women (Metropolitan Museum, Louvre),
this stage has the appearance of a tiled pavement receding to a vanishing point, as recommended by Alberti
and done throughout the Quattrocento.

When the setting is in the open air, this pavimentum
becomes irregular and is hidden behind rocks or plants. The
finest example of this can be seen in The Israelites Gathering
Manna (fig. 34), in which the story is broken up into sectors,
or episodes, that help us enter into the subject and under-
stand its various ramifications. In his 1667 lecture to the
Académie Royale de Peinture, Charles Le Brun admired the
Figure 31 Nicolas Poussin, The Return of the Holy Family from Egypt. Dulwich Picture Gallery, Dulwich (London) (DPG 240)
Figure 32. Nicolas Poussin, The Return of the Holy Family from Egypt. The Cleveland Museum of Art (Gift of Hanna Fund 1953.156)
appropriateness of the arid, austere setting—the “desert affreux”—to the episode Poussin illustrated. Wide open and relatively flat in the foreground, rocky and more uneven toward the back, this landscape is a stage on which numerous actors harvest the nourishment God has provided. Their postures and facial expressions are quite diverse, ranging from despair to thanksgiving; they are distributed into distinct but interrelated groupings. Following them, the viewer’s gaze "wanders throughout the expanse of this desert." Linear and aerial perspective are strictly observed. This stage is surrounded—"embellished” doesn’t quite seem the word—by pieces of scenery: rocks and trees at right; to the left, the rocky mass pierced in the middle (inspired by an ancient painting, the Ninfeo Barberini), through which the light filters. Its majesty hangs above Moses and echoes his gesture, designating, like him, the transcendent presence of a God who gives back life and hope.

Travelers in the Landscape

To construct space in depth more rigorously, Poussin, like the Bolognese, used the motif of the road. We see it as early as about 1633 in the enigmatic Landscape with a Man Pursued
by a Snake (cat. 27), in which this artifice allows the artist to space out the characters of his brief and disturbing narrative. The construct becomes even stronger in Landscape with an Ancient Tomb (cat. 40), which until recently was attributed to Jean Lemaire,95 and which probably dates between 1635 and 1640. Its meaning, too, remains obscure. It is a “caprice” in an all’antica style, less prolix than those by Lemaire: the architecture and sculpture are imposing witnesses to an encounter, perhaps a dialogue, whose significance eludes us, though its intensity seems heightened by the authoritative way that space is delineated. In the pendants of about 1637–38 at the National Gallery in London, Landscape with a Man Scooping Water from a Stream and Landscape with Travellers Resting (cats. 28, 29), rough-hewn paths rush into the distance on a diagonal. Punctuated by the figures, they give drama to the landscape.

At this point, the theme of the voyage—a voyage over land, not over sea as was often the case with Claude Lorrain—began appearing in Poussin’s work. Roads, most often winding and difficult, become a symbol of life and of the obstacles facing humanity. Precursors of what Blunt called the “heroic” landscape, these works already express a vision of the world that is separate from the Christian concept of a “journey of the soul.” In them, we can perceive the painter’s Stoicism: the road might symbolize Fortune, the Fate that man cannot escape when he ventures into the world. Poussin amplified this motif a decade later in the large landscapes that feature Phocion and Diogenes (fig. 38, cats. 43, 62). Stylistically

Figure 34 Nicolas Poussin, The Israelites Gathering Manna. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7275)
speaking, the road winding between rough terrains, littered with clumps of trees and shrubs, establishes the preeminence of line: these landscapes are first and foremost drawn. Like Domenichino, Poussin is seeking to convey the continuity of planes, from front to back, and the relations between them by means of strongly linear motifs, such as roads, undulations, or waterways. In Claude’s work, by contrast, the composition is mainly described by the light and the contrasts in values between foreground and background.

It would of course be simplistic to posit an opposition between the active landscapes of Poussin and the contemplative landscapes of Claude. But even in paintings such as the Roscioli Evangelists (cats. 35, 36) in which nature encourages lofty meditations, Poussin always introduces a more dynamic, even bitter element that is distinct from his friend’s restful sweetness. In his treatment of The Finding of Moses from 1638 (fig. 83), the sculptural figures are grouped on a rocky platform, in front of a calm, shimmering river that joins the foreground to the distance. The ample rhythm of the architectural motifs in the background—the fortified bridge, the city, the pyramid—give an impression of balance and tranquil grandeur: there is a perfect correspondence between landscape and figures. The light colors of the women’s dresses stand out against a beautiful harmony of bluish grays. The eye embraces all these planes with the same clarity, so careful was the painter to subject the aspects of nature to a single law and to make his canvas into a fabric in which everything is related.

Whether backdrop or stage, the landscape draws out and highlights the story. The backdrops define the context, but the stage provides the base, a setting for the characters, and thus for the action. The skillfully drawn roads animate the landscape and give it a resolute, rather than contemplative, cast. On these roads, the impending action is inscribed as if on a blank page, rich in possibilities. Looking at The Israelites Gathering Manna or the Landscape with Saint Matthew, we cannot help thinking of Poussin’s working method, his practice of arranging modeled figurines on an “oblong plank” that served as the ground. He covered this miniature scene with a box with holes in the sides that allowed him to regulate the amount of light let in, and with a peephole in the front through which he could see and judge his composition, altering it as he saw fit. These compositions took shape primarily through the arrangement of the figures, their grouping and disposition in space. Poussin might embellish the ground with pebbles to simulate a rocky terrain, or with small bits of branches for trees. Behind, he might put a sketch of the setting and the distant vistas. In these scale mock-ups, landscape played its part. As such, it is easier for us to understand the often stereotyped appearance of many compositions of the 1630s. Having at that time renounced the charms of Venetian coloring, having chosen to construct rather than merely evoke, Poussin prepared the ground for a conception that would triumph in his mature years, from the Evangelists for Roscioli to the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe painted in 1631 for Cassiano dal Pozzo (cat. 57).

1. On the two paintings, see Thuiller in Meaux 1988–89, nos. 20, 21.
2. Le Nobiliaire de Vertu (1704) notes that “Varin was the first painter in France who could render perspective, and Brother Bonaventure of Amiens had given him the opening” (cited by Thuiller in Meaux 1988–89, no. 22).
3. Ibid., nos. 32–35 (entries by P. Ramade, who at the time attributed the paintings to Lallemand).
4. The second canvas is The Death of the Virgin (Sterrebeek, Belgium, Church of Saint-Pancrace; fig. 51).
5. This is the scene Poussin developed in a painting that shows Saint Denis frightening his executioners with his head (see fig. 52); ten copies of which were listed by Thuiller in London 1958, nos. 8–18 (the best of these seems to be the one in a private collection in New York). This attribution has not been generally accepted. According to C. Whitfield, for example, the original composition is by Antonio Carracci: cited by Mahon in Rome 1988–90, p. 30. At the same time, let us note that this composition, still marked by late Mannerism, articulates narration and space in a way reminiscent of the two Varins from Les Andelys. The figures, some of which are precisely garbed in the style of Lallemand, move awkwardly, scattered along parallel diagonals over an uneven terrain, dominated at right by a large tree that acts as the stage. The ground rises toward the foreground as an embankment on which one can
clearly see the saint dressed in white. In the background, the terrain dips sharply— which solves the as-yet-untried artist from having to relate the foreground to the background, where one can make out mountains and a town.

7. Ibid., p. 165.
8. On these drawings from the “Massimi Album,” housed at Windsor Castle, see Oberhuber in Fort Worth 1988, pp. 50–55 (drawings that this author considers simple copies); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, vol. 1, nos. 2–17; Thuillier in London 1953b, nos. 23–37; and Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, nos. 1–13.
11. Ibid., fig. 18; see also Scailliérez 1876, fig. 7.
12. A painting of the same subject (private collection) but with a different composition, which might be attributable to Poussin, shows a similar and extremely allusive conception of the landscape; see Mahon in Rome 1998–99, p. 15, fig. 4.
17. Ibid., no. 26 (Thuillier 1994a, no. B3). Mahon dates this painting (which he owns, and whose attribution has been challenged) to 1627, which seems too late.
18. Philostratus 1614, 1.23, p. 103. The illustrations for this deluxe edition were created by various engravers after drawings by Antoine Caron.
19. Rinehart 1961, p. 57. These are the oldest known documents regarding Poussin’s landscape painting.
20. Thuillier 1994a, p. 107; Mancini’s text is cited in ibid., p. 154.
25. A certain number of bird paintings are attributed to Poussin in the list of paintings in the dal Pozzo collection (established by Giuseppe Ghezzi), which were shown in 1715 at San Salvatore in Lauro, in Rome (Haskell and Rinehart 1960). Birds against a landscape setting were painted for dal Pozzo by Antonio Cinatti, two of which F. Solinas (1996b, p. 300, figs. 9, 10) has identified in a private collection.
27. Solinas 1996b, p. 318, n. 27.
30. Frommel 1996.
31. Vertumnus and Pomona by Antonio Fantuzzi, after Rosso (Zwemer 1962, no. AF38) and The Garden of Vertumnus by the Master L. D., after Primaticcio (ibid., no. LD7).
32. Freedberg 1996.
37. For instance, by re-creating the evolution of how the artist perceived and rendered space, Konrad Oberhuber (in Fort Worth 1988) claims to date to within a month of their composition the canvases Poussin painted during his first seven years in Rome. As such, Poussin, starting from a “French” tradition in which the figures’ gestures and postures suggest depth even as they remain at the front layer of the painting, would have gradually assimilated a more “Italian” concept based on linear perspective, finally mastering it about 1630 (notably in The Plague at Ashdod), before arriving at a new synthesis of the two manners in the Triumphs he painted for Richelieu. During those seven years, each of the three spatial axes (verticality, horizontality, and depth) predominated by turns; the fourth year (from July 1625 to July 1626)—a central pivot on either side of which the six others are symmetrically arranged—is characterized by a clarification of form and a deeper vision. Moreover, a short cycle is superimposed over this long cycle, so that within each year, Oberhuber notes a supposed influence of the seasons on the painter’s output: an exposition of the problems in the spring; sensual opening to nature in summer; and, at the end of the year, predominance of the intellect, consolidation of forms, and greater attention devoted to line. In short, according to the author, Poussin’s artistic creation was governed by biological rhythms.
39. Note that in 1966, Blunt considered the painting a copy of a lost original.
40. As F. Rosenberg pointed out (in Edinburgh 1981), Poussin made the figures stand out more in the Getty painting, whereas in the Louvre version he tried to integrate them better, notably via a faint diagonal line heading into the distance from right to left.
41. Bellini’s canvas, paid for in 1614 and retouched before 1629 by Dossi, then by Titian (who replaced part of the original curtain of trees with a mountain), is now in Washington. An old copy, sometimes attributed to Poussin himself, is in Edinburgh (see Edinburgh 1981, no. 6).
44. Discovered in Rome in 1657, this fragment of a fresco was copied in watercolor for Cassiano dal Pozzo’s Museo Cartaceo. See Lavagne 1993; Rome 2000a, section 27, no. 7.
“Peace and Tranquillity of Mind”:
The Theme of Retreat and Poussin’s Landscapes

Claire Pace

Poussin’s landscape paintings are often divided into various stages, with marked differences but also certain common characteristics or underlying themes. The first stage is usually identified as about 1630 to 1640, with either mythological subjects in a romantic Venetian mode or picturesque landscapes in the decorative naturalistic tradition of northerners in Rome; the second is the “heroic” stage of about 1648 to 1651, when noble and often Stoic subjects are set in landscapes of comparable nobility, characterized by lucidity and order; the final stage consists of the “ideal” or “mythological” landscapes of the late period, from about 1657 to 1665, when the forms of nature dominate and mythological beings are reintroduced—although they are almost abstractions—as metaphors or allegories for the processes of nature.

Rather than considering the landscapes from the familiar chronological standpoint, I propose here to adopt a more thematic perspective. Poussin’s landscapes may be studied from various angles: as “natural allegories” or hieroglyphs; as backdrops to a particular subject, mirroring that theme, according to the “theory of the modes”; as the expression of the different moods of nature; or as images of an idealized Roman Campagna. (All are valid, for particular works and different phases of the artist’s career.) I shall here adopt the “lens” of the theme of retreat and retirement, which was a dominant concern in the circles to which the artist’s patrons in both Italy and France belonged—both as a literary topos and as an experience in life. It may also have been an important factor in the perception and reception of landscape art, and it may have played a part in Poussin’s own approach to landscape. One strand among many, it may, of course, overlap with or may be integrated with other approaches.

The significance of this theme for Poussin has been noted by a number of writers. Jacques Bousquet, stressing “his inclination towards retreat and silence,” concluded that Poussin displayed “a voluntary distancing of himself from his surroundings” in relation to his milieu; in a recent study,
Olson has pointed to its relevance for Poussin and French patrons, and Bull has indicated the changing balance between nature and culture in the artist’s works. In a more general sense, Kitson has observed that the human longing for tranquility and order is the premise on which “ideal landscape” is based. Many Roman noble and papal families such as the Giustiniani—among Poussin’s patrons in his early years in Rome—owned villas on the outskirts or in the environs of Rome, to which they would retire in the summer. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that these families consciously emulated the Roman villa owners of antiquity, often decorating their villas with landscapes, according to the recommendations of Alberti and Armineni; thus, landscape depictions were associated with the idea of retreat from the city. Frascati, the site of ancient Tusculum, was particularly favored: it is seen as a haven from urban cares in the writings in praise of the Villa Mondragone by the poet Giovanni Guidiccioni, in the service of Scipione Borghese. He extols the fertility of ancient Tusculum, and in his discorso of 1633 asserts that the beauty of the site derives chiefly from the views, praising their variety. A writer of a previous generation, Giovanni Battista Agucchi, in the service of the Aldobrandini household in the Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati, may well have had some impact in developing a taste for landscape art; he was close to Domenichino, whom Poussin greatly admired, and whose ordered, rational approach to landscape influenced Poussin’s own. Whitfield has written of Agucchi’s “desire to retire from the world” and suggests that his idea del bello may underlie the ideal landscape tradition. Agucchi’s Relatione, describing the Villa Aldobrandini, also praises the variety of the “beautiful view” from the villa. His evocation of “a calm day in the most beautiful season” in his programme for the pastoral episode from Tasso, Erminia and the Shepherd (later the subject of an opera libretto by Poussin’s patron Giulio Rospigliosi) is marvelously embodied in Poussin’s luminous Landscape with a Calm (cat. 56), with its light tonality and sunlit buildings, gleaming expanse of unruffled water, and framing trees.

For French seventeenth-century viewers of Poussin’s works, the theme of retreat was not only an established topos in literature, but it was also a familiar experience in life, whether as a temporary break from the city, a chosen refuge, or enforced retirement. Madame de Sévigné and other Parisians enjoyed temporary sojourns in their châteaux or more modest residences in the suburbs or the provinces (the Perrault brothers received their friends in their house at Viry). Chantilly, the château to which the statesman and general “le grand Condé” retired, together with the writer Guez de Balzac’s house in the Angoumois, acquired exemplary status as “places of retreat.” An illustrious example of enforced retirement is that of François Sublet de Noyers, cousin of Poussin’s patron Paul Fréart de Chantelou (to whom most of the artist’s surviving letters are addressed), and the king’s surintendant des bâtiments, who summoned Poussin to France; during his retreat in disgrace from public office, he encouraged Chantelou’s brother Roland Fréart de Chambray in his writings on architecture. The Epître to Chambray’s Parallèle praises the “sweet tranquility” enjoyed in the “solitude of Dangu.”

The term retreat here includes not only the idea of relaxation and respite from cares—though this has been an important element in the appreciation of landscape painting since Alberti—but it also in many instances has a moral dimension, consonant with Poussin’s ideas in maturity that a certain distance is necessary for fostering philosophical detachment from the world, in order to bear the blows of Fortune (the Lucretian “detached spectator”). Retirement is seen, also, as encouraging artistic and intellectual endeavor (as pursued by Fréart de Chambray at Dangu), in accordance with Cicero’s advocacy of otium cum dignitate. In a wider sense, it concerns humans’ relationship with nature; in his complex mature landscapes, Poussin explores humankind’s place in the natural world: the relationship between the figures and their setting, or between culture and nature, is one of his abiding preoccupations.

Poussin’s Way of Life

Poussin’s way of life in maturity is notable for a concern with independence, a desire to distance himself from the world. Admittedly, his arrival in Rome was marked by stirrings for recognition and “a genuine sociability,” in Bousquet’s words. Thuillier described the artist in 1624 discussing artistic matters surrounded by a circle of painters in the studio of
Simon Vouet (1590–1649), and we recall Poussin’s willingness in old age to take a glass of wine with his neighbor Claude, as described in a celebrated letter from Abraham Brueghel, and to discuss artistic matters with a few congenial companions during his walks on the Pincio. Friendship with loyal patrons such as Chantelou was of great importance to him, but, in general, surviving documents and the artist’s views as expressed in his letters convey a sense of detachment and withdrawal from the competitive atmosphere of the papal court. Bellori tells us that “he fled courts and the conversation of courtiers.”

Poussin showed a similar independence in his way of working and attitude to work; he had no large studio (contrast Rubens or Vouet) or grands projets, preferring to work for private patrons. Some of his earliest small-scale mythological paintings appear to have been made for sale, but in general he worked chiefly for patrons with whom he felt in sympathy: in Rome, Cassiano dal Pozzo, the learned member of the Barberini household who shared the artist’s fascination with classical antiquity and also his interest in natural phenomena, and, from the 1640s onward, members of the intellectual bourgeoisie in France, especially Chantelou. The fact that landscape painting was aimed at private patrons, allowing the artist greater freedom and independence, would have been congenial to him. He avoided large-scale fresco decorations, and was unhappy when in France he was burdened with the project to decorate the Grande Galerie in the Louvre. On his return to Rome, he wrote that his one desire was to “work in Rome and remain in peace.” A letter from Gabriel Naudé to Cassiano, decrying the “turbulence” of Paris, states that Poussin “returned to Rome in order to lead a more tranquil life”—for him Rome represented tranquillity.

Although he certainly responded to public events, especially the dramas of the Fronde in Paris, as well as civil war in England and the revolt of Masaniello in Naples, it is clear that Poussin preferred to view such turbulent happenings from a distance: he writes to Chantelou in 1649: “It is a great pleasure to live in a century where such great events take place, provided that one may hide away in a corner, so as to watch the comedy at one’s ease.” This picture of solitary detachment is supported by Félibien’s account of Poussin’s habit of going out into the countryside alone: “He avoided social gatherings as much as he could so that he could retire alone to the vignes [vineyards] and most remote places in Rome. . . . It was during these retreats and solitary walks that he made light sketches of things he came across.”

His household was a modest one, as indicated by the celebrated anecdote, recounted by Bellori, of Poussin and his friend and patron Cardinal Camillo Massimi; when Poussin saw his guest to the door, and the cardinal expressed concern that the painter had no servants, Poussin responded, “And I pity your Eminence more because you have so many.” The house itself, in Via del Babuino, was similarly modest in comparison with those of contemporary artists such as Pietro da Cortona (1596–1669); as Spatti observes, this modesty did not result from constrained circumstances but reflected a definite choice. In a letter of August 1639, Poussin evokes “the peace and sweetness of my little house.” (The inventory of the artist’s possessions at his death shows a puzzling meagerness in the goods listed, in view of his substantial financial reserves.) Thullier suggests that his modest marriage, also, may be seen as a kind of “renunciation” of social ambition.

As Blunt suggests, Poussin’s views in maturity, as expressed in his letters, are in accordance with those of Seneca and later Stoics, that one should keep out of public life and cultivate a life of contemplation, as well as with those of neo-Stoic writers such as Montaigne, who deplored “the slavery of courts.” Writing to Chantelou, Poussin asserts: “I have no doubt that you view with fear rather than pleasure the possibility of returning to the tangled life of the court.” Tranquillity of mind is the quality he values most highly—all the more precious for being hard won, after the “fury” of his youth, and illness and trials undergone. He continues: “The peace and tranquillity of mind that you may possess are treasures without equal.”

Certain of the artist’s views are in tune, also, with those of the libertins—the group of skeptical writers and thinkers who challenged conventional religious beliefs. Pintard is cautious about overstating the connections, but—although Poussin may not have shared all their convictions—it is certain that he was in contact with libertin circles in both Rome and Paris. Through Cassiano’s entourage in the 1630s, he knew Naudé, later Mazarin’s librarian (in Rome until 1642), and was in touch with Pierre Bourdelot, physician to the
French ambassador, who records the artist’s presence at a convivial gathering in Paris in 1642. He shared the libertins’ ethical standpoint, derived from neo-Stoicism, and particularly their views concerning the supremacy of Fate, identified with laws governing the cycle of death and regeneration, and their belief that the workings of nature were the cause of immaterial phenomena. The parallel drawn between the structure of nature and laws governing human behavior is central to his approach to the depiction of landscape.

Poussin’s Interest in Landscape

The number of landscapes that Poussin painted is probably greater than those now firmly attributed to him; for instance, Louis-Henri de Loménie, comte de Brienne, in his Discours refers to “more than 30 small landscapes that I saw by his hand in various Paris collections.” Although his activity as paysagiste developed fully only in the late 1630s, we now know that his interest in landscape emerged about 1630 or even earlier—an interest evident in the small paintings with nymphs, satyrs, or mythological figures in landscape settings made in his early Roman years and generally dated to the late 1620s or early 1630s. Many were painted for Cassiano dal Pozzo, as recent studies of inventories and inscriptions have confirmed. Such mythological scenes were often described as paesi, as in the 1638 Giustiniani inventory.

Most telling of all is a 1630 letter from Cassiano, stating that Poussin was willing to paint prospettive superior to those of Filippo Napoletano (ca. 1589–1629) and Paul Bril (ca. 1553–1626). Clearly, Poussin was linked to the Northern naturalistic landscape tradition at that date, and we know from Félibien and Sandrart that he drew from nature in the 1630s. Pierre-Jean Mariette, owner of some of the drawings, recognized that they formed the foundation from which the artist’s ideal vision of an antique world developed: “[O]n the basis of these studies, he composed in his studio those noble landscapes which make the spectator feel that he has been transported to ancient Greece, to those enchanted valleys described by the poets.”

The attribution of Poussin’s landscape drawings is still much debated, and it is difficult to be certain which were made sur le motif, but a drawing such as the study of a group of trees and undergrowth in the Louvre (cat. 78), with dappled use of wash, may represent his close focus on the individual forms of nature in the early 1630s. A dazzling image of the Aventine (cat. 80), slightly later, shows the artist’s concern with analyzing the structure of the landscape—in itself “architectonic,” as Shearman observed—and his concern with bold contrasts of light and shade. The later landscape drawings turn from the use of wash—associated with Northern artists in Rome—to the pen and ink of the Bolognese graphic tradition, as in the tremulous but poised late drawing of trees formerly in Uppsala (fig. 35). In Harris’s words, Poussin’s drawings reveal his “intimate thoughts in his untrusting quest for order at the heart of nature’s chaos.”

Landscape art, generally low in the official hierarchy of genres, was not subject to the strict regulations of history painting; both its practice and its enjoyment were held to involve a certain freedom from rules. Bosse commented in 1649: “I have seen . . . some landscapes that he made for pleasure (par divertissement) that must be among the finest in that category.” (Yet the foundation of “ideal landscape,” deriving from the Carracci and Domenichino, was that landscape might gain in dignity and status if it depicted a noble subject or selected the most beautiful aspects of nature.) For the viewer, one attraction was the liberty of the eye to roam, as expressed by Cardinal Federico Borromeo: “[P]aintings enclose in narrow places, the space of earth and the heavens, and we go wandering, and making long [spiritual] journeys standing still in my room.” This is analogous to the pleasure derived from viewing the actual landscape, which many writers on rural life considered one of its chief attractions; for example, Alberti lauds not only the “liberty” of life on a country estate, but also the pleasure given by viewing a varied setting.

The Golden Age

The idea of retreat to the countryside may be linked to traditional notions of a pastoral Arcadia and the Golden Age, as recounted by Hesiod and Ovid. Although for Ovid the two are distinct, there was considerable overlap in contemporary
interpretations, epitomized in Tasso’s chorus in praise of the Golden Age in his pastoral drama, *Aminta*. With Virgil and Tibullus, the age of Saturn and the Golden Age are identified; for Tibullus, the Golden Age is an age of love. In general, the Golden Age implies physical abundance in nature: the concept of nature’s fecundity was one of Poussin’s persistent preoccupations, often embodied in figures of nymphs. Bacchus, too, was associated with fertility, and with the sun, according to mythographers such as Natale Conti, and Bellori states that Poussin painted a number of *baccanali* in his early Roman years. Most date from the mid-1620s—for example, the Bayonne *Bacchanal*, which may allude to Virgil’s *Eclogue* 6, as well as versions of the childhood of Bacchus, which have the quality of “tenderness” appropriate to pastoral poetry. The theme of nature’s fertility—sometimes contrasted with sterility—was one to which Poussin returned in his late paintings, notably the complex *Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus* (cat. 58) of 1657 (described by Félibien as a landscape), where the groups of nymphs at the left and center are contrasted with the isolated figures of the dead Narcissus and plangent Echo on the right; the setting pro-
vides a similar contrast, with lavish vegetation behind the nymphs and barren rocks behind Narcissus. An analogous contrast occurs in Poussin’s final unfinished painting of Apollo and Daphne (fig. 12), in which the regal figure of Apollo, representing light and fertility, enthroned on the left, stares across at the unresponsive figure of Daphne on the far right.

Italy and especially Rome were associated with the Golden Age; in the second Georgic, Virgil had praised the fertility of Italy (lines 136–76), and this is a recurring theme. Many seventeenth-century travelers emphasize the country’s natural abundance. Although the Roman Campagna itself was in the seventeenth century relatively arid, many writers nostalgically recalled the days of antiquity when it was peopled and more fertile, harking back to the early days of Rome, as to the Golden Age. For the early history of Rome was linked with the mythical age of Saturn, following Ovid’s account in the first book of the Metamorphoses, as well as the description in Virgil (Aeneid 8.321–25) of Saturn’s arrival in Latium, as recounted by Evander.55

Poussin’s Landscape with Polyphemus (fig. 36) contains explicit allusions to the Golden Age, which the Cyclops was held to inhabit; Polyphemus, lamenting his love for Galatea, seems to grow out of the towering mountain—Mount Etna in Sicily—in the distance. The cultivation of the land (shown in the middle ground) belonged to the Silver Age, with the introduction of the plow and the ship, and nymphs denoting fertility inhabit the foreground. The painting thus illustrates a moment of transition. The Golden Age is generally located in the distant past—a “land of lost content”—but Virgil’s fourth Eclogue provides the most famous formulation of the future return of a Golden Age, associated with Saturn and Astraea. Here one may suggest an affinity with the later Stoics’ view of the cyclical processes of nature, which seems to be at the heart of many of Poussin’s landscapes and mythologies also.

Poussin’s early poésie are steeped in the Venetian tradition of the pastorale, the fruit of the artist’s study of Venetian paintings then in Rome. These are sensuous depictions, expressing the fecundity of nature, embodied both in the landscape itself and in the semideities who inhabit it: water nymphs—“nurses of all creatures,” in Conti’s words—fauns, and satyrs, whereas the Ovidian themes recount the loves of the gods, in particular, of Venus, linked to the month of April in Ovid’s Fasti.

The Montpellier Venus and Adonis (cat. 7) and the Landscape with a River God (cat. 6), originally part of the same painting, offer an opulent vision of figures embracing in a rich, rolling landscape that echoes their rounded forms. (The publication of his patron Giambattista Marino’s poem Adone in 1623 surely influenced Poussin in his choice of theme.) The Landscape with a River God—like the Landscape with a Nymph and Sleeping Satyr (cat. 3), in Montpellier—unites Venetian opulence with classical references: the tonality is dark, with strongly contrasted light effects and saturated coloring, and the river god, which appears in so many paintings, signifies the genius loci, the spirit of the place.58 The Venus and Adonis was made for dal Pozzo, and we know from the inscription on the reverse that it is intended to be a view of Grottaferrata, the summer residence of popes. As Pope Urban VIII, Maffeo Barberini wrote a number of poems on the delight of rural retirement in Grottaferrata: for example, a poem in the Horatian tradition, “In praise of rustic things.” In an invitation to Lorenzo Magalotti, Urban praises the extensive prospect, and values the tranquillity arising from such contemplation.59

Another early work, Numa Pomphilus and the Nymph Egeria of about 1627 (fig. 37), a rare subject, was probably also painted for Cassiano.59 The painting again shows a specific site, here with numinous associations: the Grove of Diana near Ariccia, with Lake Nemi and the Alban Hills.59 The subject anticipates Poussin’s later preoccupations: Numa, the virtuous second king of Rome, was praised for his ability to rule both his own passions and the citizens of Rome. After his wife’s death, he wandered alone through the sacred groves and meadows, leading a solitary life in places “remote from the company of men.”55 In Poussin’s painting, Numa, standing on the right, holds the fabled golden bough, associated with Aeneas’s descent into Hades, described by Virgil as a sign of destiny. One of Poussin’s leading concerns in maturity—that of submission to the demands of destiny—is foreshadowed here: Poussin refers in a letter of 1665 to the “golden bough” presented to Aeneas as a sign of destiny and the gift of inspiration. The figures are not yet fully integrated with the landscape setting; the nymph Egeria reclines in the left foreground,
and the pastoral figure playing a pan pipe in the center, as Rosenberg observes, evokes a Virgilian and Arcadian world, linked in many accounts to the early history of Rome.55

"Enchanted Valleys": A Pastoral Arcadia

The topos of Arcadia was important for Poussin: witness not only the celebrated depictions of Arcadian shepherds but also the figures of Pan, the tutelary deity—"god of the Arcadians," in Marino's words—of Syrinx and other nymphs, and of satyrs, the inhabitants of Arcadia, in his early works.56 Like the Golden Age, Arcadia was associated with the early history of Rome. The founders of Rome were inhabitants of a pastoral world: Romulus was a shepherd, and Evander was an exile from Arcadia, living as a shepherd king in Italy, and the first settler on the Palatine hill, according to Ovid's Fasti. Travelers often commented that the Palatine and Campo Vaccino had now reverted to their original pastoral state.

The concept of Arcadia, which has been defined as the "landscape of an idea," is one of potential seriousness and complexity, exploring the tension between man's desire for an ideal world of nature and the ineluctable demands of the actual world. For Panofsky, Virgil transferred elements of
Theocritus’s Sicilian pastoral to Arcadia, and the concept was revived in Jacopo Sannazaro’s romance in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{57} Whereas Panofsky emphasizes the visual unity of the imaginary landscape, however, Virgil’s landscapes in the Eclogues are more varied and accord with Vitruvius’s recommendations for wall paintings—including not only the archetypal locus amoenus but also farm scenes, rustic countryside with shrines, and the wilderness of Eclogue 10, the only extensive description of Arcadia.\textsuperscript{58} (We may discern an analogous variety in Poussin’s landscapes, and the diverse activity he shows, ranging from roads bordered with fountains and shrines, and pastoral episodes with abundant vegetation, to the primeval mountainous scenery of the late landscapes.)

Sannazaro’s romance Arcadia, of central importance for seventeenth-century interpretations, generated a proliferation of pastoral dramas, which enjoyed a huge vogue in the seventeenth century; there were frequent performances in noble Roman households, including that of the Barberini, who built a theater in their Quirinal palace. The popularity of pastoral drama may have encouraged a taste for landscape art, and the landscape backgrounds in some of Poussin’s early mythologies or landscapes with travelers recall stage settings, with a tuft of trees, a group of rocks, or a grotto suggesting a
pastoral setting, or "wings" of rocky bluffs establishing recession. A schematic use of such "signs" denoting landscape, common in the 1620s, gave way in the 1630s to a greater concern with establishing a convincing spatial setting. Poussin drew on Serlio’s rendering of the Vitruvian scena tragicca for _The Plague at Ashdod_, and the scena satyrica may lie behind some of these settings. Bellori suggests that Poussin may have viewed the scene before him in terms of theater, describing his walks on the Pincio, "from where a most beautiful view of Rome opens out, with its handsome hills, which together with the buildings evoke a theatrical stage setting." 59

The term _poésie_ applied to Poussin’s early mythologies implies not only a debt to Venetian painting but also a parallel with pastoral poetry, especially Virgil’s bucolic poems (which, like Poussin’s landscapes, also include some georgic elements; such a parallel accords with the humanistic theory of poetry current in the seventeenth century, with its emphasis on the “sister arts” of poetry and painting). There may also be an echo of the poems of Marino’s _Sampogna_, which contains an “idyll” devoted to Syrinx, recalling Poussin’s painting of _Pan and Syrinx_ (1637; Dresden), with its lyrical rendering of the nymph Syrinx fleeing Pan in a grove of trees, her white body echoed in a silvery tree trunk behind her, contrasting with the earthy tones of Pan and the satyrs. 60 Poussin wrote that he had painted the scene with “love and tenderness” because “the subject required it.” 61

This comment recalls Poussin’s letter expounding his theory of the modes, in which he considers the question of an appropriate style (“convenance de parler”) with reference to Virgil’s “three kinds of speech”—the styles suited to bucolic, georgic, or epic verse. 62 Pastoral poetry may, however—like landscape painting—be elevated by the introduction of a noble theme; thus, pursuing the Virgilian analogy, the pastoral poet may encompass in his scope “woods worthy of a consul.” The tradition of the allegorical eclogue (deriving from Virgil’s fourth _Eclogue_), encoding a complex meaning in simple form, may also be seen as an appropriate analogy to Poussin’s mature landscape compositions, which embody noble, even epic subjects. 63

Poussin’s early _Pastoral Scene_ (cat. 19)—with a shepherd playing a pipe and seated beneath a tree, recalling _Eclogue 1_—is one of his most explicit allusions to the Virgilian bucolic theme. 64 The pastoral figures in the _Landscape with a Calm_ (cat. 56), described by Kitson as Poussin’s nearest approach to pure pastoral, are again signs evoking the bucolic tradition. Figures of shepherds recur in many landscapes; see, for example, the _Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion_ (fig. 38), in which a shepherd leaning pensively on his staff is positioned in the center, directly above the corpse of Phocion. 65 The painting, a supreme example of the lucidly ordered landscapes of the artist’s “heroic” period, has been seen through the “frame” of the “elegiac pastoral,” deriving from Virgil’s _Eclogue 5_—with the inclusion of poplars, trees associated with mourning, inclined over the group bearing Phocion’s body. The _locus classicus_ for “elegiac pastoral” in Poussin’s works is his rendering of _The Arcadian Shepherds_, especially the second version (fig. 39), which is imbued with a Virgilian atmosphere—for instance with the inclusion of a beech tree, the Virgilian _fagus_—rarely found in the actual Campagna. 66 The pose of the shepherd on the left—again leaning on a staff, with crossed legs—has been compared to that of figures on funerary monuments, but it also recalls certain figures in the Roman Virgil, illustrating the _Eclogues_, a manuscript that Cassiano borrowed, together with that of the Vatican Virgil, in 1632. Cardinal Massimi borrowed the Vatican Virgil in the 1640s and again in the 1660s, and, in the 1660s and 1670s, had pages of both manuscripts copied for him in watercolors by the Bartolii. 67 The elegiac Virgilian vision underlies many of Poussin’s landscapes: inherent in the idyllic scene is hidden danger, such as the serpent that appears in so many of the paintings (from _Eclogue 3_, “a snake lurks in the grass”), yet the individual tragedies are ultimately subsumed into nature’s overall harmony. Bardon suggests that Poussin’s landscapes may owe part of their “final grandeur” and their _recueillement_ to Virgil. 58

Gardens as Retreat

Whether in rural villa estates, or _in vigna_, or in _palazzi_ in the city itself, gardens were a distinctive feature of seventeenth-century Rome. The garden was also seen as a place for withdrawal and contemplation, according to the neo-Stoic writer Lipsius (praised by Montaigne), whose _De constantia_ (1584)
includes three chapters on gardens as offering a haven from the cares of public life. (The 1677 inventory of Massimi’s possessions reveals that his library contained a copy of Lipsius’s writings.) In the Italian translation of 1620, the author praises gardens as offering refreshment and “calm to the spirit” and “a sure refuge from irritations and disturbances,” citing “philosophers and sages” who took refuge in gardens. 69

The first garden—the Garden of Eden or Earthly Paradise—is represented in Poussin’s verdant and abundant Spring: Adam and Eve (cat. 66), the first of the Four Seasons series of 1660–64; strangely, here it lacks the serpent, which is displaced to Winter: The Flood (fig. 42). Mérot has suggested that the work may carry a nostalgic recollection of the lush Normandy of the artist’s childhood, 70 but, as with Arcadia, the apparently idyllic scene represents a state of innocence that will soon—as viewers are aware—be disrupted. Hazlitt recognized this in his eloquent account of the painting as “the very ideal of landscape painting [which] throws us back to the first ages of the world, to the only period of perfect human bliss, which is, however, on the point of being soon disturbed.” 71

Freedberg has suggested links between the contemporary interest in gardens and cultivation of flowers—notably the Barberini gardens and Ferrari’s De florum cultura—and Poussin’s The Kingdom of Flora (fig. 53) described by the artist as a giardino), with its delicate pergola and cast of players transformed into flowers. 72 Cassiano owned a garden near Nervi, where he cultivated flowers and vegetables, and there are many botanical drawings in his Museo Cartaceo (the so-called Paper Museum). 73 In a letter to Cassiano’s brother
Carlo Antonio, Poussin himself praised the garden of his spacious dwelling in Paris, set in the Tuileries: “There is . . . a fine, extensive garden, full of fruit trees, a wide variety of flowers and plants, with three little fountains, and a well, as well as a beautiful courtyard, where there are more fruit trees . . .” He appreciates the vista that the garden offers: “I have views which open out on all sides, and I think in summer it must be a paradise.” There was a much smaller garden in his more modest house in Rome.74

“Happy the man . . .”

The cult of retreat from public life, preferably in the country, was one of the standard topoi in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.75 It derives from classical sources, especially Virgil’s second Georgic (“O fortunatos nimium . . .”) and Horace’s second Epode (“Beatus ille . . .”).76 The advocacy of retreat was taken up in humanist Italy, in Petrarch’s writings and, especially, in Renaissance villa literature.77 Life in the country, contrasted with that of the town, is described as “a true likeness of Paradise,” for “there are found fair peace, true freedom and certain tranquillity.”78

Writings in an austere and Stoic vein advocating a “heroic” type of retreat from city and country, with associations of renunciation and strenuous endeavor, derive from agronomists like Columella and from Renaissance villa literature. The heroic days of Roman history are held up as exemplary.79 Other writers adopt a softer, more Epicurean vein, emphasizing the advantages of otium (relaxation and enjoyment), which is present also in Horace’s Epode.80 The Epistles of Pliny the Younger are an important source here; a late seventeenth-century translation praises the recueillement of “a sweet and innocent life” in the country.81

In parallel, and sometimes overlapping, with the advocacy of rural retreat, the cult of solitude, again deriving from Petrarch, also flourished throughout Europe in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Writers praised the

Figure 39. Nicolas Poussin, The Arcadian Shepherds, also known as Et in Arcadia Ego. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7300)
attractions of the désert (which might mean no more than a country estate, not necessarily a wilderness). The cult of both rural retreat and solitude is reflected in contemporary verse, echoing Petrarch or classical sources, from the late sixteenth century onward. In 1617, Saint Amant (a fellow Norman who might have met Poussin) wrote in praise of “La Solitude” as conducive to artistic creation. At about the same time, there appeared another poem dedicated to “La Solitude,” this one by the libertin Théophile de Viau (who lauded Poussin as “the king of Painting”). Mersenne, however, denounced the cult of solitude as one of the marks of the libertins.

The topos of retreat is essentially related to the question of public or private, active or contemplative life—in the words of Montaigne, “that long comparison of the solitary and the active life”—which provoked numerous dialogues and essays on the relative advantages of urban and rural existence. An inscription in Montaigne’s cabinet describes how, at the age of thirty-eight, he retired to his ancestral home, “which he has consecrated to his library, to his tranquillity, to his leisure.” In his essay “De la solitude,” Montaigne cites Pliny the Younger and Cicero, and concludes that solitude had more justification for “those who have given to the world their most active and vigorous life.”

The inscription on Baudet’s engraving of the 1683 after Poussin’s Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain (cat. 38), painted about 1648, probably for Pointel, suggests that seventeenth-century viewers may have inferred just such a meaning from the painting. The print is dedicated to Louis II de Bourbon-Condé, called the Grand Condé, “resting with such dignity among the delights of his most agreeable country estate” (Inter amorem isaeae villa suae delitiae, cum tanta dignitate otianti), an echo of Cicero’s otium cum dignitate. The question of the proper use of otium was a frequent topic of debate in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; following Cicero and Petrarch, it was argued that otium should be employed not only for relaxation but also for study, reflection, and creative endeavor. The painting was described by Constable as “full of religious and moral feeling”; this “moral feeling” may be related precisely to the renunciation of the life of the city and advocacy of rural retreat. Indeed, Blunt held that this painting, together with the Dulwich Travellers Resting, also called A Roman Road (cat. 39), alluded to “the virtues of country life, as set forth by Varro, Cato and ancient works on agriculture.” The man kneeling on the left by a fountain is balanced by two seated figures on the right, and recession is established by a gently meandering road beneath large umbrageous trees; a graceful female figure, recalling antique painting, bears a vessel on her head, and on a tree in the middle distance hang the warrior’s arms, together with the image of a tutelary deity. The fountain in the foreground may allude to the idea of purification—an example of Poussin’s fascination with the element of water, found in so many of his paintings.

In Pierre Charron’s De la sagesse—certainly known to Poussin—country life is described as encouraging wisdom and contemplation, whereas cities are likened to “very prisons to the spirit, like cages to birds and beasts.” Charron particularly values the sense of intellectual liberty in rural as opposed to urban life, for, he declares, it is difficult to develop “free and fine thoughts and meditations” in the tumult of city life. (By implication, the contemplation of the landscape, or images of landscape, is also conducive to meditation.)

The magnificent Landscape with Diogenes (cat. 62) exemplifies the theme of such “philosophical” retirement. Poussin was the first to treat this episode, though Salvador Rosa later painted two versions; however, whereas Rosa’s settings are harsh, the philosopher is shown here in a fertile, resplendent landscape, appropriate for one whose aim was to live according to nature. The abundance offers as it were a reward for the self-denial Diogenes has undergone; Mérot suggests that in its lushness the landscape here may be a nostalgic reminiscence of the Norman countryside of Poussin’s childhood, as was the case in Spring: Adam and Eve. Having discarded all his worldly goods except a wooden bowl, Diogenes pauses at the brink of a pool, watching a boy kneeling to scoop up water with his hand; the action brings home to him the fact that even his bowl is unnecessary for his survival. Close contact with the terrain seems to have been important for Poussin, as exemplified in Bellori’s anecdote in which the painter offered a handful of earth to a visitor with the words, “This is ancient Rome.” In the distance are the sunlit palaces and temples that the philosopher has rejected for a life of nature; the building resembling the Belvedere may represent the idea of Rome and the city. The painting
illustrates an aspect of Stoic thought, showing a man of wisdom becoming one with the natural world. Charron refers to Diogenes a number of times, and Montaigne cites the philosopher’s emphasis on living according to nature.

The earlier pendants of the two Evangelists, Landscape with Saint Matthew and Landscape with Saint John on Patmos (cats. 35, 36), probably painted about 1640, show two solitary figures in the foreground of the composition, each seated on the ground and alone in nature, absorbed in the task of writing the gospel. The compositions mark a transition in Poussin’s approach to landscape, moving away from the romantic Venice-inspired mythologies of the 1630s, with their evocative settings mirroring the — often-elegiac — mood of the fable, toward the juxtaposition of natural and architectural elements. De Piles considered the use of architecture as an essential element in “heroic landscape” (le paysage héroïque), and he considered Poussin its supreme exemplar. The high viewpoint allows the spectator an overview, and expansive vistas anticipate those of the “heroic” landscapes of the late 1640s. The figures of the saints are integrated into the landscape; they resemble classical sculptures, like two ancient philosophers, and the setting is markedly Roman, both in the classical architectural ruins strewn around John—underpinning the juxtaposition of the pagan world, now demolished, with the new world of the Gospels—and in the recognizable references to an idealized Roman Campagna surrounding Saint Matthew (the winding Tiber, the Torre delle Milizie).

The connection between pagan and Christian solitary figures meditating in a landscape is suggested by a passage from Baudoin. He recommends to those who are considering retirement to the country, in the manner of the “ancient Philosophers, who preferred living in the fields rather than in towns,” the contemplation of the natural world as the handiwork of a divine Creator. Estienne, too, declares that the withdrawal to, and cultivation of, a country estate allows opportunity for contemplating the works of the divine Creator. The contemplation of the landscape, both for pleasure and for spiritual meditation, is a significant component in the advocacy of rural retreat. Pope Urban VIII wrote a vernacular poem in praise of the setting of his country retreat at Castelgandolfo, suggesting that the contemplation of landscape is conducive to reverence for God’s creation.

Penitential Retreats

The depiction of anchorite saints and penitents in the wilderness has a long lineage, but among the most immediate prototypes are frescoes by Paul Bril and images by the Carracci and Domenichino, as well as prints of hermit saints by the Sadelers, or by Cornelis Cort after Venetian artists, notably Girolamo Muziano (1532–1592). The Counter-Reformation encouraged the dissemination of such images: Cardinal Federico Borromeo, an enthusiastic collector of Northern landscapes, owned prints by the Sadelers, as well as two hermit scenes by Jan Brueghel after the engravings. Borromeo himself, in his I Tre libri delle piaceri della mente (1625), held that the contemplation of nature offered a means of becoming close to the Creator, whose presence is to be found in all things. This view of nature as a manifestation of God’s goodness is an expression of the “Christian optimism” evident especially in the writings of Filippo Neri and Cardinal Bellarmine.

The cult of spiritual retreat also had followers in France, including the cellule of Guez de Balzac and, more significantly, the solitaires of Port-Royal des Champs, whose ideas were extremely influential among many writers, from Pascal to the young Racine. An important text connected with the solitaires of Port-Royal was Arnauld d’Andilly’s Vies des saints pères des déserts et de quelques saints, translations of lives from the Golden Legend and the Thebaid. In the preface, Arnauld d’Andilly, author of an “Ode sur la solitude,” writes in praise of the “sainte et bienheureuse retraite” in which he lived, and of the solitude that had induced him to study the lives of religious penitents; he sees retreat and solitude as essential for meditation and contemplation. Among the penitent saints whose lives figure in this volume was Saint Mary of Egypt—the subject of a remarkable drawing of about 1637 by Poussin (cat. 31), with brilliant effects of light and shade, showing the tiny figures of Saint Mary and Saint Zosimus absorbed into the surrounding landscape; the carefully positioned trees establish spatial recession, a rocky arch—possibly the hermit’s grotto—is reflected in still water, surrounded by sheltering woods.

Although the drawing is not directly linked to any known painting, it has been related to the important commission in the 1630s, from Philip IV, for a painted series of hermit saints.
for the Buen Retiro, Madrid. The series included works by Claude Lorrain, Gaspard Dughet, Herman van Swanevelt, and Jean Lemaire, as well as Poussin’s *Landscape with Saint Jerome* (cat. 30). Saint Jerome—like Mary Magdalen considered a model of penitence in the seventeenth century—was recognized as such by the libertin François de La Mothe le Vayer, who praised the “happiness” enjoyed by “so many good anchorites,” represented by Saint Jerome. With its screen of trees seen in contre-jour, or against the light, and its sensitive treatment of foliage, Poussin’s painting recalls some of his distinctive nature drawings of the same decade and also suggests Venetian prototypes. There is a striking contrast between the sunlit section on the left, with a view to the horizon, and the dark cavern where the hermit kneels; a ray of light pierces the gloom. Like Claude’s paintings for the series, Poussin’s treatment here displays some affinities with the Mannerist tradition of Bril, and with the picturesque qualities of Dughet.

Félibien gives the title of *La Solitude* to Poussin’s *Landscape with Three Monks* (cat. 53), thought by Blunt to represent Saint Francis of La Verna (the sanctuary given to the saint in 1212 by Count Orlando of Chiusi as a retreat “specially favourable for contemplation”). His discussion (with characteristic late seventeenth-century emphasis on the passions) points to the emotional effect on the spectator, evoking “a certain spiritual repose” that encourages a longing to enjoy a tranquility like that of the monks depicted in “such a charming peaceful désert.” By alling the depiction of inanimate nature to the expression of human emotion, the artist dignifies the “low” category of landscape. The painting (which may have been owned by the marquis de Châteauneuf, no stranger to enforced retirement) shows three small figures absorbed in discussion; in the engraving by Louis de Châtillon, Saint Francis plays a guitar. The figures are dwarfed by immense mountains surrounding them; Cort’s engraving of Muziano’s fresco of the subject has a similar setting. Severe mountainous scenery was considered appropriate to monastic retreats (as in the Grande Chartreuse, celebrated in odes by Pierre Perrin, who described “terrifying huge precipices”). De Piles’s view was that wild (“sauvages”) settings were suitable “as a place of retreat for solitaires.”

The painting prompts consideration of seventeenth-century responses to mountain scenery: about midcentury, there was a shift in attitude; mountains generally inspired horror but also a pleasurable thrill, with intimations of an incipient sense of the sublime. Mountains were an extreme example of the power of nature—and, by implication, of the divine. As Guez de Balzac wrote: “Nature reveals her greatness in the depths of chasms and precipices.”

A late drawing in Saint Petersburg (cat. 64), marked by the hesitant, trembling pen strokes of Poussin’s last period, evokes a similar mood: what have been thought to be hermits converse in a wild, imposing mountainous setting, the tiny figures dwarfed by the vastness of their natural surroundings. Though the specific subject is not clear, it may (as has been suggested) denote either a “philosophical dialogue” between the two hermits or the Temptation of Christ.

Awe-inspiring mountain scenery also dominates the late *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* (fig. 44), which is thematically linked but probably not a pendant to the *Polyphemus*. Evident here is a sense of nature’s primeval power, with a return to Virgil and to a concern with the ancient origins of Rome, as recounted in the *Aeneid* (8.190–270). The painting closely follows Virgil’s description of the setting (probably in the 1623 edition of Annibale Caro’s translation)—the Aventine hill—conveying its primitive, rugged savagery. The Virgilian episode is placed in the distance; the victory of Hercules, whose figure merges with the rocks, may symbolize that of Good over Evil; it also signifies the power of the sun. Scenes of human activity in the more placid scenery of the middle ground, and the familiar nymphs and river god in the foreground, denote again the idea of the Golden Age, of fertility and the progression of civilization from its origins. Nature’s power and fertility are represented also in the mysterious *Two Nymphs and a Snake in a Landscape* (Chantilly), with its abundant vegetation—like that of *Spring: Adam and Eve*—in which the calm figures of nymphs recline, hardly agitated by the ominous coiled serpent, ambivalent symbol of both destruction and regeneration.

As we have seen, the idea of retreat may be interpreted in different ways in relation to Poussin. One is as an evocation of another world—that of the Golden Age, with the theme of fertility or of a classical pastoral—in which distance is achieved.
by setting the subject in classical antiquity, remote from the everyday world; another is the representation of figures that symbolize “philosophical” or spiritual retreat; finally, in the sense of a psychological state of withdrawal, there is the idea of an internal retreat from everyday demands in order to achieve “tranquillity of mind.”

Poussin’s conception of retreat differs in general from the softer, gentler haven offered by the pastoral of Claude Lorrain (though Claude, too, may often insert a note of regret at transience). It involves a more austere, somber, and clear-eyed analysis of the forms of nature and of the place of humankind in the universe. The inhabitants of the early mythologies act out their tragedies against an evocative setting; the Stoic personages of his “heroic” period are integrated perfectly with their noble surroundings; during his final period, when the artist devoted himself chiefly to landscape, the mythological protagonists seem to be embodiments of the forces of Nature herself, reflecting contemporary scientific interpretations of the natural world as well as antique philosophy.

Thus the theme of retreat—of withdrawal from the mundane world, or escape to a more ordered and tranquil ideal universe—is a persistent thread in Poussin’s treatment of landscape and the figures that inhabit it. This thread may be discerned in his choice of motif, the interests of his patrons and viewers, and even his very lifestyle. Poussin’s early sensuous baccanali and paesi for Cassiano, evoking a fertile Golden Age and pastoral Arcadia, may be seen as a kind of refuge from the “turbulence” of political and court life. His evocation of an idealized antique landscape in his “heroic” period conveys a sense of Stoic fortitude, a psychological withdrawal in the face of the “tricks” of Fortune, and the dangers that lurk even in an idyllic scene—implying also the ultimate absorption of individual tragedies in the overall harmony of the universe. In his final pantheistic works, Poussin revisits the Arcadian theme, and the concept of fertility, with unforgettable images of nature’s power and grandeur, and a sense of recueillement in contemplating the cyclical processes that rule the universe.

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2. Bouquet 1960, p. 27.

3. Olson 2002; Bull 1993; Michael Kitson, personal communication.


29. Danesi Squarzina 2003, no. 133, pl. 128.

30. See Rinehart 1961, p. 43.


32. Mariette 1741, p. 114.

33. Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 114; Harris (1944) provides a concise summary of the criteria involved in judging the authenticity of the landscape drawings; see also the introduction to Rosenberg and Prat 1994, pp. xix–xx.
34. Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 116; the authors accept the drawing with some reservations, though Harris cites it as one of his most beautiful (1994b, p. 41). See also Brigitte's introduction to Oxford 1990–91.
35. See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 353, where it is described as among "the most moving" of the landscape drawings.
40. See Lovejoy and Boas 1935 and Leach 1974.
41. Stadning 1946a; Rome 1990–99; Jerusalem 1999. Thuillier (1988, pp. 123–24) writes that Poussin's art was "sous le signe de Bacchus" during these years.
42. Mérot 1990, no. 122.
43. Ibid., no. 119.
44. For Jouvin de Rochofort (1672, vol. 2, pp. 303–4), Italy was "le jardin et le verger de l'Europe."
45. Lagerlöf 1990.
46. Mérot 1990, no. 220.
47. McGathie 1996, pp. 43–44.
52. "est lacus, antiqua religione sacra"; Ovid Fasti 3.260ff.
53. "... se promenant par les bois & par les prez sacrez aux dieux & a mener vie solitaire es lieux escartez de la compagnie des homes."
54. Letter of March 1, 1665 (Jouanny 1911, p. 465): "ces parties sont du peintre et ne se peuvent apprendre. C'est le Rameau d'or de Virgile que nul ne peut trouver ni cuellir s'il n'est conduit par la fatalité."
57. E. Panofsky 1955.
59. "ove s'apre la veduta bellissima di Roma de' suoi ameni colli, che insieme con gli edifici fanno scena e teatro." Bellori (1672) 1726, p. 431.
60. Marino (1607) 1993, pp. 373–92; Mérot 1990, no. 155.
63. See Hulbein 1998; Olson 2002, p. 120.
64. Oberhuber in Fort Worth 1988, no. 30 (as autograph); Stadning 1996a; Rome 1998–99, p. 86.
65. Mérot 1990, no. 228.
66. Ibid., no. 189; Stanic 1994, p. 120.
68. Bardon 1960, p. 132; it is likely that Poussin would have used translations of Latin texts, but he might have turned to the original text on occasion.
70. Mérot 1990, no. 206; Paris 1994–95, no. 238.
72. Freedberg 1996; Mérot 1990, no. 141; Paris 1994–95, no. 44.
74. "Ve . . . un bello, e gran giardino pieno di alberi a frutti, e diversissimi fiori, ed herbe, con tre fontanele, ed un pozzo, oltre un bel cortile, dove sono altri alberi fruttiferi . . . ho le vedeche che scoprirono da tutte le parti e credo nell'estate sia un paradiso!" Jouanny 1911, p. 40, no. 21, letter of January 6, 1641; Sparti 1996.
75. Beugnot 1996.
76. Virgil Georgie 2.458: "O farmers happy beyond measure, could they but know their blessings . . . ," Horace Epode 2.1–3: "Happy the man who far from business concerns, works his ancestral acres with his oxen like the men of old . . ." (Loeb translations).
79. For example, Belleforest, "Dédicace," in Gallo 1752.
80. Ackerman 1990, pp. 110–11; Estienne (1657, "Epistre") introduces the Epicurean idea of "douxceur, plaisir et liberté."
81. E.g. Epist. 1:ix; Pliny 1699, pp. 1ff. ("Le Laurentin"), 4 ("Explication"), 50 ("Remarques").
88. Louvre, ca. 1648; Mérot 1990, no. 220; Paris 1994–95, no. 171. Mahon (1961) proposed a later date, for stylistic reasons.
91. Mérot 1990, p. 156. The neo-Stoic Naudé declared that "la loi de la nature est la vraie règle de l'homme humain."
92. "Opposer aux perturbations, la raison, à fortune la confiance, aux lois, nature": Montaigne, Essais, 3, chap. 9. "De la vanité."
95. Estienne 1657, "Epistre dédicatoire."
96. "Della vaghezza della villa di Castel Gandolfo si innalza la mente a contemplare l'eterno bellezzze;" the Poéme toscane are included in the 1642 Paris edition of Urban's Poëmata.
99. Arnaud d'Andilly 1647–53.
100. Ibid., “Discours,” p. 5.
101. Although clearly composed in the studio, it is close to nature studies of the 1630s and has been considered a touchstone for deciding their authenticity; see Harris 1994a.
104. Mérot 1990, no. 212.
105. Félibien 1685–88, Entretien 8, p. 436. The painting may be a pendant to the Landscape with Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44), which according to Félibien “fait un effet contraire” —that of fear.
106. On Châteauneuf, see Olson 2003, p. 81.
110. Letter of September 12, 1623 (Balzac 1659, vol. 1, p. 161)
From *The Storm* to *The Flood*

RENE DEMORIS

It was in the gardens of Saint-Cloud, at the home of the king’s brother, that Andre Félibien, in his fifth *Entretien* (or conversation) with his friend Pymander, broached the subjects of color, light, reflection and shadow, the landscape genre, and Titian. They were discussing the refraction observed in the waters of a fountain, when suddenly: “We were absorbed in these observations when we heard a loud noise near the Château, as if something had rolled down the entire length of a mountain. For we never would have imagined that this noise came from the air above, as the sky was completely calm and there was not a trace of bad weather.” Then came “a thick cloud, spreading like a black sail,” accompanied by lightning, rain, furious winds, and cyclones of dust. “The tallest trees, succumbing to the violence of the tempest, bowed their heads to the ground; & we heard the ones that resisted loudly crack and split.”

Before the two men had even reached the shelter of the castle, Pymander commented: “Don’t you think it was in similar circumstances that M. Poussin conceived the painting you recently showed me?” Well before Diderot’s comments on the work of Claude-Joseph Vernet, Félibien is slyly introducing an ekphrasis by referring to the *Landscape with a Storm*, painted for the merchant banker Jean Pointel in 1651 and today in the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (cat. 55).

Using Poussin to preface an encomium of Titian might seem paradoxical. In 1679, in fact, Félibien responded to Roger de Piles, who in his *Conversations sur la connaissance de la peinture* (1677) had criticized Poussin for not spending enough time observing nature and for not being able to “fool the eye,” which he deemed the painter’s primary task. In answer, Félibien attributed that shortcoming to the genre of history painting itself. True, when treating “major subjects,” the artist could give free rein to his genius, inventiveness, and knowledge. But “grand compositions” did not allow art to “show fully its power & the strength of its charms”—to create, in other words, an effect both truthful and marvelous. Félibien, standing on the authority of Zeuxis and Alberti, maintains that this effect is

Detail of cat. 55
much better obtained in a “moderate space” with only a “few figures.”

The Landscape with a Storm demonstrates that Poussin was quite capable of “painting well.” Moreover, Féli brien refused to give priority to either of the painter’s twin duties (“one, knowing how things should be narrated historically, and the other, knowing how to paint them well”). Defending Poussin as a painter meant challenging the undisputed superiority of grand history painting, the kind practiced by Le Brun, and legitimizing minor genres such as landscape. Is there a relation between Féli brien’s stance here and Poussin’s situation in the period when he began his series of “grand landscapes” — especially given that Féli brien, during that same period (1647–49), was an attaché at the embassy in Rome and was closely acquainted with the painter?

Why a storm? Poussin’s talent for painting landscapes was well known by then. In the landscape genre, storms nonetheless enjoyed special status: Féli brien made sure to mention the praise the ancient painter Apelles received for having “perfectly depicted things that cannot be depicted” (quae pungi non possunt), and stressed that painting a storm presupposed the ability to capture “fast and fleeting actions” (analogous to capturing expressions of emotion, according to Roger de Piles). The talents of such a painter, therefore, surpassed those of a simple copyist. As early as 1550, Vasari had professed overwhelming admiration for a storm scene by Palma Vecchio. Because meteors is the domain par excellence in which forces beyond human ken and control are unleashed, the tempest is often considered a manifestation of divine will—either pagan or Christian. Moreover, the rise of the landscape genre at the end of the sixteenth century, notably among the Flemish and Dutch, brought about the subgenre of “realistic” storms, often embellished with shipwrecks. The search for grandiose and violent effects inherent in these scenes can also be found in Leonardo’s prescriptions.
for depicting storms: “Come si de’ figurare une fortuna.” In the *Landscape with a Storm*, Poussin, who had already derived remarkably stirring effects from his treatment of sky and clouds, for the first time took a weather event as his subject. For this painting, he ignores earlier models, which are mainly concerned with storms at sea: he locates his storm on land. Then he restricts the scope of his subject, limiting our view to a relatively close vantage point by placing, on the left, groups of trees swaying in the wind and, on the right, a bit farther away, buildings strangely illuminated by the storm, yet solid looking for all that. Finally, he shows the subject in all its trivial detail: a tree struck by lightning, with its two broken branches; at the foot of that tree, an oxcart in which two women are hiding beneath piles of clothes while the driver of the cart prostrates himself, face to the ground, hands over his ears, in front of his oxen, who have also folded their forelegs. This dramatic arrangement differentiates Poussin’s canvas from the storm scenes rendered by artists like his brother-in-law, Gaspard Dughet (fig. 40), who sought mainly picturesque effects, or Françoise Millet, who in his own storm scene (fig. 41) invites the viewer to share in the aesthetic pleasure of his two figures in the foreground.

In describing the picture, Félibien chooses to ignore the prostrate driver, the cart, and the huddled women, which clears the way for his “illusionistic” interpretation. Perhaps it never occurred to him that a peasant in mortal terror could be
the hero of a tragic scene. To a certain extent, the *Landscape with a Storm* corresponds well to the model Félibien set against “grand compositions”: moderate space and few figures (two minuscule silhouettes casting their shadows on the walls of the lit buildings, a shepherd prodding his flock in the dark and, closer in, a man glancing behind him and fleeing with his arms raised). But in addition, it posits a different kind of painting, one that can stir the emotions without being historical. This view ran counter to the role the Académie had conferred on Poussin, which might explain posterity’s long resistance to attributing the painting to him.9

A “tragic landscape,” Jacques Thuillier called it. The cart driver’s prostration is surely a natural response to the noise and impact of the lightning, but it is also a ritualized posture belonging to the gestural code of tragedy, which might suggest the beseeching of a deity (mimicked, not without irony on the artist’s part, by the oxen). Traces of this primal terror remain even for a cultivated viewer like Félibien, who was initially startled by the noise of unknown origin and who admitted just how mysterious it remained: “‘Although the cause of this awful thunder,’ I replied, ‘& of Nature’s prodigious efforts is quite hidden.’” Through this, one can understand the experience and emotions of the central figure, who is not a part of a history per se, but rather is emblematic of a fundamental relation to nature: exposure to the elements.

How did Poussin come to paint this remarkable work?

On June 22, 1648, he wrote to his patron Paul Fréart de Chamblet: “If possible, I would like to convert these [paintings of the] Seven Sacraments into seven other stories, which would vividly depict the strangest twists Fate has ever visited on men, especially on those who mocked it. These examples would not be haphazard or casual, but would remind those who see them of the virtue and wisdom one must acquire to stand firm against the efforts of that blind madwoman.” It is a strange idea, this “conversion” that would have the sacraments—the institution of an order with supposedly divine foundation—serve to manifest what, to human eyes, can only appear as disorder.

The first of these strange “twists” was the fate of Phocion, an Athenian statesman who was sentenced to death and forbidden burial in Athens. Poussin—who, in 1645, saw himself as “forced to die far from [his] homeland, like an exile or someone banished”—may have felt a certain affinity for the ancient Greek. Taken together, the *Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion* (fig. 38) and *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion* (cat. 43), both from 1648, form a remarkable celebration of the Stoic hero, who in the first painting is reduced to the state of a corpse, and in the second to a handful of ashes gathered by his widow in Megara. In 1722, the English painter and critic Jonathan Richardson Sr. lucidly analyzed what he considered the shocking novelty of the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (cat. 44) and the *Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion*: “…the One an Accident, the Other a History: in Neither the Scene agrees with the Actors; for the Subjects in Both are Grave, Dreadful, or Solemn; but the Landskips are Gay & Riant; Thus the Mind is distracted with contrary Sentiments.” He adds: “Besides the Figures are too considerable for Landskips, as the Landskips are if the Pictures are to be consider’d as Historical. Let the Figures, or the Landskip be apparently Principal; but two contending Powers of Equal Consideration in a Picture, as well as in a State, will create Disturbance, and Confusion.” Landscape or history?

The first objection concerns the unity of effect, which is pertinent unless we take precisely this discordance to be the subject of the painting—possibly a means of grappling with the widespread indifference to a worthy man’s death. But in the absence of the main protagonist, the two canvases offer
the spectacle of an insolently happy scene of everyday life that manages perfectly well without the great man (with a marked accent, in the *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion*, on leisure activities such as playing the flute, archery, wrestling, swimming, and so on). This might be an invitation to meditate on the vanity of politics and the pretension of participation with respect to a hero whose pride almost caused Plutarch to shed his customary tolerance.

Richardson’s second objection touches on the matter of genre and makes Poussin out to be a troublemaker in the realm of painting. Landscape or history? Let us recall the critic’s comments about the size of the figures, which could apply equally well to all of his “grand landscapes.” In history paintings, the protagonists, seen up close, occupy most of the painted area. Reducing the scale of the figures allows the artist to depict both the physical surroundings and ordinary humanity.

My sense is that the two Phocion paintings mark the moment of Poussin’s retreat from the historical stage. Grand history is traditionally the place where providential designs—or at least the projects of great men and the *exempla virtutis* they provide—are inscribed and deciphered. Poussin had become interested in such matters through Romulus, Scipio, and Moses. Now, in 1648, he witnessed political upheavals: Poussin’s letters from 1644 to 1652 show that he followed political events, such as the duc de Guise’s Neapolitan misadventures, the revolt of the Cossacks, Cromwell’s revolution, and especially the uprisings of the Fronde, which involved clients and friends of his. But while he shared some of their views and their hatred of Mazarin, he shied away from actual commitment, preferring to “sit quietly in his corner and watch the comedy unfold in comfort.”  

He wasn’t the only one to whom the political tumults of the Fronde seemed like a bad farce that derided its actors, the various aristocrats who didn’t stand a chance against the irrepressible Mazarin and the rise of absolutism. Grand history masks the petty maneuvering of private interests. As Pascal said, behind Antoine’s conquest of Egypt was Cleopatra’s nose. This disillusionment went hand in hand with a progressive abandonment of neo-Stoic morals, which from that point on would seem only a convenient posture, a way of rationalizing failure. Phocion embodies the futility of political heroism.

The *Landscape with Diogenes* (cat. 62) complements the two Phocion paintings. The peasant supplies the philosopher with an *exemplum*. A sign of indifference to the “bounties of fortune,” the discarded bowl is also a denial of mediation between man and the knowable universe, an evocation of contact between water and skin, which in the landscape is echoed by the two bathers. The bowl is also History, and here Poussin is following a road paved by Montaigne. What interests him is the direct relationship that man—humanity—maintains with the universe.

In the first place, there is Poussin’s relationship with death, whose sudden intrusion forms the common subject of the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47) and the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*—as was demonstrated by Pierre Rosenberg when he presented the two works as pendants.  

With the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice*, we are still in the realm of fables. It is possible, as Sheila McTigue has written, that the painting contains a hidden political message and that the boat running upstream is an allegory of bad government. More overtly, there is the contrast between the triumph of Orpheus charming beasts and men and offering himself, creating a spectacle, and the crucial event to which he remains blind: Eurydice bitten by a tiny snake, which she turns to look at—an event that is witnessed by a fisherman—and from it flows the dark sequel to the story, in which Orpheus will again fall victim to his own fatal lack of attention. There is a disproportion between a small cause and a huge effect: this is a commonplace in historical criticism. Should one say that the fisherman, boatmen, and bathers enjoy a better relationship with nature than the hero does? The sequel is only indirectly evoked by Poussin, via the funereal associations inherent in the boat and the river (Charon on the Styx), as well as the clouds and smoke hanging over what might be an infernal city.

The *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, which Fénélon considered a “caprice,” is not based on a literary text. Unlike Richardson, Fénélon admired the opposition between the marvelous landscape (castle, city, lake with fishermen, bathers, and people at leisure)—“one wishes one were there,” he said—and the horror in the foreground, in which nature’s first manifestation is the deadly encounter between the snake and its victim; the latter lies in a swamp that contrasts sharply
with the civilized and nourishing waters of the lake. The monstrous serpent might well refer back to a process of regeneration that is in the natural order of things, but when he sees his own death in it, the frightened man cannot help but respond to the inhumanity of that order. Can the washerwoman’s gaze make this horror before the unnameable more bearable? With great insight, Fénelon recognized in this work a form of painting that might supersede the historical genre.

Poussin would return to monstrosities in his series of “allegorical tempests,”19 which begin in 1649 with the Landscape with Polyphemus (figs. 36, 43). Here, with an overarching vision not too different from the panpsychic and pansensual vision of the Dominican philosopher-astrologer Tommaso Campanella, he pursues his meditation on the natural cycle of generation and fecundation. Taking his inspiration from the writings of Renaissance mythographers, who tried to decipher the knowledge of natural history purportedly hidden in the ancient writings, he made use of fables—not those concerning the traditional Olympus, but the ones featuring half-human figures such as Cyclopes and giants. For the educated viewer, the Cyclopes, sons of air, earth, and humidity, are like the “hot vapors or exhalations which rise from earth to form thunder and lightning in the upper region of the air.”20 A personification of the storm, and thus of the fertilizing rain, is embodied in the Landscape with Polyphemus (the river god) by the three water sprites in the foreground and the satyrs watching them. The men who till the soil have a place in this natural landscape—a kind of return to the source—dominated by Polyphemus perched atop an outcrop, with his back turned to us and his head in the clouds, colossal and at peace. But the memory of his love for Galatea (who may be one of the figures in the foreground),21 and of his murder of Acis, colors the scene with the threat of violence unleashed.

In Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun (cat. 63), Ernst Gombrich has detected a myth of rain, in which the blind hunter, guilty of rape, also incurs the cloud before his eyes.22 A son of the earth but with three fathers—Poseidon, Apollo, and Jupiter (in other words, the three elements)—he represents the brutal conjunction of elements that cause a storm. Poussin does nothing to facilitate such an interpretation (Félibien, in fact, mistakenly believed Orion had been blinded by Diana). Although the presence of Diana and Vulcan was explained by the sixteenth-century mythographer Natale Conti, there is still something odd about this canvas, owing to the almost surrealistic arrangement of figures that, while reducing the gods to paltry dimensions, gives us the spectacle of the blind giant, fearsome but helpless, who will regain his sight thanks to the sun but who is also heading toward his death.

A late pendant to the Landscape with Polyphemus, the Landscape with Hercules and Cacus (fig. 44) features a similar arrangement and constitutes a kind of response to the earlier painting. Here, the violence is actualized: Hercules, a solar hero and son of Jupiter, leaning against a cloud-covered promontory, crushes under his feet the monstrous brigand whose body hangs downward. Again there are nymphs and a river god in the foreground, and in the middle distance an aquatic landscape with bathers and a small boat. This triumph of light over shadow cannot overcome a certain sense of dread, born of the figures’ isolation amid a wild and over-abundant nature.

Poussin’s intent is to craft a tale that concerns neither humanity nor the climate. He seizes on formative moments that are repeated throughout history, and he underscores their inherent violence. We might wonder if the nebula of interpretations inspired by the work is not also a way of expressing the eternally unknowable aspects of nature. The giant and the Cyclops embody the disproportionate size of nature compared to humans. These periods from before human history are hardly comforting.

The Landscape with a Storm (cat. 55) of 1651 explores another path that stands outside history: that of the direct representation of atmospheric turbulence. In its staging of ordinary humanity, this canvas follows on the Landscape with Polyphemus, as well as the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake. Traces of Poussin’s penchant for depicting everyday life date back perhaps to as early as 1637–40, in three subjectless snapshots showing scattered travelers.23 In 1648, his subject seems to be rest itself, as he depicts banal, everyday actions performed by ordinary people (a woman walking, a man washing his feet, a couple conversing), in harmonious, civilized landscapes replete with paths and huts—as in the Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain (cat. 38) or Travellers Resting, also called A Roman Road (cat. 39).
More complex is the Landscape with a Woman Washing Her Feet (Vertumnus and Pomona?) (cat. 54), which shows, in addition to the seated woman, the head of some rustic spying on her through a hedge and an old woman watching her (a wink to Jupiter and Antiope, no doubt). This is neither about a subject, per se, nor the expression of emotions; but rather, it concerns space, a reverie, a presence made possible by the exclusion of History. Is the insistent presence of water a reference to Diogenes? Or to Midas at the source of the Pactolus?

We find the same human order in a pendant to the Landscape with a Storm, the Landscape with a Calm (cat. 56), a model of balance and regularity, structured along a network of horizontal and vertical lines. A castle is reflected in the small lake it overlooks; in the foreground, a shepherd, surrounded by his goats, leans on his staff, lost in reverie at the watery mirror, while on the other bank a herd of sheep and cattle are slaking their thirst. In the distance is the stormy horizon, with a large, sterile outcropping surrounded by clouds; the fire near hand, however, is man-made. At left a horse drinks (more water), and a horseman leaves at a gallop (a reference to Plato and passions mastered?). It is an image of rest that yet is not death and avoids the artifice of pastoral scenes; here, the presence of humans is a mark of civilization.

In 1651, Poussin returned to the theme of storms with the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57). He wrote to his friend Jacques Stella that he had made for the cavalieri dal Pozzo a large landscape, in which I tried to represent a land storm, imitating as well as I could the effect of a violent wind, of air filled with darkness, with rain, with lightnings and with thunderbolts which fall here and there, not without producing disorder. All the figures to be seen play their part in relation to the weather: some flee through the dust and go with the wind which carries them along; others, in contrary fashion, go against the wind and walk with difficulty, putting their hands before their eyes. On one side a shepherd runs away and leaves his flock, seeing a lion, which, having already thrown down some oxherds, is attacking others, some of whom run away while others prick on their cattle and try to make good their escape. In this confusion the dust rises in whirlwinds. A dog some way off barks, with his coat bristling but without daring to come nearer. In the front of the picture you will see Pyramus stretched out dead on the ground, and beside him Thisbe, given over to her grief.24

This time, the storm covers a vast landscape punctuated by distant mountains and various buildings: at left the castle and the round temple of Bacchus; farther off, a large construction reminiscent of the Sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia at Palestrina; to the right, a small town perched atop a hill and lit from the right-hand side. All of this is arranged around a central lake with still waters, on the edge of which are herds and a tree with a branch shattered by lightning. Poussin’s letter underscores two major aspects: the importance of human actions and the reduction of the “subject,” taken from Ovid, to the lower portion of the picture—for the figures in this unusually large canvas are comparatively small.

Poussin’s originality lies in relating the story of Thisbe to the storm. He might have gotten the idea from Les Amours tragiques de Pyrame et Thisbé (1623), by the poet and notorious libertine Théophile de Viau, in which Thisbe’s mother has a premonitory dream of a lioness in a storm and her daughter’s death. In Ovid’s tale, the lioness, having disemboweled several oxen, drinks from the fountain where the lovers are to meet and bloodyes the scarf that Thisbe had lost in her flight, which leads to Pyramus’s mistaken assumption of her death and his suicide. Poussin builds on Ovid’s tale, introducing shepherds struggling with the wild beast. He portrays not Thisbe’s suicide, but the moment she discovers the dead Pyramus: her body is straining forward, held in unstable balance by the force of the wind, one of her hands outstretched as if to touch her lover, the other raised as if to ward off the sight of his corpse. This frozen momentum symbolizes the forever unbreachable distance that now separates her from Pyramus, with an effect of petrification not unlike the one that touches the horrified man in the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake.25 The emotion of the thunderstruck Thisbe is echoed by the violence of the storm.

Poussin stages three different actions. Confronted by the storm, people have no alternative but to run for their lives. Confronted by the lioness, they try to goad the herds to safety and help each other set up an effective resistance. The lovers’
tragic end, by contrast, involves human responsibilities: those of the fathers who opposed the marriage (and who recognize their error by granting the lovers a shared grave); and that of Pyramus, who wrongly (or “precipitously,” to use a term Poussin employed in a letter to Chantelou) interprets the clue of the bloodied scarf and hastily chooses the romantic solution of suicide. This lack of prudence, in the strongest sense of the word, indicates not so much amorous passion as a weakness of spirit and will; it shows the hero’s alienation in an imaginary sorrow: as Oskar Batschmann suggests, he fails to exercise “prospect,” that considered view that Poussin celebrated in a letter to Desnoyers.46 Pyramus dies needlessly. Relating Pyramus and Thisbe to the sterile couple of Echo and Narcissus in The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus (cat. 58), Batschmann presents this painting as the “negative” of Marriage from the second series of the Seven Sacraments, following Poussin’s proposed “conversion” of that series into images of Fortune.47 The truly positive heroes here are the anonymous herdsmen, who perpetuate the heroic tradition of slaying monsters and, in doing so, help establish a human order.

Should the storm, like the great landscapes, be considered an emblem of a universe subject to chaos and buffeted by the whims of fortune, the absurdity of which Poussin discovered about 1648? Before that date, Poussin, like the libertine naturalists, did not entertain a Christian, providential vision of world history. At least heroes like Romulus and Moses left some hope for a convergence of the natural and human orders, in which Stoic virtues could still find their place. The elimination of the political realm, which masks the prospect of an individual’s death, confronts him with a natural, frequently oppressive order, foreign to that which he desires. There is, on the other hand, the possibility of a human order based on ordinary, apolitical relations between individuals, on mutual aid, friendship, shared endeavors, love, perhaps even a struggle for survival that is itself a fact of nature. This relationship might involve affections, but it is often situated outside the expression of passionate emotions, except when one encounters the unnameable force. The approach is anthropological rather than psychological.

Things unnameable are also at issue in Winter: The Flood (fig. 42), the last canvas in the series of the Four Seasons (1660–64). The work lends itself to multiple interpretations: it can refer just as easily to the stages of life, the hours of the day, the pagan gods (Apollo, Ceres, Bacchus, Pluto), or the natural elements. For Willibald Sauerländer, the painting recounts various stages in the history of Christianity, with the flood standing in for the Last Judgment and the ark representing the Church. It might also refer to the final episode in a cyclical history of the world, as suggested by the only unusual element in the canvas, the large snake on the left (there is also a smaller snake in the tree branches), a symbol of the circularity of time as well as regeneration; it is the serpent missing from the Garden of Eden evoked in Spring: Adam and Eve (cat. 66).48 It calls to mind Heraclitus’s enigmatic pronouncement, “For it is death to souls to become water, and death to water to become earth. But water comes from earth; and from water, soul.”49

In any case, the flood is related to old age, water, night, and death. Poussin shied away from earlier depictions, in which his predecessors (among them Michelangelo and Antonio Carracci) had tried to render the collective and cosmic nature of the event with, as befits the stormy setting, a riot of naked bodies in improbable positions. We are reminded of the return to chaos evoked in Leonardo’s Treatise.50 There is an evident refusal of spectacle here, such that we might be tempted to see it as a banal inundation scene. “There is only water, & people drowning,” says Félibien.51 Along with the rise of the water level, Poussin depicts shapes and colors dissolving in the rain and fog, suggesting a return to a formlessness and a confusion of elements into a succession of grays that has won him the admiration of posterity.52 What he shows is slow violence, the barely noticed progress of an engulfment, in which air, earth, and water intermingle, and which ultimately makes it impossible to distinguish objects by name. In 1668, Nicolas Loir hinted at a feeling of unease in front of this remarkable canvas, in which the painter eschews the seductions of both subject and palette: “weak” lighting, even the flashes of lightning; sun “almost hidden”; no “strong shadows” to be seen; “the clouds, water, and earth are almost the same hue”; “the rocks are washed out and almost transparent from the dripping water”; the water cascading from the cliffs “seems more like soaked earth.” He nonetheless praised the work’s “overall harmony”
and the triumph of a “universal color,” derived from the “general tint of the air.”

What do stand out are the vivid dabs of the figures’ garments, each of which (as Loir noted) retains “its natural and distinct color” without undermining a “union and harmony that deserve admiration.” Like Raphael, Poussin includes only a few figures, located at a medium distance from the viewer: ordinary, anonymous human beings, excluded from History, no doubt ignorant of their fate. Apart from two swimmers clinging, respectively, to a board and a horse, the figures are split into two groups framing a central emptiness: to the left, near two drowning men, a man in the prow of a boat that has nearly capsized is gripped by another man while he lifts his arms to heaven in a pathetic gesture of supplication. Closer in, from the center to the right of the canvas, is a larger boat into which a man is trying to hoist himself, and in which a series of actions is taking place: at one end someone is holding the boat steady with an oar while watching what is happening at the opposite end, where a woman is straining to lift a child to the outstretched arms of a man reaching over the rocks.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who generally disliked painting but considered The Flood the “only canvas” to have struck him, was very moved by this scene, in which he believed he “felt all the suffering of nature”: “It so impressed me that I had to go back upstairs to see it again. I could not look away from that mother, who thought only of saving her child and tried to lift him onto the rocks before they both perished.”
There is no expressiveness, no pathos in the couple’s practical gestures, which are adapted to fit the circumstance. Perhaps Poussin meant to contrast the useless beseeching of the figure on the left with the human order instituted by the relations among the couple, the child, and the figure holding the boat steady—an order that looks toward the future, made all the more tragic by our knowledge that no one will survive.

The parental couple of The Flood follows on that of Adam and Eve, as well as Ruth and Boaz. In depictions of the Flight into Egypt, another couple labors to save an infant. Perhaps we should examine the place occupied by mother figures in Poussin’s late canvases (of Holy Families, Annunciations, Coriolanus, Lamentations over the Dead Christ), and reconsider her in light of an obsessive configuration in Poussin’s work, in which a woman, not necessarily a mother (Hermione, the Virgin, Venus, Armida, Thisbe), leans over the body of a dead or wounded man. This might be one aspect of humanity’s fundamental relationship to the universe and of basic human relations—relations that stand outside the political sphere, at the level of personal interchange, and are expressed in the actions of ordinary people who are neither historical nor heroic, as in the look of the woman holding the boat steady against the flood, or that of the washerwoman toward the man frightened by a snake.

In the Principia philosophiae of 1644, Descartes posited the foundations of a natural history of the universe, removed from the hypothesis of creation. Poussin does not question a demigod’s intentions. The meteorological event gives him a chance to envision the conditions for human happiness and order in the face of a potentially deadly nature, to which humanity nonetheless belongs. A nature to which it is better to conform, but which must also be conquered, and in which the individual recognizes his fellows. At the sight of these tempests, Félibien and Fénélon sensed the advent of a new kind of painting. We continue to marvel at The Flood, but we would rather forget the Landscape with a Storm and Pyramus and Thisbe.

2. De Piles 1677, pp. 246–47.
3. This was no mere illusion, as Félibien stressed: “Il est vrai que M. Poussin a fait des Tableaux où l’on trouve de ces sortes d’accidents qui sont merveilleux tant par le choix qu’il en a eu faire que par leur belle expression” (It is true that M. Poussin has created Paintings in which one finds such accidents, which are marvelous both for the choice he made and for their beautiful expression) (Félibien 1666–88, Entretien 5 [1679], pp. 60–61).
4. Ibid., pp. 92–94.
8. Leonardo 1651, p. 17. Poussin knew the Treatise on Painting and had even provided illustrations for an edition of it. See Białoostocki 1954.
12. Fréart de Chambray 1650, unpaged, and in Leonardo 1651, unpaged.
15. Richardson 1722, pp. 87–88. Fénélon had compared the two canvases in his Dialogues des morts (written in 1689 and published in 1718), nos. 51 and 52, which puts Poussin face-to-face with Parrhasius and Leonardo (Fénélon 1864, pp. 248–60).
18. For Fénélon’s text, see Lecoq 2003, pp. 25–28.
20. Ibid., p. 40.
23. Landscape with a Man Pursued by a Snake, Landscape with a Man Scooping Water from a Stream, and Landscape with Travellers Resting (cats. 27, 28, and 29).
25. The posture is similar to the one in the engraving based on a drawing by Poussin and used to illustrate chapter 295 of the published edition of Leonardo’s Treatise.
26. Félibien 1666–88, Entretien 8 (1685), pp. 282–83. Théophile had been chastised for defending the lovers’ flight. In this connection, see Erwin Panofsky’s 1959 interpretation of the tomb in Et in Arcadia Ego as belonging to a shepherdess who had refused a suitor’s love.
27. Bätjichmann 1994, pp. 203–22. It is a little more difficult to credit the interpretation of the distant lightning as the bolt that consumes
Semele, and of the still lake as the “mirror of Bacchus” in Platonic
t theory. The stillness of the lake under the high winds follows an oft-
respected convention.
28. The large serpent clearly forms the shape of a Greek epsilon, a Delphic
letter (inscribed on a pilaster in the Ordination)—an allusion to Python
killed by Apollo?
29. English translation from John Burnet’s Early Greek Philosophy, as pro-
vided by Randy Hoyt on www.heraclitusfragments.com (DK936).

30. Not included in the Fréart de Chambray edition of 1651. See Leonardo
1974, pp. 175–82.
32. See Verdi 1981.
34. Comments cited in the correspondence (Rousseau 1665–, vol. 6, p. 11,
224, vol. 20, 226). Rousseau lost his mother at birth, and Julie in the
Nouvelle Héloïse dies shortly after saving her son from drowning.
In one of the most sensitive texts ever written about a painting by Poussin, William Hazlitt (1778–1830), the great English essayist, praised the artist’s landscape with *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (cat. 63), now in the Metropolitan Museum. “Nothing,” he wrote, “was ever more finely conceived or done. It breathes the spirit of the morning; its moisture, its repose, its obscurity, waiting the miracle of light to kindle it into smiles; the whole is, like the principle figure in it, ‘a forerunner of the dawn.’ The same atmosphere tinges and imbues every object, the same dull light ‘shadowy sets off’ the face of nature: one feeling of vastness, of strangeness, and of primeval forms pervades the painter’s canvas, and we are thrown back upon the first integrity of things.” Hazlitt sums up his impression in one unforgettable sentence: “This great and learned man might be said to see nature through the glass of time.”

Since Hazlitt’s time, much has been written on Poussin’s landscapes. They have been the object of many learned but also complicated, and even mystifying, interpretations. One sometimes wonders if the hidden secrets that these iconological exercises pretend to have revealed behind the telling silence of these pictures were really invented by the artist or are rather the creation of all-too-erudite art historians. The time may have come to return to Hazlitt’s ingenious insight into the relation between time and nature in Poussin’s landscapes in order to try and evoke their poetry, their dreams, and their tragedies in terms of their primary literary sources, the ancient poets and writers—Ovid and Virgil above all—and, in the case of the Four Seasons, the texts of the Bible.

The German painter and biographer Joachim von Sandrart recounts that he, Poussin, and Claude Lorrain made excursions to Tivoli to paint and draw landscapes. Some drawings attributed to Poussin may be reflections of these early trips, which must have taken place before 1635, the year Sandrart left Rome. At the time, Poussin, who had arrived in Rome in 1624, was not a painter of
landscapes; instead, he concentrated his attention on nobler subjects drawn from mythology, history, or the poetry of Tasso. Unlike his compatriot in Rome, Claude Lorrain, Poussin was not a born landscape painter, and it was only as he approached his fiftieth birthday that he began to imbue the scenery of nature with his dreams of ancient history and mythology and with his moral reflections on human passions and the fate of man. No other painter knew better how to merge landscape with history, the tempests of nature with the tempests of the human heart. His most dramatic landscapes were produced in the few years between 1648 and 1652. Later he turned only occasionally to nature—Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun dates from 1658; the Landscape with Hercules and Cacus (fig. 44) may be two years afterward—and by then the mood had changed. There was a new vastness. Drama had become myth, or prophecy. The Four Seasons, painted between 1660 and 1664, were the master’s last words on the great theme of nature and time.

Among Poussin’s earliest works announcing this new interest in landscape are two small paintings executed about 1640 for Cassiano dal Pozzo—the Landscape with a Man Scooping Water from a Stream and Landscape with Travellers Resting (cats. 28, 29). They tell no identifiable story and have no known literary source. Rather, they show lonely prospects from the Roman Campagna—rocks, trees, a road, a river—and some isolated figures in ancient dress, resting or thinking. Nothing significant happens, but in their melancholic silence these paintings evoke a quality of greatness and the mood of a recollected past. With them, Poussin has found his proper theme: “nature through the glass of time.”

In 1640 the artist was paid by a prominent Roman patron, Giovanni Maria Roscioli, for two landscapes with Evangelists—the Landscape with Saint Matthew and the Landscape with Saint John on Patmos (cats. 35, 36). The Evangelists were a time-honored theme in Christian art, but the representation of the holy men in a classical landscape littered with the remnants of broken pagan monuments seems to have been Poussin’s own poetical invention. Saint Matthew is shown sitting beside the drums of fallen columns high above a mighty stream that recalls the Tiber, while in the distant background rises a tower resembling the Torre delle Milizie. It is the evocation of a ruined Roman setting. Surrounded by the remnants of the pagan world, the evangelist listens to the inspired words of the angel. Nature has become history, its scenery describing the threshold between the twilight of the pagan past and the dawn of Christianity.

The painting with Saint John is of a different character. We don’t know where the gospel of Saint Matthew was written, and the Roman setting of the painting may have been Poussin’s fancy. Saint John, however, tells us: “I, John, . . . was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” (Revelation 1:9). Exiled to Patmos, John lived in a cave near the town of Scala, and that is exactly what the painting shows. The entrance of the cave, still visited today by pilgrims, is visible behind and to the right of the writing evangelist. In the background are monuments of Scala. The elegant building with the columns may be the renowned temple of Artemis, depicted as already half in ruins. Behind it rises Mount Elias, and beneath stretches the sea beyond Scala’s harbor. Poussin reconstructs the topography of the Greek city with the precision of an antiquarian, yet he also imbues it with the poetry of a dream. The spirituality of John, who is totally absorbed in his vision, transcends all the splendor of the vanishing ancient world.

Beginning in 1648, Poussin painted his landscapes for a new class of French client in Paris and Lyon. These new clients belonged not to the traditional aristocracy but to the milieu of commerce and finance, and they asked for secular yet moralizing themes with a classical background.Characteristic examples are two landscapes, one with the funeral (fig. 58) and the other with the ashes of Phocion (cat. 43), which Poussin painted in 1648 for a silk merchant in Paris, Jacques Serisier. The subject was unusual, but telling. Although Phocion had been a worthy politician and general in Athens, his ungrateful compatriots had not only condemned him to death, but they had even refused him a burial in Athenian territory. Phocion’s fate is told in the Parallel Lives of Plutarch, which had been widely read in France ever since it was translated by Jacques Amyot (1513–1593). (Plutarch had been Montaigne’s favorite author.) Yet the story of Phocion had never been painted before, and Poussin had to imagine every detail.

The funeral takes place on a gloomy day. The view of Athens is as splendid as it is stern. Poussin searched Palladio’s
Four Books of Architecture for models of the most prominent buildings. In the middle ground, to the left, we see a monument resembling the Temple of Vesta at Tivoli. The stately building to the right, beneath the Tower of the Four Winds, follows the illustration of the Temple of Fortuna Virilis. A procession bearing a statue and accompanied by trumpets is approaching, for the nineteenth day of the Athenian month Munychion (April or May) — the day Phocion had to take hemlock — was the same day the Athenian knights traditionally visited the temple of Zeus. Plutarch recounts that many inhabitants of Athens were indignant about a public execution on such a solemn day. In the center of the painting, on a hill, rises a luxurious tomb. Just beneath, in the foreground, appear two men who carry the body of Phocion beyond the border of Athens. The entire setting — indeed, each building — seems to resonate with the tragic and sinister story.

In the second picture, the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion, private piety is opposed to public pomp and sacrifice. Phocion’s body has been brought to Megara and cremated there. Again, Poussin shows an ancient city with a Palladian temple in the center, but the mood is different: the light has become soft, and, along the river in the middle distance, we see figures bathing, playing the flute, walking, or reading. It is an image of suburban pleasure. In the foreground, in the shadow of the trees, we perceive Phocion’s widow gathering the ashes of her husband with a venerating gesture. She will carry them in the night to her house and bury them in its most sacred and intimate place, the hearth. These pendant landscapes have been read by some scholars as a political statement about the unreliability of public favor, and as related to the contemporary upheavals in France during the Fronde (1648–53). But the works’ deeper message is a religious one, for they evoke the moral contrast between the ceremony of official rites and unadorned private piety: a memorable message to be sent from Baroque Rome.

Possibly in the same year, 1648, Poussin painted the Landscape with Diogenes (cat. 62), often praised as his most lush representation of nature. The composition seems to evoke the moral contrast between civilization and wilderness, luxury and frugality. On the mountain, to the left, rises a stately city — symbol of urban pride and vanity, of richness and ease. The dominant building recalls Bramante’s Belvedere in the Vatican, but the city may represent Athens or Corinth, the two places where the Cynic philosopher is said to have lived. In the middle distance, the mirror-like surface of a river shines. A Palladian-style villa stands at its border, and a shepherd tends his flock. This beautiful scenery suggests the pleasures of a suburban, bucolic life. Yet all this splendor — this visual encomium of architecture and nature — serves only as the backdrop, or “moral repoussoir,” for the figure of the philosopher in the right-hand foreground. He turns his back to civilization, to both town and suburbia, and watches, with all the signs of astonishment and admiration, a young man drinking from his hands. The philosopher discards his bowl, his last piece of property, and, according to Diogenes Laertius, declares: “A youth has beaten me in plainness of living” (Lives of Eminent Philosophers 6.37). The beauty of nature is thus only a means to a moral end. Poussin’s Landscape with Diogenes is a paysage moralisé.

Another group of landscapes deals with terror and death in nature. As the painter of biblical histories, Poussin had always been unsurpassed in the representation of human passions and emotions, but now he transferred pain and horror into his images of nature. Again in 1648, he painted for a Parisian patron — Jean Pointel — the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44), which in French has been suitably called Les Effets de la terreur.

The composition is similar to that of the Landscape with Diogenes. Stately buildings adorn a mountain, a city appears in the background, and in the middle distance trees and houses are reflected on the shining surface of a lake. But nature has otherwise become torpid in the shadow of death. The body of a youth, strangled by a python, is stretched out on the edge of a brook, and a male figure, exhibiting all the signs of horror, escapes at a run.

The Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake has provided a stumbling block for learned iconographers. No classical text can be connected with the theme of this picture, and alternative interpretations — anecdotal or pseudoscientific — have not proved any more persuasive. But where erudition has failed, aesthetic discussion of the painting has been livelier than is the case with any other landscape by Poussin. Fénelon, and, above all, Diderot have been thrilled by the
emotional power of the work. In his *Salon* of 1767 (no. 128), Diderot has given a long and fascinating description:

In the extreme right foreground is a standing man, transfixed by terror, ready to flee. But what is the source of his terror? What is it he’s seen? He has seen, in the far left foreground, a woman [sic] lying on the ground, encircled by an enormous snake that devours her [sic]. . . . From the tranquil travelers in the background to this last terrifying spectacle, what an immense distance is covered, and within it what a sequence of different passions is laid out before you—you, the limit point of the composition!  

There exists no more brilliant analysis of this extraordinary picture, with its chain of horror and fear. But Diderot wrote as an enlightened critic of the eighteenth century, and his astonishing text resounds with his sensual ideas about human feelings and their mechanism. One is reminded of a phrase in his dialogue *D’Alembert’s Dream*: “If a touching word strikes his ear or a remarkable sight strikes his eye, there he is all of a sudden caught up in an inner tumult. All the threads of his network are set in motion, a tremor runs through him, he’s seized with horror.”  

Poussin’s painting is of a different character, tragically interweaving time, nature, and death. Death—or the expectation of death—was a persistent theme in Poussin’s landscapes. Tragic death was recalled in the two landscapes with the story of Phocion, and death hovers over the poetical setting of the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47), which may have been painted as a mythological pendant to the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*. In these works, nature has become the stage for tragedy. Poussin must have been haunted by the trauma of unexpected death, for one after the other of his landscapes evokes catastrophes in nature and their annihilating effect on defenseless human beings.

In 1651 Poussin painted for Cassiano dal Pozzo a landscape with the story of Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57), or, as an English engraving from 1769 calls it laconically, *A Landstorm Wherein Is Represented the Story of Pyramus and Thisbe*. There have been some speculative interpretations of this painting, but its narrative follows the story of Pyramus and Thisbe as told in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Moreover, a letter from the artist to his friend and fellow painter Jacques Stella gives a detailed and lively description of this astonishing landscape. Once again, the composition is based on the contrast between city and countryside, civilization and wilderness. Far to the right can be seen the skyline of Babylon, with some curious buildings suggesting the oriental character of the town. In the middle distance we again see the surface of a lake. The foreground is dark and in shadow. This is a place of deception and death. The composition is similar to that of the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, but horror and fear are now intermingled with pain and love. Thisbe does not flee from the sight of her dying lover but rushes toward the pale body with a combination of grace and despair. In utter excitement, she storms through the night. One is reminded of Ovid’s unforgettable description of her “shivering like the sea when a slight breeze ruffles its surface” (*exhorruit aequoris instar, quod temit, exigua cum summum stringitur aura* [Ovid *Metamorphoses* 4.135–36]).  

But we still have not mentioned the most unusual aspect of this unique painting: the interconnection of a storm in nature with a storm in the human heart. In 1651, perhaps inspired by Leonardo, Poussin began a painting in which a tempest or a thunderstorm strikes, causing dramatic effects on frightened peasants and cattle (cat. 55). Just as with the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, this painting has no literary subject. In the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe*, he went a step further and combined the rendering of a “landstorm” with the narrative of a tragic love story. In the already mentioned letter, the painter explained this keen experiment: “I have tried to represent a land storm. . . . In the front of the picture you will see Pyramus, stretched out dead on the ground and beside him Thisbe, given over to her grief.”

According to Ovid, the fateful meeting of the two lovers was planned for the first hours of the night. Ovid tells how Thisbe watched a lioness drinking “in the light of the moon” (ad lunae radios [Ovid *Met.* 4.99]). Accordingly, earlier painters had placed the story of the suicide of Pyramus and Thisbe in the silver light of the moon. Poussin alone, the painter who usually so carefully followed his literary sources,
departed from Ovid and relocated his scene at night during a thunderstorm, dramatically illuminated by lightning. The storm of human passion is echoed by the storm in nature. The lightning in the heavens illuminates the point at which the tragedy of love and death is approaching its heartbreaking end. Only once, when, more than ten years later, he painted Winter: The Flood (fig. 42) for his Four Seasons, did Poussin return to the paired themes of destruction in nature and human death.

The landscapes that Poussin painted about 1650 were of astonishing diversity and inventiveness. To the paysages moralisés (the landscapes featuring the funeral and the ashes of Phocion and the Landscape with Diogenes), and the panoramas of horror and death (Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake and the landscapes with a storm and the story of Pyramus and Thysbe), should be added a magnificent mythological landscape painted in 1649: the story of the Cyclops Polyphemus and the lovers Acis and Galatea (fig. 36). Some scholars have tried to endow the beauty of this painting with a hidden deeper meaning, yet every figure, every detail is perfectly explainable by following the narrative of Ovid’s Metamorphoses. One might even say that never did Poussin come so close to the wit of the most lovable among the Roman poets as in this picture.

There is no storm, no lightning. It is a serene, if somewhat cloudy day. Poussin shows us a powerful Mediterranean landscape with the sea and a river, with fields and majestic trees. In the background rise two colossal mountains, evidently volcanoes. Nature looks peaceful, but it seems to hold its breath in expectation of some impending explosion. The figures scattered through the picture are embedded in nature as if they were themselves part of it. There is no city, not even a single building: the myth of the Cyclops precedes the age of civilization. With this mythological painting, Hazlitt’s dictum about seeing “nature through the glass of time” gains a new, profound meaning.

Ovid’s verses are the golden key for understanding Poussin’s narrative. The Roman poet describes the scenery in which the story takes place: “A wedge-shaped promontory with long, sharp point juts out into the sea, both sides washed by the waves” (Prominet in pontum cuneatus acuminis longo collis, utrumque latus circumfluit aequoris unda [Ovid Met. 13.778–79]). In the painting, the crest of the right-hand mountains descends into the sea: evidently the artist has followed Ovid’s description. The poet goes on: “Hither the fierce Cyclops climbed and sat down on the cliff’s central point . . .” (Huc ferus adscendit Cyclops mediusque resedit [Ovid Met. 13.780]). Accordingly, Poussin seats the Cyclops on top of the rocky mountain. Ovid completes his description of the Cyclops: “Then, laying at his feet the pine-trunk which served him for a staff . . .” (Cui postquam pinus, baculi, quae praebuit usum, ante pedes posta est [Ovid Met. 13.782]). In the painting the staff protrudes behind the back of the Cyclops against the light of the sky.

Focusing his narrative on the moment of highest passion had been Poussin’s intention in the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake and in the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe. There is a similar focus in the Landscape with Polyphemus, but here the moment is of a volcanic explosion yet to come. Nothing is moving, everything is listening and waiting. Ovid describes the reaction of the jealous Cyclops seated on the mountain, who is consumed by unbridled love: “. . . he took his pipe made of a hundred reeds” (sumptaque harundinibus compacta est fistula centum [Ovid Met. 13.784]). Poussin depicts very clearly in the hands of the Cyclops the monstrous instrument, which he has begun to play. Ovid describes the effect of his passionate chant, and in the picture, it seems as though nature, indeed the whole landscape, is listening to the terrible sound of the Cyclops’s pipe: “All the mountains felt the sound of his rustic pipings; the waves felt it too” (senserunt toti pastoria sibila montes, senserunt undae [Ovid Met. 13.785–86]). The Cyclops proudly lists his treasures and properties: “And all this flock is mine” (Hoc pecus omne meum est [Ovid Met. 13.821]). “And I have . . . lambs in my warm folds” (Sunt . . . tepidis in ovilibus agni [Ovid Met. 13.827]); and “a pair of doves” (parve columbarum [Ovid Met. 13.833]). All are visible in Poussin’s landscape: men dig the soil, an ox pulls a plow, sheep flock in the shadow of the trees, and a pair of white doves fly in front of the mountains.

But what about the four figures in the foreground (see fig. 43)? They are evidently under the spell of the Cyclops’s overpowering song, and one of them is hiding, full of fear. It is Galatea, who, “hiding beneath a rock and resting in my
Acis’ arms, at a great distance heard the words he sang . . .” (latitans ego rupe meique Acis in gremio residens procul auribus hausi talia dicta meis [Ovid Met. 13.786–88]). Polyphemus praises her as the most beautiful of all the figures: “O Galatea, whiter than snowy privet-leaves, more blooming than the meadows, surpassing the alder in your tall slenderness . . .” (Candidior folio nivei, Galatea ligustri, floridior pratis, longa procerior alno [Ovid Met. 13.789–91]). Playing with her long hair, she hides herself behind a youth with a reed crown, who is none other than Acis, her lover. According to Ovid, “Acis was the son of Faunus and a Symaethian nymph, great joy to his father and his mother . . .” (Acis erat Fauno nymphaque Symaethide cretus magna qui dem patrisque sui matrisque voluptas [Ovid Met. 13.750–51]). In light of this verse, the other figures in the foreground of the painting can easily be identified. The river god to the left, who is looking up to the mountains and to Polyphemus, is Symaethus. Symaethus was a Sicilian river flowing around the foot of Mount Etna. The nymph who stands beside Galatea is the mother of Acis. She turns her regard to a faun, who is hidden behind a bush and some stones and is watching the “family” assembled around Galatea. Every detail is of a rare narrative grace inspired by the poetry of Ovid.

But only in listening to the words of Polyphemus’s song is the topography of the landscape completely revealed. “For oh, I burn,” he moans, “and my hot passion, stirred to frenzy, rages more fiercely within me; I seem to carry Aetna let down into my breast with all his violence.” (Uror enim laesusque exaestuat acrius ignis, cumque suis videor translatam viribus Aetnæ pectore ferre meo [Ovid Met. 13.867–69]). Behind the figure of the Cyclops one sees a piece of rock that the giant had broken from the mountain, “a piece wrenched from the mountainside” (partemque e monte revulsam [Ovid Met. 13.882–83]). With the edge of this stone, Polyphemus will smash his youthful rival.

We now recognize in this imaginative Sicilian landscape Etna, the ever-threatening volcano, as well as the Symaethus River and, to the far right, the Mare Sicilium. The topography is as precise as it was in the Landscape with Saint John on Patmos or in those with the funeral and the gathering of the ashes of Phocion. Again, nature provides the stage for a story of love and death. In many of Poussin’s landscapes dating
from about 1650—*the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* and those with the stories of Thisbe and Orpheus—human happiness is destroyed by the unbridled forces of nature—snakes and wild beasts, storms and lightning, the Cyclops and the volcano. All these images of nature evoke the fragility of happiness, and all end in tragedy.

Ten years later—about 1660—when Poussin painted his last mythological landscape, the *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* (fig. 44), the mood has changed. The vast scenery evokes something of the quality of a dream. In the silvery light of the evening a huge mountain rises up to the clouds. Below, a large river flows slowly between the hills and the trees. There is no trace of civilization, no city, no house, and only a few figures are scattered throughout the immense landscape. Again, however, the topography is not a free invention of the painter. Poussin has followed the indications found in the texts of ancient writers: Virgil, Livy, Ovid, and, eventually, Propertius. The *Landscape with Hercules and Cacus* evokes the mythological origins of ancient Rome.

The colossal mountain is the Mons Aventinus. The monstrous Cacus, “the terror and the shame of the Aventine wood” (*Aventinae timor atque infamia silvae* [Ovid Fasti 1.551]), had lived in a dark cave, where he hid the oxen he had stolen from Geryon’s herd. The pasture to the right, where two fat cows...
are seen, refers to the Roman Forum Boarium, which was near the Aventine. The river in the foreground is the Tiber.

High on the rocks of the Aventine stands Hercules with a club on his shoulder and a lion’s skin in his left hand. He is the “Hercules Victor,” setting his foot in triumph on the genitals of Cacus, whose slain body is stretched out in front of his cave. The traces of the terrible fight between the hero and the monster are still visible in a landslide of broken rocks, which have fallen from the entrance of the cave. In this detail—the crumbling stones near Cacus’s home—Poussin has followed the Aeneid: “Now first look at this rocky overhanging cliff, how the masses are scattered afar, how the mountain-dwelling stands desolate, and the crags have toppled down in mighty ruin” (Iam primum saxis suspensam hanc aspice rumep, disiectae procul ut moles desertaque montis stat domus et scopuli ingentem traxere ruinam [Virgil Aeneid 8.190–93]). 9 Such were the words that Evander, the Arcadian king settled in Rome, had addressed to Aeneas. Aeneas had arrived in the city the very day of the annual feast of Hercules, and Evander had shown him the altar dedicated to the hero who liberated Rome from Cacus: “He himself set in the grove this altar, which shall ever by us be called Mightiest, and Mightiest shall it ever be” (Hanc aram luco statuit, quae Maxima semper dicetur nobis et erit quae maxima semper [Virgil Aeneid 8.271–72]).

The Tiber—with the figure of the river god in the shadow of the foreground to the left—is curiously quiet, resembling more a pond than a stream in movement. Virgil explains that, during the night of Aeneas’s arrival in Rome, the Tiber slowed down its movement so that the prophetic guest could easily cross: “All night long the Tiber calmed his swelling flood, and flowing back with silent waves stayed thus, so that like a gentle pool or quiet mere he smoothed his watery plain, that the oars might know no struggle” (Thybris . . . nocte tumentem leniit et tacita refluens ita substitit unda, mitis ut in morem stagni placidaeque paludis sternet aequor aquis, remo ut luctamen abseset [Virgil Aeneid 8.86–89]). Poussin has sensitively transposed this poetic description of the silent river into his painting through the calmness of the stream and the easy crossing of the boat.

But the complete meaning of this painting is revealed only after the identities of the four female figures in the foreground have been made clear. The prominent figure to the right, shown with a golden quiver and arrows, can be none other than Diana, who was venerated in a temple on the Aventine. Two other figures, wearing crowns of weed, must be nymphs, probably nymphs of the Tiber. But who is the fourth figure, who wears in her hair not weed but a red band, and who is pointing prophetically with her right hand at the victorious Hercules on the Aventine. I would suggest that she is Carmenta, the mother of Evander, who was venerated as the first—the earliest—of the sibyls. Livy tells that Evander had greeted Hercules after his victory over Cacus with the following words: “Hail, Hercules, son of Jupiter! You are he, of whom my mother, truthful interpreter of Heaven, foretold to me that you should be added to the number of gods, and that an altar should be dedicated to you here which the nation one day to be the most powerful on earth should call the Greatest Altar, and should serve according to your rite” (love nate, Hercules, salve . . . te mihi mater, veridica interpres deum, aucturum caelesium numerum cecinit tibique aram hie dictatum iri quam opulentissima olim in terris gens maximam vocet tuoque ritu colat [Livy Ab urbe condita 7.10–11]). 10 Now Poussin’s intention becomes clear: The subject of his Landscape with Hercules and Cacus is the origin—and the prediction—of the Roman cult of Hercules at the Ara Maxima. Again nature is seen “through the glass of time,” and its representation is interwoven with myth, religion, and history. Poussin, the great narrator, has truly followed the legacy of the Roman poets and historians.

Poussin’s last word on the grand theme of nature and time came in the form of four landscapes painted between 1660 and 1664 for the duc de Richelieu. In a unique way, the old painter fused the traditional representation of the Four Seasons (time in nature) with the mythological theme of the Four Ages (time in history) and, finally, with the Christian idea of the Fall and the salvation of humankind (time by the hand of God). Not every aspect of this idiosyncratic program is totally clear, but no other painter—and especially no other painter of landscapes—had ever broached the problems of

Figure 45 Nicolas Poussin, Spring: Adam and Eve (detail of cat. 66)
“NATURE THROUGH THE GLASS OF TIME”: A REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF POUSSIN’S LANDSCAPES
metamorphoses in nature, and of guilt, punishment, and hope in history, in such a comprehensive way. In these last landscapes, Poussin’s reflections on nature, time, and humanity reveal a profundity reminiscent of Dante or Milton.

The narrative subjects of the four paintings are taken from the Bible—more precisely, from the Old Testament. The sequence begins with a beautiful representation of the first season—Spring: Adam and Eve (cat. 66)—combined with the first time of day, morning, and the first Age of Man according to the Bible, Paradise. It is a peaceful, blossoming landscape with wonderful trees and bushes, a river, and a mountain in the background. Only a few animals are seen: swans on the surface of the river of Paradise. The Creation of the world is finished, and God is seen high in the sky blessing his work. As in Poussin’s other landscapes, however, felicity is overshadowed by immanent misfortune and death.

Eve, who is seen in the center of the garden, points to the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge and invites Adam to taste from them (see fig. 45). It is the moment just before the Fall, the moment of expectation, just as had been the case in the Landscape with Polyphemus. The Golden Age is coming to an end. The scorn of God and the Expulsion from Paradise are imminent.

The sequence continues with a gleaming image of the second season—Summer: Ruth and Boaz (cat. 67)—and the second time of day, noontime, combined with a telling description of the second Age of Man. Expelled from Paradise, man must earn his bread “in the sweat of thy face” (Genesis 3:19). He must work, cultivate the land, prepare his food, and obey his master. In pagan times summer had been the reign of Ceres, the goddess of harvest, fruits, and especially of grain. In representing summer as the season of the reaping of corn, Poussin maintained this pagan tradition, but he replaced the pagan Ceres with the biblical Ruth and converted the harvest of the fields into a metaphor of the harvest of the spirit.
The choice of the story of Boaz and Ruth for the landscape depicting summer corresponded to no iconographic tradition. Ruth, a “damsel” from Moab, had come to Bethlehem and said, “Let me now go into the field, and glean ears of corn after him [Boaz] in whose sight I shall find grace” (Ruth 2:2). Boaz came to visit his field and said “unto his servant that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?” The servant answered, “It is the Moabitish damsel that came back” (Ruth 2:5–6). Then said Boaz to Ruth: “Go not to glean in another field . . . but abide here fast by my maidens . . . and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink . . . At mealtime come thou hither, and eat of the bread . . .” (Ruth 2:8–14).

Boaz and Ruth are placed in the center of the foreground. She kneels humbly before him, and a sheaf of corn is visible on the ground behind her. Farther to the right stands the servant, who bows his head, obeying Boaz’s order: “Have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee?” (Ruth 2:9). Around them are arranged the different scenes of the harvest, and to the right, on the mountain, rises Bethlehem. In the shadow of the tree to the left two maidens busy themselves near a chest full of bread and vessels (fig. 46). Here Poussin follows the text of the Bible no less carefully than he had followed those of the ancient poets in his earlier landscapes.

But the prophetic meaning of this radiant image of summer, harvest, and music is only revealed when one remem-
bers that Ruth the Moabitite will become Boaz’s wife and that Obed, their son, “begat Jesse, and Jesse begat David” (Ruth 4.22). As ancestors of David, Boaz and Ruth became part of the genealogy of Jesus. In the hands of Ruth, the biblical Ceres, the sheaf of corn becomes the symbol of the spiritual bread, the Eucharist (fig. 47). The astonishing achievement of Poussin is his superimposing of different meanings so that natural time is fused with the time of the Bible, and the narrative of the Old Testament is the veil for salvation. The pair of Boaz and Ruth—Ruth kneeling before Boaz—is an inversion of the pair of Eve and Adam in the first painting—with Adam seated before Eve.

The same superimposition of meanings can be observed in the third painting. The season is Autumn: The Spies with the Grapes of the Promised Land (figs. 48, 49), and the time of day is a golden evening. In pagan times the god reigning in autumn had been Bacchus, and the great event of the season was the vintage. Again Poussin did not break with this pagan tradition, but instead fused natural time with sacred history by evoking the prophetic vintage story told in the Bible: the return of the spies from the Promised Land with the cluster of grapes.

The story is told in the book of Numbers, and Poussin has again carefully followed the biblical text: “The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Send thou men, that they may search the land of Canaan” (Numbers 13.1–2). “And they ascended by the south, and came into Hebron...Hebron was built seven years before Zaan in Egypt” (Numbers 13.22). In Hebron the tomb of Abraham was venerated. In Poussin’s painting the town on the rocks to the left is probably Hebron. The text continues: “And they came unto the brook of Eshcol...” (Numbers 13.23). The brook Eshcol appears in the painting exactly behind the spies. An angler is seen on its bank. The narrative continues: “And [they] cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs” (Numbers 13.23). The spies with the cluster of grapes are the dominating figures in Poussin’s image of autumn. Behind them grows the tree with pomegranates. A graceful woman has climbed a ladder and plucks
the precious fruits. One of the spies holds in his left hand a branch with three grape clusters. After their return the spies reported to Moses: “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it” (Numbers 13:27).

The “grape,” which the spies brought back from the Promised Land, was in Christian art a time-honored symbol of the Holy Blood of Christ and the Eucharist. Until the eighteenth century it appeared on numerous altars, tabernacles, and chalices. A Flemish engraving of 1607 depicts the two spies with the “grape” between the figures of the Old and the New Law (fig. 50). Christ on the cross is rising from the biblical fruit.

Thus the first three of Poussin’s seasons follow a coherent program: the year begins with spring, the day with the morning, and the history of mankind with the Golden Age, Paradise—but also with the Fall of Man into sinfulness. Summer and autumn are represented as noonday and evening and as the seasons of the harvest of bread and wine. The sheaf of corn from the field of Boaz gleaned by Ruth and the grape from the Promised Land are the symbols of the coming salvation from sin and death through the sacrifice of Christ.

In the last of the four paintings, the tone changes radically. Autumn is followed by Winter: The Flood (fig. 42), evening by night, and the images of the harvest and bread and wine as the means of salvation by the representation of catastrophe and death. As in the Landscape with the Man Killed by a Snake or the tragic end of Eurydice, Poussin returns to his earlier panoramas of horror and death, but now the accidents and misfortunes in nature have been transformed into punishment by God. As his subject for winter, Poussin chose the Deluge as described in the sixth chapter of Genesis. Because there existed no precedent for this astonishing connection between the season of winter and the biblical event of the Flood, this final of the four paintings is the most difficult to explain.

Everything looks gray and dark. The only source of light in this terrifying night consists of a long thunderbolt crossing the sky, the flaming signal of God’s wrath.

The rocks are cracking, “and the waters prevailed, and were increased greatly upon the earth; . . . and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered” (Genesis 7:18–19). Figures try to escape, parents to save their child. In the center a man raises his hands up to the heaven, whether in prayer or in utter desperation cannot be said. Only a single beast is visible: a snake on the rocky slope to the left. Poussin seems to have been haunted by snakes, as indicated by some of his earlier landscapes, in which snakes were the cause of unexpected and horrible death. But here the venomous reptile, coiling itself in vile satisfaction and a kind of devilish triumph, is a glistening symbol of sin and guilt. Poussin’s great panorama of the change in nature and of the course of human destiny concludes with a fatalistic representation of God’s wrath and man’s annihilation.

In order to grasp the admonishing message of this picture one must remember that Man and his fate—the attitude of man in the face of destiny, of terror and death—had been
one of Poussin’s favorite subjects throughout his life. In earlier years, he had taken the attitude of a Stoic moralist. His paintings of Eudamidas (in the Statens Museum, Copenhagen), Phocion, and Diogenes had been exempla virtutis, but now, in his old age—close to his own end—he endows the old moral subject with a new religious and eschatological dimension. Fate is replaced by the biblical God. The disaster is no longer an accident of nature but an act of the punishing Lord. Before the beginning of the flood, God “said unto Noah, The end of all flesh has come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them, and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Genesis 6.13). The moral aspect of the theme has by no means disappeared—Poussin insists more intensely than ever on man’s weakness and inconstancy, his fear and helplessness when confronted with disaster—but fate is now in the hands of the Lord, and human weakness has become sin.

Yet Poussin had not become a fatalist, and the interpretation of his most moving picture cannot stop at this point. We must once more turn to the texts of the Bible—not only to the book of Genesis but also to the gospel of Saint Matthew—in order to understand fully the significance of the painting. When the flood has ceased, “and the Lord smelled a sweet savour” of Noah’s Sacrifice, he “said in his heart: . . . neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8.21–22). This quotation is crucial to Poussin’s image of winter because it is the only one that connects, albeit in a very peculiar way, the Flood with the seasons, with winter and night. Poussin must certainly have known this passage, and it may even have been decisive in his choice of the theme. Were it not for this quotation, Poussin’s pathetic evocation of the Flood would be nothing more than a narrative from the Bible and another example of fate, of human fear in the face of devastation and death. At best, it could be yet another example of God’s punishment of human corruption, which had happened thousands of years ago.

Only when we turn to the twenty-fourth chapter of the gospel of Saint Matthew is the painting’s cautionary message fully revealed. In this chapter, Jesus speaks to his disciples about the approaching Last Judgment: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man. . . . But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark. And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be” (Matthew 24.36–39). In light of this quotation, Poussin’s representation of the Flood is not only a biblical narrative, and not merely a moral example, but also an eschatological admonition. It was his last word on the great theme of Man and his fate: he had become a religious moralist. In these days of increasing hurricanes, the inundations of air pollution, and the perversion of climate, the warning message of Poussin’s painting of the Flood is more timely than ever—and Hazlitt’s words about seeing “nature through the glass of time” gains a new urgency.

3. Translated by Robert D. Hicks (Diogenes Laertius 1925).
7. Translated by Frank Justus Miller (Ovid 1946).
8. Translated by James George Frazer (Ovid 1931).
10. Translated by B. O. Foster (Livy 1919, p. 29).
1594
Nicolas Poussin was born June 15 in the market town of Les Andelys, on the Seine, about twenty-five miles from Rouen, in Normandy. His family—said to have descended from noble stock—was not well off, and little is known of his early years. He seems to have been schooled in Latin and the classics—an experience that left an indelible mark on all his work. In 1611–12, the late Mannerist artist Quentin Varin (ca. 1570–1634) worked in Les Andelys and encouraged the youth in his chosen profession.

ca. 1612
Poussin left home and made his way to Paris, possibly via Rouen. He attempted to place himself with various masters, worked in Poitou, and spent time in Lyon as well. He made at least one attempt to reach Rome, getting as far as Florence. Illness and poverty forced him to return to Paris, where, in 1622, his fortunes took a turn for the better. To celebrate the canonization of Ignatius Loyola and Francis Xavier, he was hired to paint six canvases for the Jesuits (none survive). These attracted the attention of the great Italian poet Giambattista Marino (1569–1625), who was then in Paris. Marino commissioned from Poussin a series of drawings based on Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (see figs. 21, 23) and, impressed with the results, invited the artist to accompany him to Rome. Before leaving Paris, Poussin completed for the Cathedral of Notre-Dame an altarpiece depicting the Death of the Virgin. That work, previously known only from a drawing but recently rediscovered in the church of Sterrebeek, near Brussels, Belgium (fig. 51), is, together with Marino’s drawings, the key document of these formative years.

1624
Poussin arrived in Rome, possibly via Venice. To judge from one of our earliest sources, the papal physician and connoisseur Giulio Mancini, it was the artist’s Venetian style that first attracted attention—together with his literary erudition and his ability to comprehend “whatever story, fable or poem, and then express it with his brush, as he does in a most felicitous fashion.” Marino was still in the city when Poussin arrived, but he soon left for Naples, where he died in 1625. The poet recommended the artist to the papal treasurer Marcello Sacchetti, who in turn introduced Poussin to Francesco Barberini, the nephew of Pope Urban VIII. Poussin also met
the Barberini's extraordinary secretary, Cassiano dal Pozzo, who was to become the key figure of the artist's early career. The Barberini introduction would later prove extremely important, but, between March 1625 and December 1626, Cardinal Francesco Barberini (together with dal Pozzo) was sent on a mission to Madrid, leaving Poussin without a patron or supporter. For this reason, many of Poussin's early works were painted for the open market—something that explains their varied quality. As one biographer (Joachim von Sandrart) noted, they consisted primarily of "bacchanals, satyrs and nymphs taken from Ovid and shown amidst ruins and landscapes."

Of necessity, Poussin changed residence frequently, eventually sharing quarters with the Flemish sculptor François Duquesnoy, with whom he measured ancient statues and began to form his ideas about Greek and Roman art (Poussin later acknowledged his enormous debt to Roman reliefs for his history paintings). He also studied from the live model, first in the studio of Domenichino and then in that of Andrea Sacchi, both representatives of the classical style, and he made excursions into the Roman Campagna with the young Claude Lorrain to draw from nature. A crucial breakthrough came in 1626 and 1627, when, for Cardinal Francesco Barberini, Poussin painted The Destruction of the Temple at Jerusalem (Israel Museum, Jerusalem) and The Death of Germanicus (Institute of Arts, Minneapolis). These remarkably accomplished compositions, carried out in a style that combined Venetian color with Raphaelian design, established a new standard for classical painting and set the stage for Poussin's success as a history painter.

1628
Through the support of Cassiano dal Pozzo and Francesco Barberini, Poussin received the prestigious commission to paint an altarpiece for Saint Peter's, The Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus (Vatican Museums, Rome). Bernini would later recount how much he admired the altarpiece, but at the time it was compared—not altogether favorably—with The Martyrdom of Saints Processus and Martinianus by Valentin de Boulogne (ca. 1599–1632). Although Poussin also received a commission from outside Rome for another altarpiece—the Apparition of the Virgin to Saint James (Louvre)—he soon abandoned such public commissions, focusing instead on gallery pictures with subjects taken from Ovid's Metamorphoses, the poetry of Tasso, Roman history, and the Bible.

1629
By this date, Poussin was living with the family of a French cook, Jacques Dughet, who nursed him through an illness (probably syphilis). Poussin married Dughet's daughter in 1639 and taught his sons, one of whom, Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675), became a distinguished painter of landscapes styled on those of Poussin. Of crucial importance during these years was Cassiano dal Pozzo's profound interest in the natural sciences as well as in classical and Early Christian culture. Through Cassiano, Poussin also became familiar with the optical treatises of the Theatine priest Padre (Matteo) Zaccolini as well as the writings of Leonardo da Vinci.

1635–42
Quite apart from the many mythological subjects in landscape settings inspired by Titian that Poussin painted for Cassiano in the 1620s, between about 1635 and 1642 he carried out an exceptional series of canvases, depicting the Seven Sacraments (The Duke of Rutland, on loan to the National Gallery, London), which are notable for their clarity, their antiquarian erudition, and the purity of their architectural settings. The same qualities are found in his landscape paintings of this period, especially the pendant landscapes with figures of the Evangelists Matthew and John carried out for the abbe Giovanni Maria Roscioli (cats. 35, 36), maestro di camera of Pope Urban VIII and therefore part of the Barberini–dal Pozzo circle. Occasionally he collaborated with the architectural specialist Jean Lemaire (1601–1659). By this time, Poussin had an established circle of serious-minded patrons in Rome, among whom we may list Cassiano's younger brother, Carlo Antonio, and their cousin Amadeo dal Pozzo, as well as the Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani, Cardinal Camillo Massimi, Cardinal Angelo Giori, and Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi. Equally notable patrons were Cardinal Richelieu, for whom Poussin painted a series of Bacchanals, and Philip IV, who in 1636–37 commissioned the Landscape with Saint Jerome.
Prominent French collectors included the maréchal de Créquy, Louis Phélypeaux de La Vrillière, and Paul Fréart de Chantelou.

1640

In 1639, Poussin was offered the position of premier peintre du roi by the surintendant des bâtiments (essentially, the minister of arts) François Sublet de Noyers. Poussin managed to delay the journey north until the end of 1640, when Paul Fréart de Chantelou and Chantelou’s brother Roland Fréart de Chambray accompanied him to Paris, where he was received by Cardinal Richelieu and Louis XIII. His principal task was the decoration of the Grand Galerie in the Louvre, for which he again engaged Lemaire to assist him. The official commissions could not have been more inimical to Poussin’s working habits, as they involved either altarpieces or large-scale decorations. Poussin maintained his relations with Italian collectors, above all with Cassiano dal Pozzo, and in 1642 he left for Rome, ostensibly to fetch his wife, but evidently with no intention of returning to Paris. Richelieu died in December 1642, and the king in May 1643, relieving the artist of his obligations at court. Poussin, however, retained his title of premier peintre to the king.

1642

Back in Rome, Poussin found his work in greater demand than ever. To his Italian clientele he added French collectors he had met in Paris and those who made his acquaintance during trips to the papal city. Especially important among these was the merchant-banker Jean Pointel, who was in Rome from 1645 to 1647 as well as in 1645–55. Pointel, whom Poussin referred to as his “bon ami,” eventually owned twenty-one paintings by the artist, including seven landscapes. By contrast, Chantelou—Poussin’s other important French patron—owned no landscapes, a fact that underlines their appeal to a certain type of collector. That the two men viewed each other as rivals for Poussin’s affection is clear from surviving correspondence regarding the two self-portraits Poussin made—one for each—in 1649 and 1650. Among other major collectors of landscapes are Michel Passart, who was in Rome in 1643, when he became a friend and patron of Claude Lorrain as well as of Poussin; Passart’s relative Marc-Antoine Lumague; the Lyonais merchant Jacques Serisier; the painter Jacques Stella; and the young duc de Richelieu (nephew to Cardinal Richelieu)—the recipient of the series of canvases showing the Four Seasons (see cats. 66, 67, figs. 42, 48).

From Poussin’s surviving correspondence with his French clients—above all with Chantelou—we know that he was deeply concerned with the political turmoil during the Fronde (1648–53), which affected many of his French patrons, as well as with the popular revolt of Masaniello in Naples against Spanish oppression (1647). Some scholars have read political views into the artist’s landscapes. In many of his letters, Poussin expressed an attitude toward life in line with neo-Stoic ideas, and this, too, has been thought crucial to understanding the serious, even severe, quality found in many of his late works. In 1648, upon completing for Chantelou his second great series of Seven Sacraments (Duke of Sutherland, on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh)—a monument of seventeenth-century painting—Poussin expressed his desire to “convert these seven Sacraments into seven other stories in which would be brought to life the most strange twists that fortune has ever played on mankind.” This passage has been associated with works such as the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44) and the Landscape with a Storm (cat. 55). Yet evident in other landscapes is an idyllic, poetic quality some have characterized as pantheistic. Unquestionably, the landscapes pose fascinating questions regarding Poussin’s attitude toward life and art.

1664

Poussin’s wife died after a long illness. For years, the artist’s shaking hand had made painting increasingly difficult, and he now abandoned the practice altogether, giving his unfinished Apollo and Daphne (fig. 12) to Camillo Massimi. In January 1665, he complained to his future biographer, André Félibien, about his infirmities, noting that his thoughts were entirely directed toward death. Yet this did not keep him from
writing that spring to Fréart de Chambray with his comments on the art of painting, which he defined as "an imitation done on a surface with lines and colors of everything under the sun, the goal of which is delection" — a definition completely in line with the ambition of his landscapes but in contrast with views he expressed on another occasion, when he emphasized painting as a learned activity.

1665

Poussin died on November 19 and was buried in his parish church of San Lorenzo in Lucina, surrounded, according to his biographer Bellori, by his fellow artists and friends.

We are extremely fortunate to have four biographies of the artist, all written by men who knew him personally. The most authoritative is that of Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1615–1696), papal antiquarian to Clement IX and librarian to Queen Christina. Bellori knew the mature Poussin intimately and had ample opportunity to discuss matters of art with him. His *Vite de’ pittori, scultori ed architetti moderni* was published in 1672 with a dedication to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV’s *surlintendant des bâtiments*, and it emphasizes the learned content and expressive goals of Poussin’s art. By contrast, André Félibien (1619–1695) met Poussin in Rome, where he was secretary to the French ambassador from 1647 to 1649. He observed Poussin painting and even took up a brush in the artist’s presence; this experience gives his comments a special flavor. Unlike Bellori — a committed classicist — Félibien was exceptionally responsive to Poussin’s landscapes and the artist’s abiding interest in nature. His *Entretiens [Conversations] sur les vies et sur les ouvrages des plus excellents peintres anciens et modernes* were published between 1666 and 1668; the eighth contains Poussin’s life. The biography by Giovanni Battista Passeri (1610/16–1679) is very different in character. A painter and pupil of Domenichino as well as a priest and poet, Passeri began in the 1650s his *Vite de’ pittori, scultori ed architetti che anno lavorato in Roma*, and in them one finds a greater emphasis on anecdotes. The manuscript was completed in 1679 but not published until 1772. Finally, the German painter-theorist Joachim von Sandrart (1605/6–1688) knew Poussin when he lived in the Giustiniani palace in Rome, between 1629 and 1635. He accompanied Poussin and Claude into the Roman countryside to draw from nature, and together they must also have studied the celebrated antiquities in the Giustiniani collection. Sandrart’s multi-volume work was published between 1675 and 1679.

In addition, more than two hundred letters by Poussin survive. By far the greatest number is addressed to Paul Fréart de Chamtelou, and it must be remembered that the vast quantity written to other patrons has simply been lost. The surviving letters were published in 1911.

Long before his death, Poussin was revered as the greatest of French painters and the worthy heir of Raphael, but it was only in the eighteenth century that he acquired the reputation of being a *peintre-philosophe* — an idea that today is so much a part of his artistic persona that it seems almost useless to insist that the term *peintre-poète* would be closer to seventeenth-century notions. Already in the seventeenth century, Poussin’s works were being analyzed and discussed as no one else’s, not least in the official precincts of the Académie, under the aegis of Colbert. Seven conferences held at the Académie in 1667 were edited by Félibien and published. Not surprisingly, two of these focused on history paintings by Poussin—*The Israelites Gathering Manna* (fig. 34) and *Christ Healing the Blind* (fig. 2).

By contrast, François Fénelon (1651–1715), the learned archbishop of Cambrai, chose two landscapes — the *Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion* (fig. 38) and the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (cat. 44) — for his dialogues intended to introduce the young heir to the French throne, the duc de Bourgogne, to the art of painting. Composed between 1692 and 1696, these fascinating texts were published in 1731 as an appendix to a biography of Pierre Mignard, who knew Poussin personally and who in 1690 was rector of the Académie royale. It is in Fénelon’s dialogues that we encounter the first signs of the changes in taste that would put Poussin’s landscapes at the very center of his artistic production.
Catalogue

Pierre Rosenberg
I
Poussin’s Early Years in Rome

Let us begin by presenting reasons for the choices we have made in organizing this exhibition of Poussin’s works. The exhibition opens with a series of more-or-less well-known paintings made by Poussin before 1630, along with some drawings from the same period. In these, landscape occupies a significant place. Poussin was born in 1594 in Les Andelys, a big market town in Normandy, and he moved to Rome in 1624 (in April, according to one of his earliest biographers). The first thirty years of his life—and with them the beginnings of his career—remain mysterious; even today many biographical details remain cloaked in shadow. The origins of Poussin’s vocation, the identification of his masters, the circumstances of and influences on his artistic development, the works he made before finally reaching Italy after numerous aborted attempts: all these facts largely escape us. A large Death of the Virgin (fig. 51), commissioned for the Cathedral of Notre-Dame by the archbishop of Paris, François de Gondi, and painted by Poussin in 1623, was recently discovered in the church of Sterrebeek, near Brussels, where it returned after a careful restoration. This work clearly demonstrates that, although Poussin certainly owed much to Italy, he arrived in that country already formed and a master of his craft.

Several factors give reason to hope that, one day, Poussin’s artistic activity in France will be much better known. First, there are the drawings conserved in the Royal Collection at Windsor illustrating the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid (one of the painter’s bedside books, which he consulted frequently throughout his career); they were executed for the poet Giambattista Marino, one of Poussin’s earliest supporters, who urged him to go to Italy. Then there is The Death of Chione (fig. 23), which I believe, in agreement with Sir Denis Mahon, Marino had Poussin paint before 1624, as well as the different versions of Saint Denis (see fig. 52) that Jacques Thuillier studied in 1995.

The artist’s earliest years in Rome proved particularly difficult for him. Marino died in 1625, and Cassiano dal Pozzo (whom Poussin called “Monsieur Du Puis” in his letters), along with the all-powerful Barberini, departed for Spain and France. Poussin found himself alone in Rome, without friends, without commissions, living in near poverty. Commission for two paintings, The Death of Germanicus (1627, painted for Francesco Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII; Institute of Arts, Minneapolis) and the Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus (1628, for St. Peter’s, Rome; Vatican Museums)—works in which nature plays no role—intervened. Poussin married on September 1, 1630: Anna Dughet was seventeen years old; he was thirty-six. It was almost certainly in the following year that he painted The Kingdom of Flora (fig. 53), a paean to the renewing cycle of nature and to the syncretism between humans and flowers.

It is widely recognized that the mature Poussin painted not many more than two or three works a year, and it has long been thought that this rate of production also held true for his early career. This is not at all the case. In my view, the artist painted as many works between his arrival in Rome and about 1630 as he made during the next thirty-five years of his life. There are explanations for this: because he needed to make a living, he had to accept even the most modest commissions; in addition, Poussin was searching, trying to find himself as an artist. He learned the formats that best suited
admittedly, the results could be disappointing. He repeated himself—merely modifying earlier paintings—something he rarely did once he achieved fame. Although the quality of his painted oeuvre before 1630 is uneven, the hand of the artist can be recognized infallibly. A range of vivid colors—golden yellows, bright blues, crude greens—a broad and vigorous, sometimes careless brushwork, and an ambition that is revealed above all in the choice of subjects (Ovid, themes taken from antiquity) distinguish these paintings from the work of his contemporaries. Certainly, the paintings of Venice (above all, Titian), where Poussin stopped on his way to Rome, and of Bologna, which Poussin undoubtedly visited in the course of his unhappy journey to Florence in about 1620, made themselves felt (a proper study of these influences has yet to be written). Yet, despite the considerable unevenness in quality, Poussin’s early work could not be confused with that of any of his rivals.

How shall these many paintings be dated? As we have noted, fixed points during the first six years in Rome are, unfortunately, very few. In his introduction to the 1998–99 exhibition in Rome that was dedicated to Poussin’s early years, Sir Denis Mahon defended a chronology that took into account both a wide range of contemporary documents (which we, in turn, shall use) and an interpretative logic based on what remains the art historian’s primary tool: his eye. This produced incontestable results, laid out in our
entries, though many uncertainties persist. The chronology that we propose is far from certain, but, by bringing together a number of important youthful works, this exhibition will undoubtedly help us to make progress.

In Poussin’s earliest paintings, nature plays an important role (as of yet, no “pure” landscape, without trace of human presence, has turned up). Poussin repeatedly depicted leafy trees, skies filled with fleecy clouds, hills and rocks, the setting sun. These are invented landscapes, created from the imagination but inspired by the Roman countryside. In one case, the view of Grottaferrata (cat. 7), Poussin wanted his viewers to recognize the site—Monte Cavo—that he chose to paint.

In the majority of cases, however, nature serves only as an accompaniment. It does not participate directly in the subject Poussin has selected, whether the central character sings of love or grieves at death, or whether the scene is erotic, melancholy, or meditative. Evident even in the artist’s earliest works is a predilection for water, be it lake or river—note the purifying water of Midas at the Source of the River Pactolus (cat. 15), the deadly water of Narcissus (cat. 16)—as well as a feeling for flowers (those flowers that become the reincarnation of mortals) and a fascination for the cycle of the seasons.

A final observation: some may object to the importance this first section of the exhibition has been accorded. Yet it is hard to understand Poussin’s engagement with landscape and nature without delving into this early period, when he initially approached many subjects to which he would later return (cats. 4, 70, 71).
1. **Apollo and a Nymph**

Oil on canvas, 24¾ x 30¼ in. (63 x 77 cm)

Private collection, Courtesy of Robilant & Voena

2. **The Death of Eurydice**

Oil on canvas, 24¾ x 30¼ in. (63 x 77 cm)

Private collection, Courtesy of Robilant & Voena

These two works, which I first saw in a private collection in 1987, before restoration, unquestionably came from the collection of Poussin’s great friend Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657). Indeed, they are—or were—inscribed on the reverse of the canvases, as was usual with works from dal Pozzo’s collection, and it is generally agreed that none of the paintings ascribed by this important collector to Poussin should be removed from his oeuvre.

By contrast, scholars (among them Mahon and Timothy Standring) have been reluctant to trust the inscriptions for identifying the paintings’ subjects: Apollo pursuing a nymph (we don’t believe that Daphne is portrayed here) and the death of Eurydice. Zlatomira Dimitrova (2002) recently demonstrated convincingly that Poussin was inspired not by Ovid’s narrative, as he was in the famous *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* in the Louvre (cat. 47), but by Virgil’s *Georgics*. Eurydice, mortally wounded by a snake (not visible in Poussin’s canvas), is discovered by Aristaeus, who, filled with desire, had pursued her shortly after her marriage to Orpheus. She had tried to escape him; he comes upon her dead and reacts with a gesture of surprise.

The two paintings undoubtedly date to the years 1625–26, a period of great poverty, when Poussin painted prodigiously, attempting to attract patrons and to make his name by undertaking literary subjects, which he translated into easily read images. Landscape plays an essential role in the paintings. The light of the setting sun illuminates the hills, the rocks, the leaves, and the tree trunks. Coming from the left of the first painting, it hits the seminude body of the nymph as well as Apollo’s face and laurel wreath. The god grasps the frightened nymph by her hair. In the second canvas, the light, also coming from the left, falls on Eurydice, clothed in yellow, stretched out along the riverbank, and Aristaeus, draped in red and stopped abruptly in mid-stride. In a departure from Poussin’s normal habits during those first years in Rome, these compositions are not stiff; rather, they flow with unaccustomed movement.

Though several structures punctuate the setting, Poussin has depicted a wild and barely cultivated nature. The painter here tackled one of his favorite themes—the superiority of chastity and fidelity over desire—but the dramas take second place to the immutable beauty of the landscape.
INSRIPTIONS
The following inscriptions, originally on the verso of the canvas, were later repeated on the frame (the paintings have been relined): APOLLO. NIMPHAM. RETINENS. POVSINVS. PINXIT; EVRIDICIS. MORIS. POVSINVS. PINXIT.

(For similar inscriptions, originally painted on the back of pictures owned by Cassiano dal Pozzo, several of which are in this exhibition, see Standring 1988, p. 613 n. 32.)

PROVENANCE
Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657); for the different citations in the inventories of the descendants of Cassiano dal Pozzo, see Standring 1988; Sparti 1992; and Standring in Rome 2000c); sold by Giuseppe Boccapaduli, one of Cassiano’s descendants, between 1771 and 1809 (for 50 scudi for the pair); private collection, Switzerland; Eugene Thaw, New York.

EXHIBITION
Tokyo 1998, nos. 16, 17, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNES
Not mentioned in Smith, Grautoff, Magne, Blunt, Badt, Thuiller I, Wild, Wright, Merot, Thuiller II.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
An old copy of The Death of Eurydice, close to the original, was formerly for sale in Rome (fig. 54).
3. **Landscape with a Nymph and Sleeping Satyr**

Oil on canvas, 29½ x 35½ in. (75 x 90 cm)
Musée Fabre, Montpellier Agglomération (Inv. 825.1.169)

New York

Restored in 1996, this painting has been the object of close study by the late Gilles Chomer (in Paris 1994–95b). Its provenance is known, and its date is agreed upon as 1625 or 1626—shortly before or after Cassiano dal Pozzo’s journey to Spain from February to October 1626. The work belongs to a group of paintings that entered Cassiano dal Pozzo’s collection immediately after their execution and were sold by his descendants about 1760. It is worth noting that the bailiff of Breteuil, who bought this canvas when he lived in Rome from 1758 to 1774, also acquired Poussin’s *Holy Family*, today in the Detroit Institute of Arts; that work was painted in Paris in 1641–42 (Paris 1994–95a, no. 101, illus.). Gilles Chomer (in Paris 1994–95b) and Francesco Solinas (1996b) have successfully identified the models for the three main figures of the painting: the river god, “one of the constants in Poussin’s entire œuvre,” was copied from an antique prototype; the nymph was inspired as much by the sculpture of the Muse *Polyhymnia* that today is in the Louvre—an antique then universally admired in Rome—as by a figure from the ancient fresco known as the *Aldobrandini Wedding* (Vatican Museums); and, finally, the satyr had its source in the *Barberini Faun*, now in Munich. All three figures are immersed in nature, sleepily remote from reality. An idyllic landscape composed of tall trees thick with luxuriant foliage, seen in successive planes, is illuminated by the changing light of the sun. Separated from each other, the river god, the nymph, and the satyr are all shown as though dreaming. Their presence lends the work its solemnity and its melancholic and somber tone. Reminiscences of Venice and Bologna are not remote, but Poussin has already set off on another path.

**Inscription**

Prior to being relined, the inscription, of the kind put on paintings that belonged to Cassiano dal Pozzo, was recopied from the reverse of the canvas onto a label glued to the stretcher, perhaps by Fabre. For this inscription, see Jouvin 1924, p. 347, no. 717; Jouvin 1926; and Rome 1998–99, no. 8, p. 78: “Copie exacte de l’inscription qu’on lisait derrière le present tableau, avant qu’il fut doublet. SATYRS. NINPHA. FLYMEN. ET. PVER. RAPTA. / SATYRI. FISTVIA. FYGIVEN. NS. POYSIVS. PINXIT.”

**Provenance**

Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657); for the different citations in the inventories of the descendants of Cassiano dal Pozzo, see Standring 1988; Spatti 1992; and Standring in *Rome* 2000c; collection of the bailiff of Breteuil (1723–1785), ambassador from Malta to Rome from 1758 to 1774 (see “Related works” below); collection of François-Xavier Fabre (1766–1837), by whom given to the museum of his native city in 1825.

**Exhibitions**


**Catalogues raisonnés**

Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, rejected (p. 275); Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, not mentioned, but see Blunt 1989a, p. 12; Badt, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. R123; Wild, not mentioned; Wright, not mentioned; Mérot, not mentioned; Thuillier II, no. R130.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY:

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
Two copies of the painting in Montpellier are known. One, a close copy, formerly belonged to the collection of Busiri-Vici, Rome (Boisclair 1986, fig. 20, as Testa); the other, with variations, in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome (Thuillier 1963b, fig. 344).

drawing
Jean-Robert Ango (in Rome from 1757—died after January 16, 1773) copied the painting in sanguine (fig. 55), which was in the collection of the bailiff of Bréteuil (see Bréteuil 1986, no. 4).
4. Apollo and Daphne

Oil on canvas, 16¾ x 21 in. (42.6 x 53.4 cm)
Sir Harold Lancer, M.D., F.A.A.D.

This painting has been known since the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was exhibited in Paris in 1925 as a work by Poussin, but in 1926, in the retrospective volume devoted to the exhibition, it was reclassified under “unknown artists of the seventeenth century.” It is in far from perfect condition. The awkwardness can be laid to the haste with which Poussin executed it, undoubtedly soon after his arrival in Rome, when he was desperately seeking to lift himself from poverty. The subject, drawn from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (5.452), presents Apollo crowned with a laurel wreath, with his lyre at his feet, pointing his finger at Daphne, transformed at her request by her father, the river god Peneus, into a laurel tree. A cupid, who has lifted the band covering his eyes, still holds in his hand the fatal bow. Neither the first sharp arrow of gold shot at Apollo, which filled him with love for the beautiful Daphne, nor the second lead one aimed at Daphne, which repelled all thoughts of love, can be seen.

The composition is arranged like a frieze. Poussin did not attempt to render the movement that ordinarily characterizes this scene (the same is true in the painting of the same subject in Munich [Thuiller 1994, no. 23], where he repeats Daphne’s pose with scarcely any variation [fig. 56], and especially in a lost painting [ibid., no. 121, and M. Szanto in Lyon–Toulouse 2006–7, p. 260, no. 10] known through several drawings [fig. 57]). He sought instead to focus on the moral of the story—the triumph of chastity over physical love—and placed his composition in a landscape defined by broad planes with light that bathes the four protagonists. Two trees separate them: the greening laurel that Apollo, here pulled up short by reality, will soon plant on Parnassus, and a sparsely leafed tree that separates him from Peneus as well as his object of desire, Daphne. These trees allude to fecundity proposed and refused.

At the very end of his life (the present work dates from his first months in Rome in 1625), Poussin returned to this subject in one of his most ambitious, complex, and moving compositions, his last masterpiece, the *Apollo and Daphne* in the Louvre (see fig. 12), which he left, unfinished, to one of his greatest patrons, Cardinal Massimi (see also cats. 70, 71).

Figure 56 Nicolas Poussin, *Apollo and Daphne*. Alte Pinakothek, Munich

Figure 57 Nicolas Poussin, *Apollo and Daphne*. Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth. Chatsworth Settlement Trustees (Inv. 859)
PROVENANCE

Many paintings titled Apollo and Daphne were put up for sale during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, generally with dimensions that exclude this work. It is worth mentioning, however, the sale of the collector and dealer Noel Desenfans in London (April 8, 1786, no. 134: a “Landscape with Daphne and Apollo” measuring 1 ft. 10 in. by 2 ft. 3 in., or about 55.5 by 68.5 cm, with its frame); John Penn Tinney, F.S.A. (died 1832); Reverend John Bensford, Salisbury (his postmortem sale, Christie’s, London, March 28, 1919, no. 27; sold to Smith for 10 guineas); J. Seymour Maynard, London, in 1925 (his postmortem sale, Christie’s, London, January 29, 1925, no. 101; sold to Wintonburg for 80 guineas); anonymous sale (Christie’s, London, November 19, 1971, no. 2; sold to Martin for £5,500); private collection, Switzerland (sale, Christie’s, London, July 3, 1997, no. 73, illus.); acquired the same year by Mr. and Mrs. Bernard C. Solomon, Los Angeles (sale, Christie’s, New York, January 26, 2005, no. 25, illus.). For a possible provenance of the painting, see also Blunt 1966, no. 130, and Gozzano 2004, p. 43 (an Apollo and Daphne "della prima maniera, tavola [sic] che ha molto sofferto" in the Colonna collection, Rome).

EXHIBITION


CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS

Not mentioned in Smith, Grautoff, Magne, Blunt, Badt, Thuillier I, Wild, Wright, Mérot, Thuillier II.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Houart et al. 1976, pp. 135, 145.
5. Midas, Pan, and Shepherds

Oil on canvas, 29 x 37¼ in. (73.6 x 95.6 cm)
Private collection; loan arranged through Adam Williams Fine Art, New York

The attribution of this painting to Poussin was accepted by Denis Mahon in 2001 and confirmed by Timothy Standring two years later. The date of 1625 they propose is explained by the patent awkwardnesses in the work; they attribute the shortcomings in the construction of space to the painter’s inexperience in his early years in Rome.

There might be another reason for these shortcomings: Poussin, with no financial resources, had counted on the assistance of and commissions from his protectors, the poet Marino, Cassiano dal Pozzo, and Cardinal Francesco Barberini. The first had just died, and the others had left Rome on a diplomatic mission. Pressed by his need for money, Poussin may well have hastily painted an entire series of Arcadian landscapes—including this one—for the Genoese art dealer Giovanni Stefano Roccagagliata. I am aware of the hypothetical nature of this account but have nothing more convincing to suggest. The subject of this piece, undoubtedly ambitious, is also puzzling. On the left, we recognize Midas (to whom Poussin would shortly devote several paintings: cats. 15, 20), who listens to Pan playing his pipes. On the right are a couple of shepherds. In the background can be seen the Ponte Molle (see cat. 112) and two satyrs, one picking olives (?),

which he holds out to his companion. I can find no explanation for this cast of figures, culled from Poussin’s cherished mythology (and often inspired by Ovid’s Metamorphoses), but I am convinced that the painter did not place them together arbitrarily.

Following his practice in his early years, Poussin alternated zones of shadow and full sunshine. He paid particular attention to the large leafy trees, the dark rocks, the water in the stream, the cloudy sky, the yellows and greens. Everything about this painting, unsatisfactory as it is at first glance, heralds the great landscapes of the following years.

PROVENANCE
Arthur Whitcombe, Cheltenham (consigned to Christie’s, London, on May 8, 1894, but bought in); (anonymous sale, Christie’s, London, July 11, 2001, no. 57, illus.; purchased by the present owner).

EXHIBITION

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Not mentioned in Smith, Grautoff, Magne, Blunt, Badt, Thuillier I, Wild, Wright, Mérot, Thuillier II.
6. Landscape with a River God

Oil on canvas, 30 ¼ x 34 ½ in. (77 x 88 cm)

New York

7. Venus and Adonis (View of Grottaferrata)

Oil on canvas, 29 3/8 x 44 5/8 in. (74.5 x 112 cm)
Musée Fabre, Montpellier Agglomération (Inv. 875.1.171)

New York

A look at the history of cats. 6 and 7, caught between documentary research and intuitive attribution, is revealing of the methodologies of art history.

The inscription on the back of the canvas in Montpellier, which long went unnoticed, answers the question of its provenance: it is from the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo, one of the earliest of Poussin’s major patrons. The work remained with dal Pozzo’s heirs until at least 1741. In the last years of the eighteenth century, the oblong canvas was cut vertically. The largest piece was acquired by the painter François-Xavier Fabre, a native of Montpellier and lover of the countess of Albany in Florence, and, together with the rest of Fabre’s collection, was given to the museum that henceforth carried his name. The other piece was acquired by another painter, Hippolyte Flandrin, a student of Ingres’ who enjoyed considerable success before his work fell into disrepute, though his rehabilitation is under way.

Although Fabre firmly believed the work to be by Poussin, this attribution quickly fell into obscurity, despite the efforts of Michel Laclotte (in London 1958) and Jacques Thuillier (1960b, pp. 293–94) to revive it. In an exhibition held in Rome and Düsseldorf in 1977 and 1978, I defended the attribution of the Montpellier fragment, without any immediate support. In 1980, Anthony Blunt (p. 581) could still write, “I am more convinced than ever that it is not by Poussin.”

In two consecutive articles, Clovis Whitfield (1979, pp. 13–19, fig. 14, and 1980, p. 838, fig. 25) on the one hand confirmed both the provenance from dal Pozzo and that the paintings attributed by that collector to Poussin could be relied on and, on the other hand, asserted that a fragment representing a river god accompanied by two dogs, the location of which was unknown, constituted the left portion of the composition. This fragment—which Walter Friedlaender, in a letter of 1939 to the owner of the painting at the time, J. E. Bulloz, ascribed to Poussin—is lined, and thus the inscription that certainly completed the one on the back of the composition in the Musée Fabre is no longer visible. The two fragments were reunited for the first time in Konrad Oberhuber’s exhibition in Fort Worth (1988, nos. 20a,b, illus.), confirming the reconstitution proposed by Whitfield and the attribution to Poussin. Thus, in the thirty years since 1977, two isolated fragments for which numerous attributions had been proposed (Testa, Mola, and so on) have been shown to constitute a single, irrefutable work by Poussin. So far as I know, no one doubts the attribution today. We know from the inventories that Cassiano dal Pozzo installed the painting above a door (a sopraporta).

The inscription on the back of the Musée Fabre canvas mentions Grottaferrata, and this has caused speculation. We know that Cardinal Francesco Barberini, one of Poussin’s earliest patrons and a protector of Cassiano, had been named commendatory abbot of Grottaferrata’s abbey in 1626. We also know that the landscape that occupies the center of the composition (the left side of the Montpellier piece) represents Mount Cavo (fig. 58), south of Rome at Rocca di Papa (or Grottaferrata). The site is easy to identify from the rocky
point that can be seen on the left of the mountain, which is one thousand meters (3,281 feet) high. Furthermore, we know that Cassiano, who was so important to Poussin when he arrived in Rome and on whom he relied to escape poverty, was absent from Italy between March 18 and December 17, 1625, and again from February to October 1626. This information enables us to date the painting to 1626.

Poussin’s landscapes are usually said to be imaginary. Here, the painter placed in the background of his painting a site that Romans would readily recognize. This landscape shelters a pair of unchaste lovers intertwined without undue modesty; they are Venus and Adonis, whom Poussin represented often. On the left, the river god, accompanied by a putto and two elegant greyhounds—an allusion to the hunt of Adonis and his coming death—serves to remind us of the fertility of nature and the cycle of the seasons. The happy encounter between Venus and Adonis that seduced Poussin in his early Roman years (paintings in Fort Worth, Providence, and elsewhere) would be followed by the tragic end of the hunter (see the painting in Caen, cat. 8).

Cat. 6

PROVENANCE
Cut from Venus and Adonis (cat. 7) in the late eighteenth century to make an independent painting, this canvas was acquired in Rome by Hippolyte Flandrin (1809–1864), undoubtedly in 1863–64, when the painter served as director of the Académie de France in Rome (Villa Médicis, letter from J. E. Bulloz, February 4, 1938); collection of his brother Paul Flandrin (1811–1902); Paul Flandrin painted a Promenade du Poussin [see fig. 15]; Sparti 1956, p. 48; his son Louis; Louis’s daughter, the wife of J. E. Bulloz. From this point on, there are two opposing versions of the painting’s history: according to one version, it was sold in 1939 to the English collector Victor William Waton (1908–1956). But Bajou (1999, p. 124 n. 73) asserts that the canvas remained in the Bulloz family until 1958. In any case, it appeared at Parke Bernet, New York (November 29, 1961, no. 27; purchased by Mrs. Everett B. Birch [Patti Cadby Birch]); since 1961 it has been on loan to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

EXHIBITIONS
Fort Worth 1988, no. 20b, illus.; Rome 1998–99, no. 6, illus., and p. 19 (English ed., no. 6, illus., and p. 25); Rome 2000, no. 80 (entry by S. Guarino).

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, not mentioned; Badt, not mentioned; Thuiller I, no. 20; Wild, not mentioned; Wright, no. 31; Ménor, no. 22a; Thuiller II, no. 22b.

Figure 58 Claude Bonnefond (1796–1860), View of Monte Cavo. Private collection
Inscription
On the reverse of the canvas is a fragmentary inscription—covered over when the painting was lined but recorded in old catalogues of the Montpellier museum (see Joubin 1924 and 1926): AGRI PROPE CRYPTAM FERRATAM PROSPECTVS. A NICO.

Provenance
Collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657), for the different citations in the inventories of the descendants of Cassiano dal Pozzo, see Standing in 1988; Spatti 1992; Standing in Rome 2000c; and Bajou 1999); we do not know the exact date when the painting left the collection of the descendants of Cassiano dal Pozzo or when it was cut; in 1798–99, the Montpellier Venus and Adonis was sent from Rome, undoubtedly to Florence, by the painter François-Xavier Fabre (1766–1837), who offered it to his native city in 1825.

Exhibitions

Catalogues raisonnés
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, rejected (p. 275); Magne, no. 117; Blunt, no. 185; Baut, not mentioned; Thuiller I, no. 89; Wild, no. 977; Wright, no. 31; Merot, no. 21A; Thuiller II, no. 22A.

Selected bibliography
See the excellent article by T. Bajou (1999), with complete bibliography. See also Brigitte 1998, p. 34; Standing in Rome 2000c, p. 322, no. 92; Schwartz-Gastine 2002, p. 120; Borghese in Trezzani 2004, p. 324.
Rather than following Giambattista Marino’s celebrated poem the *Adone*, Poussin remained faithful to Ovid’s narrative (*Metamorphoses*, 10.719–33). The tragic episode follows that depicted by Poussin in the Montpellier canvas (cat. 7), the blissful passion between Venus and Adonis. From the nectar that Venus pours over the body of Adonis, killed by a wild boar, grow anemones, symbolizing the annual return to life of the young hunter. On the left, the sleeping figure represents the river Adonis, whose water turns red every year to commemorate the day Adonis died.

Many authors, starting with Blunt (1958a), have pointed out that Adonis’s position resembles that of Christ’s body in Poussin’s *Lamentation* in Munich (fig. 59). This resemblance is not accidental: Poussin was perfectly aware of the analogies between the myth of Adonis, who died and was resurrected as a flower, and Christ. The pose of Venus, a sort of secular Mary Magdalene, has also been noted. The syncretism between pagan antiquity and the Christian world fascinated Poussin as much as did the metamorphosis of men into flowers.

In dating the canvas, the attribution of which was long uncertain, scholars seem to have achieved a consensus, the undecided having been won over: it belongs to a group of paintings now placed in the earliest Roman years of the artist, shortly before the commission from Francesco Barberini for *The Death of Germanicus* (1627).

Poussin depicted the tragic conclusion of Ovid’s poem, giving it a somber and melancholy cast. Adonis, stretched out lifelessly on the earth, is mourned by Venus, who kneels before him; two white doves—attributes of Venus—sit on the edge of the hunter’s chariot. The light of the setting sun illuminates the tree trunks, the river in the distance, and some vegetation, as if to accompany the hunter’s death and announce his resurrection, like that of the coming dawn. In its chromatic richness the painting owes much to Titian.
PROVENANCE
Undoubtedly, like the Echo and Narcissus (fig. 25) in the Louvre, this painting came from the collection of Cardinal Angelo Giori (1556–1662); it was inherited by his nephew Cesareo Giori and inventoried in 1666, no. 139: “Un Quadro bizzarro Venere che piange Adone di Monsù Pasino con cornice oro e negra” (Corradini 1977, pp. 83–84, 87, no. 139; see also Brejon de Lavergnée 1987); sold by the dealer Louis Alvarez (1659–1696) to Louis XIV in 1682, deposited in Caen by the Louvre in 1802.

EXHIBITIONS SINCE 1993

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 195; Grautoff, no. 34; Magne, no. 76; Blunt, no. 186; Badt, no. 79; Thullier I, no. 19; Wild, no. 7; Wright, no. 13; Mérot, no. 161; Thullier II, no. 26.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTING

PRINT
Engraved by Pierre Baquoy (1759–1829) from a drawing by Alexandre-Évariste Fragonard (1732–1806) (Andresen, no. 347; G. Wildenstein 1962, pp. 184, 172, illus. fig. 173). As Doris Wild (1986) noted, this print has a slightly greater height. Was the upper part of the painting cut before being deposited in the Caen museum? If so, it would weaken the theory, sometimes put forth, that the painting was intended to go over a doorway.
9. *The Nurture of Bacchus*

Oil on canvas, 38 1/4 x 53 1/4 in. (97 x 136 cm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7295)

The Louvre painting has often been compared to the canvas, apparently of the same subject but smaller (31 1/4 x 38 1/4 in.; 80.9 x 97.7 cm) owned by the National Gallery, London (fig. 60). The differences between the two compositions are notable, however. Although similar on the left side, where two satyrs (one pressing a bunch of grapes) give the young Bacchus a goblet of wine to drink, they differ on the right-hand side. Whereas in the London canvas a putto, half hidden by a goat, points a finger toward the grapes, in the work in Paris a bacchante, nude and sleepily drunk, lying voluptuously in the foreground, presses a sleeping putto to her breast with her right arm.

The Louvre painting entered the royal collections of Louis XIV in 1671; the one in London belonged to Pierre-JeanMariette (1694–1774) and was sketched by Gabriel de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780) in the margin of his copy of the sale catalogue of that famous collection (no. 18, sold for 2,310 livres; fig. 61).

The two paintings have had a checkered critical reception. The London canvas, long neglected, was rehabilitated in the 1960s by English Poussin scholars. The French painting, displayed in 1960 in the major “Poussin” exhibition at the Louvre (no. 29), was not well received, no doubt because of the strange mountain and the tree—rapidly painted with a thick, easily visible brushwork—that shelters a nude couple. Its rehabilitation—today it is unanimously accepted as the work of Poussin—goes back to the Düsseldorf exhibition, where the two canvases were shown next to each other. I thought then that the London picture preceded the one in Paris. Today, the opposite point of view generally prevails (although I am not entirely won over to this view). The Louvre painting is generally dated 1626, the London one...
1628. In the exhibition catalogue for the Rome and Jerusalem shows (1998–99), which accorded chronological issues a major importance, Denis Mahon (who did not rule out that the Louvre painting was made for the Genoese art dealer Roccaglia) numbered the Louvre painting 14 and the London painting 33 (in Rome 1998–99).

The precise subject of this Bacchanal remains an open question. Poussin made many works on the theme and, following the example of Titian (the drunken bacchante in the foreground clearly recalls a similar figure in The Andrians), made it a specialty in his early Roman years. Wine (2001) calls the subject “problematic.” In fact, comparing this painting with Ovid’s story, we find the scene does not take place in a cave (see cat. 18), and Bacchus drinks wine rather than milk (or, at least, grape juice). Wine interprets the London painting as Bacchus being nourished by Ino and Athamas. Nevertheless, he does not reject the traditional title of the two works.

We have mentioned the tree and the mountain, but we have not sufficiently stressed the beauty and sumptuousness of the nature depicted here: the light celebrates the bodies; the white and brown skins of the nymphae and satys glow.
before a screen of foliage. The sky, the clouds, and the water all contribute to this sensual evocation of an idyllic moment in antiquity.

PROVENANCE
Perhaps the picture cited in the postmortem inventory of Jean-Baptiste de Bretagne of 1650, under number 97: "item un tableau peint sur thoile du Poussin avec sa bordure d’or brun représentant L’éducation de Bacchus prisé six vingts livres" (Mignot 1984, pp. 76, 86), although the work mentioned could equally well refer to the London painting; collection of M. de La Feuille, who ceded it to Louis XIV in 1671.

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 206; Grautoff, no. 25; Magne, no. 15; Blunt, no. R64 (see also no. 133); Baud, no. 100; Thuillier I, no. 37; Wild, no. R27; Wright, no. 23; Mérot, no. 124; Thuillier II, no. 50.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Chomer in Paris 1994–95b, no. 5, illus. (with previous publications); Wine 2001, pp. 276, 280, fig. 2. See also Schleier in Lugano–Rome 1989–90, p. 307; Rosenberg and Prat in Chantilly 1994–95, p. 42, under no. 2, fig. 2d; Wine 1995, pp. 27–28; Solinas 1996a, p. 228, fig. 12; Stair 1996a, pp. 56, 61, fig. 13; Wine 1996, pp. 232, 236, fig. 2; Bonfait 1998, p. 73 n. 24; Bailey 2001, p. 62 and p. 63, fig. 2.

RELATED WORKS
OTHER VERSIONS BY POUSSIN
For the London treatment of the theme, see Wine 2001, pp. 276–81 (fig. 60); for the Chantilly treatment, see Chantilly 1994–95, no. 2 (fig. 67).

COPIES
The Louvre painting, far more than the London work, has been copied often, especially in the nineteenth century (by Rodin, Eugène Isabey, Ernest Laurent, among others).

PRINTS
The composition has been engraved in reverse by Matthys Pool (Amsterdam) in 1699 (Andersen, no. 364) and in many other versions in the nineteenth century.
10. A Nymph, Satyr, and a Goat

Pen and brown ink, sanguine, 7¼ x 9½ in. (18.4 x 24.5 mm)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11.424)

This drawing is usually related to the painting of a nymph on a goat in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg (Thuillier 1994a, no. 82, illus., fig. 62), dated by Blunt to about 1636 (1966, no. 199) and by Thuillier to about 1633; Louis-Antoine Prat and I think it earlier by several years. There are numerous differences between the drawing, the attribution of which has sometimes been questioned, and the painting: the composition of the drawing is horizontal rather than vertical; the landscapes are dissimilar; the drawing includes only one cupid, sleeping, and the scene is viewed from an angle slightly different from that in the painting. The drawing’s central group, however, with a satyr helping a nymph to mount a goat, is comparable to the one in the painting.

The pen was employed with speed and authority. The mountains are schematically treated and lack structure—one is reminded of the background of The Nurture of Bacchus in the Louvre (cat. 9)—but they are indicated with great assurance, and the tree trunks on the right are done with great efficiency.

I still believe the drawing dates to about 1626–27, as proposed in 1994–95.

INSCRIPTION
At lower right, in black chalk: Nicol. Poussin.

PROVENANCE
Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1822; L. 174 at lower left).

EXHIBITION
Fort Worth 1988, no. D170, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 33, illus.

RELATED WORKS
From the catalogue of a sale in Ghent on November 3, 1800 (P. F. de Goezin), under no. 92: “autre dessin à la plume et lavis représentant une Femme et un Satire monté sur une chèvre, et un enfant endormi dans un paysage. Haut. 7 p.; larg. 9 p.” See also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R242; and Rosenberg and Prat in Chantilly 1994–95, no. 102, illus.

Figure 62 Nicolas Poussin, Nymph Riding a Goat. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE:178)
11. Sleeping Venus and Cupid

Oil on canvas, 28 x 37 1/4 in. (71 x 96 cm)
Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (Inv. 721)

This painting has not fared well with scholars. The attribution to Poussin was questioned by Blunt in 1966; by Thuillier in 1974; by me in 1978; and (of course) by Doris Wild. More recently, it has finally been rehabilitated by the majority of Poussin specialists. For my part, I still find it hard to accept as Poussin’s the heavily impastoed white sheet on which the nymph (or Venus) rests.

Nymph or Venus? The majority of scholars have leaned toward Venus, despite the absence of her doves. As to the date: one about 1626 cannot be too far off.

The work fits into a series of compositions in a landscape setting that have a strong erotic charge. Venus offers herself to the gaze of the shepherds, as well as to ours, in a lascivious pose that Poussin employed many times: for example, in the Mercury, Herse, and Argus in the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris (fig. 63)—another painting doubted in the past but generally accepted today (see, for example, Thuillier in Meaux 1988–89, no. 57, illus.). The winged cupids armed with arrows reinforce the sensual nature of the composition and draw attention from the beauty of the landscape.

An engraving made about the same time by Claude Mellan (1598–1688), the Woman with a Mousetrap (see Préaud in Paris 1988, nos. 171, 172, illus.; fig. 64), employs the same pose, in reverse, found in the Dresden Venus. A wonderful text, long unpublished, by Louis-Henri de Loménie, comte de Brienne, dating from 1693–95, confirmed that, to make a picture of Venus “tolerable to chaste eyes,” he had found it necessary to cut the composition in two and cover the figure of Venus, “who, in truth, is too nude and too immodest.” Brienne added: “The indecency of this Painting consisted in that the goddess, sleeping or pretending to sleep, lifts a leg that reveals too much the nudity of the seat of love” (quoted in Thuillier 1994, p. 204).

PROVENANCE
Acquired in Paris for the collection of August the Strong, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, by Raymond Le Plat (ca. 1664–1742) before 1722 (inventory of 1722–28, A. 528).

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 202; Grautoff, no. 23; Magne, no. 110; Blunt, no. 189; Baidt, no. 222; Thuillier I, no. 212; Wild, no. 356; Wright, no. 34; Méro, no. 157; Thuillier II, no. 28.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1966
Rosenberg in Düsseldorf 1978, p. 83, under no. 6; Rosenberg in Paris 1994–95, p. 185, under no. 33; Careri 1999, pp. 53, 62 fig. 7; Marx and Spence in Dijon 2001, pp. 232, 235 n. 2; Rosenberg and Mandrella 2005, p. 132, no. 874, illus.

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
Blunt (1966) cites two copies, one of them in the Akademie der Bildenden Kunst, Vienna.

For the painting in a private collection, Rome, see Standring (in Rome 2000, no. 212, illus.; also p. 195); and Standring (in Biella 2001–2, no. 102, illus.)

Standing cites many copies that have come up at auction in London over the last several years. An oval copy (26 x 34½ in; 66 x 88 cm) that had belonged to Maria Callas (with a certificate by Adolfo Venturi attributing the work to Fragonard) was sold in Paris (June 14, 1978, no. 10, and October 20, 1991, no. 157, illus.).

DRAWINGS
The drawing in the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica in Rome (127244), often cited, was rejected by Wild (1966–67, p. 42, fig. 45), then by Thuillier (in London 1995b, p. 55, illus.), who attributes it to "Fra Presto Copyist." See also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R1069, illus.
12. *Venus (or a Nymph) Spied On by Satyrs*

Oil on canvas, 30¼ x 39½ in. (77 x 100 cm)  
Kunsthau, Zurich (Inv. 2480)

The painting has not always been accepted as by Poussin. It was included in the 1960 Paris “Poussin” exhibition but was spurned for many years before being fully and justifiably reinstated. Its critical reception has much in common with that of the *Nymph and Satyrs* in the National Gallery, London (fig. 65), magnificently studied by Humphrey Wine (2001). The two principal figures of the London painting are “already” present in the Zurich canvas (1626), although I am not entirely convinced by the current notion that the Zurich canvas precedes that in London (1627).

The subject of these two works merits examination: Jupiter and Antiope? Sleeping Venus Spied On by Satyrs? A Nymph Spied On by Two Satyrs? Certainly the doves and the quiver in the Zurich canvas, not present in the London work, suggest the second title. But perhaps it does not need be tied to a precise iconography, something Poussin hardly concerned himself with at this moment, when he was absorbed by the example of Venetian art.

For a long time, the strong erotic current of these two works seemed to contradict the conventional view of Poussin as an austere and serious artist. Not only do the satyrs stare lasciviously at the nude body of the nymph, but the latter, long described as sleeping, also swoons in ecstasy. Her fingers have brought her to an orgasm that Poussin depicts forthrightly.

The scene takes place outdoors. The leafy trees and cloudy sky envelop the composition; the sun caresses the shoulders of the satyrs and, especially, the nymph’s nude body, offered to our eyes as well as to the eyes of the satyrs who watch her.

![Figure 65. Nicolas Poussin, *Nymph and Satyrs*. National Gallery, London (NG 91)](image-url)
Painting

Copy, “perhaps by a Neapolitan painter about 1700” (Wine 2001), formerly collection Thalberg, today in the museum in Bern.

Drawings

See cat. 13. See also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R438, illus.

The work was undoubtedly copied in Italy by Pierre-Charles Trémolières (1703–1739). Today his drawing is preserved in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (see Brugerolles in Paris–Sydney–Ottawa 2003–6, no. 54, illus.).

Edme Bouchardon (1698–1762) did a partial drawing after the work (Louvre, inv. no. 23940), reproduced by Brugerolles in Paris–Sydney–Ottawa 2003–6, fig. 2; see also Méjanès et al. 1997, nos. 1871, 1872, illus.). In addition, there is an anonymous drawing, formerly attributed to Watteau, now in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (see Rosenberg and Prat 1996, no. R90, illus.).

Print

The painting was engraved, in reverse, by Jean Dauillé (1703–1763) in 1760, as well as by Matthys Pool (1670–ca. 1732) and Marie Pauline Soyer (1786–1820) for London (1813, pl. clxxxiii; see also Trinque 2006).
13. *Venus and a Satyr*

Pen and brown ink and brown and gray wash, 4⅛ (5⅛ where a piece has been reattached) x 10⅛ in. (125 [144 where a piece has been reattached] x 264 mm—on the modifications made to the drawing since Massimi owned it, and for the cutting of the upper part, see Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, p. 79)

Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 11987)

The drawing is similar to but in the opposite sense of the painting in Zurich (cat. 12). As with that work, the drawing in Windsor has not always been accepted as a work by Poussin.

Its date has been debated: Oberhuber (in Fort Worth 1988) suggests 1626; Clayton (in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96) about 1631–32; originally for us (Rosenberg and Prat 1994) 1628–30; I now favor about 1626–28.

The left hand of the satyr boldly points to the nymph’s genitals. Exposed to our gaze in full sun, she seems to have her eyes open. The landscape is drawn summarily but with great assurance.

**Provenance**

Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; album Massimi, no. 9); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686); Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II (1707–1751; at Leicester House in 1750); his son, the future George III (1738–1820); Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Blunt 1945, no. 186; L. 901).

**Exhibitions**


**Selected bibliography**

See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 50, illus., and Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 27. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1953, no. 211, pl. 161; Rosenberg and Prat 1995, p. 690; Wine 2001, p. 302.
14. *Amor vincit omnia (Landscape with a Cupid Leading Pan to Venus)*

Oil on canvas, 38¼ x 50¼ in. (97 x 127.5 cm)

Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland. Gift of J. H. Wade (Inv. 1926.26)

This painting has not had the critical fortune it merits. Although in 1960 it was exhibited at the Louvre (no. 33) as a work by Poussin, it was unanimously rejected. Not until the exhibition of French painting in American collections, held in Paris, New York, and Chicago in 1982, was the attribution—again unanimously (or virtually so)—accepted. There are several reasons for the turnaround: it is now recognized that Cassiano dal Pozzo, the art lover and friend of Poussin, probably owned the painting, and he is unlikely to have been deceived. Then, too, the canvas belongs to a series of works from Poussin’s youth—this one dates to about 1626—that combine contrasted effects of light with a careful execution of the figures and a much freer technique in the landscape. Another reason the attribution was rejected is the fixed idea, dealt with in the introduction to this section of the catalogue, that Poussin painted relatively little, taking great pains with all his compositions. In fact, it was only after 1630, or perhaps 1628, once he had established his reputation, that the artist was satisfied producing two or three works per year. By contrast, his production before then was abundant and uneven.

The subject hardly requires a lengthy explanation: the theme of conquering love often tempted painters. Here a cupid, his quiver under his arm, leads by the beard a kneeling Pan, identified by his pipes, toward a reclining nymph, apparently ready to welcome him. There is nothing to prevent us from identifying her as Venus, the goddess of love.

In the background is a nude couple embracing in the shadow of the trees, which dispels any doubt about the interpretation of the subject. Rarely, except in the early years of his Roman sojourn, did Poussin dwell on the description of the landscape—the woods, and the trees, the light and shadows—with such freeness.

The painting was exhibited at Knoedler’s in 1939 and at the New York World’s Fair in 1940. Walter Friedlaender, responsible for the second exhibition, already related the work, whose attribution he never doubted, to a “group of pictures in Montpellier and elsewhere... . . . We know of no other artist [besides Poussin] who could have executed these fine things.” An illustrious visitor to the exhibition, Marguerite Yourcenar, in exile in the United States, wrote, in an allusion to Racine: “The background, at once peaceful and wild... of the Landscape with nymphs and satyrs [sic] is full of that ‘shadow of the forests’ where Phèdre dreamed of lying down next to Hippolyte.”

**Provenance**

Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657; for the different mentions in the inventories of the descendants of Cassiano dal Pozzo, see Standing in 1988, Sparti 1992; and Standing in Rome 2000); Lord Radstock; his sale, Christie’s, London, May 13, 1825, no. 27; sale, Phillips, London, 1829 (according to Smith); the Earl of Northwick, Thirlestane House, near Cheltenham, in 1837 (Smith); his sale, Phillips, London, August 24, 1859, no. 1809; collection J. S. W. S. Erle Drax, Olanthig Town, Wye, Kent; sale, Christie’s, London, February 21, 1910, no. 105 (to Cohen); David Horner, London, in 1925; Durlacher Brothers, London; J. H. Wade, Cleveland; given by the latter to the Cleveland Museum of Art in 1926.

**Exhibitions**

Paris–New York–Chicago 1982, no. 84, illus. (with previous history); Fort Worth 1988, no. 13, and colorpl. p. 89 (see also nos. Dy8 and Dy9, pp. 88, 252 nos. 15, 16); Rome 1998–99, no. 20, illus., and p. 22 (English ed., no. 20, illus., and p. 29).

**Catalogues raisonnés**

Smith, no. 227; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. R38; Thuillier I, no. R124; Wild, not mentioned; Wright, no. 37; Mérot, no. 223; Thuillier II, no. R124.

**Selected bibliography**


**Related works**

15. **Midas at the Source of the River Pactolus**

Oil on canvas, 18⅜ x 25½ in. (48 x 65 cm)

Musée Fesch, Ajaccio, Corsica (Inv. 852-1-361)

On the basis of a photograph, Roberto Longhi attributed this painting to Poussin prior to 1958 and its exhibition in London and Paris by Michel Laclotte. Although its attribution to Poussin is universally accepted today, the same cannot be said of its date. The previously proposed one of 1629–31 has been largely abandoned, but scholars are divided on the matter of whether the Ajaccio canvas precedes or follows the painting of the same theme in New York (cat. 20). Thuillier, who initially suggested an early dating for the canvas (about 1625), in 1994 dated it after the New York composition. By contrast, Mahon, in the exhibition catalogue for Rome 1998–99, placed it earlier—a view I have held since 1977–78 (Rome 1977–78 and Düsseldorf 1978).

The work was painted over a composition that must have been considerably bigger. In an X-radiograph (see Blunt 1967, p. 76, illus.; and Thuillier 1994, p. 16, illus.), the head of a woman leaning back can be made out. New X-radiography will undoubtedly allow us to better read the first composition, even though it was reduced to a fragment to create the present composition.

The Ajaccio and New York paintings show episodes related to the Midas legend drawn from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a subject rarely treated by artists (Unglaub 2006, p. 52). For having saved his foster father, Silenus, Bacchus promises Midas, the king of Phrygia, whatever he wishes. Midas requests the gift of changing everything he touches into gold, and soon is dying from hunger and thirst. He begs Bacchus to release him from his dangerous talent, which the god grants. Midas washes himself in the waters of the Pactolus, which thereafter is filled with grains of gold.

In truth, the situations in the two canvases differ significantly: in the painting in the Metropolitan Museum, Midas washes in the presence of Bacchus and rides himself of the gold that almost killed him. In the Ajaccio canvas, he regards with melancholy the grains that the river will carry henceforth in its waters. As Verdi noted in 1995, the painting takes up the theme of vice and virtue, which occupied a central place in Poussin’s work: an example of the vanity of possessing worldly goods and of the baseness of human nature.

Nature is the complement to the composition. The water, the rocks, the trees with large, yellow leaves (see cat. 16) are lit by the setting sun, which gives the composition its unity and lends the work its somber and reflective tone.

**Provenance**

Giovanni Stefano Roccatagliata (1596–1652); bought in the spring of 1631 by Fabrizio Valguarnera (died 1652); it is cited in Valguarnera’s trial on July 28, 1631, as a “quadretino d’un Rè Mida con altra figurina ignuda”; (for the trial, see Costello 1950, pp. 237–84; Blunt 1958b, pp. 76–86; and “Documenti” in Rome 1994–95a, pp. 229–33); Cardinal Flavio Chigi (1611–1663), who undoubtedly obtained it from his uncle Fabio Chigi (1599–1667), who became Pope Alexander VII; mentioned in the Chigi inventories of 1652 and 1658 (see Fumagalli 1994, p. 56 nn. 87, 90); collection of Cardinal Joseph Fesch (1763–1839), Napoleon’s uncle, in Rome; bequeathed to the Ajaccio museum on his death.

**Exhibitions**


**Catalogues raisonnés**

Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 166; Baud, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. 36; Wild, no. 9; Wright, no. 10; Mérot, no. 151; Thuillier II, no. 48.

**Selected bibliography**

See Blunt 1966, no. 166 (with previous publications). See also Schleier 1978, p. 284; Oberhuber in Fort Worth 1988, no. 34, illus.; Carrier 1993, p. 90 n. 31, p. 137; Fumagalli 1994, pp. 52, 55–56, n. 90 (see also n. 87); Fumaroli 1994, p. 86; Thuillier 1994a, p. 16; Rosenberg in Paris 1994–95a, pp. 140–41, under no. 10, illus. fig. 10b; Cropper 1995, p. 134 and fig. 8a; Verdi in London 1995a, p. 29, illus., and p. 159; Amadio in Rome 1998–99, p. 145 (English ed., p. 145); Briggstocke 1999, p. 39, illus. fig. 2; Bernstock 2000, p. 72 n. 66; Standing 2000, pp. 8, 12, fig. 23.

**Related works**

For the painting on the same subject in the Metropolitan Museum, see cat. 20.
16. Narcissus

Oil on canvas, 20⅞ x 16⅞ in. (53 x 42 cm)
Private collection, United States

A cupid shoots his arrow at Narcissus, who, for having neglected Echo, is henceforth condemned to contemplate his image in the water (Ovid Metamorphoses 3.339–510). Here he is seen, a hunter’s spear in his hand, leaning over the water that will prove fatal for him, in a pose that Poussin borrowed from Titian’s Bacchus and Ariadne, today in the National Gallery, London (Mahon).

Mahon dates the painting to 1626–27 and relates it to the Midas in Ajaccio (cat. 15). Vigorously painted and more like a sketch than a finished work, with the light of dusk announcing Narcissus’s impending death, the canvas beguiles with its melancholy atmosphere. The foliage is created with small, yellow brushstrokes. Narcissus is absorbed by his reflection, which can barely be made out; he is indifferent to the nature surrounding him—to the plants and flowers that he will soon join in his lonely death.

Provenance
This may be the painting bought for 64 pistole by the Lyonnais collector Balthazar de Monconys (1611–1665) during his visit to Rome and shown by him to Poussin, who, on May 29, 1664, “recognized and acknowledged” as his work the “painting of Narcissus…” (Monconys 1665–66, vol. 2, p. 498; Thullier 1994, p. 174). Perhaps it is the painting cited by Félibien (1696, vol. 2, p. 433): “another painting in the early style, representing Narcissus who looks at himself in a spring”; Sandart (1675–79, vol. 1, p. 368) also mentions a Narcissus, with no more detail. There are numerous English auctions that name a Narcissus by Poussin (without giving any dimensions): Calonne sale, London, April 27, 1795, no. 95; anonymous sale, London, December 16, 1821, no. 216; anonymous sale, January 27, 1827, no. 101; Van Campan sale, London, February 17, 1836, no. 73 (“Cupid Shooting his Arrow at Narcissus, introduced in a finely coloured classical Landscape”). Postmortem sale, C. Gurney, Christie’s, London, February 13, 1874, no. 51 (for three guineas to Hansell); sale, Christie’s, London, December 2, 1997, no. 53 (£399,500).

Exhibition

Catalogues Raisonnés
Not mentioned in Smith, Grautoff, Magne, Baud, Thullier I, Wild, Wright, Mérot, Thullier II; but see Blunt, no. L66 (?).

Selected Bibliography

Related Work
For the painting by Charles Mellin on the same subject, formerly in the Chigi collection, today in the Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica, Rome, see Almamaria Tantillo Mignosi in Rome 1994–95b, no. 23, illus.
17. Apollo and the Muses on Mount Parnassus

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, and traces of black chalk, 6⅜ x 9⅛ in. (176 x 246 mm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Inv. 83.GG.345)

This admirable drawing acquired by the Getty in 1983 has always been related to a no-less-admirable painting in the Prado representing Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus (fig. 66; see Paris 1994–95a, no. 45). The link between the two works—homages to Raphael’s Parnassus in the Vatican stanze—certainly cannot be denied. Nonetheless, in the drawing there are considerably fewer figures, and Apollo is moved even more off-center. Above all, the introduction of a nude figure (Hippocrene) entirely changes the scene’s harmony. In fact, except for the figure of the poet at the extreme left of the composition (and even he is changed in the position of his legs), there is only a general resemblance between the painting and the drawing. There has been too great a tendency to date the drawing in relation to the painting. After much heated debate, specialists today agree in dating the painting to about 1631, whereas the drawing, whose efficient, nervous line has been much admired, can be dated several years earlier.

It is worth noting the schematic character of the figures and the importance accorded the trees that powerfully punctuate the background. One already finds in this drawing something of the youthful liveliness and the freshness of inspiration that characterizes the painting.

Figure 66 Nicolas Poussin, Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P 2313)
**PROVENANCE**

Pierre Defer (1708–1870); his son-in-law, Henri Dumesnil (1823–1898; L. 739 at lower right), Paris; Defer-Dumesnil sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, May 10–12, 1900, no. 205; Louis Deglatigny (1834–1926; L. 1768a at lower left), Rouen; his first sale, Galerie Charpentier, Paris, May 28, 1937, no. 73; Georges Wildenstein, New York; Galerie Wildenstein, New York; acquired in 1983 by the Getty.

**EXHIBITION**

Paris 1944–1954, no. 20, illus.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See (with previous publications) Rosenberg and Prat 1944, no. 37, illus., and Paris 1944–1954, p. 161, no. 20 and under no. 45. See also Brigstocke 1996, p. 205.
18.  *The Infancy of Bacchus*

Oil on canvas, 29 ⅜ x 38 ¾ in. (74 x 97.8 cm)

Private collection, Europe

19.  *A Pastoral Scene*

Oil on canvas, 29 ⅜ x 38 ¾ in. (74 x 97.8 cm)

Private collection, Europe

These two paintings remained together between 1753 (at the latest) and 1807. Thanks to Denis Mahon, who published them in 2001, and to Timothy Standring, who carried out successful research in 1996, they are once more reunited. One of their owners deserves special notice: the painter Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792), who played a major role in bringing from Italy the series of the Seven Sacraments that had belonged to Cassiano dal Pozzo (today on deposit in the National Gallery, London) and who owned, among other works by Poussin, the *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* in The Metropolitan Museum of Art (cat. 63; for Reynolds and Poussin, see Broun 1987, vol. 2, esp. pp. 206–21).

It seems surprising that Poussin painted a simple pastoral as the pendant to a work whose subject is incontestably the nurture of Bacchus (Reynolds called them *Evening* and *Morning*). The first painting shows us, in effect, the nymphs of Nysa—only one is actually seen in the canvas, accompanied by a satyr and preceded at the entrance to the cave by a faun—preparing to hide the infant Bacchus in their cave and to nourish him with milk (here replaced with wine). The second must have its source in Ovid, who portrayed many amorous pastoral scenes in his verses. Unlike *The Youth of Bacchus*, a subject Poussin illustrated in the painting in Chantilly (fig. 67; see Rosenberg in Chantilly 1994–95, no. 2, illus.), which shows us the young god already aware of his power, the artist here takes up his infancy. In the pendant, Poussin shows the young shepherd playing Pan’s pipes in the same pose as that of the musician in *Numa Pompilius and the Nymph Egeria*, also from Chantilly (fig. 37; see ibid., no. 1, illus., and especially the detail on p. 39).

The two compositions, which apparently date to 1628 and do not seem to correspond perfectly, grant a major role to landscape, rendered in successive planes of shadow and light. Notable features are the fleecy skies, the big rocks, the water, the animals—goat, dogs, and sheep—the tree trunks seen against the light, and the thick foliage of the branches. The nymph and the young Bacchus, the shepherdess who attentively listens to her musician—Daphnis and Chloe?—play their part in this depiction of a peaceful and welcoming nature from the earliest days of humankind.

Figure 67  Nicolas Poussin, *The Youth of Bacchus*. Musée Condé, Chantilly (PE 298)
Figure 68 After Nicolas Poussin, Pastoral Scene. The Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas, Austin

Figure 69 Jean Lemaire (1601–1659), Landscape with the Infancy of Bacchus. National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (NGI 800)

PROVENANCE

Acquired by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792) in an auction, March 26–28, 1778, nos. 17, 18 (Langford’s, London); the two paintings came from France, undoubtedly from the collection of Michel-Pierre-Philippe Levesque de Gravelle (1699–1752), sold in Paris on February 26, 1753, no. 249; Reynolds sale, Christie’s, London, March 8, 1794 (not 1793), nos. 58, 59, bought by Michael Bryan (50 guineas), who put them on sale in his gallery in Saville Row on April 27, 1795, and the following days, nos. 53, 54; owned by Edward Coxe; his sale, Peter Coxe, London, April 23, 1807, nos. 62, 63. The two paintings were separated following this sale.

The Infancy of Bacchus failed to sell and was put in the postmortem sale of Edward Coxe at Squibb’s, London, April 15, 1815, no. 77; bought by Sir Francis Freeling; his sale, Christie’s, London, April 15, 1837, no. 87 (sold for £40 to one Edwards); undoubtedly the picture sold at Christie’s, London, January 31, 1919, no. 125 to "Swift for 25 guineas." In 1937 I saw the painting, which had been entrusted to the Jocelyn Fielding Fine Art gallery by Carmen Gronau, her father having acquired the work in an auction after the war; Derek John, London, from whom acquired by present owner.

The Pastoral Scene was in the postmortem sale of Lord Radstock, Christie’s, London, May 12, 1826, no. 22; bought by the art dealer Peter Norton (58 guineas); it entered the Cadogan collection, date unknown but before 1879.

EXHIBITIONS

London, British Institution, 1819, no. 79 [The Nurture of Bacchus]; London, Royal Academy, 1879, no. 135 [Pastoral Scene]; London 1996, no. 8, illus. (entry by T. Standring); Rome 1998–1999, no. 28 [Nurture of Bacchus], illus., and pp. 13, 24, 25 n. 2, 32 n. 62, 110 (English ed., no. 26, and p. 15 n. 2, p. 32 n. 62); the two paintings, reunited for the first time since 1807, were shown at the National Gallery, London, October 2000–January 2001 (no cat.).

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS

Smith, nos. 334, 335; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, not mentioned; Badt, not mentioned; Thuillier I, not mentioned; Wild, not mentioned; Wright, not mentioned; Thuillier II, no. R126 [Pastoral Scene].

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1994


RELATED WORKS

A copy of the Pastoral Scene (fig. 68), often cited, formerly collection Suida Manning and today in the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, is known (see Mahon 2001, pp. 281, 283, fig. 3). Jean Lemaire combined the two compositions into one single painting (fig. 69), in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin (see Fagiolo dell’Arco 1996; Standring 1996a, p. 64, fig. 17; and Mahon 2001, p. 282, fig. 4).
20. **Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus**

Oil on canvas, 38¼ x 28½ in. (97.5 x 72.7 cm)
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, 1871 (71.56)

The first painting by Poussin to have been acquired by an American museum (today there are about thirty), this painting entered the collections of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1871. Like so many of Poussin’s compositions, its subject was drawn from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* (11.100–145), though apparently Poussin was among the first to treat it. As already recounted in the entry for the related canvas in Ajaccio (cat. 15), Midas, king of Phrygia, saved the life of Silenus. Bacchus, the foster father of Silenus, expressed his gratitude to Midas by offering to grant the latter his choice of reward. Midas’s wish—“Make all that my body touches turn to gold”—was immediately carried out. But soon, dying of thirst and hunger because everything he wanted to drink became “liquid gold” and everything he wanted to eat became covered with gold, Midas went back to Bacchus to ask him to “undo the favor that he had done for him.” Bacchus thus directed him to go to the source of the Pactolus and there to wash his body in order to remove the misguided wish. From that time on, the river carried grains of gold in its waters.

In the Metropolitan Museum canvas, Bacchus is depicted in the very center of the composition (some have seen this figure as the personification of the Pactolus); the king, on the left, bathes himself in the purifying waters. On the right, two putti pour water filled with grains of gold.

The work is first mentioned in 1677: it was owned by Cardinal Massimi, who cannot have commissioned it, however, as he was not born until 1620. The inventory of this most discerning collector lists a pendant, *The Arcadian Shepherds*, most likely the painting found today in Chatsworth (cat. 21); until after World War II, Massimi’s descendants still owned copies of the two works. It is nonetheless difficult to decide if the two paintings were conceived as pendants or if the cardinal arbitrarily placed them together. Initially, I thought the pairing an artificial one because the position of the river god in the Chatsworth canvas seems to echo too closely that of Bacchus in the *Midas*. Yet in the two we have complementary allegories on the fragility of happiness and the vanity of desire.

In 1994–95, I suggested dating the work to 1625–26. Since then, the majority of Poussin scholars have opted for 1627.

It is easy to deduce the moral of the work: an allegory on the futility of wealth, on the vanity of earthly goods, on greed, and on the opposition of desire and reason. Although he did not perfectly master his composition, which displays a somewhat unstable balance, Poussin proved himself a bold colorist, deftly playing the deep greens against the light of the setting sun. Above all, he managed to convey the fable’s story with a freshness that would never leave his work.

Nature again plays only a supporting role. The trunks of the trees, the rocks, and the foliage are painted with great freedom. The purifying water, one of the elements that fascinated Poussin throughout his career (see *Winter: The Flood*, fig. 42), holds an essential place in the work.

**Provenance**

As far as we know, the painting was mentioned for the first time in the post-mortem inventory of Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677): “Due Quadri compagni di Monsù Pusino alli p. xxvi, e lungi p. xxvii. 3 in uno vi è il Re Mida, che si lava nel Fiume Patolo, e l’altro li Pastori d’Arcadia” (Pomponi 1996, p. 102); it entered the collection of his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686; according to some authors [Bréjtoček 1996], Massimi’s painting is identical to a variant composition in the Dohna collection; see “Related works”). For the subsequent history of the painting, of which many uncertainties remain, see Rosenberg in Paris 1994–95, no. 10; and Baetjer in Martigny 2006, no. 30. It was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 1871.

Massimo Pomponi (1996, p. 144 n. 126) proposes that the *Midas* and *The Arcadian Shepherds*, undoubtedly the painting today in Chatsworth, were sold in 1678 by Fabio Massimi to “Monsù Alvarez.” This was the famous art dealer Alvarez, who sold several canvases by Poussin to Louis XIV. Might Pomponi be confusing the *Midas* and *The Arcadian Shepherds* with fig. 83 and cat. 41, both in the Louvre (Paris 1994–95, nos. 152, 153), which also came from the Massimi collection and in 1678 were bought in Rome for 800 ecus by Alvarez, who then sold them to Louis XIV in 1683 for 2,800 livres?
EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95a, no. 10, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 12, illus.; from February 18 to April 11, 1997 (no cat.), the painting was shown next to the related version in the Dohna collection at the National Gallery, London (see "Related works"), and the Chatsworth Arcadian Shepherds: Rome 1998–99, no. 31, illus., and p. 25 (English ed., no. 31, illus., and pp. 33–34); Martigny 2006, no. 30, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 248; Grautoff, no. 38; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 165; Badt, not mentioned; Thuiller I, no. 35; Wild, no. R25; Wright, no. 11; Mérot, no. 152; Thuiller II, no. 47.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
For the "pendant," The Arcadian Shepherds, in Chatsworth, see cat. 21.
For the unfinished replica in the collection of Lothar Graf zu Dohna, today universally considered an autograph work (fig. 70), see Paris 1994–95a, p. 140, and Rome (and Jerusalem) 1998–99, no. 34. Does this replica predate or postdate the Metropolitan Museum's painting? The majority of specialists lean toward the second proposal. It perhaps dates to about 1628.
For the painting on the same subject in the Ajaccio museum, see cat. 15.
For the copy that still belonged to the Massimi descendants after World War II, see Paris 1995–96a, p. 140.

Figure 70. Nicolas Poussin, Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus. Collection Lothar Graf zu Dohna, Germany
21. *The Arcadian Shepherds*, also known as *Et in Arcadia Ego*

Oil on canvas, 38\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 28\(\frac{3}{8}\) in. (97.5 x 72.7 cm); 39\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 32\(\frac{3}{4}\) in. (101 x 82 cm) with additions, now covered by the frame
Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth. Chatsworth Settlement Trustees

In the seventeenth century, this painting was paired with the *Midas Washing at the Source of the Pactolus* (cat. 20). It appears that the two paintings were separated shortly after the death of Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1677), who left substantial debts, and replaced with copies augmented in height, still to be found in the Palazzo Massimo in Rome after World War II but now lost. Later enlargements to the Chatsworth painting—one of the many works by Poussin acquired by English collectors in the eighteenth century—are now covered by a frame adjusted in 1996.

The Chatsworth painting is generally considered later than the *Midas* and dated—most recently by Mahon (in Rome 1998–99 and Jerusalem 1999)—to 1628.

The Chatsworth picture might be (wrongly) neglected were it not the antecedent of one of Poussin’s most famous works, *The Arcadian Shepherds*, in the Louvre (fig. 39), which has benefited from a legendary popularity that has diminished only in the last few decades. Paradoxically, it was in the very years that Erwin Panofsky published his first essay—one of the sacred texts of every iconographer or iconologist—that *The Arcadian Shepherds* ceased to occupy its top ranking among the Poussins in the Louvre. But the Chatsworth version is much more than the initial idea of an icon of painting.

Two shepherds and their companion turn toward a sarcophagus and decipher an inscription in capital letters: ET IN ARCADIA EGO. Above this inscription, on the tomb, is a skull. How should the inscription be translated? There have been many proposals, but it seems reasonable, especially for the Chatsworth painting, to read the inscription simply as “I [i.e., Death] am even in Arcadia.”

Figure 71  Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, known as Guercino (1591–1666), *The Arcadian Shepherds*, ca. 1618. Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica di Palazzo Barberini, Rome
Only one visual precedent for Poussin’s painting is known, the famous canvas by Guercino in the Galleria Nazionale, Rome (fig. 71; see Mahon in Bologna 1968, no. 30, illus.), generally dated to about 1618. Although this work’s presence in the Barberini collections, at least before 1644, makes it possible to surmise that Poussin knew of Guercino’s canvas, it is not known who commissioned the work or, especially, who conceived of the subject (and why) or, at least, who conceived its pictorial transcription: Cardinal Giulio Rospigliosi (Panofsky’s suggestion), Father Miranda, or perhaps Father Pederzani (Mahon in Bologna—Cento 1901, no. 32)? As to its literary sources (see also Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1973), many poets, from Virgil to Jacopo Sannazaro, who in 1504 published the pastoral romance Arcadia, described an idyllic Arcadia populated by shepherds, where the river Alpheus (represented on the right) ran. To Guercino’s shepherds Poussin added this river god as well as a shepherdess, and he gave the skull less prominence.

The shepherds retain the same melancholy and dreamy expression seen in those painted by the Bolognese master, but Poussin infused his composition with a delicate poetry tinged with nostalgia, making us conscious of the fragility of happiness and the presence of death even in the most blissful realm.

**Provenance**

Collection of Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; inventory of 1677, see cat. 20); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686). Collection of Louis-Henri de Loménie, comte de Brienne (before 1695–95), who obtained it from a relative, Mme. du Houset (see Thuiller 1994, p. 202). According to a written communication from Dr. Edward T. Corp of December 1994, the painting was acquired by Raoul-Pierre de La Porte after Loménie de Brienne’s death. After La Porte’s death in 1714, it seems to have passed to the collection of Richard Boyle, third Earl of Burlington, when he visited Paris in the spring of 1714. It most likely remained in England, where it was mentioned in 1751 (see “Related works”). Collection of the Duke of Devonshire from 1753.

**Exhibitions**


**Catalogues raisonnés**

Smith, no. 278; Grautoff, no. 43; Magne, no. 280; Blunt, no. 119; Badt, no. 90; Thuiller I, no. 53; Wild, no. 3; Wright, no. 54; Mérot, no. 198; Thuiller II, no. 67.

**Selected bibliography**


**Related works**

**Paintings**

An enlarged copy in the Palazzo Massimo in Rome, which replaced the original, is cited by Blunt (1966); its current location is unknown. An old copy was published by A. Brejon de Lavernée in 1996 (p. 879 fig. 3).

A portrait of a woman by Thomas Hudson (1701–1779) dated 1751 (sale catalogue, Christie’s, London, July 7, 1967, no. 93, illus.)—and representing, according to an inscription we have no reason to doubt, Elizabeth Yorke, Lady Anson from 1748—shows the sitter holding in her hand a drawing of Poussin’s painting. From this, we might infer that the canvas was in England by this date. It is interesting that the drawing shows the painting without the enlargements on the left, which can, however, be seen in Ravenet’s engraving of 1763.

An eighteenth-century copy was twice auctioned at Sotheby’s Olympia, on July 6, 2004, no. 507, illus., and April 25, 2006, no. 345, illus.

**Engraving**

Engraved (not in reverse) by Simon François Ravenet (1706/72–1774) in 1763, while the painting belonged to the Duke of Devonshire (Andersen, no. 418; G. Wildenstein 1962, pp. 196 and 190, illus.).
22. **Two Putti Fighting on Goats**

Oil on canvas, transferred to panel, 13⅛ x 15 in. (33.3 x 38.2 cm)

Jan Krugier and Marie-Anne Krugier-Poniatowski collection

That the painting is a fragment is demonstrated by an X-radiograph reproduced in Blunt (1966, before p. 181 of his catalogue raisonné; unfortunately, we have been unable to have a new one made) and is indicated, as well, by the fine drawing in the École des Beaux-Arts (cat. 23). A recent restoration exposed on the left side the silhouette of a nymph with raised arm, as well as the hand of another nymph, which had already been seen in the X-radiograph.

The attribution of the painting, like that of the related drawing, has not always been accepted (Thuillier 1944a). Today its attribution is in no doubt, although its date (shortly before 1630?) is not entirely certain.

For the subject of the composition before the canvas was reduced—for reasons difficult to imagine—the reader is referred to cat. 23. In the painting, both of the putti are winged and hold arrows; the quiver can be made out on the left. The cupid on the left, nude in the drawing, here wears an orange-colored scarf. Above all, the landscape in the drawing is completely different from that of the painting, in which the two putti are seen against a wooded hill, lit by the sun. Despite these differences, the painting has retained the youthful grace of the drawing, as well as its bucolic and enchanting spirit.

**PROVENANCE**

Richard Owen Cambrige (died 1802); his son the Reverend George Owen Cambrige, Twickenham Meadows; his sale, Christie’s, London, May 11, 1824, no. 68 (8 guineas, to Bartie); J. Taylor, Esq.; his sale, Phillips (Harry), London, June 23, 1828, no. 39 (sold or bought back for £3.10); anonymous sale, Foster, London, May 26, 1829, no. 34 (£5.5. to Cap Brian); Acquired before World War II by Christopher Norris; sale, Mrs. Clive Pascal (formerly Mrs. Christopher Norris), Sotheby’s, London, May 23, 1951, no. 45 (to Calman); Michael Kroyer, London, 1960 and 1968; sale, Christie’s, London, December 13, 1966, no. 58, illus.

**EXHIBITIONS**


**CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS**

Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 194; Badt, no. 53; Thuillier I, no. B31; Wild, not mentioned; Wright, no. A17; Mérat, not mentioned; Thuillier II, no. B3.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**


**RELATED WORKS**

For the drawing in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris, see cat. 23.
Two Nymphs and Two Putti Fighting on Goats

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 7 7/8 x 11 in. (201 x 279 mm)
École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (Inv. 1421)

New York

This drawing is customarily dated to 1625–30 and has always been related to the painting Two Putti Fighting on Goats (cat. 22). That the latter is the fragment of a larger composition is confirmed by X-radiography, as well as by its recent restoration, which revealed on the left of the composition the hand of one of the two nymphs, not present in the drawing. But what is the relation of the two? Is the drawing a preparatory study for the painting or, to the contrary, a sort of ricordo, considerably modified, of a painting made somewhat earlier? The existence of many drawings comparable in technique, subject, and inspiration (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 46–49, illus.) prevents us from excluding the second theory.

Whatever the case, the sheet in the École des Beaux-Arts—in a magnificent state of preservation and of a confident execution, notably in the application of the brown wash—accords a significant place to the landscape setting. The pen is handled with assurance to give definition to the tree trunks, the hills, and the branches—the effect further reinforced by the brush. The sunlight, coming from the left, accentuates the shadows and gives the composition its depth.

It seems more prudent to discuss the subject of the composition in front of the drawing rather than the painting. Two putti confront one another, one winged, the other not, one holding an arrow, the other fighting with bare hands. A nymph is ready to crown them with laurel wreaths (but why does she hold two wreaths?). Are we witnessing a duel between sacred and profane love—a theme dear to Titian—as Blunt has proposed? There is a liveliness, gaiety, and sensuality that lend an irresistible charm to this drawing.

Inscriptions
At lower right, in pen and black ink: 41 A framing line in pen and brown ink, partially cut off. Doubled.

On the verso, in pen and brown ink: du Poussin 1630 (this may have been an inscription on the front that was cut off and recopied on the verso).

Provenance
Collection of Aimé-Charles-Horace His de la Salle (1795–1878; his mark, L. 1333, at lower left); Alfred Armand (1805–1888) from 1879; his nephew, Prosper Valton (died 1907); bequest of his widow to the École des Beaux-Arts, Paris, in 1908 (L. 829 at lower right).

Exhibitions

Selected Bibliography
24. A Dance before a Herm of Pan

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over light pencil, 8¼ x 12½ in. (209 x 328 mm)

On the verso, a recently discovered study for a Holy Family, in very pale sanguine
Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 11979)

The drawing has always, and justifiably, been related to the Bacchanal before a Herm in the National Gallery, London (fig. 72; see latest in Wine 2001, pp. 288–95). Current opinion dates the painting to 1632–33. But is this a herm of Pan, as indicated by the flute that can be seen at right, or a representation of Priapus? The floral wreaths in the foreground are the traditional attribute of Priapus, the god of gardens.

There are significant variations between the painting and the drawing. In fact, no figure, or groups, or details from the drawing appear in the painting. These differences have led me to date the drawing to 1628–30. I am aware that scarcely anyone has followed me (Brigstoke 1995: 1632; Keazor 1995b: 1628–30, “etwas zu früh”; Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96: 1631–32, and so on), but it seems to me that the considerable variations between the drawing and the painting lend authority to such a hypothesis, confirmed by the drawing style, marked by a schematic treatment of the trees and the figures.

The friezelike composition plays out like a film in slow motion, the gestures linked together in a harmonious sequence, frozen as in an ancient bas-relief yet very lively. The image, of dance and rhythm, aspires to be atemporal. The landscape is summarily sketched with a few pen lines. Poussin gave it breadth by means of the brown wash. Note the action of the female dancer, who wets the plants at the base of the herm, adroitly hiding its genitals with a small vase.
PROVENANCE
Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; album Massimi, no. 20); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686); Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II (1707–1751; at Leicester House in 1751); his son, the future George III (1739–1820); Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Blunt 1945 [1], no. 174, pl. 29; L. 901 at lower right).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the verso, see Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, p. 77, fig. 25 verso.

RELATED WORKS

ENGRAVING

DRAWINGS
For the study in Stockholm (fig. 73), see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 44, illus., and Rosenberg and Prat in Paris 1994–95, p. 210, under no. 47, fig. 47a.

For the drawing in the British Museum (fig. 74), see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R517. Our refusal to consider this an original is far from universally accepted. Clayton has twice defended the drawing and believes it is by Poussin, and Brigstoke, like Verdi, seems to accept it. More recently, Wine (2001, p. 292) shared the same opinion, whereas Keazor judged it to be from the studio (“Werkstatt”) of Poussin. Only Harris agrees with us. See also Wine 2001, p. 288.

Figure 73 Nicolas Poussin, study for Bacchanal before a Herm. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (NM THC 5424 a)

Figure 74 Studio of Nicolas Poussin, Bacchanal before a Herm. British Museum, London (Sloane 5337-147)
This drawing, one of Poussin’s most delicious (it has justifiably evoked the art of Cézanne, whom he seems to prefigure with his remarkable integration of figures in a landscape), is perhaps all the more seductive in that it has been cut on the right, and what may have been no more than a detail has become the primary subject of the composition.

There has been a tendency to follow Marinella, the first cataloguer of the drawings in Windsor before 1700, in seeing here a representation of Tyro accompanied by her nymphs and wooed by Neptune, who would be shown on the right in the form of a river god. But this figure, hidden by the trunk of a tree, seems instead to make an allusion to the presence of water, unless he is the river god Enipeus, whose form Neptune assumed in order to win Tyro’s favors.

The structure of the landscape is achieved by lively contrasts of wash and the blank sheet, with very simple foliage and the shadows of the trees strengthened by fine ink hatchings that run the length of the rock.

Poussin clearly took an interest in the representation of a body half-submerged in water (but he put his wash down too quickly: the plane of water “leans” to the left!), which he took up again in a much later drawing with a comparable group: the famous *The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa* in the Fogg Art Museum (cat. 59).

The drawing can probably be dated to the beginning of the 1630s (ca. 1632–34, according to M. Clayton).

**Provenance**
Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; album Massimi, no. 10); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686); Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II (1707–1751; at Leicester House in 1750); his son, the future George III (1738–1820); Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Blunt 1945, no. 187, pl. 39).

**Exhibitions**
Paris 1994–95, no. 40; Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 28, illus.

**Selected bibliography**
Can we speak of a break between Poussin’s first group of landscapes, datable between 1624 and 1630 (cats. 1–25), and those presented in this section? Whoever compares the pendant Landscape with Saint Matthew (cat. 35) and Landscape with Saint John on Patmos (cat. 36), which we know were painted before 1640—prior, that is, to Poussin’s departure for Paris—with the Venus Anointing the Dead Adonis (cat. 8), becomes aware of the immense distance and completely different ambition that separates them.

A preliminary observation is therefore in order. In Rome in the 1640s, landscape painters occupied a far from negligible status, although certainly painters of ceilings and large religious or profane decorations still stood at the top of the ladder. And certainly, invention and imagination were still considered the rarest and most appreciated qualities in any painting. But it was agreed that landscape also had a place.

A second observation: Poussin does not describe, he recreates. He does not paint what he sees, and only exceptionally does he make literal drawings of a subject. He gives to nature a construction, a range, a role, and a function that differentiate him definitively from specialists in landscape painting—one thinks, for example, of his gifted brother-in-law Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675)—as well as from his contemporaries who only occasionally dabbled in the genre.

As stated in the first introductory section, so far we know of no “pure” landscape—something without any human presence—that is, no landscape painting by Poussin (for the drawings, see the introduction to the fourth section of the exhibition, pp. 307–10). These paintings often deal with religious themes (cats. 30, 31, 35, 36, 41, 42, 53), history (cats. 33, 43; unfortunately, we were unable to procure the loan of the Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion [fig. 38]), or mythology or poetry (cats. 26, 32, 34, 37, 47, 49, 54, 57). There is, however, a group that stands apart and cannot be put in any of these categories: these are “climatic landscapes”—an unhappily reductive term. But how else can we define the Landscape with a Calm (cat. 56) and Landscape with a Storm (cat. 55), as well as, perhaps, the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57)?

Other paintings, ostensibly without subject, exist, though great efforts have been made, with obstinacy and an admirable perseverance, to endow them with one. Sometimes the identified subject is convincing (cat. 54); sometimes it seems forced and remains in doubt (cat. 52). Alternative explanations also merit careful exploration. Sometimes interpretations have rapidly gained ground, with iconologists and iconographers throwing themselves into the task, making wonderful leaps of ingenuity (cat. 44). Poussin’s paintings have withstood even these praiseworthy and sometimes pertinent exertions. They remain admirable examples of painting—affecting or delectable, unlike any other work of their period—and have lost nothing from the blows of these analyses.

Generally speaking, it is my belief that the current tendency toward overinterpretation—condemned by Jacques Thuillier and treated sarcastically by H.-W. van Helsing (2002) and, with greater nuance, by Willibald Sauerländer (in an article that can be recommended to all enthusiasts: it is dated 2005 but actually appeared in 2006)—constitutes a wrong turn. Such an approach overlooks the fact that Poussin did not have the time to read and see everything postulated. His erudition was not as vast as has been suggested (which
takes nothing from his obvious intelligence). What the over-
interpretive approach overlooks most, as Denis Mahon untiringly reminds us, is the painter.

Can we fix a date and suggest reasons or ambitions related to this break, or rather, different tack in the artist’s production, remembering that Poussin was a man not of “breaks” but of reflection and deliberation? There is one fixed point, dating from before the unhappy sojourn in Paris from 1640 to 1642. A painting such as the Landscape with a Man Pursued by a Snake in Montreal (cat. 27) serves as an early example of the combining of anecdote and nature. We might also mention The Arcadian Shepherds (fig. 39), in which anecdote—although perhaps the term anecdote does not really fit the painting in Montreal—has already turned to allegory. The Landscape with Saint Jerome (cat. 30) is another example of this syncretism that will develop so magnificently after 1642 to produce some of Poussin’s finest paintings.

The reasons for this transformation, this evolution—treated in the essays in this catalogue—is complex. But whether or not the paintings have a subject, they all have one thing in common: the symbiosis between humans, with their dramas, and an atemporal nature, devourer of time, heedless of and insensitive to the everyday and the present. Whether the landscape—nature—participates actively in the work, playing a primary role, or whether it functions passively as an impassive observer, the one is inconceivable without the other. Human beings submit to nature, bask in it, obey its laws, whether gentle or brutal, or defy it, but nature is no longer simply decoration; it lives beside us, with us, as friend or enemy.

As for the works of Poussin’s maturity: is their intention moral, Stoic, religious, or atheistic? Does the artist’s pessimism leave any hope for salvation? Shall we ever know?
26. **Landscape with Juno, Argus, and Io**

Oil on canvas, 48 ¼ x 78 ½ in. (122.5 x 198.5 cm)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (463)

**New York**

To protect his lover, the nymph Io, from Juno’s jealousy, Jupiter changed her into a cow, which Juno had guarded by Argus, the herdsman with one hundred eyes. Jupiter then sent Mercury to kill Argus. In the Berlin painting, Juno gathers the eyes of Argus, with which she adorns the tail of her sacred animal, the peacock.

Instead of the encounter between Mercury and Argus and the ruse that proved fatal to the latter, or the scene of Argus’s death, Poussin chose to show the final episode in the story: on the right, we see Juno and the dead Argus as well as the cow Io, who runs off in terror; Mercury contemplates his crime from the sky. The interpretation of the left part of the composition is more delicate. Landon settles for the description of “Cupids, naiads, and an old man, seen on a distant plane.”

The 1638 inventory of Vincenzo Giustiniani specifies that the canvas was intended to be hung over a door and calls attention to the reduced size of the figures, which certainly did nothing to facilitate the reading of the scene (Vincenzo Giustiniani also owned The Massacre of the Innocents in the Musée Condé, Chantilly; see Chantilly 1994–95, no. 3, illus.).
Blunt dates the work to 1636–37, Thuillier to 1634. It is unquestionably among the first paintings announcing Poussin’s return to landscape, which here has a major role in accompanying the terrible episode.

PROVENANCE
Collection of Marchese Vincenzo Giustiniani (1564–1637), Rome (for the different inventories of the Giustiniani collection, see Danesi Squarzina 2003: from that of 1638, vol. 1, no. 133: “un quadro sopraparto con un Paese e figurine piccole con l’Istoria di Mercario che hà ucciso, che custodiva la Vacca Io. . . .”); in 1808 the collection was put up for sale in Paris by Prince Vincenzo Giustiniani; in 1815 it was made over to Chevalier Férétol de Bonnemaison for Count Frederick William III of Prussia.

EXHIBITION

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, rejected (pp. 260–61); Magne, no. 62; Blunt, no. 160; Badt, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. 81; Wild, no. R5 [Dughet]; Wright, no. 91; Mérot, no. 218; Thuillier II, no. 95.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1966

RELATED WORK
ENGRAVING
Engraved by Charles Normand (1765–1840) in Annales du musée of Landon, in the volume devoted to the Giustiniani gallery (1812), on plate 19, under the title Paysage.
27. *Landscape with a Man Pursued by a Snake*

Oil on canvas, 25\(\frac{3}{4}\) x 29\(\frac{3}{4}\) in. (65 x 76 cm)
The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (Inv. 1975.15)

At the center of the canvas, the trunk of a slender tree stands out against a cloudy sky and a hill colored a lovely lavender blue. Immediately to the left of the tree, a man wrapped in a cowl and dressed in yellow turns his back to the fisherman as well as the traveler, who, having seen a snake—perhaps a viper—flees in fright. Several trees with luxuriant foliage frame the composition.

This work was published for the first time in 1965 by Blunt in the essays offered on the ninetieth birthday of Walter Friedlaender. (Friedlaender has never won the praise he deserves for his astute opinions on Poussin and the quality of his analyses; his book, published in Munich in 1914, caused a sensation.) The painting undoubtedly dates to shortly before 1640—1655 at the earliest (Blunt: 1642–43; Thuillier: 1638–39; Mérot: 1630–35).

We would like to touch on a number of points relating to the Montreal canvas as well as to two others, both in London (see also cats. 28, 29). In 1962, one of those was attributed by Denys Sutton to Gaspard Dughet (Sutton 1962, p. 618 n. 3); it was the view of the great English critic Roger Fry that the Montreal canvas was by the same artist (see New York 1990, p. 55 n. 5). Dughet, Poussin’s brother-in-law, basically painted only landscapes, which can be distinguished from Poussin’s by the deep understanding of nature they evince; they also display a realism and immediacy that set them apart from Poussin’s more organized and abstracted landscapes.

Clearly painted in the studio and not outdoors, the three figures shown in each of these three canvases were added after the landscapes had been finished. Indeed, even with the naked eye, the landscapes can be made out under the figures (this is apparent with the cowed figure in the Montreal canvas).

Are we dealing with pure landscapes embellished with figures, or should we look for a subject? Malcolm Bull (1998) proposed identifying the scene in the Montreal canvas with the legend of Tylos and the snake, which is hardly convinc-
CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 215; Thuillier I, no. 131; Wild, no. 111; Wright, no. 149; Mérot, no. 235; Thuillier II, no. 96.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1966
28. **Landscape with a Man Scooping Water from a Stream**

Oil on canvas, 24¼ × 30¼ in. (63 × 77.7 cm)
Bilbao

Published for the first time by Blunt in 1945, this and the following painting (cat. 29) were scrupulously studied in 2001 by Wine, who devoted special attention to their provenance: both were certainly owned by the dal Pozzo family. Cassiano dal Pozzo had been one of the artist’s primary supporters and patrons, especially during Poussin’s difficult early years in Rome.

Two questions arise. Are these two works really pendants, and when was each painted? Recent critics have responded in the negative to the first question, and in the strict sense of the term, they are correct. Nevertheless, it seems incontestable that, even if the two paintings are separated in date by several years or, perhaps, merely several months, Poussin conceived them as part of a series. (In dal Pozzo’s collection, five landscapes are grouped together in the inventories and formed a group to which the Montreal painting [cat. 27] also belongs.)

In light of the dates of the Berlin and Chicago canvases (cats. 35, 36), there are few scholars today who disagree in placing these two works before 1640 and the artist’s departure for Paris—that is, about 1637 for the present picture and 1638–39 for cat. 29 (see Wine 2001; there are some nuances among specialists: McTighe in New York 1990; Verdi in Edinburgh 1990, p. 66; Brigitte in Oxford 1990–91; Thuiller 1994). 

A traveler, his beggar’s purse and calabash beside him, rests on the bank of a stream, from which a second traveler holding a bowl in his hand, prepares to drink. In the distance, a third traveler walks away, carrying a stick.

The landscape is clearly structured: in the foreground are the stream and hillocks from which three trees grow; a road lined with rushes leads toward the hills, which increase in height as they recede into the distance. A wide range of yellows, fairly constant greens, blues in the sky and hills—not customary in Poussin’s work—layers the composition, which is brightly lit from the left by an unseen sun.

When compared with the paintings of the previous ten years, the two paintings in the National Gallery can be seen...
to mark a clear break. There is an openness and airiness in them that the paintings of the 1620s do not possess. More austere in their subject, and employing a spatial construction that looks ahead to Cézanne, they approach nature in a more contemplative and serious way.

For an interpretation of the painting’s subject, see the entry for Landscape with a Man Pursued by a Snake (cat. 27).

PROVENANCE
The painting (as well as its pendant, cat. 29, and see also cat. 27), was in all likelihood made for Cassiano dal Pozzo (1598–1657) or for his younger brother Carlo Antonio, and undoubtedly remained in the family collections until 1779 (see Brejon de Lavaugne 1973; Standring 1988; and Sparti 1992). Although we can affirm that Cassiano’s grandnephew offered the painting to his daughter Maria Laura Boccapaduli on August 8, 1739, as proved by the label on the verso, affixed to the frame, we do not know the exact reasons for this generous gesture; in all likelihood acquired by the painter and dealer Gavin Hamilton (1723–1798); the painting then passed through several English collections before definitively entering the National Gallery, London, in 1970 (for the details on this provenance and for the different dal Pozzo inventories, see, most recently, Wine 2001).

EXHIBITIONS
London 1949–50, no. 30 (or 32); Bologna 1962, no. 64; London 1975, no. 208, illus.; Edinburgh 1992, no. 1, illus.; Copenhagen 1992, no. 18, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned [engraving]; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 213; Badt, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. 133; Wild, no. 113; Wright, no. 148; Mérot, no. 233; Thuillier II, no. 133.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
DRAWINGS
The verso of a drawing in the Musée Bonnat, Bayonne (fig. 75), a preparatory study for the decor of the Louvre’s Grande Galerie, has been related by Thuillier (1974) to the London painting (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, fig. 213 verso; Rosenberg and Prat in Bayonne 1994–95, no. 10, verso, illus.; Olson 2003, p. 231, fig. 116). Though the drawing, a landscape without figures drawn with pen alone, is definitely by Poussin, and though it is regrettable that it could not be borrowed for the exhibition, its relation to the painting is not all that apparent. The presence on the verso of a study for the Grande Galerie dates it either to Poussin’s sojourn in Paris (1642–43) or to the months following that journey.

The drawing in Oxford (cat. 81) has also been related to this painting (by Brigstocke in Oxford 1990–91, no. 56, illus., and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, fig. 259).
29. *Landscape with Travellers Resting*

Oil on canvas, 24¼ x 30⅜ in. (62 x 77.8 cm)

*Bilbao*

In the center of the composition is a seated traveler on a winding road. Farther back, a second traveler appears to be lacing his sandal; a third traveler, in the distance, on the bank of a waterway, moves away. On either side of the road, rocks, trees, and abundant vegetation lead the eye toward the hills and sunlit vistas in the distance.

See the previous entry (cat. 28) for the provenance and probable date of this painting.

**Exhibitions**

**Catalogues Raisonnés**
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, not mentioned; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 214; Badt, not mentioned; Thuiller I, no. 132; Wild, no. 112; Wright, no. 147; Mérot, no. 234; Thuiller II, no. 134.

**Selected Bibliography**
See the preceding entry (cat. 28) and Wine 2001, p. 348, illus. See also McTaghe in New York 1990, p. 52, illus. fig. 1; Sparti 1992, pp. 106–7, illus. fig. 58; Wine 1992, p. 269 n. 2.
30. **Landscape with Saint Jerome**

Oil on canvas, 61 x 92⅝ in. (155 x 234 cm)

Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P 2034)

Although the attribution of this painting is no longer doubted, it took many years for it to become definitive. During the nineteenth century in the Prado, it went under the name of Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675), Poussin’s brother-in-law, nicknamed Gaspard Poussin. Magne (1914) is credited with having attributed the work to Poussin. In truth, as early as 1859, Louis Clément de Ris wrote in his book on the Prado: “Also, one may without fear of committing error consider as an original by Nicolal [sic] Poussin this painting alleged to be by Guaspe [sic].” During the 1950s, the work was variously attributed to the “Silver Birch Master” (the creation of Blunt [1950]), and again to Dughet, before being restored to its rightful author, notably by Blunt (1959), Thuillier (1974), and Whitfield (1979).

Poussin’s canvas belongs to a series of twenty-four large compositions of hermits commissioned to decorate a gallery in the Palacio del Buen Retiro, near the present-day Prado in Madrid. The commission was placed in Rome in 1634–35 and paid for in 1637–38. This was unquestionably among the most important commissions of the entire seventeenth century, benefiting not only Poussin but also Claude Lorrain, Gaspard Dughet, Jean Lemaire, Herman van Swanevelt, and Jan Both—all either French or Northern European landscapists then established in Rome.

The choice of Poussin at this time is surprising. Although he was famous, his reputation rested primarily on two prestigious commissions, a painting on a historical subject, The Death of Germanicus (today in Minneapolis) for Cardinal Francesco Barberini, nephew of Pope Urban VIII, and a painting on a religious subject, the Martyrdom of Saint Erasmus for Saint Peter’s, Rome. During 1627 and 1628, Poussin’s mythological compositions became more numerous. Official commissions from France and Italy followed one on the other, but, even if the paintings of this period included landscapes, and these landscapes were not simple decorative elements or backgrounds, neither were they the main subject of the works. In this canvas, the figure of Saint Jerome—shown without his lion—received careful treatment: the hermit, his clothes removed, is shown kneeling in prayer before the cross, holding in his hand a stone with which to strike himself. In accordance with iconographic tradition, the solitary Jerome communes with nature, composed of a variety of trees in more-or-less full foliage as well as solid rocks, creating a screen pierced here and there by the rays of the sun. Nature is highlighted far more than the austere saint in meditation. Nature absorbs him; he becomes lost in it.

As I am reminded by Keith Christiansen, the Landscape with Saint Jerome obliges us to pose the question of the relationship between Poussin and Dughet, on the one hand, and Poussin and Claude, on the other. These are the years when Dughet freed himself from the authoritative example of his brother-in-law and invented his own language and style. Even if one cannot fully agree with the hypothesis of Boisclair (1986, p. 76) that in this picture Dughet influenced Poussin, it should nonetheless be recognized that Poussin attentively observed the creations of his younger brother-in-law. The poetic—almost proto-romantic—character of Dughet’s work can hardly have won over the older artist, however, attached as he was to the historical landscape as a pretext to more intellectual reflections.

The friendly relations between Claude and Poussin (did they chat with each other in French, or possibly in Italian?) hardly kept them from expressing themselves visually in very different modes. It is in some of their drawings—at least those in which Poussin employed washes—more so than in their paintings, that the two are closest. It is enough to recall that for many years the View across a Valley towards Distant Hills in the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (cat. 81), was ascribed to Claude.
PROVENANCE
Commissioned by Philip IV of Spain, possibly acting on the recommendation of the marquis de Castel Rodrigo, ambassador to Rome, for the decoration of the Palacio del Buen Retiro with a series of paintings on the theme of anchorites (Blunt 1999); royal collections of the Palacio del Buen Retiro (Testamentaria 1701, part of no. 142: "Otro Pais de dos Uaros y media de largo y Uara y media de alto Con San Jeronimo y Una grutta de mano del Ytaliano Con marco y tallado dorado tesor en ochenta doblones . . . 4800"); Madrid 2005, p. 267).

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNES
Smith, not mentioned; Grutoff, rejected (p. 268); Magne, no. 312; Blunt, no. 103; Baid, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. 95; Wild, no. R7; Wright, no. 145; Merot, no. 214; Thuillier II, no. 114.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
31. Saint Mary of Egypt Receiving Communion from Saint Zosimus

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 8⅛ x 12¼ in. (225 x 310 mm)

Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 11925)

Unanimously accepted as by Poussin, the drawing has been dated generally to about 1635–37 and related in style to Hercules and Deianira (cat. 32) and to A Wooded Scene in the Louvre (cat. 78). This is one of the rare sheets definitively attributable to Poussin in which the landscape takes precedence over the human figure. The morphology of the figures, the spatial construction of the composition, the use of a wash with two tones skillfully but discreetly applied, with a keen sense of proportion: all constitute proof of the drawing’s authenticity. Additional proofs include the expanses of sun-washed earth left in reserve, the foliage reinforced by delicate hatchings made with the fine point of the pen, and the clarity of the vegetation, with the trunks of the trees well defined. The presence of water leads the artist to exploit the theme, dear to him, of reflections. The assurance and delicacy of the treatment lead Prat and me to propose a date of about 1635–38 (1634–35 for Brigstoke, ca. 1634–36 for Clayton).

This drawing has often been thought preparatory to a canvas and associated with the commission from Philip IV of Spain for a suite of paintings on the subject of anchorites or hermits to decorate the landscape gallery of the Palacio del Buen Retiro in Madrid. The commission, made about 1635–37, was extended to Claude, Poussin, Lemaire, Dughet, and other Northern artists living in Rome; Poussin’s Landscape with Saint Jerome (cat. 30) belongs to this series. Here, however, the function of the drawing remains problematic: this is neither a true landscape study nor a preparatory drawing for a painting, but rather a finished work, perfect in the equilibrium it achieves between the figures and surrounding nature, animated by that narrative facility that always inspired Poussin. The calm beauty of the site intensifies the religious nature of the scene, drawn from the thirteenth-century Golden Legend by Jacobus de Voragine: after living in the desert for forty-seven years, Saint Mary of Egypt, a prostitute converted to Christianity, receives Communion from Saint Zosimus near the Jordan. The subject of the drawing was specified by G. B. Marinella in his inventory (of about 1700) of Cardinal Massimi’s collection.

Provenance
Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; album Massimi, no. 56); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686); Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II (1707–1751; at Leicester House in 1750); his son, the future George III (1738–1820); Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Blunt 1945, no. 195, pl. 43. L. 90).

Exhibitions
Paris 1994–95a, no. 84 (with previous history); Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 32, illus.

Selected bibliography
See Paris 1994–95a, p. 272, no. 84 (with previous publications). See also Friedländer and Blunt 1963, no. 275, pl. 215; Bächmann 1994, p. 144, fig. 166; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 128, illus.; Brigstoke 1995, p. 63; Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 32; Clayton 1996, p. 468; Méro 1996b, p. 71; Oberhuber 1996, pp. 105–6, fig. 7 p. 113; Whitfield 1996, p. 251; Keazor 1998, p. 77 n. 82, fig. 86 (with an error in the caption); Rosenberg 2000b, p. 97, fig. 118; Capitelli in Madrid 2005, pp. 254–55 and 261 n. 71 (Eng. ed.).
32. *Hercules and Deianira*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over a light underdrawing in black chalk, 8½ x 12½ in. (220 x 318 mm)
On the verso, in very pale black chalk: studies for a *Holy Family* and a *Madonna and Child*
Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 11912)

It is likely that the drawing is related to a lost picture that, according to Félibien, was painted for Jacques Stella in about 1637 and that, by 1665, was owned by Chantelou. The subject, taken from Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 9.1ff.), has been explained by numerous commentators: at left, after having overcome his rival, the river god Achelous, Hercules makes off with Deianira. Thrown to the ground, Achelous is succored by a nymph; another nymph fills his cornucopia with flowers. On the right, a nymph offers the same cornucopia to a seated woman, while at extreme right Oeneus, king of Calydon and father of Deianira, moves away. (The seated woman has been identified as Deianira by those who believe Poussin depicted the same figure twice in one composition: I believe he treated two different subjects.) Poussin divided his drawing in two by clearly marked vertical lines, as if to retain only one part for his future painting. Clayton has noted that, at the end of the story, in Giovanni Andrea dell’Anguillara’s embellished, Italian translation of Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, which enjoyed extreme popularity and was used by Poussin on other occasions, mention is made of “la Dea fertile,” and he suggests that the seated woman is therefore Ceres. This would create the sort of thematic contrast later used in *The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus* (cat. 58)—another work painted for Stella.

Striking are the almost friezelike succession of figures and, especially, the landscape, which evokes the wooded hills found in *Ordination* and the *Baptism* (Paris 1994–95a, nos. 67, 69)—canvases belonging to the first series of the Seven Sacraments for Cassiano dal Pozzo and dating to the later 1630s. As Harris (1984a) noted, this landscape is one of several that should serve as the point of departure for the reconstitution of the graphic oeuvre of Poussin the landscapist. It is a highly structured space, lacking in overt decorative effects, with the wash reapplied and reinforced in spots and the rocks and tree trunks having well-defined outlines, yet it lacks the lyricism and luminous quality that characterize the sheets in the so-called G group (see section 5).

All scholars have dated this drawing between 1636 and 1639, which seems perfectly acceptable.

Figure 76 After Nicolas Poussin (?), *Hercules and Deianira.*
Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32058)
PROVENANCE
Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677; album Massimi, no. 66); his brother, Fabio Massimi (1621–1686); Frederick, Prince of Wales, son of George II (1707–1751; at Leicester House in 1750); his son, the future George III (1738–1820); Windsor Castle, Royal Library (Blunt 1945, no. 207, pl. 50 (recto); L. 901 at lower right).

EXHIBITION
Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 44, illus. (no. 43 for the verso).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

For the verso, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 100, pp. 182, 183; and Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, illus. p. 129.

RELATED WORKS
DRAWINGS
The Louvre owns a copy (fig. 76) of an original lost work by Poussin, engraved in the seventeenth century, showing a simplified and modified composition of the left part of the drawing in Windsor (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R782; Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1704, illus.; see also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 31, 101. Clayton (1996, p. 460, and in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, under no. 441) believes the Louvre drawing to be autograph, as does Méjanès et al. 1997).
The Finding of Queen Zenobia

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 6⅔ x 7⅛ in. (154 x 200 mm)
Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 11985)

The subject was drawn from Tacitus’s Annals (7.51), a work that Poussin rarely used (except for The Death of Germanicus). Zenobia, the pregnant queen of Armenia, and her husband, Rhadamistus, were pursued by the Parthians. Overcome by labor pains, she implored her husband to kill her so that he could escape the enemy. He stabs her and throws her body into the waters of the Araxes “to thus rob the enemy of her body.” She was discovered by shepherds, who, “judging by the nobility of her features that she was not of low birth,” saved her.

In addition to the unfinished painting in the Hermitage (fig. 77), generally but not unanimously accepted (Paris 1994–95a, no. 79, illus.), are six drawings that treat the same episode (some of them not universally accepted; see cat. 50).

The one in Windsor, on which Poussin wrote in two places the names of the river, araxa, as well as the name of the heroine, Zenobia, and of the town, artaxata, where the shepherds brought Zenobia, is especially appealing. On the right can be seen a horseman fleeing. It is Rhadamistus, pursued by the Parthian troops, who can be made out at the extreme left, along with an enormous dog watching the scene at the river, adding a humorous note.

The balance between the firm pen lines and the delicately placed wash, as well as the tiered arrangement of the planes, make this drawing a perfect example of Poussin’s style. Prat and I had dated the sheet to about 1640–42, which is undoubtedly too late (Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, dates it about 1634–36).

Figure 77 Nicolas Poussin, Queen Zenobia Found on the Banks of the River Araxes. The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (GE 7690)
INSCRIPTION
In Poussin’s hand, in pen and brown ink: arx (crossed out), araxa, Zenobia, artaxata.

PROVENANCE
Formerly Royal Collection but of unknown provenance (see Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 35).

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95, no. 82, illus. (with previous history); Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, no. 35, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORK
See cat. 50.
Armida Bearing the Sleeping Rinaldo

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 8 x 10 in. (203 x 255 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32435)

Bilbao

Bellori (1672, p. 447) describes a painting by Poussin based on an episode from Tasso’s Gerusalemme liberata (14.68) showing the sorceress Armida preparing to bear the sleeping Rinaldo away to her enchanted island. The composition he describes differs significantly from that of the drawing catalogued here but seems related to two preliminary studies, in the Louvre and at Windsor (fig. 78; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 58, 59) as well as a drawn copy of the finished composition (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R1318). Did Poussin paint two pictures on this theme, as Thuillier (1994a, no. 98) believes? What can be said with certainty is that when he wrote his biography of Poussin, Bellori had before his eyes either the now-lost painting or the compositional drawing.

The sheet catalogued here is preparatory to the canvas that, according to Félibien, Poussin painted in 1637 for Jacques Stella (1596–1657), which is known from two engravings and a canvas in the Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (fig. 79) that was long thought to be a copy but appears instead to be the original (see Rome 2000b, no. 1). The drawing must have been owned by the banker-collector Éverard Jabach because it was shown to Bernini when he visited Jabach in the company of Chantelou during his stay in Paris in 1665 (Chantelou [1665] 2001, October 11, 1665).

The drawing is among the most astonishing made by the artist during this period, when he sought to give visual form to his taste for literary romance. The intense use of wash lends the landscape a fantastic aspect—a luminous quality that it shares with the painting.

Comparing the painting and the drawing reveals only a few differences, such as, for example, the boat on the water, absent in the painting but quite visible in the drawing on the left, in front of the marble column mentioned by Tasso (14.57). Unfortunately, the strong use of shadows makes the groups less legible here than in the definitive composition. Also, the position of the nymph standing behind the seated river god is different, and there are variations in the group of

Figure 78 Nicolas Poussin, Armida Bearing the Sleeping Rinaldo. Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (Inv. 11923)

Figure 79 Nicolas Poussin, Armida Bearing the Sleeping Rinaldo. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin (486)
cupid. The highly delineated parts (the tree at left, the face of Rinaldo) accord with Poussin’s concern for precision, which he did not neglect even at his most lyrical.

PROVENANCE
Collection Éverard Jabach (ca. 1618–1655); acquired for the Cabinet du Roi in 1671 (L. 296 affixed on the remounted drawings, at lower left); Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 at lower center and L. 2207 at lower left).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 135, illus. (see also the errata). See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1949, no. 144, pl. 111; Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, pp. 196–97 under no. 70, and p. 200 under no. C3; Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1693, illus. (see also no. 1694); Keazor 1998, p. 107, fig. 117; Laveissière in Rome 2000b, p. 69, under no. 1 and fig. 1b.

RELATED WORKS
PAINTING
For the painting in Berlin (fig. 79), see latest Laveissière in Rome 2000b, no. 1, illus.

DRAWINGS
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 58 (Louvre), 59 (Windsor), as well as nos. R21, R402, and R1318.

A copy of the Louvre drawing in sanguine attributed to Michel Comielle II (1642–1708) is preserved in the Uffizi, Florence; see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R422; and Laveissière in Rome 2000b, pp. 69–70.

ENGRAVING
Charles Massé (1631–1665) engraved the drawing in reverse in Recueil Jabach (Andresen, no. 411; Wildenstein, no. 153), under folio 270.
35. **Landscape with Saint Matthew**

Oil on canvas, 39 x 53½ in. (99 x 135 cm)
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Gemäldegalerie (478 A)

*New York*

36. **Landscape with Saint John on Patmos**

Oil on canvas, 39½ x 53¼ in. (100.3 x 136.4 cm)
The Art Institute of Chicago. A. A. Munger Collection (1930.500)

*New York*

Although painted as pendants, cats. 35 and 36 have rarely been reunited since the death in 1644 of their first owner, the secretary to Pope Urban VIII, Abbot Giovanni Maria Roscioli. Undoubtedly, he acquired them directly from Poussin, on October 28, 1640, exactly a month before—and not the same day—the painter left for Paris. Whereas Roscioli bequeathed the *Saint Matthew* to Cardinal Antonio Barberini—it remained in the Barberini collections and then with their descendants until acquired for Berlin in 1873—the fate of the *Saint John* between 1644 and 1801 is not known. Was it the same painting that belonged to the comte de Grignan, the (indebted) son-in-law of Madame de Sévigné (see under “Related works”), in 1680, the date when it was engraved by Louis de Châtillon?

Poussin most likely painted the two canvases—although in what order?—in the months preceding his departure for France, where he had been summoned by Richelieu and Louis XIII. There is every reason to believe that he originally conceived a series of four Evangelists, and why he did not complete the series with *Saint Luke* and *Saint Mark* after he returned to Rome, in November 1642, is a mystery.

The paintings in Berlin and Chicago not only provide precious points of reference in that delicate task of reconstructing the chronology of Poussin’s work, but they are also among the artist’s earliest attempts in a genre that would become increasingly important in his production: the classical landscape. It is not that he displayed any lack of interest in nature before 1640, but, as we have seen, his early landscapes complemented mythological scenes, taking backstage to the narrative, decorating—sometimes magnificently—the composition, as in the *Echo and Narcissus* in the Louvre (fig. 25). Here, the conception has radically changed and the vision is completely new (see Ginzburg 2006). The two Evangelists are all but immersed in nature, which is no longer the wild countryside but has been domesticated, re-created by the eye of the painter. In the *Landscape with Saint Matthew* can be seen the Torre delle Milizie, tempting one to identify the river as the Tiber, near the Acqua Acetosa. The episode depicted in the *Landscape with Saint John* took place on Patmos; the obelisk and the temple in the center of the painting and the shafts of a column serve to symbolize the ruins of the antique world on which the New Testament was built (see, further, Sauerländer’s essay, p. 104).

Poussin selected an elevated point of view to command the scenes: we stand outside the pictures, as spectators. Not a breath of wind disturbs the trees. The waters of the river appear motionless. The block of stone, with its sharp angles, and the pieces of smoothly polished columns give the space its cadence. Like sculpted reliefs, the figures of the Evangelists participate in this majestic spectacle of a sunlit and serene nature: outside of time, ideal, eternal. Rather than enclosed in their studies, the two inspired solitary souls appear in the open air, in nature.

Poussin was, in the first place, interested in the light: a clear, bright light that envelops the compositions and gives
them unity. Observed with keen acuteness, this light enhances the brilliant, freely juxtaposed colors; it sculpts the draperies lying before Matthew as well as the silhouetted eagle to which John turns his back; it accentuates the form of the rocks and the reflections of clouds in the still water.

Poussin resists describing the countryside. Rather, he ennobles it, re-creates it without removing its poetry. He invents a genre: the ideal landscape, the fortunes of which can be followed down to the Nazarene painters of the nineteenth century. If the Berlin and Chicago paintings are not the oldest examples of this genre, they are surely the most perfect.

Cat. 35

PROVENANCE
One of the five paintings in the collection of Abbot Giovanni Maria Roscioli (1609 [not 1604]–1644), Pope Urban VIII’s Maestro di Camera. For this and its pendant (cat. 34), Roscioli paid 40 ecus on October 28, 1640 (plus 2.40 ecus for the frames and 7 for their gilding); on his death in 1644, Roscioli left the picture to Cardinal Antonio Barberini (1607–1671); the Barberini collection; by inheritance in 1818 to the Colonna di Sciarra; acquired in 1873 by the Berlin museum (for 60,000 lire, according to Bode 1997, p. 66; 50,087 marks according to von Stockhausen 2000).

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉES
Smith, no. 160; Grautoff, no. 125; Magne, no. 304 (and no. 268); Blunt, no. 87; Balth, no. 167; Thuillier I, no. 136; Wild, no. 115; Wright, no. 150; Mérat, no. 215; Thuillier II, no. 147.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS
See Paris 1994–95a, no. 95.

DRAWINGS
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 560, fig. 289b, and nos. R367, R394, as well as 273 and R80.

There is also a drawing by Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675), Poussin’s brother-in-law, preserved in Dusseldorf (Paris 1994–95a, illus. under no. 95, fig. 95c), which copies only the landscape.

Cat. 36

PROVENANCE
This work and cat. 35 are among the five paintings by Poussin in the collection of Abbot Giovanni Maria Roscioli (1609 [not 1604]–1644), Pope Urban VIII’s Maestro di Camera. Roscioli paid 40 ecus for them on October 28, 1640 (plus 2.40 ecus for the frames and 7 for their gilding); For the history of the painting between 1642, the date of the collection’s inventory, and 1930, the date of the painting’s acquisition by Chicago, see Paris 1994–95a, no. 94.

We owe to Madame Gilberte Chambrier (personal communication, October 22, 1994) a very valuable piece of information that calls for extended research. It concerns the comte de Grignan (1672–1741), son-in-law of Madame de Sévigné (1666–1696) and an avid art lover (Madame de Sévigné, in letter no. 323 of December 24, 1675, alludes to “M. de Grignan’s passion . . . for paintings and furniture. . . .” and to successive loans he secured from a banker in Aix, Jean-François Gassendi), in a document received in Aix-en-Provence before Monsieur Bouchard on January 26, 1686, the count was recognized as a debtor to the treasurer Blanc for the sum of 6,184 livres. He had used this considerable sum to buy three paintings, among them a “Saint Jean l’évangéliste à Patmos par Poussin” (Madame de Sévigné, Correspondance, vol. 2 [1896], p. 1084 n. 1). Does this refer to the painting in Chicago? A. A. Munger, Chicago, donated by him to the Art Institute in 1930.

EXHIBITIONS
See Paris 1994–95a, no. 94, illus. (with previous history; see also Wise 1996, p. 119); London 1995a, no. 47, illus.; Chicago 1996, no. 64, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉES
Smith, no. 316; Grautoff, no. 253; Magne, no. 267; Blunt, no. 86; Balth, no. 149; Thuillier I, no. 137; Wild, no. 114; Wright, no. 150; Mérat, no. 213; Thuillier II, no. 148.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS
See Paris 1994—95a, no. 94; and Wise 1996, p. 123 n. 15. A copy, attributed to Francisque Millet (1642–1679), was auctioned in Paris on February 8, 1803, no. 78: "Saint Jean écrivant l’Évangile dans l’île de Patmos" together with another copy of "Polyphème et Galathée."

DRAWINGS
For the drawings, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 570 fig. 2944 and nos. R1053, R1054 (for which Verdi in London 1995a seems unable to discard the attribution).

ENGRAVING
Engraved by Louis de Châtillon (1639–1734); Andresen, no. 454; Wildenstein, no. 186.)
37. *Nymphs of the Lago di Garda Offering Lemons to the River God Benalus*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 12 x 8 1/8 in. (304 x 207 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32442)

*New York*

In 1646, the Jesuit priest Giovanni Battista Ferrari (1583–1655) published a work devoted to the cultivation of citrus fruit, *Hesperides; sive, De malorum aureorum cultura et usu libri quator*, illustrated by the great Italian artists of his time: Andrea Sacchi, Francesco Albani, Domenichino, Guido Reni, Pietro da Cortona, Giovanni Lanfranco, and Giovanni Francesco Romanelli. One plate was set aside for Poussin (vol. II, pl. VI, p. 97). The engraving (see fig. 80), made by Cornelis Bloemaert, shows some variations in relation to the drawing, notably a castle in place of the sun, whose rays warm the lemons in the drawing. The Louvre sheet shows us the three sisters sired by Hesperus welcoming Benalus on the banks of Lake Garda and offering lemons to the marine god. The dreaming figure in the drawing’s background becomes a more conventional satyr in the plate. Also, the pose of the nymph at the extreme right is modified in the engraving.

The date of the drawing is problematic. Some of the work for this project was delivered fairly early to Ferrari; two of the illustrators, Domenichino and Guido Reni, died in 1641 and 1642, respectively. David Freedberg, who places the date at about 1640—a proposal that Keazor accepts—and most probably before Poussin’s departure for Paris, has published an extract of the contract between Father Ferrari and his printer, Herman Scheus, which proves that the drawing had been realized by April 1, 1644. Yet all of the references to Father Ferrari’s project made by Poussin in his letters occur between January and June 1642 (Jouanny 1911, pp. 110–65). This dating therefore seems the most plausible.

Despite some wear and tear and the intrusion of text on the verso (not in Poussin’s hand; it appears to be a sort of program of the realized subject) that is visible, the sheet has retained all its elegant qualities and poetic circumspection. The passion of Poussin’s circle (notably, of Cassiano dal Pozzo, who owned an illustrated anthology of citrus cultivation) for natural history here combines with the artist’s bent for illustrating mythology.

**Figure 80** Cornelis Bloemaert, after Nicolas Poussin, *The Nymphs of the Lago di Garda Offering Lemons to the River God Benalus*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

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**INSCRIPTION**
On the verso, in pen and brown ink, in a hand that is not Poussin’s, are ten lines in Italian, visible through the backing of the sheet. The inscription describes the composition in detail.

**PROVENANCE**
Collection Éverard Jabach (ca. 1638–1695); acquired in 1671 by the Cabinet du Roi (L. 2960 affixed on the mounted drawings, at lower left); Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 and L. 2207 at lower left and right).

**EXHIBITIONS**
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


RELATED WORKS

DRAWINGS


ENGRAVING

Engraved in reverse, with variations (the sun is replaced by a castle) by Cornelis Bloemaert (fig. 80) for the Hesperides of Father Ferrai, Rome, 1646 (Andresen, no. 435; Wildenstein, no. 173).
38. *Landscape with a Man Washing His Feet at a Fountain*, also called *Landscape with a Dirt Road*

Oil on canvas, 29 7/8 x 39 3/8 in. (74 x 100.3 cm)

39. After Nicolas Poussin

*Travellers Resting*, also called *A Roman Road*

Oil on canvas, 31 1/4 x 39 3/8 in. (79.3 x 100 cm)
By Permission of the Governors of Dulwich Picture Gallery, Dulwich (London) (DPG 205)

Let us begin with what we can reasonably be certain of, even though it does not amount to much and still is not universally agreed upon: the painting in the National Gallery (cat. 38) is by Poussin (Thullier [1994a] disagrees), the one in Dulwich an old copy in compromised condition (Cropper and Dempsey [1996]) do not seem to share this point of view, which, to my eyes and those of my colleague L-A. Prat, was confirmed by the 1990 Edinburgh exhibition, where the two compositions were displayed side by side, see also Rosenberg in Paris 1994-95a, fig. 152b, for the X-radiograph of the Dulwich painting revealing beneath the present composition a copy of another composition by Poussin, fig. 81).

These two works share an uncertain provenance. If the painting in the National Gallery is identified with the “paysage d’un pays plat où il y des fontaines et des figures” (a landscape of a flat country that contains fountains and figures) in the postmortem inventory of Jean Pointel (1660), it is troubling that its “pendant” should not be (or is indistinctly) mentioned. At the time Félibien (1685) wrote, the latter, described as “un paysage où est un grand chemin” (a landscape with a broad road), belonged to Chevalier Philippe de Lorraine, the owner of several important works by Poussin and a favorite of Monsieur (Philippe I, duc d’Orléans), the brother of the king. The only solution is to follow Wine’s lead and disassociate these two works, heretofore considered companions.

Why have these paintings been associated? The main reason, it seems, has to do with the engravings of two paintings carried out by Étienne Baudet (1658–1711), dated 1684 and belonging to a series of four that included the two paintings of Phocion (fig. 38, cat. 43). But nothing prevents us from supposing that, for purely commercial reasons—pendants sell better than separate works—Baudet paired two comparable compositions.

If the two paintings were not conceived as pendants, we must also resign ourselves to abandoning the diverse interpretations, however seductive, that have been proposed: as a contrast between a cultivated countryside (Dulwich) and nature in its wild state (London); between a dirt road and a paved road, or, more generally speaking, two stages of civilization—a dialogue between nature and culture (Mérot 1990, p. 150), or between a “rustic and civilized world.” Especially memorable is the analysis of Cropper and Dempsey (1996), which takes into account the painter’s intellectual ambitions and contrasts a Greek landscape (the Vale of Tempe) and a Roman one, with its rectilinear roads arising from the genius of the Latin engineers.

If they describe no specific incident from ancient history, are the two paintings “subjectless” and lacking any intention? Can we accept that Poussin would depict for no particular reason the man on the left in the London canvas who washes his feet (thus giving the work its title), the pair of travelers seated at right, the woman walking away with a basket of laundry (or fruit: apples or plums?) on her head (her pose directly inspired by the Niobide Chiaramonti: see Wine 2001,
p. 286, fig. 3), and, finally and especially, the “old soldier” dressed in blue, lying beneath the tree in the center of the composition, the trunk of which is embellished with a quiver, a sword, a votive figure, and a garland?

The same questions could be asked of elements in the poorly preserved Dulwich composition: the convent, the architectural structures, the orange tree.

These doubts in turn raise the question of dating the two compositions. For the painting owned by the Chevalier de Lorraine, the date of 1648, as advanced by Félibien, is unanimously accepted. To me, that date seems a bit late (1644–45?), but then, Félibien has rarely been caught out.

As we await a new reading of the two compositions, we should emphasize the importance Poussin accorded the road (Poussin was the painter of the road and travelers, in contrast to Claude, the painter of the sea) and the quality of the representation of the landscapes. These majestic, inhabited landscapes unfold in numerous planes, each of them holding our gaze, from the travelers in the foreground, at the very edge of the canvas, to the distant view, with a wealth of detail, none of it gratuitous. This justifies wondering about the central figure in the middle ground of the London painting: What is he holding in his right arm?

It should be recalled that the great Irish painter James Barry (1741–1806) copied the London canvas, and the Dulwich composition inspired both the poet William Hazlitt (“The genius of Antiquity might wander here and feel itself at home”) and the painter J. M. W. Turner (1775–1851); in a work dating to 1812, today at the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven, the Château de St. Michel, Bonneville, Savoy). In his discussion of Turner and Poussin, Ruskin called the London canvas “one of the finest landscapes that ancient art has produced.” He remarked on the apparent conflict in the depiction of light—is it evening or noon? —and noted, “The only truth in the picture is the exact pitch of relief against the sky of the foliage, and everything indicative either of the nature of the light, or the character of the objects, is unhesitatingly sacrificed. So much falsehood does it cost to obtain two apparent truths of tone!” (Modern Painters, vol. 1, part 2, sec. 2, chap. 1, para. 14).

Cat. 38

PROVENANCE
Almost certainly the collection of Jean Pointel (postmortem inventory of 1660, see Thuiller and Mignot 1978, p. 40, valued at 200 livres). Bought by Sir George Beaumont, probably in 1785; his gift to the National Gallery in 1826 (for more details on this provenance, see Wine 2003, p. 282).

EXHIBITIONS
See Wine 2001, p. 282 (with previous history).

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 309; Grateau, no. 127; Magne, no. 317; Blunt, no. 211; Badt, not mentioned; Thuiller I, no. 158; Wild, no. 144; Wright, no. 158; Mérot, no. 230; Thuiller II, no. 175.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
Wine (2001, p. 282) catalogues fourteen compositions—most of them simple copies—related to cat. 38. For the copy by James Barry, see Cork 2005–6, no. 56. For a version attributed to Andrea Locatelli (1695–1741) (see Busiri Vici 1974, no. 206, illus.), see also sale, Dorotheum, Vienna, September 27, 1998, no. 67. In addition, we know a copy by Eugène Pougheon (1885–1955) in a private collection, Paris. See also cat. 39.

Figure 81. X-radiograph of Travellers Resting, also called A Roman Road.
DRAWINGS
For the drawings, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. R352, R172; as well as Wine 2001, p. 282.

ENGRAVINGS

Cat. 39

PROVENANCE
The original painting was cited by Félibien (1696, vol. 2, p. 336) as belonging to the Chevalier Philippe de Lorraine: "un paysage oui un grand chemin, qui est dans le cabinet du Chevalier de Lorraine"; however, it does not appear in Lorraine's postmortem inventory of December 29, 1702 (Rambaud 1964, vol. 1, pp. 504–5). For its more recent provenance, see Murray 1980.

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1960, no. 84; Edinburgh 1990, no. 21, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 310; Magne, 292; Blunt, no. 210; Thuillier I, no. 157; Badt, no. 198; Wild, no. 143; Wright, no. 157; Mérot, no. 231; Thuillier II, no. 174.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Blunt 1966, no. 210; Murray 1980, pp. 92–93. See also Lagerlöf 1990, pp. 61–62 and n. 46 p. 236; Carrier 1993, pp. 59, 140, 159 and fig. 33 p. 158;

Related Works

Paintings
For the painted copies, see Blunt 1966. The copy that belonged to Anthony Blunt was auctioned at Sotheby’s, London, on July 7, 1999, no. 490. In addition, there is a copy exhibited in Rome in 1995, no. 185 (entry by Trezzani); the partial copy auctioned at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, on March 26, 1996, no. 19; and finally copies auctioned at Christie’s, New York, on September 30, 2003, no. 363, and at the Hôtel Drouot, Paris, on December 17, 2003, no. 70. It is possible that “un Paysage, au milieu un grand chemin coppé du Poussin,” in the 1653 inventory of Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella (see Szanto in Lyon–Toulouse 2006–7, p. 249, no. 180), might be a copy of the Dulwich painting.

Engravings
For the engravings, see Blunt 1966; Wine 2001, p. 287 n. 16; and Trinque 2006, vol. 2, no. 49.
Landscape with an Ancient Tomb

Oil on canvas, 30¼ x 38½ in. (78 x 98 cm)
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P 2308)

The painting has not always had a favorable reception. Although in the past it was often attributed to Poussin, ever since Grautoff (1944), the majority of critics have awarded its authorship, with varying degrees of confidence, to Jean Lemaire. This is not surprising, for beginning in the 1620s Lemaire was closely associated with Poussin, both in Rome (for a time the two roomed together) and in Paris. The two even occasionally collaborated, Poussin supplying figures for Lemaire’s architectural capriccios. Lemaire also copied Poussin’s work—a practice that his contemporaries commented on (Le Comte 1702, vol. 3, p. 20)—or lifted figures from Poussin’s compositions for use in his own (see cat. 10). Lemaire in fact introduced the two principal figures from the Prado painting—the man seated at the side of the road and the traveler who authoritatively points his finger at the resting man—in a number of his own compositions (see “Related works”). Both of these figures were painted over the landscape, something that has led some specialists to see two different hands at work (Fagiolo dell’Arco [1996, p. 205] saw a collaboration between Poussin and Lemaire, with Lemaire painting the figures—a reversal of their normal practice). In fact, through the traveler seated at left one can clearly make out the road that the other figure has just been taking. Yet we now know that this was a common procedure in Poussin’s landscapes (see cats. 27, 28, 29, 44, 57).

The confusion over the authorship of the Prado painting is understandable given that Lemaire, who worked for many of the same collectors as Poussin, played a significant role in the creation of a type of view painting that combined contemporary, Renaissance, and classical architecture with Roman statues and monuments to create what Fagiolo dell’Arco has likened to “a room of the museum of culture.” In the case of Poussin’s picture, we might think of a landscape of memory: a picture that works on the viewer’s mind through a process of cultural associations rather than narrative. As Cassiano dal Pozzo observed in a letter of 1629, these antiquarian views of Rome were “embellished with little stories and small figures” (prospette di queste anticaglie di Roma adornate con storiette e figurine; the word storiette clearly downplays any profound narrative significance). In Poussin’s painting, one traveler seems to be asking directions from another as he makes his way up a winding path flanked by funerary monuments toward a temple complex or necropolis. The tomb in the foreground, with the deceased couple reclining on the lid, is of a well-known late-antique type (a very similar monument, but with a different base, is depicted in a small picture from the dal Pozzo collection: see Rome 2000c, p. 139 no. 149, entry by F. Solinas). Another funerary monument, surmounted by an urn, can be seen farther along the path, which leads to a multiporticoed temple derived from Palladio’s reconstruction of a temple at Trevi (this building recurs in the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion [cat. 43], where it represents the temple at Megara). Another building to the left is based on Palladio’s design for the Villa Tornieri, illustrated in his Four Books of Architecture. Behind it can be seen a commemorative column crowned by a statue (these two buildings and the columns are repeated in a painting by Lemaire in Montauban: see below, “Related works”). Farther to the left is a massive circular sepulcher, and a small figure in the right middle ground washes clothes near yet another monument.

In 1998 I proposed the name of Poussin for this painting, an attribution accepted by Denis Mahon (written communication), and by A. Brejon de Lavergnée and J. J. Luna (in Biella 2001–2). The articulation of the planes, the disposition of the various architectural motifs in a sunlit landscape, the mastery of space, the quality of execution: all are notable in this work of high quality.

The question of the date remains. Luna does not rule out a date of 1633–35, as I suggested in 1998. Mahon felt it equally possible that the picture was painted just before or just after Poussin’s journey to Paris. I now think it was executed in the years following Poussin’s return to Rome in 1642, but in any
case before Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion (cat. 43), which dates to 1648 and in which, as noted above, the same temple is found.

PROVENANCE
Collection of the painter Carlo Maratta (1625–1713); acquired by Philip IV of Spain in 1722; regularly inventoried since 1746 in the Palacio de la Granja; then in the Museo Nacional del Prado.

EXHIBITIONS
Madrid 1984, no. 35 (entry by J. J. Luna); Biella 2001–2, no. 109, illus. (entry by J. J. Luna).

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, not mentioned; Grautoff, rejected (p. 270); Magne, no. 310; Blunt, discussed in nos. R124–29; Badi, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. R133; Wild, not mentioned; Mérot, not mentioned; Wright, not mentioned; Thuillier II, no. R142.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
A copy of the painting was auctioned at Christie’s, London, on February 18, 1998 (30 x 38 in., 76.2 x 96.5 cm; as “style of Poussin.” Rosenberg 1998, p. 18, fig. 7). The seated man in the left foreground of the painting was twice copied by Jean Lemaire (1601–1659): Musée Ingres, Montauban, and London art market (Rosenberg 1998, p. 16, figs. 4, 5; the background of the landscape and some of the monuments also appear in the Montauban painting); the two male figures recur in a painting formerly in the collection of Arthur L. Nicholson, London (Rosenberg 1998, p. 17, fig. 6).
41. The Finding of Moses

Oil on canvas, 47 1/8 x 76 3/4 in. (121 x 195 cm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7272)

Painted for Jean Pointel—perhaps even begun while he was in Rome (he left the city on June 3, 1647)—the picture was completed by the end of the year. After Pointel’s death in 1660, it entered the collection of the duc de Richelieu, then, in 1665, that of the king. On June 2, 1668, Philippe de Champaigne, who had appraised it highly, presented a lecture on it to his colleagues at the Académie Royale de Peinture (the manuscript has not survived; see, most recently, Lichtenstein and Michel 2006, pp. 247–52). Poussin had introduced the subject some ten years earlier (The Finding of Moses [fig. 83], see Paris 1994–95a, no. 92), and took it up again in 1651 (fig. 84; see most recently Wine 2001, pp. 366–75).

This work has always been acclaimed for its composition, its bold coloring, the intelligence of the expressions, and the artist’s deep understanding of the biblical narrative (Exodus 2:5–7). It acquired further renown, however, through some rather unusual circumstances. As already noted, it was painted for Jean Pointel and arrived in Paris shortly after Chantelou received his canvas depicting The Sacrament of Ordination (fig. 82; Paris 1994–95a, no. 111, illus.), part of Poussin’s second series of the Seven Sacraments. Chantelou was disappointed; he considered The Finding of Moses much more appealing. He did not hide his envy, making it known to the artist (his letter is lost) that he felt he was less “esteemed” than Pointel, for whom, he thought, Poussin reserved his finest paintings. Of all his writings, Poussin’s response to Chantelou has elicited the most commentary. In it, he gave an extended exposition on his theory of the modes (in fact, as we now know, his ideas were based on a treatise by Gioseff Zarlin, Le istituzioni harmoniche, first published in 1558: see especially Montagu 1992; and Mério 1994, pp. 80–86). Poussin reassured his “good friend” Chantelou of his devotion, but also, and more important, he expanded on his intentions. He had not painted the Moses “with more love than I put into your paintings” (speaking of the Sacraments). Could Chantelou not see that “it is the nature of the subject that has produced this result and your state of mind and that the subjects that I am depicting for you require a different treatment? The whole art of painting lies in this. To judge well is very difficult unless one has great knowledge of both the theory and the practice of this art. We must not judge by our senses alone but by reason” (Jouanny 1911, p. 372). In other words, the Moses and The Sacrament of Ordination must be viewed and appreciated with different eyes, and the artist must know how to “change” according to the subject (“I am decidedly not among those who always sing in the same key,” he had declared to Chantelou some months earlier; Jouanny 1911, p. 352).

These statements have led to many interpretations and a great many “readings,” which cannot be recapitulated here. Reducing them to a few words, it can be said that they oppose those who see Poussin above all as a painter to those who, in ever increasing numbers, consider him also, and perhaps primarily, to be a thinker, a philosopher, an artist of complex intentions. Behind the simplicity of the image hide allusions, references inviting identification and interpretation. These scholars offer as support the famous lines of Louis-Henri de Loménie, comte de Brienne, regarding the various versions of
Moses (quoted in Thuillier 1994a, p. 202): “It is Moses: the Moshe of the Hebrews, the Pan of Arcadia, the Priapus of Hellespont, the Anubis of the Egyptians, that I pull from the Waters and to whom I give the name, Moshe (pulled from the waters) which belongs to none but he.” The same Loménie did not care for the allegorical representation of the Nile (“I do not like the figures of rivers in paintings, it’s a signboard that the painter sets down in order to make himself better understood”), preferring the Moses that had belonged to him (fig. 84) “for just one reason, because it’s simpler and less allegorical.”

If The Sacrament of Ordination is more austere, more serious, the Finding of Moses is no less ambitious. The care taken with archaeological details; the Egyptian harp, or sistrum, set on the ground at the left (its precise source is known: see most recently Jaffé 1989); and the hippopotamus hunt in the background at right (inspired by the mosaics of Palestrina: see Dempsey 1963b) are the accompaniments to a reflection on the religion of the ancient Egyptians and on the identical destiny of the daughter of Pharaoh and of Isis, daughter of Horus, who sought and found her son along the Nile (Colantuono 1986).

This painting differs significantly from the earlier composition of 1638 (fig. 83). Here, the colors are warm and rich in the lit areas rather than dry and washed out, as in the earlier canvas. The effect of the sun on the water, illuminating the boat of the hippopotamus hunters, is especially pleasing. Most memorable is the pensive and joyous expression of the Pharaoh’s daughter, who carries a premonition of Moses’ destiny.

Of considerable interest is the evidence from a drawing in the Louvre (cat. 42) that, at the same time he was working on The Finding of Moses, Poussin was planning a picture of Moses defending the daughters of Jethro, based on Exodus 2.16–17. He would thereby have shown two contrasting episodes of Moses’ life: one serene, the other violent; one set in a haunting morning light, the other beneath a threatening sky. It is difficult to imagine a more perfect embodiment of the artist’s ideas on the modes and the place landscape played
in establishing the mood of and the setting for the narrative—something alluded to by Félibien in his discussion of the letter to Chantelou. In effect, what we seem to have is a prelude for the pendant *Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion* (fig. 38) and the *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion* (cat. 43), painted in 1648, or the *Landscape with a Calm* (cat. 56) and the *Landscape with a Storm* (cat. 55), of 1653: pictures whose inherent qualities are accentuated by juxtaposition.

Is it possible that initially Poussin was thinking of these contrasting episodes of Moses’ life for Pointel? The matter must remain speculative—especially as we know nothing about the *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro* beyond the fact that an engraving was made of the finished composition. In any event, in 1648 Poussin painted for his friend and patron another picture of women drawing water at a well: the great *Eliezer and Rebecca* (fig. 4), in which the violent subject inherent to the *Daughters of Jethro* is eliminated, the turbulent sky is transformed into the serene light of early evening, and an even greater variety of female beauties is shown (according to Félibien, this had been Pointel’s primary interest). To judge from Pointel’s postmortem inventory, the *Eliezer and Rebecca* and *The Finding of Moses* were viewed as pendants.

**Provenance**
Painted for Jean Pointel before the end of 1647; acquired by the duc de Richelieu on Pointel’s death in 1660 (valued by Champagne at the considerable sum of 1,200 livres); along with the rest of the duke’s collection, it entered that of Louis XIV in 1665 (see cats. 66, 67).

**Exhibitions**

**Catalogues raisonnés**
Smith, no. 13 (and no. 15); Grautoff, no. 115; Magne, no. 155; Blunt, no. 13; Badt, no. 175; Thuiller I, no. 148; Wild, no. 132; Wright, no. 134; Mérot, no. 10; Thuiller II, no. 169.

**Selected bibliography**

**Related works**

**Paintings**
To the list of copies cited by Blunt (1966) and Rosenberg (in Rome 1977–78, and Paris 1994–95), we would add, limiting ourselves to auctions, copies auctioned on January 13, 2001, at Corbeil-Essonnes (illus. in the *Gazette de l’Hôtel Drouot*) and at Sotheby’s, Amsterdam, November 9, 1999, no. 242, illus.

**Drawings**
For the two drawings in the Louvre and in Budapest, see cat. 42 and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 307, 308, R332, R502, R1007.

**Engraving**
Engraved by Gilles Rousselet (not in reverse) in 1676 (Andresen, no. 31; Wildenstein, no. 11; Davies and Blunt 1962, p. 208; Meyer 2004, no. 1, illus.).
42. **Study for The Finding of Moses**

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 6¼ x 7¼ in. (161 x 190 mm)

On the verso: four studies for groups of females

Pen and brown ink

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. RF 747)

*Bilbao*

The left side of the drawing has been cut, cropping the composition on the recto as well as the studies on the verso for a *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*—a lost painting known through an engraving by Antoine Trouvain (inscribed *Poussin pinxit*) and several drawings by Poussin. The presence on the same sheet of preparatory studies for two different Mosaic subjects allows us to fix the chronology of the relevant paintings: the *Finding of Moses* in the Louvre (cat. 41), which we know was painted for Pointel in 1647, and a lost painting representing *Moses Defending the Daughters of Jethro*. Although Keazor (1995a) rejects the connection of the drawing on the verso with the lost painting, he has reasonably compared it to the *Eliezer and Rebecca* in the Louvre (fig. 4), which dates to 1648 (Paris 1994–95a, no. 166, illus.).

That the composition on the recto is truncated detracts nothing from its charm. To the contrary, it places the emphasis on the landscape and the ample spaciousness of the composition, with the escapades on the Nile, the typically “Egyptian” details (the hippopotamus hunters in their flat-bottom boat), the isolated presence of a water divinity (inspired by the ancient statue of the Nile in the Vatican) accompanied by a sphinx (which rather resembles a dog sleeping near its master), all of which merge with the banks of the river. And the birds that take flight above the rushes—suppressed in the painting—turn into pure and pleasing geometric abstractions as they climb higher in the sky.

**PROVENANCE**

Collection of Aimé Charles His de la Salle (1795–1878; L. 133 at lower left); gift to the Louvre in 1878 (L. 1886 at lower right); Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques.

**EXHIBITIONS**


**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See (with previous publications) Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 306, illus.; Paris 1994–95a, pp. 374–75, no. 160. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1939, nos. 3 (recto), and 13 (verso), pls. 3, 8; Keazor 1995a, pp. 338–39. Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1734, illus. (and no. 1736 [verso], illus.).

**RELATED WORKS**

**DRAWINGS**

We know from Félibien that this painting—as well its pendant, the Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion (fig. 38)—was done in 1648. We also know that, at that time, the pair of canvases belonged to the Lyonnais silk merchant Jacques Serisier (or Cerisiers), who still had them in 1665. It was while standing before the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion in Paris on October 11, 1665, that Bernini indulged in his famous Witticism. Pointing to his forehead, he declared, “Il signor Poussin è un pittore che lavora di là” (Monsieur Poussin is a painter who works from here; Chantelou [1665] 2001).

Poussin undoubtedly drew his inspiration from a passage in Plutarch’s Lives (1951 ed., vol. 2, p. 525). Until then, no other artist had broached the subject. Was it requested (or suggested) by Serisier or another of Poussin’s regular Roman patrons (it is known that Serisier was living in Rome in November 1647), or did the idea originate with the artist? We have as yet no way to resolve this question, though it is worth remembering that once Poussin decided, after many delays, to paint a second series of the Seven Sacraments for Chantelou rather than arrange for a copy of the first set to be made, he urged Chantelou to not interfere in the arrangement of subjects and to leave him complete freedom. Everything leads us to believe that the same arrangement pertains to the Phocion paintings.

Phocion, a proud Athenian general of the fourth century B.C., felt constrained to support an unpopular policy that excited the wrath of his compatriots, who passed judgment on him, voting for his death for treason: he was condemned to drink hemlock. His enemies “were directed by the people that his body should be banished and carried away from the country of Attica” (this is the subject of the Funeral of Phocion). Transported to Megara, Phocion’s body was burned and its ashes collected by “a woman of Megara” and her servant (the subject of the present painting). Due to a translation error in Plutarch’s text, the lady of Megara was subsequently identified with Phocion’s wife. Ironically, Phocion’s reputation was quickly rehabilitated, his compatriots having realized that “they had put to death someone who sustained the honesty and justice of Athens.”

The novelty of their subjects has given rise to divergent interpretations of the two works. In 1944, Blunt stressed possible allusions to the French political crisis, the beginning of the Fronde (1648–53), and a comparison between contemporary France and Athens in the fourth century B.C. In 1967 Blunt favored a Stoic reading of the two paintings: the hero confronts adversity without complaint (he asks his son to do nothing to avenge him), without even condemning the ingratitude of his fellow citizens. Although not claiming to contradict these interpretations, Richard Verdi has on several occasions drawn attention to a letter Poussin wrote on June 22, 1648, to Chantelou, in which he alludes to “tricks of fortune.” Poussin had just finished the Seven Sacraments and wished to “convert” these paintings into “seven other stories, where would be represented vividly the strangest tricks that fortune has ever played on men” (Jouanny 1911, p. 384). Might it not be that the two versions of Phocion, together with five other landscapes composed at the same time (painted, it is true, for different patrons), are the seven paintings that Poussin set out to realize as a response and complement to the Sacraments? Wollheim (1987) takes an opposite point of view. In his analysis of the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion, he emphasizes the instinctive gesture that moves the woman to collect the hero’s ashes and thus to assure the survival of his name.

Does not the novelty of the two paintings—it is difficult to separate them in our commentaries—reside, after all, in the lack of emphasis that Poussin accorded the figures and the essential and completely new role he gave to the landscape? Conopion and his companion, who carry Phocion’s body covered by a shroud (in the Funeral), the two women
who gather the ashes (in the exhibited painting) fade before the majestic spectacle of nature. The minuscule figures in the background, indifferent to the two funerary episodes, attend to their daily occupations. Certainly, the artist did not neglect to represent Athens in the Funerale (such as he imagined it: see Cropper and Dempsey 1996) and Megara in the Ashes. As has been frequently pointed out, the carefully delineated architectural structures in both paintings make clear allusion to Palladio (see Bruhn 2000). As Félibien, following Plutarch, noted, it is also true that, in the Funerale, Poussin studiously showed “in the distance and near the city, a long procession” that took place every year on March 19, the “day on which the knights are accustomed to form a procession in honor of Jupiter,” and the day of Phocion’s death, thereby underscoring the artist’s respect for historical faithfulness. Yet, Poussin also gave an entirely new importance to nature—one that contrasts with the highly restrained treatment, reflecting an entirely different inspiration, it had previously received.

Were these two landscapes, to which the label “heroic” is often applied, and in which countryside and city are skillfully combined, meant to vie with those of Claude, Gaspard Dughet, Salvator Rosa, Pietro da Cortona, and other contemporary artists whose work had met with great success? Was Poussin attempting to prove that he knew how to innovate in a genre held in low repute in the precincts of the Parisian Academy (which had just been founded)? In any case, it is certain that these works could never be confused with any contemporary example. Ideal and sublime, they make an impact at first glance.
Jonathan Richardson Sr. (1728, p. 313) registered his
surprise when he observed:

It seems to me that Poussin makes something of a mis-
take in relation to the figures that he brings into his
landscapes, as one sees with regard to two of [those]
that I named which are the Man Who Flees from a
Snake [cat. 44] and the Body of Phocion Carried Away.
The one is an Accident and the other a History, but nei-
ther in the one nor the other does the scene agree in
any way with the authors: because these two subjects
are serious, terrible and solemn and the landscapes, to
the contrary, have a cheerful and smiling air. In the
mind this gives rise to very opposite feelings. It is impos-
sible to be affected by pleasure that arises naturally
from the representation of a beautiful countryside
when at the same time one sees objects that bring up
thoughts completely contrary to it; and the cheerful-
ness or the beauty of the landscape interrupts serious
thoughts, what is due to objects that must excite pity.

Was this a breach in Poussin’s practice of the modes? On
the contrary, Richardson is guilty of having misunderstood
both the dignified solemnity of the landscape settings and
that it is precisely in the deliberately marked opposition between
nature’s calm and the hero’s last rites and the gathering of his
ashes amid general indifference that the bitter message of
the two compositions resides: exemplary illustrations of the
insignificance of life and the derisory human condition.

PROVENANCE:
According to Félibien, the picture was painted in 1648 for Jacques Serisier
(or Cerisiers), a silk merchant of Lyon; according to Chantelou, it was still
in his possession in 1665; the history of the painting between 1665 and 1776
has not been firmly established: the two Phocion paintings (see “Related
works”) might have been separated very early: in 1687 Brice, cited by Thuillier
1944, records only the Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion in the study
of the king’s dancing master, Pierre Beauchamp; the fate of the Landscape
with the Ashes of Phocion remains unclear, as many copies were then in cir-
culation with which the original may have been confused (but see Blunt
1666 and Morris and Evans 1984); undoubtedly, since 1776–77 in the collec-
tion of the twelfth earl of Derby, at Knowsley Hall, acquired by the Walker
Art Gallery, Liverpool, from his descendants in 1983.

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95a, no. 169, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a,
no. 68, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 321; Grautoff, no. 129; Magne, under no. 319; Blunt, no. 174; Badt,
no. 191; Thuillier I, no. 136; Wild, no. 176; Wright, no. 153; Méré, no. 220;
Thuillier II, no. 177.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Paris 1994–95a, pp. 387–90, no. 169, illus. (with previous publications).
See also Carrier 1993, pp. 112 n. 23, 153, 155 fig. 31, 156; Bartschmann 1994,
pp. 21–22, 139 and fig. 15; Thuillier 1944, p. 35; Arika 1994, p. 46; Kitson
1995, p. 31; Verdi in London 1995a, p. 283; Cropper and Dempsey 1996, p. 284,
illus. fig. 153; Ishaghpoor 1996, p. 15; Verdi 1996, pp. 489–98, fig. 2 p. 490;
Carroll 1997, pp. 46–52, illus.; Keazor 1998, pp. 159–61, fig. 201; Bruhn 2000,
pp. 114–15, 118, 124–25, fig. 17; Kitson 2000, pp. 36, 200, illus. figs. 1, 18;
fig. 107 and 113 (detail); van Helsing 2002, p. 160, 183; Lee 2003, pp. 70–72;
Borghese in Trezani 2004, p. 335, illus. 191; Nau 2005, p. 124; Sauerländer

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
Landscape with the Funeral of Phocion (see fig. 38, Paris 1994–95a, no. 168,
illus.), on loan from the Earl of Plymouth to the National Museum of Wales,
Cardiff.

For the numerous copies of the painting, see Blunt 1666 and Morris and
Evans 1984, pp. 15–18, no. 10350. For the dal Pozzo copy (in fact, copies of
the two compositions, as Timothy Standing’s research [in Rome 2003a,
p. 207, under no. 29] seems to prove), see Brejon de Lavergnée 1973, pp. 83,
87, and Sparti 1992, p. 210, no. 112. One copy was auctioned at Christie’s,
London, on July 16, 1970, no. 44; another is in a private collection, Turin (see
also Verdi 1996, pp. 489–90, 498 n. 2).

DRAWINGS
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 351 (the drawing of the landscape that
disappeared from the museum in Uppsala several years ago [fig. 35]) and
fig. 35b, as well as cat. 60.

A drawn copy of the painting belongs to the collection of the Besançon
museum (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R127); another belonged to Ingres
(ibid., no. R353bis). For the Louvre drawing related to the Funeral of
Phocion, see ibid., no. 324.

ENGRAVING
Engraved by Étienne Baudet, not reversed, in 1684 (Andresen, no. 447;
Wildenstein, no. 184; Davies and Blunt 1964, p. 215; Trinque 2006, p. 52,
p. 596).
44. **Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake**

Oil on canvas, 47 x 78¾ in. (119.5 x 199 cm)  
National Gallery, London. Bought, 1947 (NG 5763)  

New York

Discovered and published by Ellis Waterhouse in 1939, acquired by the National Gallery, London, in 1947, carefully studied by Martin Davies and Michael Levey in 1957 and by Humphrey Wine in 2001, this picture was painted for Jean Pointel—it was probably finished at the end of August 1648. The *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47), also made for Pointel, is likely to be its pendant.

The remarkable subject fascinated Poussin’s contemporaries and has given rise to many different interpretations, some of which are noted here. In 1846, the anonymous author of an article for the *Magasin pittoresque* (first issue, p. 20) proposed that “Apuleius’s narrative on the effects of magic, as they had been reported by Aristomenes, may have provided the idea for the scene represented in the foreground of the landscape.” Tervarent (1952) believed Poussin must have been inspired by a text in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* that tells the story of a monstrous snake (actually a dragon) that strangled one of Cadmus’s companions. Glòzer (1967) leaned toward Statius’s *Thebaid* and the story of Hyphasis discovering the body of Archelamorus. Blunt (1967) rejected all these hypotheses, with pertinent arguments, and suggested another, which, in turn, has failed to convince (see Cropper and Dempsey 1996). Basing himself on the inscription accompanying Étienne Baudet’s engraving after the picture of 1701 (fig. 85), as well as on information provided in the 1773 sale catalogue, Blunt argued that the painting alludes to the numerous snakes that infested the village of Fondo, near Lake Terracina, driving out all the inhabitants. In the painting, a village, with its castle, is shown in the distance. More recently, McTighe (1987 and 1996) has suggested a new reading of the painting that is hard to summarize in a few lines but alludes to snakes born through spontaneous generation from a dead man’s spine. For Beaven (forthcoming), the snake somehow revives the dying man. Other theories are found in Rex and the very recent monograph by T. J. Clark. Most of these “readings” presume a level of erudition that Poussin was far from boasting. They attempt to interpret, with often frail arguments, the philosophical, metaphysical, moral, or religious thought of the artist, in the context of Rome during the Barberini papacy and a libertine milieu.

More plausible is Félibien’s description (1696, vol. 2, pp. 432–33): “The setting is marvelous, yet right in the foreground are figures who express horror and fear. This dead body stretched out at the edge of a spring and encircled by a serpent, this man who flees with an expression of terror on his face, this seated woman astonished to see him running and very frightened, convey passions that few other Painters have managed to depict as aptly as he.”

Thus, for Félibien the picture was about the “passions.” For Fénelon, writing about 1695, it was a “caprice” (Fénelon’s fictional dialogue between Poussin and Leonardo da Vinci gave rise in 1770 to a long semiotic analysis by Louis Marin, revised in 1995 and translated into English in 1999, and to a much more reasonable study by A. M. Lecoq in 2003, which severely criticized Stanić, McTighe, and Bull). For Richardson Sr. (1728), it was about an “accident”—a peripeteia (or sudden reversal of fortune). The painting was admirably described (in the opposite vein) by Diderot (*Salon of 1767*, trans. Goodman, 1995, p. 242):

> The background of his canvas is filled by a noble, majestic, immense landscape; no more than rocks and trees, but very imposing ones. Your eye wanders through many different levels of depth, from the closest to the most distant points. On one of these levels, at left, some distance off, in the background, a group of travelers who are resting and conversing, some seated, some reclining, all perfectly safe. On another level of depth, further forward, in the center of the canvas, a woman washing her laundry in a river; she listens. On
a third level of depth, further left, quite far forward, a crouching man, but he's begun to rise and casts his gaze, a mixture of anxiety and curiosity, towards the left of the scene; he has heard. In the extreme right foreground is a standing man, transfixed by terror, ready to flee; he has seen. But what is the source of his terror? What is it he's seen? He has seen, in the far left foreground, a woman [sic] lying on the ground, encircled by an enormous snake that devours her and drags her into the depths of the water, where her arms, head, and hair are already hanging. From the tranquil travelers in the background to this last terrifying spectacle, what an immense distance is covered, and within it what a sequence of different passions is laid out before you—you, the limit point of the composition.

It is worth pointing out that, following the observations of Cropper and Dempsey (1996), two funerary urns discovered on the grounds of Palazzo Barberini served as the source for the figures. As observed by Shearman (1960), Poussin concentrated on the landscape (as confirmed by cats. 45, 46) and, once it was finished, painted the three protagonists over it. Technically, then, the landscape preceded the story. Poussin's fascination with snakes has often been remarked upon and should be noted. This one is an enormous python.

What registers above all is the train of events provoked by the discovery of the corpse beside the water. The eye goes from the dead man to the frightened man, and from the latter to the surprised woman, kneeling at the center of the canvas, and finally to the fishermen in the background on the shore of the lake. As Bätschmann (1990) observed, “The blissful state of correspondence between man and nature is ended by a wild beast attacking an unarmed man; news of the catastrophe flashes through the calm landscape like a lightning-stroke.”

“An official report... made visual of the coincidence of death, of man confronting death, of indifference, and of life going on as usual” (Arikha in Paris 1994–1954, p. 408), the painting is a new reflection on the sudden and unexpected presence, in a “marvelous” setting, of death: “... when it pleases him, [Poussin] knows how to interject fear and trembling into the middle of a rustic scene!” (Diderot).

**Provenance**
Painted for Jean Pointel; finished on August 31, 1648 (according to a lost letter from Poussin to Pointel conserved by the heirs of the painter Jacques Stella and cited in 1773 in the Strange sale catalogue; see above); valued at 1,000 livres in the Pointel estate in 1680 (“Item un autre grand tableau peint sur thoilie auxy de six pieds [de roi] de long sur quatre de haut [51½ x 76¼ in.; 129.9 by 194.9 cm] sans bordure représentant un paysage auquel il y [a] un home dévoré par un serpent proche une fontaine, oubrage dudit Poussin, pris la somme de mil livres”) and bought for 1,800 livres by Nicolas du Plessis-Rambouillet; according to Félibien, 1685 (see Thuiller and Mignot 1978, p. 52), “presently in the study of Monsieur Moreau, first Valet of the King’s Wardrobe”; at the death of Denis Moreau in 1707, inherited by his nephew François Louis de Nyert, marquis de Gambiais, seigneur de Neuville; by succession to his son and grandson, Louis and Alexandre Denis; acquired from the Nyert family by Sir Robert Strange; acquired at his sale, Christie’s, London, March 6, 1773, no. 113, by Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn; acquired from one of his descendants by the National Gallery, London, in 1947.

**Exhibitions**
Paris 1994–1954, no. 179, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 69, illus.

**Catalogues Raisonnés**
Smith, no. 308; Grautoff, p. 259; Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 209; Baud, no. 159; Thuiller I, no. 159; Wild, no. 140; Wright, no. 155; Mérot, no. 236; Thuiller II, no. 178.

**Selected Bibliography**
See Paris 1994–1954, pp. 426–8, no. 179, illus. (with previous publications); See also Carrier 1993, pp. 75 n. 134, 140 n. 80, 146–48, 164, 178, and 147 fig. 28; Bätschmann 1990, p. 108; Bätschmann 1994, no. 119, fig. 96; Stanic 1994.

**RELATION WORKS**

**PAINTINGS**

For a possible pendant, see cat. 47. See also Blunt 1966.


**DRAWINGS**

See cats. 45, 46; see also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 213, verso (Bayonne), and nos. R856, R855 (for the latter, see Méjanes et al. 1997, no. 1834, illus.).

**ENGRAVING**

Engraved by Étienne Baudet (fig. 85), not reversed (Andersen, no. 442; Wildenstein, no. 180; Davies and Blunt 1962, p. 215; and Trinque 2006).
45. *Landscape with a Man Carrying a Net and a Staff*

Pen and brown ink, brown and gray wash, squared up in black chalk, 10 5/8 x 15 5/8 in. (263 x 390 mm)

On the verso: *Study for an Adoration of the Shepherds*

Black chalk

Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon (CA. 872)

Bilbao

This drawing has always been related, justifiably, to the Louvre drawing *Landscape with Two Figures in the Foreground* (cat. 46), which has a comparable format and technique and is of a similar inspiration. Here, Poussin modified his composition a number of times: the man in the right foreground was initially in the center of the composition, much smaller and walking in the opposite direction—but he seems to have been more or less erased. The body of water was significantly enlarged: the reflections of the buildings were over a rolling landscape. The trees on the right seem to be partly sunk in the water, and the mass of earth at the left is not well integrated into the structure of the terrain.

The drawing in Dijon has often been related to the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (cat. 44), because the man at right, who walks with a strong and firm step, a long stick on his shoulder, occupies the same position as the terror-stricken man in the London painting. Here, however, the scene is more peaceful. In truth, the drawing evokes just as strongly the majority of landscapes painted in the 1650s, such as the *Landscape with a Calm* (cat. 56).

Once more, what is notable in the composition is the importance of the road and its traveler, who is indifferent to the spectacle of nature, depicted as immutable and majestic.

**Provenance**

Collection of Aimé Charles Horace His de la Salle (1795–1878; L. 1333 at lower right); gift to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Dijon, in 1863 (L. 1863b at lower right).

**Exhibitions**


**Selected bibliography**

See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 335, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 282, pl. 219 (entry by J. Shearman); Bätschmann 1990, p. 98 fig. 84; Bätschmann 1994, p. 108, fig. 84; Rosenberg in Paris 1994–95a, p. 407, fig. 179c; Verdi in London 1995a, p. 280, fig. 153; Bruhn 2000, p. 121, fig. 16; Rosenberg 2000b, pp. 97, 99, illus. fig. 119; Wine 2001, p. 280, fig. 13.

**Related works**

For the verso, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 335; also no. R1688 verso.
46. Landscape with Two Figures in the Foreground

Pen and brown ink and black chalk (stumped in places), 10 1/2 x 16 in. (267 x 406 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32481)

New York

In his considered analyses of 1960 and 1963, John Shearman related this drawing to two other sheets: the large Landscape with a Man Carrying a Net and a Staff (cat. 45), and, less convincingly, the verso of a drawing in Bayonne ([fig. 75] Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 213), incontestably by Poussin but earlier than the Louvre sheet. He saw these three landscapes as preparatory studies—at least in terms of the organization of space—for the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44), painted for Jean Pointel in 1624. Shearman clearly indicated that the figures in the Dijon and Louvre drawings have nothing in common with those in the London painting, but he judged that both landscape layouts announced that of the painting. The link is plausible but remains difficult to verify. Poussin revised the two sheets many times, changing the background, the folds of the terrain, and the structure of the trees. In the Louvre drawing, these changes are particularly noticeable in the group of trees at right, some of which seem to grow behind the slope and others, closer to the right, in front of it, although their trunks have been reworked in pen. At the bottom, both right and left, the foreground gives the same effect of superimposition, emphasized by stumped hatchings with black chalk that serve to reinforce the effect of depth.

Another painting—unknown in 1963—similarly evokes the particularly noble and peaceful atmosphere that this sheet induces: the Landscape with a Calm (cat. 56), which also features a shepherd and his flock in the middle ground. The left part of the Louvre drawing, with, in the foreground, large branches hanging over the buildings reflected in the water, corresponds well to the structure of that canvas. Actually, it seems unlikely that Poussin would have made studies like these (were they made on-site?) with a specific painting in mind. What we have instead are drawings of themes that were eventually reused for this or that painting. In the Louvre drawing, the two figures in the foreground, engaged in peaceful dialogue, add a solemn tone to the work and provide its unity and harmony.

Inscription
At lower right, in pen and brown ink: poussin.

Provenance
Collection of Jonathan Richardson Sr. (1665–1745; L. 2184 at lower left); collection of Sir John Barnard (died 1784; L. 1419 and 1420 on the recto and on the mat of the verso); his sale, London, February 20, 1787, part of lot 89 (with another landscape attributed to Dughet); Bertheels sale, Paris, February 3, 1789, part of lot 175 (with another lost landscape attributed to Dughet); collection of Charles Paul Jean Baptiste Bourgevin Vialart de Saint-Morys (1743–1795); confiscated from royalist exiles in 1793; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1886 at lower left).

Exhibitions

Selected bibliography

Related work
Drawing
For the drawn copy in the Grenoble museum, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R446.
47. Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice

Oil on canvas, 48¾ x 78¾ in. (124 x 200 cm) (enlarged at the bottom by about 2 in. [5 cm]);
for the original format, see below)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7307)

One of the most famous and beloved of Poussin’s works, this painting is also one of the most mysterious and, in many ways, one of the most intriguing. Its provenance prior to its acquisition by Louis XIV in 1685 was unknown until 1978, when the discovery of the postmortem inventory of the Lyonnais art lover Jean Pointel, who owned no fewer than twenty-one works by Poussin, made it possible to confirm that the painting belonged to him. More important, the inventory has shown that the painting has been cut, mainly at the top. When it belonged to Pointel, it measured 57½ inches (146 cm) in height, versus 48¾ inches (124 cm) today—a reduction of 8¾ inches (22 cm). This reduction—made before 1685, according to Brejon de Lavergnée (1987)—and its illustrious provenance enable us to associate the Orpheus and Eurydice with a few lines of a crucial text by Félibien (1696, vol. 2, pp. 358–59), which have intrigued and lent themselves to multiple interpretations, of which only that of Doris Wild (1962, p. 244) seems apposite. According to Félibien, “It was during the same period that [Poussin] made for the same Pointel two large landscapes: in one is a dead man encircled by a snake and another man terrified who flees.” There is no further description of the other landscape, which must, however, be the painting in the Louvre (though this opinion is not universally shared: see Stanić 1994, but also Fohr in Tourcoing–Strasbourg–Ixelles 1994–95).

In the first painting described by Félibien we easily recognize the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake (cat. 44), which also must have been cut down, but to a lesser extent (the engravings of both works by Étienne Baudet help to document these changes; figs. 85, 86). Might we go further and propose that the Louvre and London paintings were conceived as pendants?

Figure 86 Étienne Baudet (1638–1711), after Nicolas Poussin, Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris
It is true that, in Pointel's inventory, the height of the “Orpheus playing the lyre with Eurydice” is given as four and a half pieds and that of the “man devoured by a snake near a spring” only four, but the works were listed one after the other in the inventory. More important, they date from the same period: the London painting, if we can believe a now-lost letter by Poussin cited at second hand in an eighteenth-century sale catalogue, was finished in August 1648 (see under “Provenance” in cat. 44); the Orpheus, given its style and the existence of several drawings by Poussin with firm dates, cannot be later than 1650.

Above all, the compositions and general tenor of the two paintings seem to respond to each other. A wealth of similar details—including the scale of the figures; the attitudes of the frightened man and of Eurydice; the two lakes, enlivened by reflections; the trees; the buildings, often identified with the Castel Sant'Angelo, the Ponte Molle, and the Torre delle Milizie; the disposition of the planes; the bathers, nude or about to undress or already swimming; the boats and their haulers—not to mention snakes, give the sensation of two complementary compositions. The subjects also seem to be two ruminations on the same idea: the sudden and unexpected, brutal and irrational appearance of death in an idyllic landscape. While Orpheus celebrates his wedding to the sound of his lyre, with an audience of nymphs (the crowned male would appear to be Hymen), Eurydice, gathering flowers, “her ankle pierced by the fang of a snake” (Metamorphoses, 10), lets out a cry. Startled, a fisherman turns around, recalling the startled woman kneeling in the center of the Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake.
Orpheus, who has neither seen nor heard anything, absorbed as he is in his music, continues unperturbed. The surprising clouds of smoke that escape from the Castel Sant’Angelo—which have given rise to innumerable interpretations (McTighe 1996, suggests that they evoke the wars of the Fronde)—undoubtedly allude to the drama unfolding before our eyes.

Variations on the same theme rather than pendants in the strict sense of the term, the two works, it seems, can no longer be studied independently. In the Orpheus, where nothing is left to chance, a close analysis—such as that by Friedlaender (1961); see also De Sausmarez (1969), and, more recently, McTighe (1996); Rex (1997); Keazor (1998); and Olson (2002)—makes it possible to better understand Poussin’s intentions. An appropriate conclusion is these lines by Michel Déon, who, in 1996 (pp. 43–44), devoted a lecture to the painting:

For a long time, it perplexed the most passionate art lovers. A syncretic impression does not allow one, at a first glance, to discern all that the rustic-poetic landscape of Orpheus and Eurydice conceals. A second look begins to reveal the beginnings of a drama. Fragmentary perceptions thus have their roots in an ensemble in which nothing is gratuitous, and the fable, in its hopeless fatality, overwhelms the viewer. Blood rushing to the cheeks enlivens the canvas; the shadows of impending death hover over the scene. It is the birth of a tragedy at which we must look on, powerless, and with a heavy heart. As always, Destiny has chosen as its victim the most innocent and poetic of creatures. We mourn for Eurydice over the centuries. This is certainly very far from the image that all too often has been cultivated of a cold and haughty painter.

PROVENANCE
Painted for Jean Pointel (see Thuillier and Mignot 1978); valued at 1,000 livres in his postmortem inventory in 1666 ("îtem grand tableau peint sur thistle de six pieds de long sur quatre et demi de hault, sans bordure, représentant un paysage ou est un château, une rivière et Orphée sonant de la lir e avec Eurydice, ouvrage dudit Poussin, prisé la somme de mil livres," quoted in Thuillier and Mignot 1978, p. 51), for which Philippe de Champaigne made the appraisal; we do not know who bought the canvas or the price paid; acquired by the king in 1685 from the painter-dealer Branjon (or Brajon or Brangeon) for 5,500 livres.

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95a, no. 180, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 71, illus.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 302; Grautoff, no. 155; Magne, no. 88; Blunt, no. 170; Balty, no. 183; Thuillier I, no. 175; Wild, no. 174; Wright, no. 161; Mérot, no. 219; Thuillier II, no. 180.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
For a “mort de Eurydice dal Poussin” with the dal Pozzo heirs, see Standing in Rome 2000c, p. 207 no. 39. See also cat. 44, Blunt 1666. For Blunt, 170±3, see Grandjean 1974, p. 165, no. 1193 (appraised at 1,000 francs); and Fredericksen 2001, pp. 198. For Blunt, 170±4, add the Dubois sale, December 7–11, 1840, no. 13.

A copy showing the painting before its mutilations (or after the engraving by Baudet) was auctioned at Christie’s, London, October 22, 1992, no. 145. For the painting in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, see Blunt, no. 891; and Thuillier II, no. 820.

See also the anonymous sale, Paris, March 9, 1767, no. 56. A copy was recently auctioned at Sotheby’s Olympia, London, April 25, 2006, no. 344, illus.

DRAWINGS
For the complex problem of the Stockholm drawing, in relation to the Louvre painting, see cat. 49. See also cats. 45, 50, 84.

For the copy drawn by Georges Michel, see Cuzin in Paris 1993, p. 66, fig. c.

ENGRAVING
The engraving by Étienne Baudet (1658–1711) shows the painting before its mutilations (fig. 86). Dedicated to Louis XIV, it is undoubtedly earlier than 1701. It does not show the painting reversed (Andersen, no. 443; Wildenstein, no. 181; Davies and Blunt 1962, p. 215; and Trémaque 2006, vol. 2, no. 53).
48. *Landscape with a Burning Fortress*

Pen and two different brown inks over black chalk, squared up in black chalk, 12 3/8 x 8 7/8 in. (322 x 205 mm)

On the verso: *The Holy Family with Saint Elizabeth, the Infant Saint John the Baptist, and Five (or Six) Putti in a Landscape*, and a handwritten letter by Poussin

Pen and brown ink

British Museum, London (1937-12-11-1)

Without doubt, the *Landscape with a Burning Fortress* is among Poussin’s most beautiful landscape drawings, as well as one of the most indisputable. On the verso can be seen, cut and reduced to the format of the recto, a study for one of the five canvases of the Holy Family that Poussin painted between 1648 and 1655, more precisely, for the one known as “with a Bathtub” in the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts (Paris 1944–95a, no. 194, illus.). There is also the rough draft of a letter Poussin intended for his faithful friend Paul Fréart de Chantelou. It concerns a *Conversion of Saint Paul* that, if it was ever executed, is lost.

The landscape on the recto shows us a body of water lined with all sorts of constructions and an aqueduct in the right background. Densely leafed trees lead the gaze toward the flaming castle, which is a version of the Castel Sant’Angelo. These flames have inspired all sorts of interpretations. In any case, it is certain that the flames, or rather the clouds of smoke from the fire, evoke those escaping in the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* in the Louvre (cat. 47). For Bätschmann (1990), “heavy rain falls on either side of the burning castle. A stroke of lightning may well have been the cause of the fire.” In the drawing are six walking figures and a fisherman (the reverse of what is seen in the *Orpheus and Eurydice*).

The drawing was done using pen and ink. The hatchings are short, more or less close together, often vertical. This work shows no effort at virtuosity, no attempt at effect or desire to please, nothing of the picturesque or anecdotal. Rather, its evocative power resides in a simplicity that one can only call classical. Can one go further and see an allusion to the fragility of man-made constructions when compared with nature’s permanence?

**Inscription**
For the rough draft of the letter in Poussin’s hand on the verso, undoubtedly from May 1650 and meant for Chantelou, and related to the *Conversion of Saint Paul* (a painting lost or never executed), see Paris 1944–95a, p. 439; and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 658.

**Provenance**

**Exhibitions**

**Selected Bibliography**

**Related Works**

**Drawings**
See cats. 49, 50.

An old and fragmentary copy, after a drawing close to the principal group of the verso (right side), is in the Hermitage, Saint Petersburg (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R120).
49. *The Rape of Europa*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, executed on the verso of four sheets of paper combined by Poussin to make one large one, 10 3/8 x 23 7/8 in. (262 x 590 mm)

On the verso (fig. 88):
1) two studies for *The Rape of Europa*
2) a study for *Moses Striking the Rock* in the Hermitage
3) a *Holy Family with the Virgin Enthroned*
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm (NMH 68/1923)

On August 22, 1649, Poussin announced in a letter to Chantelou (Jouanny 1911, pp. 403–4) his intention to paint for “M. Pucques” (Monsieur Picques, perhaps), a friend of his correspondent, a *Rape of Europa*. He explained how much the subject pleased him (“The subject of Europa is very beautiful, [being] filled with savory episodes”) and envisioned a painting twice as wide as high. These proportions approximate those of the Stockholm drawing, the largest known by the artist (along with cat. 50) and one of the most impressive masterpieces of his mature style. In order to obtain these dimensions, Poussin took several sheets, the rectos of which were already filled with drawings, and joined them end to end, using the verso.

For a long time, it was thought that Poussin had not painted a work from this study, until in 1966 Blunt published (no. 153) a fragment of a canvas (formerly collection of Pierre Desprats, Cahors) that showed a version of the right portion of the Stockholm drawing. The drawing on the recto, which alone interests us here, struck several commentators, not only because of its exceptional size, which would seem to indicate a finished project, ready to be transferred to the canvas, but also because of its subject. It represents both *The Rape of Europa*—with the maid deceived by Jupiter, who transformed himself into a bull, surrounded by nymphs, and Mercury and Cupid flying overhead, indicating the direction of Crete toward which the bull will carry its rider—and another theme: a nymph frightened by a snake, under the indifferent gaze of a group of three gods. The latter has generally been taken for a depiction of Eurydice, preceding that in the great *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47), where in the background one finds the same motif of a fortress in flames (see cats. 48, 50). The nymph on the right, who wipes her long tresses, “can be none other than the melancholy Arethusa” (Stanić 1994), accompanied by the water god Alpheus. The interpretation of the drawing’s subject engaged

Figure 87 Nicolas Poussin (?), *The Rape of Europa* (fragment).
Formerly in the collection of Pierre Desprats, Cahors
Van Helsing in an article (2002) that criticizes point by point the overinterpretative readings now fashionable. He concluded: “So the composition’s meaning is unclear. . . . The puzzle will have to remain unsolved until someone has a flash of inspiration—without plundering a bookcase. . . .”

We find here of particular interest the way Poussin drew the trees and their foliage, the way he used the pen and wash, and the role he accorded to nature in this sheet, which is of unusual ambition.

PROVENANCE:
Embosed P. F. at lower right, not indexed by Lugt; according to Bjuiström (1976), this may be the mark of the Swedish engraver Per Gustav Floding (1731–1791), who lived in Paris for many years; the drawing entered the museum in Stockholm attached to the verso of an engraving by this artist, The Birth of Saint John the Baptist, dated 1762. By coincidence, a mention of a drawing that might be this one occurred in a sale that same year: Adrien Manglard sale (1695–1760), Paris, June 7, 1762, no. 263 (“École Française. Nicolas Poussin. Deux dessins à la plume, et au bistre, dont l’Enlèvement d’Europe, grand morceau, riche de composition”). A drawing by Poussin, “l’Enlèvement d’Europe, dessin à la plume et composition capitale lavée au bistre,” also figured in the Barni sale, Paris, December 5, 1856, no. 248. Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 336; Paris 1994–95a, pp. 447–45, no. 197. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1939, no. 25, pl. 14 (verso) and no. 52, pl. 32 (verso); Friedlaender and Blunt 1953, no. 166, pl. 137 (recto) and nos. 167–68, pl. 138 (verso); Stanić 1994, pp. 34–38 and 36, fig. 17; Thuillier 1994a, p. 259, fig. 181; Verdi in London 1992a, p. 283, fig. 154; van Helsing 2002, pp. 158–60, 171–73, 181, 183, illus. fig. 2 p. 159.

For the verso (2), see Paris 1994–95a, no. 185, illus.

RELATED WORKS

PAINTING
Fragmentary painting (it shows the right part of the drawing) formerly in the collection of Pierre Desprats, Cahors (fig. 87; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 652, fig. 336f).

DRAWINGS
For the drawing in the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence (inv. no. 924E), whose loan we were unable to obtain, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 337, illus.

For the copies of the drawing, recto and verso, see Paris 1994–95a, p. 442; and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 650 and nos. R320, R769, R977, R1337.
Figure 88  Nicolas Poussin, Group of studies, verso of cat. 49
50. Landscape with a Burning Fortress and a Basilica

Pen and brown ink and black chalk, central vertical fold, 7⅛ x 21⅛ in. (200 x 539 mm)
On the verso: Study for a Landscape and a study for The Finding of Queen Zenobia (fig. 89)
Pen and brown ink
Museum Kunst Palast, Düsseldorf, Sammlung der Kunstkademie (FP 4699)

Bilbao

This landscape, Poussin's most panoramic, must have been done about 1649–1650, to judge from the simplicity with which the masses are described, the breadth of conception, and the elements that compose it, including, on the left, a fortress on fire—as in the Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice (cat. 47) as well as in other drawings exhibited here (cats. 48, 83). The right side of the sheet, showing a basilica—also executed in pen only—evokes another canvas by Poussin, the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe (cat. 57). A comparable basilica appears in the partly authentic drawing in Turin (cat. 51; see also cat. 83). Shearman thought the two drawings were related, but this seems unconvincing because, unlike the Turin drawing, the one at Düsseldorf, probably not made on-site, follows a spatial construction that is rigorous in a different way.

PROVENANCE
Collection Pierre Crozat (1665–1740; see Hattori 1998); Gerard Hoet sale, The Hague, August 25–28, 1760, no. 256; Wilhelm Lambert Krahe (1712–1790); acquired, with the rest of the collection, by the Kunstkademie, Düsseldorf, in 1776; deposited at the Kunstmuseum in 1932.

EXHIBITIONS
Frankfurt 1988, no. P2, illus. (recto and verso); Paris 1994–95a, no. 206, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS

DRAWINGS
For the study of The Finding of Queen Zenobia, see cat. 33.
A drawn copy of the recto is in the collection of Besançon (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R123).
51. *A Road Leading to a Basilica*

Pen and brown ink, brown and gray wash, 9 7/8 x 16 3/4 in. (252 x 408 mm)

Biblioteca Reale, Turin (Inv. 16285)

Opinions have been divided on the status of this drawing. Badt (1966) and Wild (1980) rejected it; Sutton (in Bologna 1962) attributed it to Dughet; Mahon (1962) and Sciolla (1974) related it to the 1650 *Christ Healing the Blind* (fig. 2; Thuillier 1994a, no. 193, illus.); and Whitfield (1977) thought it connected with the *Landscape with a Calm* (cat. 56). Finally, and most important, in his contribution to the fourth volume of Friedlaender and Blunt’s catalogue raisonné of drawings, Shearman subjected it to a thorough analysis, relating it to the large *Landscape with a Burning Fortress and a Basilica* in Düsseldorf (cat. 50), itself compared to the paintings *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* and the *Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe* (cats. 47, 57). To our mind, the Düsseldorf drawing seems very different in character: it is more intellectual in approach. The Turin drawing is more descriptive, more anecdotal, and it has the look of one of the rare drawings by Poussin made on-site.

It is much harder to ascertain whether the drawing is entirely by the same hand. Passages such as the trees at left and right in the dark foreground seem to have been reworked in wash by another artist (Gaspar van Wittel, known as Vanvitelli, 1652/53–1736, according to Harris 1996) over an original pen drawing by Poussin. The very free and lyrical style of these additions contrasts with the much more careful style of the buildings and the seated man in the center of the composition, who looks as if he is sketching. These latter elements are by Poussin. The facade of the basilica is comparable to one seen on the right-hand side of the small drawing in the Albertina (cat. 83) as well as the structures found in the beautiful *Landscape with a Tree* at Chantilly (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 296, illus.; fig. 90). A date of about 1640–50 seems plausible.

Figure 90 Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Tree.* Musée Condé, Chantilly (AI 202; NI 246)
PROVENANCE
An unidentified mark is visible at lower left. Friedlaender and Blunt (1963) also note traces of a Crozat number (?) in the lower right. The drawing most likely came from the collection of Giovanni Volpato (1797–1871) and was sold to King Carlo Alberto of Savoy (1798–1849), Biblioteca Reale, Turin.

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 295, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 283, pl. 220 (entry by J. Shearman); Harris 1996, p. 426.
52. **Landscape with Three Men**

Oil on canvas, 47 3/8 x 73 3/8 in. (120 x 187 cm)
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid (P 2310)

Scholars have accepted the attribution of the Prado painting to Poussin, with the exception of Doris Wild, who ascribed it to Dughet (1958, p. 168) before retracting her theory in 1980. In 1859, Louis Clément de Ris (p. 133) proclaimed it "completely beautiful" and found it comparable to the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice*, the *Landscape with Diogenes*, and *Spring: Adam and Eve*, all three at the Louvre (cats. 47, 62, 66).

As a pendant to the *Landscape with a Storm* (cat. 55), engraved and dated 1651, Félibien (1666, vol. 2, p. 358) mentions a "temps calme et serein," which specialists long identified as the Prado painting, which was also engraved. The discovery by Clovis Whitfield (1977) of the true *Landscape with a Calm* (cat. 56), today at the J. Paul Getty Museum, has necessitated a rejection of this theory.

Most of the authors who have discussed the painting seem agreed that the work has no obvious subject and appears to be essentially a landscape in which two travelers ask for directions from a man lying on a slope. By contrast, Dempsey (1988, 1989, and, in Cropper and Dempsey 1996) has cited a text drawn from Diogenes Laertius (*Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, vol. 6, 59), as well as the clothing of one of the travelers—the characteristic *duplex pannum* of the Cynic philosophers that Diogenes wears in the Louvre painting (cat. 62)—in support of the proposal that the picture shows Diogenes abandoning Sparta for Athens. Diogenes would be shown replying to the querying strangers that he still preferred Athens, though it was called effeminate, to virile Sparta. This exchange would explain Diogenes’ gesture in the painting as he points his finger to the right. This notion was taken up by Mahon (1995): identifying the Prado picture as the *Diogenes* that Félibien says was painted in 1648 for a "Monsieur Lumague"—a work until then universally identified with the famous canvas in the Louvre (cat. 62)—helped reinforce his arguments, advanced as early as 1961, that the Louvre picture should be dated about 1657.

In his entry for the painting in the London Poussin exhibition catalogue of 1995, Verdi expressed reservations about this interpretation and advanced several arguments against it: why, for instance, would Poussin have painted the same subject in two versions, eliminating in the Prado picture the "bowl" that Diogenes supposedly broke and that Félibien mentions? For my part, I do not think that the elusive subject of the Prado painting, whatever it is, can be identified with Diogenes. But I do agree that it dates from about 1648 to 1650, as I already proposed in 1977–78 (in Düsseldorf 1978, under no. 32).

Poussin describes an idyllic and idealized nature. Following his custom, he subtly combined structures (Sparta, if one follows Dempsey and Mahon) and countryside: some trees with sparse foliage, shrubs, a nearly bare trunk, a lake around which horsemen exercise, some in full gallop, as in the *Landscape with a Calm* (cat. 56), overlapping hills. . . . The bright rays of sun highlight the planes as well as various details of the very solemn composition, whose apparent simplicity camouflages its ingenious novelty.

**PROVENANCE**

First mentioned in the collection of Philip V, king of Spain, in the Palacio de la Granja, in 1746, though Juan J. Luna (Madrid 1884, no. 59) has suggested that the painting might be identified with a "Landscape with figures" in the collection of Jaques (or Jacques) Meyers of Rotterdam in 1714 (catalogue, p. 7), whose dimensions correspond to those of the Prado painting (Jansen in Dijon–Paris–Rotterdam 1992–93). It is true that several works by Poussin in the Prado (*The Triumph of David and Apollo and the Muses on Parnassus* [fig. 66]) came from this collection.

**EXHIBITIONS**

Madrid 1984, no. 59; Paris 1994–95, no. 181, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 70, illus.

**CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS**

Smith, no. 314; Grautoff, no. 128; Magne, no. 301; Blunt, no. 216; Bacht, not mentioned; Thuillier I, no. 180; Wild, no. 142; Wright, no. 154; Mérot, no. 237; Thuillier II, no. 199.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1986

RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS
Doris Wild (1986) mentions a copy in Saint Petersburg. Following the exhibition of Landscape with Three Men in Rome in 1977–78 (no. 36), Somers Rinehart (written communication) informed me of a copy of the painting from the Chigi collection, now in a private collection in Rome.

DRAWING
For the drawing in Besançon, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R46.

ENGRAVING
Engraved in reverse before 1680 by Louis de Chatillon (Andresen, no. 459; Wildenstein, no. 191).

II. LANDSCAPES IN A NOBLE AND HEROIC STYLE
53. **Landscape with Three Monks**, also known as *La Solitude*

Oil on canvas, 46⅜ × 76 in. (117 × 193 cm)
Republic of Serbia, Ministry of Culture, trustee HRH Crown Prince Alexander II, Belgrade

*New York*

This little-known painting, for many years displayed in the Belgrade office of President Tito of Yugoslavia, has not been shown outside Serbia since 1934. (It has been restored by Michael Gallagher of The Metropolitan Museum of Art for this exhibition; it is shown here before treatment.) I had the opportunity to examine it only once, several years ago, under less than perfect circumstances and prior to its restoration, when the foliage was completely obscured by discolored varnish and the sky entirely overpainted. The picture has suffered—as occurs often with Poussin's paintings, the darks are thinly painted, sunk, and abraded. Even so, it remains a work of exceptional beauty.

Félibien (1696, vol. 2, p. 432) gave as its title *Landscape with Three Monks*, as well as the sobriquet *La Solitude*. Seeking a pendant, several specialists have leaned toward the *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (cat. 44), but none of the conjectures has gained acceptance. By contrast, Poussin specialists have pretty much agreed on a date: Blunt, 1648–50; Thuillier, 1650; Sterling (in Paris 1960, p. 264), 1651; and Mahon, 1651.

Of all the landscapes painted after his return to Rome, only the Belgrade painting and the *Landscape with Hagar and the Angel* in Rome (cat. 65) incorporate a religious subject. The three friars in the foreground—a fourth, seated at the edge of the lake or river, is shown reading—are clearly Franciscans (Capuchins, to be more specific), as confirmed in the Crozat sale catalogue of 1751. Blunt identified the oldest friar, who is bearded, as Saint Francis, who would be instructing the other two, one of whom Blunt believed wore a scapular and was a tertiary. He further suggested the site as Mount Alverna (Monte Penna), where Francis retired to meditate during Lent and received the stigmata, and the city perched high on the hill as Chiusi, which cannot be correct (Blunt seems to have confused Chiusi della Verna, below the sanctuary of La Verna, with the town of Chiusi in southern Tuscany). The identifying features of the locale are a Romanesque church tower, a bridge and waterfall, a rocky outcrop crowned by a building, a circular structure (an ancient temple?), and, farther along to the right, a group of buildings along the ridge. The configuration recalls Tivoli and, moreover, it is the same one studied in the drawing at Stuttgart (cat. 87). The licenses taken are similar to those Claude took when he introduced Tivoli as a backdrop in paintings and drawings. We must marvel that if one of the friars is indeed Saint Francis, Poussin chose not to show an important incident—or narrative—from his life, but instead evokes a scene of serene and prayerful meditation. He lavished equal attention on the rocky slope at the right and the enormous oak tree entwined with ivy on the left.

Everything in the picture leads one to identify it with a passage in the eighth Entretien of Félibien (1696, vol. 2, p. 432): "As for that solitude owned by M. the Marquis of Hauterive, where one sees Monks seated on the ground applying themselves to their reading, does it not give rise to a certain repose of the soul, inspiring the desire to enjoy a tranquillity like that in which one imagines the Religious inhabiting such a peaceful and charming desert?"

Calm and solitude, absorption in reading, repose of the soul: who could better define the Belgrade painting, and how could this ideal be attained without the beauties of nature and the isolation one finds in it? Indeed, if we take Félibien at his word, the object Poussin had in mind was to create a mood rather than to illustrate a story (Félibien contrasted the tranquil effect of the picture with that evoked by the terrifying *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, whence the idea that that picture was conceived as a pendant). The landscape is unique in Poussin's oeuvre for showing the whole of the middle ground and rugged hills in deep shadow against a distant vista and brightly lit sky.

Is it possible to push the circumstances of this picture further? In correspondence, Keith Christiansen has suggested
to me that the picture may well have been intended to evoke a whole series of associations with the site of Tivoli. From Francesco Marzi’s history of the city (1665), we learn that Horace’s villa was located in the valley below the hill town, “along the banks of the Anio, where there are a few vestiges beneath the convent of the fathers of Saint Antony of Padua [i.e., Franciscans], and where, as he says in the second Ode of the fourth book [actually 4.3], he often used to compose poetry.” The site was given Horace by the great patron of letters Gaius Maecenas. In one ode (1.7) Horace addresses Munatius Plancus and urges on him the beauties of the Tiburtine site as a place of retreat and refuge: “As for me, neither tough Lacedaemon nor the fertile plain of Larisa has so struck my imagination as the home of the echoing Albunea and the plunging Anio and the grove of Tiburnus and the orchards watered by hurrying rivulets. As the bright South Wind often wipes the clouds from the dark sky and does not invariably produce rain, so you should do the sensible thing, Plancus, and make sure to drown life’s sadness and trouble with mellow wine, whether you are living, as now, in the camp with its glittering standards, or in the dense shade of your beloved Tibur.” According to Marzi (p. 140), Plancus, a native of Tivoli, was also revered as the founder of Lyon when he was proconsul of Gaul. It is not difficult to see how these circumstances might have appealed to some of Poussin’s patrons—especially those from Lyon and particularly during the political upheaval of the Fronde. The Belgrade painting, which might best be titled “The Grove of Tiburnus,”
would have appealed to them as a landscape of retreat, a place in which the associations with a classical past mingled with the present: the site that had inspired Horace now gave refuge to Franciscan friars.

PROVENANCE
Félibien (1685) and Loménie de Brienne (1693–95) list it in the collection of the still-mysterious marquis de Hauterive (see Schnapper 1994a, pp. 17, 371); Crozat; his sale, Paris, June 1793, under no. 223 (90.1 livres, “haut de 3 pieds 7 pouces, large de 6 pieds” (116 by 194.5 cm); perhaps the sale, at the firm of Basan, Paris, May 7, 1778, and the following days, no. 71 (200 livres, but that painting measured 7 and a half pieds by 5 pieds [2.45 by 1.62 cm], though possibly including its frame), like, perhaps, our cat. 54 (or a copy of that work); undoubtedly collection of John Sweetman; his sale, Dublin, December 1–2, 1817, no. 30 (sold for 108 guineas); it then passed to the dealer John Smith; his sale, May 17, 1834, no. 124 (bought in at £54.12); collection of Anthony Reyre, London; bought from him by Julius Böhler, Munich, 1931; acquired from him by Prince Paul of Yugoslavia; the State of Yugoslavia; the State of Serbia.

EXHIBITION
Paris 1934, no. 268.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 313; Grautoff, no. 124 (this was a copy in Montauban); Magne, no. 298 (painting in Montauban); Blunt, no. 100; Thuillier I, no. 172; Wild, no. 165; Wright, no. 159; Mérot, no. 212; Thuillier II, no. 191.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY SINCE 1966

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
A copy 23 1/4 x 32 1/4 in. (59 x 82 cm) that belonged to Ingres, which Grautoff had considered an original, is today in the Musée Ingres, Montauban (see Viguier 1993, no. 123). Blunt sees in this canvas the one auctioned in Paris on April 24, 1775, no. 41, from the collection of Le Dous, which then went into the collection of Didot de Saint-Marc, then his sale, Paris, March 26, 1810, and the following days, no. 171 (with the dimensions 25 1/4 x 38 1/8 in. (65 x 97 cm), and then in the collection of Cardinal Fesch, his sale, Rome, March 17, 1845, and the following days, nos. 409-1778. The Fesch painting, entitled La Solitude, was judged a good copy by the author of the catalogue, the appraiser George, and measured 3 pieds 7 pouces 9 lignes high by 4 pieds 11 pouces 10 lignes wide (46 1/2 x 63 1/4 in.; 118 x 161.5 cm), which rules it out as the same one in the collection of Didot de Saint-Marc. A copy belonged to Michel Passart (1614–1692) (see Schnapper and Massat 1995, p. 107 no. 50; and Harris 2003).

DRAWING

ENGRAVING
The painting was engraved by Louis de Châtillon (1659–1734) (Andresen, no. 458; Wildenstein, no. 190) and published by Nicolas Poilly (see also cat. 54), as well as by Landon; the latter engraving seems to prove that the upper part of the painting has been cut. The entry for the Sweetman sale informs us of an engraving by Picart.
54. *Landscape with a Woman Washing Her Feet (Vertumnus and Pomona?)*

Oil on canvas, 45 3/4 × 68 1/4 in. (116.5 × 174.7 cm)
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Gift of H.S. Southam, Ottawa, 1944 (Inv. 4587)

New York

Often copied, this painting is not as well known as it should be: it was not shown at the Paris and London Poussin exhibitions in 1994–95. It is reasonably thought that it belonged to Michel Passart (1611/2–1692) and is the work mentioned by both Bellori (1672, p. 455) and Félibien (1696, vol. 2, p. 358): “He made a large landscape where a woman is seen washing her feet.” Michel Passart (studied in 1995 by Schnapper and Massat and more recently by Olson), the extremely wealthy head of finances (*maître des comptes*), was in Rome in 1643. Passart owned one of Poussin’s supreme masterpieces, *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (cat. 63). Had he given Poussin a direct commission for the Ottawa painting or did he acquire it in the market? We do not know. One thing we do know is that Passart loved landscapes, not just those by Poussin but also by Claude, Dughet, and Italian artists such as Gobbo dei Carracci (Pietro Paolo Bonzi, 1576–1636).

The date of 1650 advanced by Félibien is generally agreed upon. Only Ann Sutherland Harris (2003) has suggested dating the work “a few years later,” for reasons having to do with the execution.

Until recently, the majority of Poussin specialists showed little interest in the subject of the painting, being content not to trouble themselves further and to put their trust in Félibien. They saw it as a woman washing her feet (for some attempts at iconographic interpretation before 2003, see Harris 2003, pp. 292–93). In a recent article, however, Harris suggested that the picture shows the story of Vertumnus and the wood nymph Pomona. In love with Pomona, Vertumnus disguised himself as an old woman in order to approach the nymph and seduce her more easily. In the Ottawa painting, Vertumnus is alluded to by the old woman’s tanned skin and, especially, her large feet—those of a man rather than of a woman. The basket of fruit beside her could be an attribute of Pomona. The young satyr who peers at the two refers to Vertumnus’s far from virtuous intentions.

Harris’s theory is convincing. It has won over Dempsey (for the interpretation he proposed and then repudiated, see Laskin and Pantazzi 1987, p. 250), who refuses to admit that a painting by Poussin might be without a subject and that the artist may sometimes have painted a simple landscape. Yet it is noteworthy that neither Bellori nor Félibien, not to mention the author of Passart’s 1684 inventory, identified the subject of the work. Further, the identification proposed by Harris is not without some problems, most notably that Pomona is not shown in her well-tended garden, as described by Ovid (*Metamorphoses* 14.643ff.) and as was traditional. Vertumnus was commonly associated with autumn.

Assuming Harris is correct, Poussin has once more treated the theme of nature’s fertility, which he opposed to the temporary chasteness of Pomona. It is the landscape that absorbs his full attention, with its abundant vegetation, its leafy trees, its hills and mountains, its cloud-filled sky, a landscape embellished with some antique structures and traversed by some travelers.

The majestic landscape and the walkers, who, unconcerned, attend to their own affairs, form a counterpoint to the private scene of seduction and deception unfolding before our eyes. The satyr poses the question: will Vertumnus achieve his goal and succeed in seducing Pomona?
PROVENANCE

Very likely painted for Michel Passart (1612/12–1692) and identifiable with an item in his inventory of 1684, under either no. 123 ("un grand paisage du Poussin,") or no. 465 ("un paisage du Poussin,") see Schnapper and Massat 1993; sold before 1684, when Félibien mentions it as "[ayant] esté à M. Passart Maistre des Comptes" (Félibien 1696, vol. 2, p. 58); Ellis Waterhouse (letter of March 4, 1969) identifies the Ottawa canvas with a "Landscape" in the collection of Charles Jennings (1700–1773) of Gosnall Hall, Leicester, in about 1766; collection of William Curzon (died 1797); his son, the first Earl Howe, then his descendants; Howe sale, Trollope and Sons, London, July 21, 1920, no. 99; collection of Norman Bickett, London; at the firm of Duks, London, in 1929, and the following year at the firm of Durlacher; acquired by H. S. Southam, Ottawa; given by him to the National Gallery of Canada in 1944.

EXHIBITIONS

Paris 1960, no. 91, illus.; (see also Laskin and Pantazzi 1987); Edmonton and other cities 2006–7, pp. 21–22 (entry by E. Dolphin).

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS

Smith, no. 312; Grautoff, no. 143 (painting in Chantilly); Magne, no. 300 (painting in Chantilly); Blunt, no. 212; Badt, no. 158; Thuillier I, no. 171; Wild, no. 164; Wright, no. 165; Mérat, no. 232; Thuillier II, no. 192.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS

In the catalogue of a sale in Paris, on May 7, 1778, no. 135 is described as "Un grand & superbe paysage avec un beau fond mêlé d’architecture; on y voit sur le devant deux femmes, dont une qui se lave les jambes. 5 pieds sur 3 & demi" (63¼ x 47¾ in.; 162 x 121 cm); il est attribué au Poussin, & connu par l’estampe de Poilly." It is worth noting that the work was only attributed to Poussin and that it was (modestly) valued at 85 livres for another painting in this sale, see cat. 53.

A copy slightly larger in height (49¼ x 69¾ in.; 125 x 176 cm) belongs to the Musée Condé, Chantilly (Rosenberg and Pratt in Chantilly 1994–95, no. 6, illus.). A copy at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Reims (46½ x 67¼ in.; 117.5 x 172 cm) had belonged to the art historian Paul Jarnot. Various copies are mentioned in the collection of Fischmann in Munich and in the collection of Felice Maragliano in Genoa (see Blunt 1966, under no. 212; and Rosenberg and Pratt in Chantilly 1994–95, under no. 6). Two works by Franscisco Millet (1642–1709) mentioned in the postmortem inventory of Jabach (ca. 1688–1695, July 17, 1696) seem to be copies of the composition in Ottawa (no. 22, fig. 14).

DRAWING

A drawn copy of the painting is in the collections of Windsor Castle, Royal Library (RL. 5723; see Rosenberg and Pratt 1994, no. R292; and Clayton in Dulwich and other cities 1995–96, p. 201 no. C14).

ENGRAVINGS

The composition was engraved by Louis de Chatillon (1639–1734) in about 1680 and published by Nicolas de Poilly (Andersen, no. 456; Wildenstein, no. 188). It is reversed in relation to the painting. This plate was subsequently republished by Madame Soyer for Landon.
55. **Landscape with a Storm**

Oil on canvas, 39 x 52 in. (99 x 132 cm)
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Rouen (Inv. 975.1)

56. **Landscape with a Calm**

Oil on canvas, 38⅝ x 52½ in. (97 x 131.5 cm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Inv. 97,PA.60)

**New York**

Félibien (1685) mentions “two landscapes, one representing a storm and the other a calm and serene scene,” painted by Poussin for Jean Pointel in 1651. While the first painting, *Landscape with a Storm*, is known through an engraving and has thus been cited by all writers on Poussin, there was no visual record of the second, and this plunged specialists of the artist into confusion. Could it be identified with the *Landscape with Three Men* in the Prado (cat. 52)? The answer only came with the almost simultaneous discovery of the two original compositions and their identifications, by, respectively, Jacques Thuiller and Clovis Whitfield. The publication in 1978 of the inventory listing the paintings in the Pointel collection, including these two canvases, and the exhibition of the rediscovered canvases in Rome and Düsseldorf in 1977–78, in Frankfurt in 1988, and then in Paris and London in 1994 and 1995, erased any lingering doubts.

The two works—both ascribed to Gaspard Dughet until very recently—are in very different states of preservation. The *Landscape with a Calm* is intact, whereas the *Landscape with a Storm*—one of the few paintings by Poussin bought by a French museum since the Revolution!—has suffered. Worn—the bolt of lightning striking the central tree in the engraving has vanished—and otherwise badly treated, its condition cannot be compared to that of its pendant. It is appropriate, nonetheless, to study the two paintings together and to appreciate each in comparison with the other, in the way that Poussin would have wished, as two reflections of nature, alternately shown in its limpid tranquility and in the violent unleashing of its elements.

In the Rouen painting we particularly admire the buildings on the right, seen against the light and illuminated by the flash of lightning, the blasted and shattered branch in the center of the composition, and the two cattle that drop to their knees. A man huddles while a second, terrified, lifts his arms, and a third flees. In the wagon a couple protect themselves with their clothing.

It is difficult to resist the temptation of quoting a passage from Félibien’s famous text (1685, *Entretien* 5, p. 650) describing a storm he observed from the terrace of the Château de Saint-Cloud, for it provides an illustration of the way contemporaries understood Poussin’s response to nature to inform a work like the Rouen canvas:

> We saw some flashes of lightning already issuing from the violent sky and observed that, with the rain beginning to fall in some distant spots, the air became so obscured that we could no longer make anything out. While to one side we watched this bursting sky and admired the various effects created by the flashes of lightning in that part of the terrain in shadow, and the way in these moments the shapes were illuminated, we saw that all of a sudden the sky changed and that, with the clouds gathering from all sides, it was covered in an instant. A furious wind blew at the same time and, lifting the swirls of dust, thickened the air so that one could barely see either sky or earth. . . . The tallest trees, yielding to the violence of the squall, leaned their crowns to the very ground, and we could
hear those that most resisted split and crack with a clamor.

In his landscape paintings, Poussin often sets his chosen subject off from nature. Thus, in a way, in the Landscape with a Woman Washing Her Feet (cat. 54), the figures of the painting—Vertumnus attempting to seduce Pomona—are isolated in a landscape that one could call impasse and indifferent to the action. Here, on the contrary, nature, in all its violence, lets loose, dominates man and makes him bend to its laws.

It is hard to decide what most deserves our admiration in the Getty canvas, which resurfaced little more than thirty years ago and was acquired in 1997 by the California museum: the quality of the dusty light, the mastery of the composition, articulated with structures of a Cubist precision that are reflected in the frigid water of a crystalline limpidity, or the refinement of the range of colors, as well as the correlation between the blues of the pond (for Félibien, Lake Bolsena) and the milky blue of the cloudy sky. No less important to Poussin was the demonstration of optical principals, particularly regarding the reflections in the water (see D. Allen and Jaffé 1998).

Poussin played off the contrast between the frightened and panic-stricken figures of the Landscape with a Storm and the dreamers of the Landscape with a Calm. He wanted this contrast to be evident also in the execution: in one smooth and unified, in the other quick and nervous. Above all, he opposed the quietude and serenity of an impassive nature—an eternal nature—to a riotous nature, “seized with a violence utterly like that of the human passions.”

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95a, no. 200, illus. (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 74, illus.; Rouen 1998, unnumbered.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 315; Grautoff, vol. 2, p. 259; Magne, no. 209; Blunt, no. 217; Badt, rejected (vol. 1, p. 78 n. 3); Thuillier I, no. 181; Wild, no. 172a; Wright, no. 103; Mérot, no. 238; Thuillier II, no. 200.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
See cat. 56.


ENGRAVING
The composition was engraved, in reverse, before 1680 by Louis de Chatillon (Andresen, no. 457; Wildenstein, no. 189).

Cat. 56

INSCRIPTION
On the verso is the inscription N.P. + F.R. (for “Nicolas Poussin + Fecit Romae”).

PROVENANCE
See the previous entry, cat. 55. Painted for Jean Pointel in 1651; collection of Lord Radstock; his sale, Phillips, London, April 19, 1825, no. 69, bought in; sale, Christie’s, London, May 12, 1826, no. 35, bought by Robson; anonymous sale, Christie’s, London, May 22, 1830, no. 73; collection of James Morrison from 1854 (see Waagen 1854); sale, Sotheby’s, London, March 27, 1974, no. 14; attributed to Dughet (withdrawn from the sale); Sudeley Castle, Gloucester; acquired by the Getty in 1997.

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1994–95a, no. 201 (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 73, illus.; Rouen 1998, unnumbered.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, Grautoff, and Magne, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 1104; Badt, not mentioned; Thuillier I, not mentioned; Wild, no. 172b; Wright, no. 164.
Mérot, no. 239; Thuillier II, no. 201 (certain earlier authors confuse Landscape with a Calm with the Landscape with Three Men in the Prado, cat. 52).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS

See cat. 55.

For a copy of the Landscape with a Calm alone, see sale catalogue, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, May 30, 1988, no. 6, attributed to Bourdon; Christie’s, London, May 18, 1990, no. 98; then Dorotheum, Vienna, June 6, 1993, no. 30, the artist

**DRAWINGS**

For the drawings in Dijon, the Louvre, and Turin, see cats. 45, 46, 51.

**ENGRAVING**

Unlike the *Landscape with a Storm*, for unexplained reasons, the painting was never engraved.
57. Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe

Oil on canvas, 75½ x 107½ in. (192.5 x 273.5 cm)
Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main (1849)
New York

I have tried to represent a tempest on earth, imitating as best I could the effect of a violent wind, of air filled with darkness, with rain, with lightning flashes and thunderclaps that fall here and there, not without wreaking havoc. All the figures that one can see act out their part in relation to the weather: some flee through the dust and go with the wind that sweeps them along; others, to the contrary, go against the wind and walk with great difficulty, putting their hands before their eyes. On one side a shepherd runs and abandons his flock, seeing a lion, which, after having felled certain oxen, attacks others, some of whom defend themselves, and the others goad their cattle, and try to escape. In this chaos the dust is lifted in dark whirlwinds. A dog barks some distance off and its hair bristles, not daring to come closer. In the foreground of the painting we see Pyramus dead and stretched out on the ground, and near him Thisbe, who gives way to grief.

As with the entire correspondence between Poussin and his friend the painter Jacques Stella (1596–1657), the letter from which the splendid description above is taken is lost (its contents are preserved thanks to Félibien 1696, vol. 2, pp. 440–41). In it, Poussin describes the Frankfurt painting, of an exceptional size for the artist. No one today doubts the picture’s status as an original, even though it was only recently that scholars could fill the gaps in its peregrinations between 1651, the date Félibien assigns its execution for Poussin’s close friend Cassiano dal Pozzo (the “chevalier Dupuy”), and 1931, when it was purchased for Frankfurt.

In 1988 the work figured in an exhibition in Frankfurt with an excellent catalogue by Michael Maek-Gérard, Peter Waldeis, and Oskar Bätschmann (for Poussin’s painting). Also included was the museum’s Noli me tangere by Claude Lorrain (fig. 91)—the artist’s last work, which he painted in 1681, sixteen years after the death of Poussin and thirty years after the Landscape with Pyramus and Thisbe. This was a
wonderful juxtaposition of two masterpieces by two of the
greatest artists of the seventeenth century. Poussin’s painting
has left Frankfurt only on rare occasions, and it is undoubt-
edly one of the highlights of this exhibition.

In viewing the painting after rereading the passage from
Poussin’s letter, quoted above, we immediately take note of
the storm—the wind, the rain, the lightning, the thunder—
then, in the middle ground, the animals in retreat, the trav-
eler laboring against the wind, the lion attacking a horse and
its rider, the barking dog. Poussin concluded his description
of his painting by mentioning its subject: Pyramus and Thisbe.
We know today (thanks to the research carried out for its exhi-
bition in Frankfurt; see also Maek-Gérard and Waldeis 1994)
that Poussin, following his practice, painted his figures after
executing the landscape.

The story of Pyramus and Thisbe is recounted by Ovid
(4.55ff.). As Thisbe, a princess of Babylon, awaited her lover
Pyramus under a white mulberry tree, a lioness, its jaws still
bloody from some cattle it had just slaughtered, approached
her. Thisbe took fright and fled, leaving behind her white
veil, which the furious animal seized and ripped. Arriving at
their agreed-upon rendezvous, Pyramus discovered the veil
red with blood, imagined the worst, and in despair stabbed
himself with his sword. On her return, Thisbe discovered the
body of her lover about to expire—the moment Poussin
depicts—and killed herself in turn under the white mulberry
tree, which thenceforth bore fruit that are “dark, suitable
for mourning.”

In 1954, Jan Bialostocki drew attention to links between
Leonardo da Vinci’s treatise on painting—printed in France in
1651 with illustrations based on drawings by Poussin (Rosen-
berg and Prat 1994, no. 129)—and the Frankfurt painting. A
chapter of the work entitled “How to Represent a Storm” had
assuredly inspired Poussin.

Attempts to decode the painting by providing icono-
graphic interpretations have multiplied—from Marin (1995) to
and are impossible to record here. If it is possible to see in the
picture an illustration of the unpredictability of life—those
“tricks of fortune” that so fascinated Poussin—it is not neces-
sary to posit that he read Théophile de Viau’s tragedy of the
same title (1621), as has been suggested (de Viau was fond of
describing the successive misunderstandings of heroes and
their tragic ends), or that in the body of calm water in the
center of the composition he wished to allude to the mirror of
Bacchus, as Bätzschmann argues (in his letter to Stella, Poussin
makes no allusion to it). One might prefer to go along with
Thuillier (1976, as well as 1977, 1983, and 1994a), for whom

Figure 92 Nicolas Poussin, Men Attacked
by a Lion. Musée Bonnat, Bayonne (AI 1676;
N1 50)
“the human drama, absurd and suddenly looming up amidst the serenity of mutual love, corresponds to the absurd and abrupt outbursts of Nature.”

Aside from the separate episodes, in which each character strives to deal with the challenge at hand, oblivious of the others; aside from the masterfully balanced composition, the image the viewer comes away with is of a frozen Thise stopped in her tracks, her arms outstretched like a dancer’s, her mouth open to cry out in grief. The unleashing of the forces of nature accompanies the expression of human anguish at the absurd and bloody misunderstanding and the tragic tricks of fate.

PROVENANCE
Painted in 1651 for Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657), it remained in the dal Pozzo family until 1729, a document dated March 1731 informs us that in 1729, Cosimo Antonio, son of Gabriele Cassiano dal Pozzo and grandson of Cassiano’s brother Carlo Antonio, asked his mother, the marquise Anna Teresa Giunetti Lancellotti, to deliver the painting, together with three other canvases by Poussin, to “Signore Maceroni” to have it sent to England to “certi Inglesi” (Standing 1988, 1992). This individual, according to Denis Mahon (cited by Standing, but see Ellis Waterhouse in Thuillier 1960b, p. 203), was either Sir Robert Furnese (died 1733) or his cousin Henry Furnese (died 1756). Henry Furnese sold the painting to Sir William Morice before 1750, the year of the latter’s death (for £500 according to The Travels through England of Dr. Richard Pococke [1750; London, 1888], pp. 153–54); Humphrey Morice (1723–1755), his cousin; then William Morice, whose entire collection was bought in 1786–87 by the second Earl of Ashburnham; sale Ashburnham, Christie’s, London, July 20, 1850, no. 82 (for £420, under the title Cephalus and Procris); Max Rothschild, London, in 1923; Asti, Paris, in 1926; acquired by the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Frankfurt, from Julius Böhrer in 1931.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 304; Grautoff, vol. 2, p. 259; Magne, no. 324; Blunt, no. 177; Badt, no. 194; Thuillier I, no. 182; Wild, no. 173; Wright, no. 162; Mérot, no. 222; Thuillier II, no. 202.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
See Blunt 1966, and Paris 1904–95a, no. 203. A gouache attributed to Goupil was auctioned at Sotheby’s, London, on October 2, 1975, no. 107, illus.

DRAWINGS
A drawing in the Musée Bonnat, Bayonne (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 344; and Bayonne 1994–95, no. 14, illus.; fig. 91), showing the horsemen attacked by a lion, displays undeniable similarities with the group of the same subject in the middle ground of the painting. See also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 344, 343, as well as nos. 247 verso; and cats. 50, 51.

ENGRAVING

EXHIBITIONS
Paris 1904–95a, no. 203 (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 75, illus.; Paris–Munich–Bonn 2005–6, no. 127, illus.
III
The Poetic Landscapes

The extraordinary beauty of Poussin's last landscapes is universally recognized. Nothing comparable can be found in seventeenth-century European painting. The giant Orion striding forth confidently in a regenerative nature (cat. 63), the unhappy story of Apollo and Daphne (cats. 69–71), the golden wheat of *Summer: Ruth and Boaz* (cat. 67) are as much images as allegories, at once obvious and complex, immediate and ambitious, altogether unforgettable. Released from all constraints, aware of the admiration (even veneration) that the cultivated world of Paris and Rome bestowed on him, Poussin, despite uncertain health and a trembling hand, approached the subjects of his choice and his heart with an astounding audacity, treating them with a perfect freedom and, with the aid of his brushes, making order of the questions that had haunted him throughout his life.

Some will be surprised to find included among these late works—staggering paintings and drawings that are admirable in their simplicity and assurance—the illustrious *Landscape with Diogenes* (cat. 62). Less iconographically complex than the works mentioned above, the *Diogenes* is dated by most specialists to 1648, in accordance with a primary text by Félibien. After many hesitations and despite the testimony of Félibien, who rarely has been found in error, I have come to agree with Denis Mahon, who for almost a half century has obstinately dated the canvas some ten years later.

The moral lesson of this majestic work—the voluntary renunciation of the most modest material goods of the world—links the painting to the great canvases of the 1640s. Yet the breadth of the landscape, treated with a spontaneous execution unmindful of thematic incongruities, already seems far from the more structured, more severe, more constrained, even assiduous (though not in a negative sense) world of the *Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion* (cat. 43) and the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47). *Diogenes* displays the inspiration, the freedom of the late masterpieces.

If we had to select one word to describe these works, and if it had not become so devalued, we would happily apply the word "marvelous" and, following Félibien, would extol "all these rich thoughts that [Poussin's] imagination did not fail to provide him."
58. *The Infant Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa; The Death of Echo and Narcissus*

Oil on canvas, 48¼ x 70½ in. (123 x 179 cm)

Fogg Art Museum, Harvard University Art Museums, Cambridge, Massachusetts. Gift of Mrs. Samuel Sachs in memory of her husband, Samuel Sachs (1942.167)

New York

According to Félibien, the picture was intended for Poussin's friend and fellow artist Jacques Stella, who died on April 29, 1657, in his lodgings at the Louvre. The work was not finished until later that year (Thuiller 1963c, p. 107). Sold by Antoine Bouzonnet-Stella (at his death in 1682?), it entered the Orléans collection before 1724, then, with the rest of that admirable group of masterpieces, was sent to England for sale. It changed hands until given to the Fogg Art Museum by Mrs. Samuel Sachs in 1942, in memory of her husband, a great collector and professor at Harvard. The painting incontestably counts among the most important, most ambitious, and most affecting works by Poussin in the United States.

The existence of a drawing, also in the exhibition (cat. 59), and an engraving by Giovanni Verini (fig. 93), both of which present a few variations in relation to the painting, has emboldened some specialists to propose that a second, later version of the composition was made. There is no solid evidence to support this idea, and a recent technical examination (Goldfarb in Cleveland–Cambridge [Mass.–Ottawa 1989–90, p. 59) seems to prove that, where we now see the luminous sky lit by the rising sun, Poussin originally depicted Apollo in his chariot, just as we see in the drawing and the engraving.

Jealous of Semele (also called Stimula) and the child she carried, which was fathered by Jupiter, Juno appeared and provoked her to beseech Jupiter to grant her dearest wish. Semele asked Jupiter to reveal himself in all his glory, which, when done, reduced the poor mortal to ashes. The god managed to rescue Bacchus from Semele's womb, hiding him in his thigh until ready to be born.

Poussin shows Mercury, "the messenger from on high," delivering the newborn infant to Dirce and the nymphs of Mount Nysa. He points to the sky, where Jupiter rests after his labors, in the company of Hebe, who "serves him ambrosia" (Bellori). On the left, five naiads look on the scene with curiosity. On the right, isolated from the main group, Echo and Narcissus, the latter wearing a robe of a beautiful blue, are shown dying. Pan, sitting above the grotto in a grove of trees, greets the sleeping child with his pipes; the grotto is decorated with vine branches and jars of wine. Dora Panofsky (1949), Anthony Blunt, Richard Verdi (in London 1995a), Sheila McTighe, Charles Dempsey and Elizabeth Cropper, and Clélia Nau have all applied their erudition to studying the varied sources of the composition, questioning and even contradicting one another's interpretations, which H.-W. van Helsingin has demonstrated with both scholarship and a sense of humor. Ovid, as annotated by Natale Conti (1520–1582; Natalis Comes in Latin), Philostratus (cited by Bellori), and Tommaso Campanella must have furnished Poussin with the theme, the audacity of which derives from the juxtaposition of Bacchus, god of fertility and fecundity, with the tragic love story of Echo and Narcissus. In keeping with Campanella's ideas, which were widely disseminated at the Barberini court and in France, where the Neapolitan philosopher found refuge after fleeing Italy, the sun—source of life—illuminates the backlit composition, so that the bright red of Mercury's cape adds a strong accent. Echo, turning into stone, and the dying Narcissus, are symbols of "sterile love" and "solitary death"; they turn away from the scene and from life.

It is worth emphasizing the importance accorded nature's elements: the pool of water with its reflections, the rising sun, the clouds in the sky, the distant countryside and blue hills, the verdant bushes and flowers (the narcissus that signify the metamorphosis of the youth). Then there is the willing passivity of the gods, who appear "torpid," and their companions, some of whom seem to merge with their reflected images;
they are enveloped, immersed, and isolated in a triumphant nature. One is struck above all by the contemplative and dreamy atmosphere of the composition, as if, toward the end of his life, Poussin hesitated between creating a hymn to nature, and its perpetual return and vitality, and expressing the certainty of the fatal triumph of death.

PROVENANCE
According to Félibien (1676, vol. 2, p. 361), painted in 1657 for Jacques Stella (1596–1657; “Pour le Sieur Stella [the date “1657” is in a note] un paysage où est représenté la naissance de Bacchus”); collection of Antoine Bouzonnet-Stella (sold at his death in 1682; see Guiffrey 1877, p. 37, no. 108, and Szanto in Lyon–Toulouse 2006–7, pp. 48, 259, no. 5, and p. 260); collection of Jean Neyret de la Ravoye, valued at 2,000 livres in his postmortem inventory of August 4, 1701 (Bonfait 1988); perhaps at the firm of the brothers Paul and André Vérani, Varennes, in 1713 (Rambaud 1964, vol. 1, p. 541: “La naissance de Jupiter et la mort d’Adonis,” valued at 3,300 livres); collection of the Regent (see Mardrus 1956) before 1724 (mentioned in his postmortem inventory of 1724), then of Louis, duc d’Orléans; entire collection sold to Walkers, who sold it to Laborde de Méreville, then to Bryan; the painting’s changing ownership from that point can be followed without interruption from 1738 to the present (see Gaskell in Cuno et al. 1996, p. 175, and, for the painting’s travels in France, collection Sébastien Élard, who also owned the Apollo and Daphne (fig. 12) now in the Louvre; see Devries 1981). Fogg Art Museum (Gift of Mrs. Samuel Sachs in 1942 in memory of her husband, Samuel Sachs).

EXHIBITIONS
CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS

Smith, no. 205; Grautoff, vol. 2, p. 257; Magne, no. 12; Blunt, no. 132; Badt, no. 98; Thuillier I, no. 204 (see also no. 209); Wild, no. 193; Wright, no. 190; Mérat, no. 122; Thuillier II, no. 226 (see also no. 232).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY


RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS

Poussin specialists are divided on whether there was a second version, with variations, corresponding to Verini’s engraving (fig. 93). Smith, Magne, Friedlaender, and Thuillier [a later canvas, painted between 1658 and 1660] favor the existence of a second, lost version, an opinion we do not share. Nonetheless, it is true that Dezallier d’Argenville (1745–52, vol. 2) mentions the Orléans painting on p. 255, and, on p. 254, notes a very perplexing “Naissance de Bacchus et la mort de Narcisse.” To the list of copies given by Blunt in 1966 (for the one by Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella, see in addition Szanto in Lyon–Toulouse 2006–7, p. 249 no. 151), we add the paintings from the Manufacture de Sévres (the central part of the composition, with some variations); Finarte, Rome, April 4, 1978, no. 83; and at Sotheby’s, Sussex, November 15–16, 1994, no. 648, illus.

DRAWING

For the admirable drawing, also preserved in Cambridge, see cat. 59. For a copy in Düsseldorf, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R351.

ENgravings

Engraved in reverse by Jean Dughet (Andersen, no. 352; Wildenstein, no. 128; Davies and Blunt 1965, p. 214; Bonfait 1996, and Trinquier 2006, vol. 2, no. 37; fig. 94). The engraving by Giovanni Verini (fig. 93), also in reverse, has been the subject of much discussion (Andersen, no. 350; Wildenstein, no. 127). Does it reproduce: a second version, now lost, of Poussin’s composition (see above; the engraving carries the words “Inven. et Fina.”); or a second drawing, also lost; or (in perhaps the simplest solution) the drawing in the Fogg Art Museum (cat. 59), slightly modified by the engraver? Prat and I lean toward the last theory.
Discovered only in 1958, this has become one of Poussin's most admired drawings (an exchange in October 1958 between Anthony Blunt and Agnes Mongan, then in charge of the drawing collections of the Fogg Art Museum, is preserved at the Courtauld Institute in London and relates the circumstances of the acquisition and the emotional reaction of Blunt, who wrote how he almost broke out in sobs when he saw the photograph of the drawing). Inspired by Ovid, Philostratus, and Natale Conti (see cat. 58), Poussin illustrates the episode subsequent to the birth of Bacchus from the thigh of Jupiter (who is shown reclining on a cloud formation at upper right) in which Mercury delivers the newborn to Dirce and the nymphs of Mount Nysa. The latter are arranged around a grotto or cave surrounded by vines that the sun will make fruitful. A cavity contains jars holding wine, the symbol of Bacchus. The infant is shown with a halo, like a god or a Christian saint, a detail that Poussin dared not transfer to his painting. To the right, Poussin added Narcissus, dead near the water (it is hard to make him out), and the grieving Echo, gradually turning into stone. The music of Pan's pipes (the god is seated above Mercury) pervades the scene. Commentators (including Blunt on numerous occasions) have inquired about the significance of this theme and its reflection of the philosophy of the aging Poussin, not only in the intrusion of the spiritual into the material (the fusion between the divine and the terrestrial), but also in the contrast between the organic and the inorganic, fertility and sterility.

The composition was slightly modified in the painting, in which Apollo's chariot is transformed into the rising sun and Mercury points to Jupiter with his right arm; in the drawing, he holds Bacchus in both hands. Narcissus is much less embedded in the banks of the water, and there are minor variations in the nymphs (in the painting, the feet of the right-hand nymph poke out of the water; in the drawing, the water is depicted in a highly pictorial fashion by employing a series of small lines that border the brown wash; for another drawing in which Poussin employs this technique, see cat. 25).

Several of the motifs in the drawing resonate in other sheets made by the aging artist. The nymphs are the sisters of those who appear in studies for the Apollo and Daphne (cat. 70). Echo was directly inspired by the nymph (Arethusa?) coiffing her hair at right in The Rape of Europa in Stockholm (cat. 49). Above all, features in the landscape recall what is seen in the sheet in Washington (cat. 60), where two tiny figures also appear near a body of water.

Along with the Stockholm drawing of the Rape of Europa and the Apollo and Daphne in the Louvre, the drawing in the Fogg is among the great graphic masterpieces of Poussin's old age. It is notable for its size and its magnificent compositional balance, as well as for the superb rendering of light, modulated by light and darker washes that bathe the scene in an atmosphere of the birth of the world, idyllic and peaceful, to the point that Narcissus's corpse, practically buried in reeds, blends with nature and seems to participate in a pantheism stripped of anguish.

Provenance
Anne-Louis de Girodet-Trioson (1767–1824); his sale, Paris, April 11, 1824, and the following days, no. 499; see Lemeux-Fraitot 2003, p. 382, under no. 411; Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769–1830, William Collingham [1815–1814]); Pierre Defer (1758–1870), his son-in-law Henri Dumenil (1823–1875); Henri Dumenil sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, May 14, 1958, no. 28, illus.; Stephen Higgins, Paris; Mr. and Mrs. Donald S. Stralem, New York, by whom given to the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1958.

Exhibition
Paris 1994–95, no. 223, illus.

Selected Bibliography
See (with previous publications) Paris 1994–95, p. 500, no. 225; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 354, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1974, no. 453, pl. 311; Harris 1994b, p. 41; Verdi in London 1995a, p. 308, fig. 171; Cropper

**RELATED WORKS**

**PAINTING**
For the painting, see cat. 58.

**DRAWING**
For a copy in Düsseldorf, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R331.

**ENGRAVING**
Engraved in reverse and with several variations by Giovanni Verini (active 1660; Andesen, no. 360; Wildenstein, no. 127; fig. 93). On the variations between the engraving and the Fogg drawing, which have been much discussed, see the previous entry (cat. 58).
60. Road along a Winding River

Pen and brown ink, squared up in black chalk, 4 x 6½ in. (100 x 162 mm)

On the verso: fragment of a rough draft of a letter, in French, written by Poussin in pen and brown ink, cut off at left, at right, and at bottom

National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. George Baer, 1986 (1986.96.2)

The precise significance of the fragment of the letter on the verso, its handwriting clearly recognizable as that of Poussin, remains uncertain. In it are the names of Raphael and the “Chevalier du Puy” (Cassiano dal Pozzo), Poussin’s friend in difficult times, who died in 1657.

Executed with a trembling hand, the drawing, despite its small size, is powerfully evocative. Parts of the sheet—the river and the trees reflected in it—are perfectly legible, whereas in other parts—the foliage on the left and the sky—Poussin shows great freedom, hatching the paper vigorously with his pen. Prat (in Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 704) related this drawing to the famous sheet in the Fogg Art Museum of The Infant of Bacchus Entrusted to the Nymphs of Nysa (cat. 59) and noted a “certain likeness between the landscape in Washington and that in upper right in the Fogg drawing, which also shows two figures near the bend of a river or a lake,” thus dating the drawing to about 1657.

PROVENANCE
Collection Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 1832 at lower center); his postmortem sale, Paris (December 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lots 1328 or 1329); collection of Maurice Marignane (L. 1872 at lower left); collection of Hans M. Calmann (1899–1982); collection of Curtis O. Baer, Atlanta; gift of Dr. and Mrs. George Baer to the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., in 1986.

EXHIBITION

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 365, illus. (with previous publications).
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, nos. 250, pl. 203 (verso) and 290, pl. 222 (recto) (entry by J. Shearman); Clayton 1996, p. 459.
61. Venus at the Fountain

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, traces of squaring up in black chalk, 10 7/8 x 9 1/8 in. (256 x 232 mm)

On the verso: a letter written by Antoine Bouzonnet-Stella in pen and brown ink
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. RF 762)

Bilbao

This superb drawing can be dated with some precision because Poussin made it on the back of a letter that Antoine Bouzonnet-Stella (1637–1682) addressed to him on August 17, 1657 (following the death of Bouzonnet-Stella’s uncle, the painter Jacques Stella [1596–1657], in April of the same year), in which he offered his services to the artist. The style of the sheet corresponds to that of the artist’s last years, shortly after 1657.

Wallace (1960) has shown that Poussin had in mind to illustrate a passage from Philostratus’s Imagines (I.6), which he knew from Blaise de Vigenère’s French edition. The theme symbolizes fertility, with the fountain of Love surmounted, at left, by a statue of Priapus. The cupids are chasing a hare that they intend to offer to Venus, while she contemplates her beauty in a mirror (Poussin hesitated over her pose, which has given us a figure with three arms worthy of Ingres’s studies for L’Âge d’or or Bain turc!).

The legibility of the drawing is made difficult by the importance Poussin gave the wash, which is generously distributed around the basin of the goddess’s fountain, as well as by the letter bleeding through from the verso. Nonetheless, the foliage at right layered with great skill, the central motif of the basin, and the amusing group of cupids pursuing the hare combine to make this sheet one of the most appealing expressions of the aging Poussin, in which wavering pen lines are combined with a perfect authority of conception and a keen sense of space.

Provenance
Aimé Charles Horace His de la Salle (1795–1878; L. 1332 and 1333 at lower center and lower left); gift to the Louvre in 1878; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1886a at lower center).

Exhibitions

Selected bibliography

For the text on the verso, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 706; and Paris 1994–95a, p. 501.

Related works
Drawing
A drawn copy, with variations and additions, as on the print, is preserved in Munich (see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R625). A drawn interpretation of this composition is found in a private collection in Paris (see ibid., no. R673).

Print
A lithograph, not reversed, by Ferdinand Piloty (1786–1844).
62. **Landscape with Diogenes**

Oil on canvas, 63 x 87 in. (160 x 221 cm; traces of nail holes visible in X-radiographs suggest that the painting was formerly folded over on the right)  
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7308)

“One day, observing a child drinking out of his hands, he [Diogenes] cast away the cup from his wallet with the words, ‘A youth has beaten me in plainness of living’” (Diogenes Laertius Lives 6.37; 1925, vol. 2, p. 39).

The canvas in the Louvre has generally been identified with the “large landscape where Diogenes broke his bowl,” mentioned by Félibien as painted in 1648 (when the latter was in Rome and regularly saw Poussin) for “Monsieur Lumague,” probably Marc-Antoine, a banker from Grisons who settled in Lyon. In 1661 and again in 1695, however, Denis Mahon strongly opposed this identification. His stance was consistently argued and is supported by a number of observations. First of all, contrary to Félibien’s account, Diogenes’s bowl is not “broken” (although Laertius did not so specify, and neither is it shown broken in the Prado painting, cat. 52, that Mahon identified with the painting mentioned by Félibien). Further, the presence of the Vatican Belvedere, clearly represented in the left background (see detail, p. 283), seems incongruous for an episode in the life of a Greek philosopher at a moment in Poussin’s career (1648) when he was particularly observant of “historical truth” (on this point, see Keazor 1955a). Even more important, the style, execution, and, above all, the spirit of the painting do not fit logically with the series of well-documented landscapes from the years around 1648. According to Mahon’s theory, Poussin would have received the commission from the duc de Richelieu shortly before 1657, before he asked the artist to paint the Four Seasons series (Richelieu must have sold the picture to Louis XIV in 1665). Mahon’s position has been supported by Friedlaender (1965), Wollheim (1987), Dempsey (1988 and 1996; for the latter’s arguments, see cat. 52), and, finally, MacGregor (1994), Conrad (1995), and Kitson (twice, in 1997 and in 1999). A recent new hanging of the Louvre painting has rallied me to Mahon’s position: when I saw the painting next to the Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice (cat. 47), it became evident to me, for the reasons given above, that the two masterpieces could not have been painted at the same time.

The present exhibition, which brings together the primary landscapes from the years around 1648 and those that Poussin painted in his final years, will allow us to clinch the matter, all the more so now that a light cleaning of the Diogenes has restored its initial tonality—clearer and colder.

The work is among the most majestic landscapes of the seventeenth century. The beauty and variety of blues and greens, the masterly layering of the planes, the skillful articulation of the buildings, abundant vegetation, water, and cloudy sky, and the quality of the reflections in the water present themselves to the eye like so many discoveries, perceived successively and with pleasure. The quality of the light, the perception of nature—a nature that, the more he experienced it, Poussin increasingly contemplated as an “other”—and the variety of observation (the bathers, the clothes left on the riverbank, the fisherman, etc.) do not detract from the vision of the whole and should not cause us to lose sight of the painter’s evident ambition. By introducing into his composition the figures of Diogenes and the young boy who drank from his hand—inserted after the landscape had been completed—Poussin gave to his painting a moral dimension, in perfect keeping with the Stoic ideas he developed during the years around 1655.

Diogenes, clothed in the duplex panum of the Cynic philosophers (as Dempsey observed in 1988), turns his back to the city and to “civilization,” as if “to place himself under the simple laws of nature” (Thuillier 1994a); “Nature serves to teach a moral, the rules of conduct” (Mérot 2004).

**PROVENANCE**

We believe this to be the “grand paysage où Diogene rompt son écuelle” mentioned by Félibien (1696, vol. 2, pp. 355–56) as painted for "Monsieur
Lumagne” (perhaps the Lyonnais banker Marc-Antoine II de Lumagne, seigneur de Sommagis, 1567–1654, who was originally from Grisons, established himself in Geneva in 1619, and died in Milan; see Coppa 1982 and Pérez 1986), and dated by him (incorrectly in my view) to 1648; collection of the duc de Richelieu; acquired by Louis XIV in 1665 (see cat. 67).

EXHIBITIONS
See Paris 1994–95a, no. 171, illus., color detail p. 121 (with previous history); London 1995a, no. 70, illus., and p. 30.

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 301; Grautoff, no. 126; Magne, no. 47; Blunt, no. 150; Badt, no. 112; Thuillier I, no. 165; Wild, no. 118; Wright, no. 156; Mérot, no. 226; Thuillier II, no. 179.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTINGS
For the painted copies, see Blunt 1966. The Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts, Brussels, owns a copy on oak (21 1/4 x 29 1/2 in. [54 x 74 cm]); see Pacco 1994, no. 42. See also Hôtel Drouot, Paris, February 1984, no. 3; Hôtel Drouot, Paris, September 29, 1998, no. 18; and the museological report by Brachais and Neveu (1993–94). Le Brun (unpublished postmortem inventory of March 2, 1690, Archives Nationales, Ménagerie Central, fonds 65, file 126) also preserved a copy. A large copy on a plaque of porcelain by Jean-Baptiste-Gabriel Langlacé (1829) is held in the Musée National de la Céramique, Sévres. The painting is seen in the well-known canvas by Samuel Morse, painted in Paris in 1831–32, showing the Salon Carré of the Louvre (see Paris 2006, no. 1).

DRAWINGS
For the drawing in the Musée Condé, Chantilly, sometimes related to the Louvre painting, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 206, and Chantilly 1994–95, no. 30 and fig. 30a (detail). For the drawing in the Louvre, related to the painting by Kimura (1979), see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R86c. For the drawing by Turner after the painting, see Cuzin in Paris 1993, p. 165; and Verdi in London 1995a, p. 282.

ENGRAVING
Engraved, not reversed, by Étienne Baudet (Andresen, no. 442; Wildenstein, no. 173; and Trümmel 2006, vol. 2, no. 50).
This work was painted in 1658 for Michel Passart, head of finances in Paris and a great lover of landscape paintings (see cat. 54; for the subject, see Schnapper and Massat 1995, as well as Olson 2002, who queries whether it was Passart or Poussin who chose the theme). The painting was in England for two centuries, almost without interruption, before it was acquired in 1924 for the Metropolitan Museum. Among its illustrious owners are Sir Joshua Reynolds, French statesman Charles-Alexandre de Calonne, Stanislas August Poniatowski, king of Poland, and the painter and art dealer Férél de Bonnemaision.

The Orion was the subject of a seminal article by Ernst Gombrich—often cited as a model of its kind—that appeared in 1944 in the Burlington Magazine (in only four pages!). Gombrich identified the literary sources that Poussin could have been acquainted with and used, especially Natale Conti’s Mythology, which gives an allegorical interpretation of the story. Since then, iconographers and iconologists have had a field day, outdoing one another with an erudition that Poussin was far from boasting. It is only with the remarkable article of H.-W. van Helsdingen (2002) that the pendulum has swung back.

Although Lucian (De Domo, 28) describes a picture of Orion remarkably similar to Poussin’s composition, the subject had rarely been represented (there is a beautiful drawing by Jacques Bellange in the Morgan Library, New York). Poussin here created one of the most affecting and poetic, images in Western painting, transforming a literary curiosity into a majestic vision. The giant hunter Orion, having been blinded by King Oenopion for having tried to violate his wife and (or) his daughter—the myth varies depending on the source—was told by an oracle that he would be cured by the rays of the sun. In Poussin’s painting, Orion, seen from the back, walks through gathering storm clouds toward the rays of the sun, which will revive his sight. Cédalion, perched on his shoulders, and Vulcan, from the ground, direct his steps toward the East, while Diana, leaning on a cloud, watches the sky (although benign in appearance and pose, according to the myth, Diana later killed Orion for trying to violate her). A luxuriant landscape of trees, hills, and mountains, full of rustling noises and mystery, envelops the scene.

Orion’s triple paternity, from Jupiter, Neptune, and Apollo (symbols, in Conti’s interpretation, of Air, Water, and the Sun—the elements that, together with Diana, produce rain clouds), helps us to understand the place that Poussin gives them in his canvas. The trail of grayish clouds at once prevents the healing rays of the sun from touching the giant’s eyes and alludes to Orion’s strange paternity and himself as a sort of living cloud. What Poussin sought to do here was to transform an allegory into an image, to depict the formation and dissipation of clouds and storms, to paint the elements in their cycles, illustrating the rejuvenating power of a fecund nature, and the sun as source of life. Van Helsdingen demonstrated that, in order to do this, Poussin needed no more than a few books: a French edition of Conti’s Mythology (Mythologie; ou, explication des fables [Paris, 1627]) and Philostratus’s Imagines would have sufficed. But do these readily available books fully encompass the ideas Poussin wished to communicate? Miller (2000, p. 120) has noted that, in this image of “a giant blinded by a storm cloud seeking enlightenment,” the artist has captured both sides of an ongoing debate in Paris about human nature and neo-Stoicism.

What is surprising is that, despite its allegorical—and possibly philosophical—program, the picture does not seem overtly literary in character. As he approached death, the artist seems little concerned with demonstrating his virtuosity or genius for formal order (the contrast with the Landscape with the Ashes of Phocion [cat. 43] is notable). Liberated from any constraints, he takes pleasure in painting a work that has little precedent, bears no relation to what other artists were doing in Rome, and left no real legacy—at least until the nineteenth century, when the picture was greatly admired in England.
Standing before this great masterpiece, rather than citing yet again the poems by Sacheverell Sitwell that the picture inspired, one is tempted to quote the lines of René Char, or the wonderful novel by Claude Simon, Orion aveugle (Geneva, 1970), or to recall Baudelaire’s “Élévation” (Les fleurs du mal [Paris: Gallimard, coll. “Bibliothèque de la Pléiade,” 1975], vol. 1, p. 10). The words from Baudelaire’s final stanza will sound familiar to readers of Poussin’s Correspondance, for, in a letter of 1639 addressed to Sublet de Noyers, the artist describes himself as someone who has made a profession of “silent things” (…moi qui fais profession des choses muettes): “Celui dont les pensers, comme des alouettes, / Vers les cieux le matin prennent un libre essor, / —Qui plane sur la vie, et comprend sans effort / Le langage des fleurs et des choses muettes!” As translated by William Aggeler (The Flowers of Evil [Fresno, Calif.: Academy Library Guild, 1954]), it reads:

He whose thoughts, like skylarks,
Toward the morning sky take flight
—Who hovers over life and understands with ease
The language of flowers and silent things!

Finally, from William Hazlitt’s influential essay (1821) devoted to the picture comes the following line: “At his touch, words start up into images, thought becomes things.” It was possibly through Hazlitt that John Keats became familiar with the picture, evidently alluding to it in Endymion (2): “Or blind Orion hungry for the moon.”

PROVENANCE
Painted for Michel Passart (1611/12–1691; Bellori and Félibien) in 1658 (Félibien); collection of Pierre de Beauchamp or de Beauchamps, master of the king’s ballets before 1687 (Brice 1687, p. 1); perhaps Pierre Thomé in 1710 (valued at 500 livres, Bonfait 1780); Andrew Hay, London; Cock sale, London, February 15, 1745, no. 46; acquired at that sale by the Duke of Rutland for £31 10s. (Pears 1868); sold by John, third Duke of Rutland, London, 1758, no. 60; acquired by Sir Joshua Reynolds; collection of Charles-Alexandre de Calonne; Calonne sale, Skinner and Dyke, London, March 28, 1795, no. 98 (“A Noble Landscape”); acquired by Bryan, through a private transaction, on April 27, 1795; Noël Desfens, sale of paintings that he acquired on behalf of the king of Poland, Skinner and Dyke, London, March 18, 1802, no. 172 ( £157 10s. to Ports; Fredericksen 1868–77, vol. 1, p. 569); Philip Panné, sale at Christie’s, London, March 28, 1819, no. 83; collection of the painter Périnel de Bonnesmaison before 1821 (see Devries 1981); between 1821 (loaned to the British Institution, no. 45) and 1847, collection of Rev. John Sanford of Nynelhead Court, Somerset; collection of his son-in-law Lord Methuen; sold by his son, Paul Sanford Methuen, the third Baron Methuen, Corsham Court, Wiltshire; Tancred Borenini then bought the painting for Lord Harewood, who declined to accept it; Durlacher Brothers, London and New York; acquired in 1924 through the Fletcher Fund.

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, no. 324; Grautoff, vol. 2, p. 238; Magne, no. 87; Blunt, no. 169; Baud, no. 328; Thuillier I, no. 205; Wild, no. 168; Wright, no. 165; Mérat, no. 216; Thuillier II, no. 227.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTING
A copy was auctioned at Christie’s, Rome, November 29–30, 1993, no. 228.
64. Two Hermits in a Landscape (The Temptation of Christ?)

Pen and brown ink over black chalk, 7⅛ x 10 in. (195 x 255 mm)
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Inv. 7414)

New York

As in many drawings from the artist’s final years, Poussin used black chalk to shade the large masses of the composition. Here, the disorder of the vegetation, further accentuated by the trembling hand, is surprising. This sheet, which corresponds to no known work of the artist, can easily be placed at about 1660.

The subject of the drawing is intriguing. In 1994, Prat and I gave it the title Two Hermits (?) in a Landscape. It now seems more likely to reflect a passage from Luke (4:4–9) in which Christ in the wilderness is tempted by the Devil, who challenges him to turn a stone into bread: “It is written, that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. And the Devil, taking him up into a high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the Devil said unto him, ‘All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will, I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.’ And Jesus answered and said unto him, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan. . . .’”

Some commentators (Verdi in Edinburgh 1994) saw in the rocky mass in the background a shape similar to Cézanne’s Mont Sainte-Victoire.

The drawing’s charm and emotional tenor arise from the perfect integration of the dialogue between Christ and the Devil in the heart of a wild but superbly composed nature.

PROVENANCE
Count Carl Cobenzl (1712–1770), Brussels; acquired, with the rest of Cobenzl’s collection, by Catherine II in 1768; Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (L. 2601 at lower right and the museum’s stamp, not indexed by Lugt, affixed in 1982, at lower left).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 367, illus. (with previous publications).
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 29, pl. 222 (entry by J. Shearman); Rosenberg 2000b, p. 196, and fig. 249 p. 197.

RELATED WORKS
In the Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence, is a copy of a drawing by Poussin very similar in its composition to that in the Hermitage (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 4493, illus.)
65. Landscape with Hagar and the Angel

Oil on canvas, 39 3/4 x 29 7/8 in. (100 x 75 cm)
Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Antica in Palazzo Barberini, Rome (Inv. 2068)

The painting seems to have escaped notice until 1960, when it was published by André Chastel. Discovered and attributed to Poussin by Rudolf Wittkower (in Blunt 1966, p. 10, no. 7) or by Luigi Salerno (in Chastel 1960), it had belonged to the Altieri collection in Rome for some time (although our research on this point is not yet complete) and was astutely acquired by the Italian state in 1983. No one has ever doubted its status as an original, and specialists agree on a date of about 1660 at the earliest, based on comparison of the clouds with those in Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun (cat. 63), the wildness of the site with that in the Landscape with Hercules and Cacus (fig. 44), and the colors, execution, and emotional tenor with what is found in Winter: The Flood (fig. 42; see Blunt 1978).

Nor does the subject, dear to Claude Lorrain, who was friends with the aging Poussin, invite debate. According to the Bible, when Sarah was unsuccessful in having a child by Abraham, she urged on him her servant, Hagar the Egyptian, who soon became pregnant ("I have given my maid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes", Genesis 16:5). jealous, Sarah mistreated Hagar until the latter fled into the desert. The angel of God met her—the moment Poussin chose—and ordered her to return to her mistress. "Submit thyself under her hands," he told her (Genesis 16:1–9). Soon after, Hagar gave birth to Ishmael.

There is one point that divides scholars, however: was the painting cut at left? Is this merely a trimmed fragment from a canvas left unfinished by Poussin—one whose composition nonetheless works on its own? Chastel and Thuillier, followed (with reservations) by Wild and Mérot, lean toward this view, which is not shared by Urbani (who, after the painting’s restoration and relining, was able to examine the edges of the canvas), Blunt (firmly in 1982), or Wright and Verdi (in Edinburgh 1990). At my request at the time of the Paris exhibition, Rolando Dionisi of the restoration laboratory of the Soprintendenza in Rome (April 28, 1994) examined the painting and confirmed that it has not been cut. Although the vertical format might seem surprising in Poussin’s œuvre, there is much that is surprising in the late canvases. It is also true that the subject is decentralized, either to counterbalance a pendant painting or, more likely, as a result of a new audacity on the part of the old artist. For my part, I am not at all troubled that Hagar seems about to walk out of the confines of the painting: this was an aspect of Poussin’s practice in his last compositions.

Hagar makes her way through the trees and rocks in a wild and inhospitable nature. Called by the angel, she turns her gaze to the sky, full of hope but already submissive. With an assured gesture, the angel orders her to retrace her steps and abase herself before Sarah. Large clouds cover the sunlit sky. The angel, wearing a robe of straw yellow that contrasts with the blue of the faraway mountain, is illuminated by the light of the sun, source of life and symbol of Hagar’s fertility. In this immense nature, Hagar seems vulnerable and abandoned, left to her fate, whose outcome remains unknown to her. Moving in its simplicity and intimacy, the Landscape with Hagar and the Angel affects us as much through the majestic spectacle of nature as through the dialogue—filled with hope—that links the friendless woman and her unborn child to their providential rescuer.

PROVENANCE
In the Altieri collection, at least by the nineteenth century; in 1960 and 1966, collection of Contessa Paolini, née Altieri (sale, Finarte, Rome, December 1, 1982, no. 212; notified, it sold for 92 million lire); acquired by the Galleria Nazionale in 1983, following a lively debate in the Italian press, upset at the prospect of the work’s leaving Italy.

EXHIBITIONS

CATALOGUES RAISONNÉS
Smith, Grautoff, Magne, and Bakt, not mentioned; Blunt, no. 7; Thuillier I, no. 223; Wild, no. 201; Wright, no. 199; Mérot, no. 210; Thuillier II, no. 241.
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS

PAINTINGS

In the Bozzolani inventory of the former dal Pozzo collections, undoubtedly after 1741; published by T. Standring (in Rome 2000c, p. 211, no. 80), who noted: "Altri due in tela di 4 palmi per traverso rappresentante Paesi, uno del quale con figura in piccolo de S. Girolamo, e l’altro Agar, quando l’angelo gli’ insegnia il fonte per il putto mortibondo, originale di Nicolo Pusino Con Sua Cornice piano dorate Liscie." A painting with this subject from the collection of James Milnes, auctioned at Coxe, London, on June 16, 1806, no. 63, measuring 36 x 42 in. (91.4 x 106.7 cm) and sold for £12, 12 s., was mentioned by Frederickson 1988–97, vol. 2, part 2, p. 752.
66. **Spring: Adam and Eve**

Oil on canvas, 46¾ x 63 in. (118 x 160 cm)

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7303)

67. **Summer: Ruth and Boaz**

Oil on canvas, 46¾ x 63 in. (118 x 160 cm)

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Peintures (Inv. 7304)

The paintings of the Four Seasons are incontestably the most
famous works by Poussin and the most often illustrated: as has
been frequently repeated, they constitute his “artistic and
spiritual testament.” We are immensely fortunate to be able
to show here **Spring** and **Summer, Autumn** and **Winter** hav-
ing been deemed too fragile to make the trip (see figs. 42, 48;
**Autumn** has never been relined, whereas the paint surface
of **Winter** has been transferred). It seemed to us, however,
difficult to limit the entry to **Spring** and **Summer** alone, as the
four compositions belong to a cycle unique in the history of
Western painting.

Félibien informs us that the artist painted the four
canvas between 1660 and 1664 “for the duc de Richelieu”
(Armand-Jean, duc de Richelieu, the young great-nephew of
Cardinal Richelieu). Yet to this day no one seems to know the
circumstances of the commission or the order in which
Poussin painted them: did Poussin follow the order of the sea-
sons, beginning with **Spring** and ending with **Winter**, or did
he adopt a different course?

We know that, as a result of a tennis match, the duc de
Richelieu lost his thirteen works by Poussin and some twelve
other paintings from his collection to the young Louis XIV
(1638–1715). The king generously compensated Richelieu
with a gift of 50,000 livres (in fact, the tennis game masked a
simple commercial transaction). We also know that the sportive
encounter between the two men took place after October 13,
1665, the day that Bernini and Chantelou paid a visit to the
duc de Richelieu and admired his collection (Bernini was
circumspect regarding the Four Seasons). What we do not
know is the price the duke paid for the four paintings or, more
important, who chose the subjects and made the remarkable
decision either to embellish biblical episodes with landscapes
symbolizing the seasons or, conversely, to treat the seasons in
terms of biblical themes. The young duke was barely older than
thirty when Poussin undertook to paint these works, and they
entered the royal collections just weeks, if not days, following
the artist’s death on November 19, 1665 (the receipt for pay-
ment is dated December 26, 1665: see Ferraton 1949, p. 438).

The Four Seasons have given rise to endless commentaries,
innumerable interpretations, and the most varied and
contradictory “readings,” yet we certainly cannot say that we
have “plumbed all their secrets.” They have inspired and con-
tinue to inspire painters and musicians, poets and (of course)
art historians. From the moment they arrived in Paris, they
caused a sensation. In the moving account of Louis-Henri de
Loménie, comte de Brienne (Thuilier 1960, p. 222): “We
gathered at the Duc de Richelieu’s, where there could be
found all those who, in Paris, were most interested in paint-
ing. The conference [that was held] was long and learned.
[Sébastien] Bourdon and [Charles] le Brun spoke and said
good things. I also spoke, declaring myself for the **The Deluge**
[Winter]. Monsieur Passart [the owner of cat. 63] agreed
with me. M. le Brun, who thought little of the **Spring** and
**Autumn**, lavished lofty praise on **Summer**. As for Bourdon, he
prized **Earthly Paradise** [i.e., **Spring**] and would not yield an
inch.” Since Brienne, discussions have proceded apace, with
everyone displaying a predilection for this or that painting.
On May 2, 1671, Jean-Baptiste de Champaigne devoted a lec-
ture to his colleagues of the Académie Royale to **Summer** (the
conférence has recently been published); Nicolas Loir had
already delivered one on Winter on August 4, 1668. Commentary on the paintings continued during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. As Richard Verdi (in London 1995a) has ably demonstrated, Winter, often referred to as The Deluge or The Flood, emerged as the clear favorite: Rousseau declared, “Yes, certainly, I don’t much like paintings, and in my life only one has appealed to me, namely Poussin’s Deluge” (Guimbau 1928, p. 141). Other admirers included Jean François Pierre Peyron (1744–1814), who copied it, Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), who owned the engraving of it (which Degas copied), Anne Louis Girodet (1767–1824), who was inspired by it, as well as Jean-François Millet, Cézanne, and—let it not be forgotten—Chateaubriand, to mention only French names.

Today Poussin’s paintings of the Four Seasons are so familiar that they no longer cause surprise, but seventeenth-century viewers must have found them disconcerting as well as audacious in conception. There was nothing novel about painting the seasons, but it was quite another thing to symbolize them with landscapes, introducing episodes “drawn from holy History” (Félibien). It must have been obvious that each work described not only a stage of life but also an hour of the day. For spring, Poussin chose the light of early morning; for summer, the midday sun. The subdued colors of early evening symbolized autumn. And then there is Winter, which cannot help but surprise us. Not only did Poussin paint a nighttime scene—he had already done this on numerous occasions—but he also described winter “without showing snow” (as noted in a conference at the Académie on April 3, 1694; see Jouin 1883, p. 103).

The choice of biblical episodes calls for some explanation. Spring is illustrated by Adam and Eve, shown nude in the Garden of Eden. Eve points toward the apple as God, flying overhead, blesses his creation.

The story of Ruth and Boaz symbolizes Summer. Ruth, from the land of Moab, kneels before Boaz, asking permission to glean in his fields. He addresses a servant, leaning on his lance, to grant her request. From the descendants of Ruth, the poor but beautiful foreign servant, chosen by the rich and powerful Boaz and singled out by destiny, will be born David, the ancestor of Jesus Christ.

In Autumn, pomegranates and the grapes of Canaan evoke the land promised to the Hebrews by the Lord: Moses sent his messengers to explore the land of Canaan, and they have returned loaded with the fruit of that fertile land, which will soon be theirs.

As for Winter, it is illustrated by the Flood—as Michelangelo had done—and it alludes to the end of the world. As eighteenth-century commentators already observed, if we set aside our knowledge of the fate awaiting those trying to escape the waters, we see that they have not lost all hope: they all, in their own ways, struggle to save their lives. In the distance, in the upper left, is Noah’s Ark, symbol of hope.

In recent years, discussion of these works has focused on interpretation: on elucidating their deep significance and Poussin’s more or less avowed intentions. Two opposing sides have emerged, and their positions are impossible to summarize in a few lines.

On the one hand is an interpretation that can be loosely described as Christian and that emphasizes the biblical and religious meaning of each scene as well as the entire cycle. This position was defended by Saueländer (1956) in an article that caused a sensation; by Kerber (1982), who, however, does not share Saueländer’s analysis; and by Santucci (1985). On the other is the more “pantheistic” vision of Blunt (1967) and the more profane view of Badt (1969). Bätschmann (1995) sees a pessimistic conception of the fate of humanity—with the redemption of man symbolized by the snakes of the Flood, so often noted (although the one slithering up the trunk of a tree, in the center of the composition, has been overlooked)—as well as “a meditation on the meaning of life and death” and, unquestionably, a synthesis of the aging artist’s Stoic philosophy.

There is something to each of these analyses. Thus, Blunt, the defender of the “pagan” theory, subscribes in large part to Saueländer’s interpretation, for whom the three first seasons symbolize three stages of human history: before the advent of the Law (Spring); sub gratia (Summer, because from the marriage of Ruth and Boaz will come David and Christ, symbolizing the union of the two Laws); and sub lege (Autumn, under the Laws of the Old Testament). Recently, in an article devoted to Poussin’s landscapes with the revealing subtitle “An Essay on the Possibilities and the Frontiers of Iconographic Interpretation,” Saueländer has returned to his thesis of 1956, noting: “The landscapes of Poussin belong
to that category of works for which there is no final word. This text was written to defend my interpretation of 1957 [the article was actually dated 1956] against the radical condemnations of the rationalists and visionaries and, even more, to defend the poetry of Poussin's landscapes against the mysteries of that 'higher iconography' so dear to M. Baxandall." (This article is dated 2005 but was published in 2006: see also Sauerländer's essay in this catalogue.)

For my part, these interpretations often pay too little attention to the extraordinary beauty of the pictures, to their harmonious balance, their observed details so judicious that they do not detract from the vision of the whole, their inventive freshness, and their colors, adapted to each of the seasons—the golden wheat of Summer, the lavender blues of Autumn, the icy grays of the interminable rain of Winter, the tender greens of Spring. Despite the difficulty he had in holding a brush at this point in his life, Poussin never forgot that he was a painter, or that painting is a pleasure and stimulation for the eye, that "delectionation" that he knew how to procure and whose primacy he never forgot.

I cannot resist recalling that, in front of Autumn, Corot exclaimed: "There is nature!" Nor can I omit Chateaubriand's comment: "This painting [The Flood] recalls something of the forlorn quality of age and of the hand of the old man: the admirable trembling of time! Often men of genius announced their end through masterpieces: it is their soul that takes wing" (Chateaubriand 1991, p. 104).

In counterpoint, and on a more intimate but no less affecting note, we may recall the letter the painter Abraham Brueghel sent to his Sicilian patron, Don Antonio Ruffo, dated May 22, 1665 (Thuillier 1994a, p. 175): "Poussin does nothing more these days than, for pleasure, take an occasional small glass of good wine with Claude Lorrain." A few weeks later, Poussin was dead.

PROVENANCE
Painted between 1665 and 1664 for Armand-Jean, duc de Richelieu (1629–1715); acquired by Louis XIV in 1665 (Richelieu lost twenty-five paintings, thirteen of them by Poussin, in a tennis game with King Louis XIV; the king compensated him with 50,000 livres; see cat. 62).
68. **Landscape**

Brush and brown wash over light drawing in black chalk, 9 x 8¼ in. (230 x 209 mm)

On the verso: *Mercury and Paris* (?) (fig. 95)

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, traces of oxidized gouache

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32445)

New York

This landscape was not “discovered” until very recently. Certainly Blunt (1974) had an inkling of its existence, but it was not until the paper backing that covered it was removed that its importance was realized. It is exhibited here for the first time.

Executed only with brush over a very light preparation in black chalk, the right side has been cut. Some trees, a large rock, a mountainous vista, and a curving path suffice for the composition: there is no trace of human presence.

There is no agreement regarding the subject on the verso (see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 373), though it has often been related to Poussin’s last painting, the *Apollo and Daphne* (Louvre), which was left unfinished at his death (see fig. 12 and cats. 69–71). Accordingly, I would date the verso about the same time (ca. 1660 at the latest). In support of assigning a similar date to the recto—a view contrary to the opinion of J.-F. Méjanès (1997), who proposes the years 1637–38—is the evidence of the comparable treatment of the groups of trees, with areas of the white paper held in reserve to indicate the light of the sun. There is no sign of virtuosity, no attempt to dazzle in this simple and affecting description of the Roman countryside.

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**Provenance**

Collection of Éverard Jabach (ca. 1648–1695); acquired by the Cabinet du Roi in 1671 (traces of L. 296 in on the mounted drawings on the verso at upper left); Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 and L. 2207 on the verso at lower right and left).

**Exhibitions (Verso)**


**Selected Bibliography**

See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 373, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1933, no. 201, pl. 201 (verso); Friedlaender and Blunt 1974, p. 109 (recto); Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1683 (recto), illus., and no. 1754 (verso), illus.

**Related Works**

**Engravings**

The verso was engraved, not reversed, by Félix Massard (born 1773) in the volume by Gault de Saint-Germain (1806, pp. 35–36, no. 22, pl. XXIX and p. 72 no. 146), under the title *Le berger Paris* [sic], and by Edmond Joseph Ramaus (1822–1890).

**Copy**

The verso of the drawing was copied by Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros (1771–1835) (Proust catalogue, Centenaire II, 1978–79, album no. 65 [since taken apart], folio 8).

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Figure 95 Nicolas Poussin, *Mercury and Paris* (?), verso of cat. 68
69. **Apollo as a Shepherd**

Pen and brown ink, traces of black chalk in the upper part of the sheet, \(11\frac{1}{8} \times 16\frac{3}{4}\) in. (290 x 424 mm)

On the verso, by a different hand: *Study for the Facade of a Palace*

Pen and brown ink

Biblioteca Reale, Turin (Inv. 16295)

Poussin’s last painting, *Apollo and Daphne* (fig. 12), left unfinished and given in 1664, at the latest, by the artist to the future Cardinal Camillo Massimi (1620–1677), has been studied in minute detail over the last half century. The exceptionally plentiful preparatory drawings, numbering at least ten—four are in this exhibition (including the verso of the previous entry, cat. 68)—demonstrate the importance Poussin accorded this painting, described below (its fragility precludes its traveling). The multiple interpretations it has inspired among the major iconologists of the past century compete in sagacity and erudition.

According to myth, Apollo had mocked Cupid's weapons as arms for children and not for gods. To take revenge, Cupid directed at Apollo a sharp arrow of gold that instantly inflamed him with love for the beautiful Daphne. In the painting, Apollo is seated under a large oak. He gazes at Daphne, at the opposite side of the composition. She clings to her father, the river god Peneus, her arms around his neck. Cupid, standing in front of Apollo, unleashes a blunl arrow at Daphne that will make it impossible for her to love him. The primary subject of the painting is thus the unhappy and thwarted love of Apollo, the god of fertility and life, for Daphne, stubborn in her virginity—a theme rarely taken up by painters, certainly much less frequently than the subsequent episode in Ovid’s narrative, of Apollo pursuing Daphne, which Poussin treated on many occasions (see, for example, cat. 4 and fig. 57).

The drawing in Turin, which belonged to two of the most eminent collectors of all time, Pierre-Jean Mariette and Baron Dominique Vivant Denon, shows Apollo as a herder (of Admetus’s herd?), with no reference to the theme of love or Daphne. Blunt (1967) observes that, in the painting, the skin of the serpent Python is wrapped around the tree, but here (as in cat. 70), the reptile seems alive.

The sheet is among Poussin’s most idyllic—one of those in which, by the simple play of the hatchings of the pen, the human figure is perfectly integrated within a vast landscape that absorbs it without reducing its prominence. Gods and mortals, animals and inanimate objects are united in the imaginary space of the myth, without tension or violence. In this evocation of a nature free of conflicts, where the harmony of a mythic, early age prevails, Poussin equaled his friend and contemporary Claude Lorrain.

**PROVENANCE**

Collection Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 1852 at lower right); his post-mortem sale, Paris, December 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; Baron Dominique Vivant Denon (1747–1825); his sale, May 1–19, 1826, no. 784 (158 francs); collection of Giovanni Volpato (1797–1871); sold by Volpato to King Carlo Alberto of Savoy (1798–1849) in 1839; Biblioteca Reale, Turin (L. 2744 at lower left).

**EXHIBITIONS**

Paris 1960, no. 239; Paris 1994–95a, no. 244, illus. (reversed); Rome 2000b, no. 47 (entry by O. Bonfait).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 380, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1953, no. 179, pl. 145; Batschmann 1966, pp. 545, 555 n. 16, 562 fig. 3; Van Helsingin 2002, p. 169 n. 91.

For the verso, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 380, illus.

**RELATED WORKS**

**PAINTING**

For the painting in the Louvre (fig. 12), see Paris 1994–95a, no. 242, illus.

**DRAWINGS**

For the ten drawings more or less directly related to the painting, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 373–82 (four are in this exhibition; see cats. 68–71; Clayton 1996 rejects our no. 574); see also Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. B855, B857.

**ENGRAVING**

An anonymous engraving, in reverse, was made for Denon’s *Monuments des arts du dessin* (1829, vol. 4, pl. CCLXXXVI).
70. Apollo and Daphne

Pen and brown ink, brown wash and black chalk, squared up in black chalk, 12⅛ x 17¼ in. (307 x 439 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32448)

New York

Although squared, as though for transfer, the drawing is still far removed from the composition of the renowned painting in the Louvre (fig. 12), which must have been painted in the same period as the Four Seasons. Many authors have suggested calling the Louvre painting The Misfortunes of Apollo, a title that perfectly suits this marvelous drawing in the Louvre. As in the painting and other preparatory drawings for it, Poussin begins with the principal subject of Apollo’s ill-fated love for Daphne, around which he develops other themes: Apollo watching Admetus’s herds, Mercury stealing an arrow from his quiver, the serpent Python, the myths of Io and Hyacinth, and so on.

The drawing places the god far away from the inaccessible object of his desire; in the right foreground, Daphne finds refuge in the arms of her father, the river god Peneus. Having already pierced Apollo with the pointed arrow of a fated love, Cupid (shown smaller in the painting) aims a blunt arrow, symbol of love bound to fail, at Daphne. The work illustrates the grievous impossibility of a union between a god projected into the world of mortals and a nymph destined for a sad fate: Daphne will be transformed into a laurel tree, and from its foliage Apollo will make a crown, the future attribute of the master of Arts—a very feeble compensation.

Apollo appears here both as musician (the lyre he holds in the drawing was omitted from the painting) and herder, the object of mockery from Mercury, who steals an arrow from his quiver. A snake is wrapped around a tree, and the god is accompanied by two dogs and Cupid, about to shoot his second arrow.

PROVENANCE
Collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740), as indicated by the number 130 in pen and black ink at lower right; collection of Charles Paul Jean Baptiste Bourgevin Vialart de Saint-Morys (1743–1795); confiscated from exiled royals in 1793; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (no mark).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTING
See figure 12.

DRAWINGS
See cats. 68, 69, 71.

The drawing was copied by Antoine-Jean, Baron Gros (1771–1835; Prouté catalogue, Centenaire II 1978–79, album no. 65 [since taken apart], folio 45).

ENGRAVING
Engraved in facsimile by Antoine-François Gelée (1756–1860) and completed by Édouard Rosette (born 1827) for the Chalcographie du Louvre.
71. Apollo and Daphne

Pen and brown ink, black chalk, 14 x 21½ in. (355 x 548 mm)
On the verso, in the upper left corner, are traces of a sketch (probably by Poussin) in black chalk
Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence (Inv. 8105 S)

Bilbao

The attribution of this drawing has seen many vicissitudes. By turns, it has been considered a copy of a lost original or a pastiche (E. Panofsky 1950; Friedlaender and Blunt 1953; Wild 1980), then an original (Blunt 1960; Rosenberg in Florence 1968). Blunt had second thoughts about the attribution (1967), before finally accepting it (1979 and 1988). More recently, Clayton (1996) has judged it “a tracing by Poussin from another sheet.”

It is true that, at first glance, some aspects of the drawing elicit surprise and even real disappointment: its dimensions, its dryness, its lack of finish. If the character of the line describing the figures is examined, however, it will not appear so different from what is found in cat. 70. The squaring also speaks in favor of the drawing’s authenticity, as does the barely visible presence of Cupid drawing his bow (shown, very sketchily, between the nymph seen from the back, stretched out in the foreground, and the cows under the tree). Moreover, on the verso are light sketches in black chalk (of which it was not possible to obtain a photograph) that might well be by Poussin. Finally, the drawing brings together the episodes organized around the theme of the unfortunate Apollo as they are found in cats. 69 and 70 and in the unfinished canvas in the Louvre (see fig. 12). In the background Jupiter can be seen entrusting Argus with Io, transformed into a heifer, as well as Apollo pursuing Daphne. Daphne can also be seen in the right foreground, embracing her father even more tenderly than she does in the Louvre sheet. Mercury, at left in the Louvre drawing, does not appear here.

This may be Poussin’s last known drawing. It is a vast page in which the rigor of thought and an imagination turned entirely toward a world about to be consummated are abruptly frozen by the impossibility of going any further.

PROVENANCE
Emilio Santarelli (1801–1886, L. 907 at lower right); given in 1866 to the Galleria degli Uffizi (L. 930 at lower left).

EXHIBITION
Paris 1960, no. 240, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORKS
PAINTING
See figure 12.

DRAWINGS
See cats. 68–70.

Friedlaender and Blunt (1953, p. 18) mention a copy of this drawing in the Crocker Art Gallery (now the Crocker Art Museum), Sacramento, but it is not known there.
IV
Poussin’s Landscape Drawings

For many years, Poussin’s drawings attracted little interest. The artist had been thought responsible for a considerable number of sheets of a more or less high quality but of the widest variety. Looking at those drawings today, they seem so far removed from the paintings—as much by style as by subject—that it appears surprising they were ever thought to be by him.

The study of Poussin’s drawings took place in two phases. From 1939 to 1974, the corpus undertaken by Walter Friedlaender and patiently pursued by Anthony Blunt resulted in five volumes, published in London—that are still essential today. Then, in 1994 there appeared the two-volume catalogue raisonné that I wrote in collaboration with Louis-Antoine Prat, from which I have repeated some of the entries. The study of the landscape drawings as a group also took place in two phases. The fourth volume of Friedlaender and Blunt, published in 1963, was primarily concerned with landscapes by or attributed to Poussin. They entrusted the research to John Shearman (1931–2003), who magnificently gave order to this aspect of the artist’s activity, until then barely studied (except in 1960, by Shearman himself). Of the hundreds of drawings attributed to Poussin, Shearman retained only twenty-two. In 1994, Prat and I were even more stringent, eliminating eight of those twenty-two sheets.

What criteria did we establish for retaining or rejecting a landscape drawing in Poussin’s oeuvre? To go back to what Prat and I wrote in 1994:

What we know about Poussin’s style in drawing landscapes can be said in a few lines and analyzed on the basis of a few simple rules that must be observed in order to move beyond attributions arising for sentimental reasons or arguments and an exclusive concern for quality. We find the postulate that because a landscape drawing is superb it must be by Poussin, hardly convincing. On the contrary, we believe that Poussin’s means were limited and that drawings that are too skillful or too elegant cannot be by him.

The fundamental criterion—which has been stated before—is that Poussin’s pure landscape drawings must resemble the landscapes in the middle ground and background of his compositional designs. Some of the latter are sufficiently developed to give a firm idea of their conceptions and possibilities (cats. 45, 46, and 48). In landscape, Poussin did not have the lyrical vision of an artist at ease with the handling of wash set down with brio. Each plane had to be defined, the trunks and branches strongly outlined, the foliage more than just evoked. In looking at nature, he began by analyzing it, as an observer rather than a poet. His conception of landscape was measured and suited to the range of his possibilities as draftsman, which consisted of conveying the maximum emotion with the minimum means. In all of his drawings, line is more important than touch, and the rendering of volume is favored over purely luminous or “tactile” effects.

The other fundamental approach was cleverly suggested by Shearman (1963) in his introduction to the fourth volume of the corpus, and it is regrettable that he did not take his remarks to their full conclusion. Only certain categories of landscape drawings assert themselves as unquestionably authentic:
a) drawings preparatory to a painting (these are rare; we
have given them precedence in this catalogue).

b) drawings with Poussin’s handwriting (cats. 33, 60,
72, 73).

c) landscape drawings that contain figures that can
unquestionably be recognized as Poussin’s (cats. 82 and
68 verso).

Such a restrictive attitude might seem sacrilegious, espe-
cially after the 1988 exhibition at Fort Worth organized by
Konrad Oberhuber, who attempted to enlarge considerably
the number of youthful drawings by the artist. Yet this attitude
is not new: over the past several years, it has been proposed
that many landscape drawings generally accepted as Poussin’s
should be reassigned to others, including the little-known but
skilled Italians Bartolomeo Torregiani and, especially, Gian
Domenico Desideri.

Such hesitations led Louis-Antoine Prat to question even
the status of one of the best-known, if atypical, sheets: The
Aventine (cat. 80) in the Uffizi, Florence. Despite the criteria
we set for ourselves, we included in our catalogue raisonné
two new drawings, barely known even today (cats. 78, 79). We
do not feel that we contravened the rules because their
resemblance to landscapes drawn on sheets with figures dat-
ing before 1640 leaps out—as Ann Sutherland Harris was the
first to discern for one of the drawings (cat. 78); the second
sheet, which belongs to the J. Paul Getty Museum, is com-
pletely consistent with the other. The rapidly made drawings
that evoke natural formations (cats. 25, 50) correspond to the
concern for topography demonstrated by the artist in his
paintings, and their written annotations recall what we find
in Poussin’s letters.

Although we were sometimes—and with good reason—
criticized for this or that position, and although the discussion
regarding certain drawings remains lively (cat. 81), Prat
and I were surprised at the welcome accorded our two vol-
umes (volume 1 contains the 382 drawings we consider origi-
nal works; volume 2, the 1,333 that we rejected). The reviews
cited in the entries of the present catalogue (those of Brig-
stocke, Clayton, Keazor, Harris, Mérôt) are confirmations of
our views. The exhibition of Poussin’s drawings in Windsor,
held at Dulwich and other venues (1995–96), with a cata-
logue by Martin Clayton, constitutes a useful advance in our
knowledge of the artist’s graphic work, as do the contribu-
tions of Clovis Whitfield and Konrad Oberhuber (not to mention
those of Marco Chiariini) at the colloquia held in Paris and
Rome in 1994, the acts of which were published in 1996.

In the years since 1994, several landscape drawings have
appeared or reappeared that I have decided to exhibit, some-
times not without a certain audacity (cats. 84, 85). Some pro-
blems with dating have been resolved, or to be more precise,
in some cases new dates have been proposed that must be
taken into account. At the same time, I have retained some
sheets that were rejected in 1994 because of what we judged
to be their insufficient quality (cats. 87–92); comparing them
with drawings whose authenticity has never been contested
will make it possible to come to a new determination.

In some cases, matters that had seemed definitively estab-
lished were shown to be fragile. Thus, doubt has been cast on
the provenance from the collection of Chantelou (1609–1694),
one of Poussin’s closest friends, of a drawing in the
Metropolitan Museum (cat. 86): the appearance of the
paraph that was believed to be Chantelou’s on several French
sheets that are unquestionably from the eighteenth century
forced us to renounce that hypothesis.

Our catalogue raisonné of 1994 suffered from a certain
weakness. True, in the exhibition in Paris we had included
Poussin’s finest drawings—his most beautiful landscapes
(they were not presented in London the following year)—but
we did not want them to appear with sheets we thought
doubtful or had rejected. Instead, we used photographs in
reaching our decisions, and this carries its risks. In the pres-
cent exhibition, landscape drawings of assured attribution are
reunited with others, some of them spectacular, that I con-
sider doubtful. This is particularly true of a group of drawings
that Shearman had put together in 1963: the so-called G
group. (For these, I refer the reader to the relevant introd-
uction: see pp. 343–45 and cats. 93–113). I hope that the con-
frontation between these drawings and the incontestable
sheets will allow us to remove definitively the former from
the catalogue raisonné.

Every exhibition has its limitations. First there are the
loans that are refused (including the View of a Bend in a
River in Montpellier [see fig. 100], The Rape of Europa in the
Uffizi in Florence, and some drawings in the Louvre that
have traveled too much in the past several years). There are museums that are not allowed to lend (especially crucial for us were the Musée Bonnat in Bayonne and the Musée Condé in Chantilly). There are thefts (the admirable Five Trees from Uppsala, reproduced as fig. 35, p. 77). There is the understandably strict limitation on the lending period for drawings—only three months—that every exhibition must take into account; it compelled us to divide many of the loans secured between Bilbao and New York.

One last point requires comment: in contrast to what was decided for the 1994 exhibition at the Grand Palais, in the present catalogue I have tended to separate the drawings from the paintings. To be more precise, I have divided the drawings into three groups. Those that relate to paintings in the exhibition (or, in some cases, that relate to well-known paintings) have been catalogued with those paintings. "Pure" landscape drawings, with no human presence, have been placed together and catalogued chronologically in a second section (cats. 72–92). Finally, there is a third section—the drawings of the "G group": magnificent drawings that I don't believe are by Poussin (cats. 93–113). I admit that these divisions are imperfect. For example, the drawing Landscape with a Small Temple from the Hermitage (cat. 82) contains figures. Nonetheless, I placed it in the second category because the landscape dominates. By contrast, the admirable sheet in the British Museum, or at least its verso showing a Landscape with a Burning Fortress (cat. 48), as well as the Landscape with a Burning Fortress and a Basilica in Düsseldorf (cat. 50)—"pure" landscape drawings with virtually no figures—are catalogued with the paintings to which they seem to relate.

Poussin may not be a great draftsman when compared with such artists as Rembrandt, Rubens, many Italian artists of the seventeenth century, or even Claude, Bellange, Callot, or Le Brun. His lack of facility is at least one of the reasons for this. For Poussin, drawing was never (or rarely) anything but a means, a way of transcribing an idea into an image. He apparently destroyed a good part of his graphic production, and he only rarely expressed himself on the importance he accorded to drawing.

Poussin's drawings are not only of great importance for those who study his painted oeuvre, but they are also moving testaments to an indispensable and daily practice. "In the last days of his life, with a trembling and heavy hand that refused to obey him, the fire of his imagination not yet being extinguished, this skillful Painter brought to life magnificent ideas, which excited admiration," wrote Mariette in 1741. It is these "ideas" that matter to us. His drawings have nothing of the anecdotal, decorative, or picturesque. He always exerts discipline, always aims for the essential. Precisely despite (or because of) their awkwardness, Poussin's drawings possess a singularity, a questioning, a tension that render them especially precious to us.

I wished (and attempted) to arrange these drawings chronologically, a particularly delicate task given the absence of any fixed points of reference. I would beg the reader's indulgence for a chronology I know to be approximate, but which I trust the exhibition will help us to rectify.
The Reiset and Chennevières Drawings

This section begins with six landscape drawings, all horizontal, made with pen and brown ink alone, and all by the same hand, to my mind incontestably that of Poussin.

Prat and I were the first to become interested in the two drawings in the Angers museum (cats. 72, 73) and to award their authorship to Poussin. They had come from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières (1820–1899). We understand that they belong to a group of similar sheets the marquis had owned—which he described in a celebrated series of articles that appeared between 1894 and 1897 in the periodical L'Artiste—and that they were included in the marquis’s post-mortem sale in 1900.

Thus summarized, the matter of provenance seems clear and simple. The reality proves somewhat less so. The drawings in Angers carry an annotation on the back in Chennevières’s hand informing us that Frédéric Reiset (1815–1892), the curator of drawings at the Louvre and a great art lover, had offered them to him. Today, Reiset’s collection belongs in large part to the Musée Condé in Chantilly, rich in Poussin’s drawings, especially in landscapes (see Rosenberg and Prat in Chantilly 1994–95).

“They were part of a notebook with similar sketches, very light, but very interesting, sort of notes that the great man made during his walks in the environs of Rome. M. Reiset gave me some of them,” wrote Chennevières on the verso of the mat on cat. 73. Very likely, Reiset had kept several. Everything leads Prat and me to believe that the drawing in the Fogg Art Museum (cat. 74)—which, unlike the five other sheets included in this catalogue, does not carry Chennevières’s mark—was originally part of the “notebook of sketches.” Given confirmation of this information, we could today conclude that the “notebook of sketches” (whose total number of pages remains unknown) that Reiset owned comprised panoramic views of the environs of Rome, most likely made on-site.

When did Poussin make use of the notebook? In 1994, we proposed the years between 1635 and 1640. This was the period of the artist’s return to nature: no longer the landscape “in the Venetian style,” viewed straight on, in which the protagonists of the scene are immersed, but a landscape seen from a distance with a high vantage point. The depiction of figures was also conceived in a completely new way.

We alluded above to Chennevières’s articles for L’Artiste. The lovely text, printed below, begins with the words: “I have six of these pen studies. . . .” Five of the drawings in this exhibition (cats. 72, 73, 75, 76, 77) carry the mark of the eminent collector, but one (cat. 75) also carries the mark of Desperet, an important collector whose post-mortem sale of 1865 remains famous. It seems plausible that, to the sheets Reiset generously offered him, Chennevières added at least one. There were, in fact, seven drawings described “Landscapes. — Ruins. In pen.” sold as one lot (no. 416; awarded to Robin for 42 francs) in the Chennevières sale of 1900. We know nothing of the seventh drawing.

Further, in his texts of 1894 to 1897, Chennevières described the landscapes that he then owned. Five are more or less easy to identify: they are, again, cats. 72, 73, 75, 76, and 77. About the one missing item Chennevières said: “Here is a road descending in a valley and that recalls the one that descends the Acqua Acetosa; wooded slope at right; at left, a house with an umbrella pine rising nearby; two horses are stopped at the bend of a road; group of houses on the hill in the middle ground; hillocks on the horizon, at right” (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. M72; and Prat and Llhinares 2007, p. 54 and n. 19).

It remains to quote, as promised above, the following lovely text by Chennevières: “I have six of these pen studies, some of them altogether delicate, of sites with a fine animation and of vast expanses captured, any morning, in a promenade in the environs of Rome; they lack only a few touches of bistre wash, to transform them into capital drawings: such as they have been left to us, they suffice to perpetuate the memory of a master of the noblest lines, effects full of poetry and grandeur.”
72. **Panoramic Landscape with a River and Hills**

Pen and brown ink, 4¾ x 14¼ in. (121 x 361 mm)

Musées d’Angers (MBA 669 [1])

As explained in the introductory essay to this section of the catalogue, this drawing is from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières (1820–1899) and, together with the five following entries, came from an album or sketchbook of landscapes depicting the environs of Rome; I believe all of these drawings are by Poussin and date from about 1635 to 1640. The present drawing may reasonably be identified with the work described under no. M75 of the 1994 catalogue raisonné of Rosenberg and Prat: “Here is a valley at the foot of mountains; flat fields bathed toward the left by a river; in the middle ground, at right, wooded slopes; in the middle ground, at left, line of bare mountains.”

The pen and black ink annotation N. Poussin (a later addition) can also be found on the second drawing in the Musée des Beaux-Arts at Angers (cat. 73), as well as on cats. 74, 75, 77, and 92. As for the inscriptions written on the drawing itself, some are Italian words, some numerals; they also appear in our cats. 33 and 73 and are probably Poussin’s.

Méro (1996b) accurately describes the two drawings in Angers as “laconic.”

**Inscriptions**
At lower left, in pen and brown ink: N. Poussin and in another hand (very likely that of Poussin), in different parts of the drawing: rolo / brolo / na / ni / or / vota.
On the verso, annotation in pen and brown ink, in Chennevières hand: Croquis de paysage, de la main du Poussin. Indications de terrains — / M’a été donné par M. Reiset. Ph. De Ch.

**Provenance**
Collection of Frédéric Reiset (1815–1891); collection of Philippe de Chennevières (1820–1899; L. 2072 or 2073 at lower right); his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 4–7, 1900, part of lot 416 (awarded to Robin for 42 francs); collection of Henri Jouin (1841–1913); his gift to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers, in 1908.

**Exhibitions**
London and other cities 1977–78, no. 83a, pl. 7; Angers 1978, no. 80a, pl. 6; Quimper–Angers 2000–2001, no. 5, illus.

**Selected Bibliography**
Panoramic Landscape with a Villa at the Foot of a Mountain

Pen and brown ink, 4¼ x 14½ in. (108 x 364 mm)
Musées d’Angers (MBA 669 [2])

Together with the preceding entry, this drawing is from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières (1820–1899) and, like cats. 74–77, came from an album or sketchbook of landscapes depicting the environs of Rome; I believe all of these drawings are by Poussin and date from about 1635 to 1640. This one may be identified with the description found under no. M73 in Rosenberg and Prat 1994: “Here is a river coursing between slopes with severe and simple lines.”

Blunt, in 1979, at first denied the attribution of this drawing to Poussin, tentatively suggesting the name of Vanvitelli.

Inscriptions
At lower right, in pen and black ink: N. Poussin, and in another hand (very likely that of Poussin): m’a été donné par M. Fred. Reiset / il faisait partie d’un cahier de croquis pareils, très légers, mais très intéressants / sortes de notes que le grand homme prenait dans ses promenades aux environs de Rome. / M. Reiset m’en a donné quelques-uns. Il n’y manque que quelques touches de son / beau lavis de bistre pour en faire des dessins superbes.

Provenance
Collection of Frédéric Reiset (1815–1891); collection of Philippe de Chennevières (1820–1899, L. 2072 or 2073 at lower left); his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 4–7, 1900, part of lot 416 (awarded to Robin for 42 francs); collection of Henri Jouin (1841–1911); his gift to the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Angers, in 1908.

Exhibitions
London and other cities 1977–78, no. 83b, pl. 7; Angers 1978, no. 85b, pl. 6; Quimper–Angers 2000–2001, no. 6, illus.

Selected bibliography
74. An Upland Landscape with Two Houses on the Plain

Pen and brown ink, 6⅛ x 14⅝ in. (172 x 372 mm)


New York

For a full discussion of this drawing and the album or sketchbook to which it probably belonged, see the introduction to this section of the catalogue. The drawing is evidently related to the two sheets in Angers (cats. 72, 73), which show panoramic views treated in a similarly schematic manner, with comparable inscriptions—here mostly numerals. The notation N. Poussin. fe., in the lower right, which has been found on other of the artist’s drawings—added by a later collector—is in the same hand as those on the two sheets in Angers. Their dating (1635–40) works with this drawing as well.

Inscriptions

At lower right, in pen and black ink: N. Poussin. fe.

Numerals and letters, undoubtedly in Poussin’s hand, in pen and brown ink, in various places in the drawing.

Provenance

Collection of Frédéric Reiset (1815–1891; it does not carry the mark of Chennevières); sale, Christie’s, London, December 9, 1986, no. 119, illus. (as “attributed to Nicolas Poussin”; sold for £1,600); collection of Thomas C. Bartee; his loan to the Fogg Art Museum.

Selected bibliography

75. Landscape with a House and a Castle

Pen and brown ink, 4¼ x 10⅞ in. (109 x 256 mm)
Private collection

As explained in the introduction to this section of the catalogue, this drawing is from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières and, together with the three preceding as well as the two following entries, came from an album or sketchbook of landscapes depicting the environs of Rome; like those, it probably dates from about 1635-40. It may be the drawing described by Chennevières (1894): “Here, finally, is an antique village perched on the rocks.” The notation N. Poussin is like that on cats. 72-74 and 77, and was added by a collector.

Inscription
In lower left, in pen and brown ink: N. Poussin.

Provenance
Collection of Édouard Desperet (1804-1865; L. 721 at lower right); his sale, Paris, June 7-10, 1865, no. 473; perhaps collection of Duval le Camus (1814-1878); stamp at lower right close to L. 1441 with two variations: the stamp is black and a period is introduced between the letters; collection Philippe de Chennevières (1820-1899; L. 2072 or 2073 at lower right); his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 4-7, 1900, part of lot 416 (awarded to Roblin for 42 francs); perhaps collection of Henri Jouin (1841-1913; stamp at lower right: H and J in an oval); sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, July 4, 2002, no. 41, sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, March 27, 2004, no. 27; private collection.

Selected Bibliography
Chennevières 1894, p. 94 (pp. 14-15 in the old numbering system; see Prat 1979); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 3151, no. M77; Prat and Lhinares 2007, no. 24, illus.
76. **Landscape with a City**

Pen and brown ink, 6 x 12½ in. (153 x 318 mm)

Private collection

New York

As is the case with cats. 72, 73, 75, and 77, this drawing is certainly from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières and belonged to an album or sketchbook of landscapes depicting the environs of Rome; it probably dates from about 1635–40. Chennevières (1894) described it as follows: “Here, at left, a group of houses sheltered by a slope heading upward to the right; in the middle ground and somewhat related, mountains that look like those of Tivoli.”

**Provenance**

Very likely collection of Frédéric Reiset (see above); collection of Philippe de Chennevières (1820–1899); L. 2072 or 2073 at lower right; his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 4–7, 1900, part of lot 416 (awarded to Roblin for 42 francs); sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, March 27, 2001, no. 94; bought at that sale by the current owner.

**Selected Bibliography**

Chennevières 1894, pp. 93–94 (pp. 14–15 in the old numbering system; see Prat 1979); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 1151, no. M74; Prat and Lhinares 2007, no. 21, illus.
77. **Landscape**

Pen and brown ink, 4⅞ x 7¼ in. (125 x 185 mm)
Private collection

As is the case with cats. 72, 73, 75, and 76, this drawing is certainly from the collection of the marquis de Chennevières and belonged to an album or sketchbook of landscapes depicting the environs of Rome; it probably dates from about 1635–40. Chennevières (1894) described it as follows: “Here is a study of a landscape; in the foreground, at left, a seated artist is drawing a hillock crowned with three trees (why could he not be identified as his brother-in-law and sketching companion, le Guaspre Dughet?).”

The identification of the figure seen from the back as Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675) is daring and depends to some degree on the dating of 1635–40 that I suggested for the six drawings of the group catalogued here. In this drawing, the artist sketching merges with the landscape that he copies.

The notation *N. Poussin fe.* is found on some of the other drawings in this group and is not in Poussin’s hand.

**Inscription**
At lower left, in pen and black ink: *N. Poussin fe.*

**Provenance**
Very likely collection of Frédéric Reiset (1815–1891); collection of Philippe de Chennevières (1820–1899; L. 2072 or 2073 at lower left); his sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, April 4–7, 1900, part of lot 416 (awarded to Roblin for 42 francs); sale, Hôtel Drouot, Paris, March 25, 2002, no. 46; private collection, Canada; W. M. Brady & Co., New York.

**Exhibition**

**Selected Bibliography**
Chennevières 1894, pp. 93–94 (pp. 14–15 in the old numbering system; see Prat 1979); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 1151, no. M76; Prat and Lhinares 2007, no. 23, illus.
78. A Wooded Scene

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, traces of black chalk, 9⅞ x 6⅝ in. (243 x 174 mm)

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32470)

New York

In 1994, the same year the catalogue raisonné of Poussin’s drawings appeared, Ann Sutherland Harris boldly published this drawing from the Louvre. Originally considered a work of Poussin’s, shortly before 1950 it was reclassified and placed with the anonymous French artists of the seventeenth century (where it can still be found today).

Harris’s arguments are worth summarizing. They rest above all on comparisons with sheets universally accepted as by Poussin, such as the Hercules and Deianira (cat. 32) or the Saint Mary of Egypt Receiving Communion from Saint Zosimus (cat. 31). She observes in these drawings the same “armature of clearly legible penwork” and the “same combination of small, comma-shaped pen strokes and parallel hatchings.” The author makes a clear distinction (not accepted by everyone: see Turner 2001, regarding cat. 79) between these drawings and those belonging to the so-called G group (see the introductory essay to this section as well as cats. 93–113), where the brush, used with great fluidity, prevails over the use of the pen, which is employed to make very few hatchings.

The date of 1635–40 for this drawing as well as the one in the Getty (the following entry, cat. 79) is generally accepted.

PROVENANCE
Collection of Éverard Jabach (ca. 1618–1695; his paraph, L. 1953 on the verso); paraph of Prioul (L. 1959) on the verso; acquired by the Cabinet du Roi in 1671; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 at lower right and L. 2207 toward the lower left).

EXHIBITIONS
See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1684 (for previous history).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
79. A Path Leading into a Forest Clearing

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 15 3/4 x 9 3/4 in. (386 x 246 mm)
The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles (Inv. 96.GA.24)

To dissociate this drawing from cat. 78 seems problematic: its layout (it occupies the entire surface of the page), the small, comma-shaped accents of the pen, and the use of a wash that is generous without being excessive, are found in both. (I cannot agree with Turner [2001], who considers the Getty drawing to be by the same hand as our cats. 103 and 104, from the “G group.”) The inscription N. Poussin fe in the lower left is found on several other landscapes by Poussin (see cats. 74, 77, and 92), but our interest is especially aroused by the additional inscription that tells us, on the one hand, that the drawing is by Poussin and, on the other, that it belonged to Félibien. (Although incontestably old, the inscription is not definitively contemporary with Félibien [1639–1695].)

Although Félibien was, after Bellori, one of the earliest biographers of Poussin and, undoubtedly, one of the best informed and most admiring, he is not considered a collector of the artist’s paintings or drawings. At most, we know that, in 1678, he tried to obtain the portion of Poussin’s legacy left to Jean Dughet (1619–after 1678), the painter’s brother-in-law (see Rosenberg 2006). Félibien was primarily interested in the documents that might prove useful to him in finishing his Entretiens. Did he succeed in obtaining a portion of the estate that included this drawing? We don’t know, but the theory is worth considering.

Regardless of whether or not Félibien owned the drawing, his famous lines (1696, vol. 2, pp. 318–19) relating to Poussin’s practice of drawing merit inclusion here: “It was during these retreats and solitary walks that he made light sketches of things he came across, whether for landscapes, such as terraces, trees, or some beautiful effects of light; or for history compositions, such as some becoming dispositions of figures, some arrangements of clothes, or other special ornaments, of which he then knew how to choose well and put to excellent use.”

Inscriptions
At lower left, in pen and black ink: N. Poussin fe.
On the verso, an old inscription in pen and brown ink: n° 9 and De la main Du poussin. collection De m f e libien i L. p. 120.

Provenance

Selected bibliography
80. *The Aventine*

Brush, brown wash, and some traces of black chalk, 5⅜ x 12¼ in. (135 x 310 mm)

On the verso: *Study for a Landscape* (fig. 97)

Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, Florence (Inv. 8101 S)

*Bilbao*

*The Aventine* is incontestably one of the most beautiful drawings of the seventeenth century. But is it truly by Poussin? It entered the Uffizi in 1866 with the collection of Emilio Santarelli, apparently at first attributed to Claude Lorrain. The letters C.L. were gone over with the pen and changed into N.P. The inscription *Tasa 2 R* (tax, 2 reales) indicates a Spanish provenance. We should note that drawings carrying such inscriptions are not rare: Ursula Verena Fischer Pace (in Florence 1997) provides an initial list. One finds them on a group of about fifteen drawings that were sold at Kornfeld in Basel on June 12, 1974. The inscriptions on some of these drawings (which, as Marcel Roethlisberger was anxious to confirm, are by neither Claude nor Poussin) are similar in every respect to those on the Uffizi sheet.

The site shown is a view of the Aventine seen contre-jour. The priory of the Order of Malta is readily recognized, but—surprisingly—the artist has omitted the campanile of San Alessio. As for the study on the verso, in black chalk and difficult to make out, Shearman’s theory (in Thuillier 1960c, and in Friedlaender and Blunt 1963) that it shows the Palatine Hill seen from the Circus Maximus seems never to have been taken up.

Prior to 1994–95, the attribution of the drawing to Poussin was never doubted, even though it was recognized as

Figure 96 G group. *View of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon*. Musée Condé, Chantilly (Inv. AI 198; NI 243)

Figure 97 Nicolas Poussin, *Study for a Landscape*, verso of cat. 80
unique—an admirable unicum. Several points nevertheless require consideration. This drawing, where the wash takes on a significant role, is close to several sheets in the “G group” (see cats. 93–113) that I reject as the work of Poussin. It is especially similar to one formerly titled A View of the Roman Campagna in the Musée Condé, Chantilly (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R259; see, most recently, Rosenberg 2001a). Yet ever since it was recognized that the real site of that drawing was a view of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (see fig. 96), the attribution to Poussin has had to be discarded because in 1640 or 1642—the dates when the artist passed through Avignon as he traveled to and from Paris—he drew in a different style.

Of all the landscapes attributed to Poussin, The Aventine is the one on the line separating the probable from the possible—though it is an uncertain possible, as noted in Rosenberg and Prat 1994 (p. 216). I have taken the position of the probable; Prat that of the uncertain. Following the publication of our catalogue raisonné and the exhibition at the Grand Palais, those supporting the uncertain (Harris and, especially, Clayton, who suggests an attribution to Ch.-A. Dufresnoy [1611–1668] for the verso) seemed to carry the day, despite fierce resistance (such as Fischer Pace in Florence 1997).

The exhibition in Bilbao (the drawing could not be lent to both venues), where the drawing will be seen alongside a good number of the drawings in the “G group” (but not, of course, the View of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, which cannot leave Chantilly), may allow us to resolve the question.

INSCRIPTIONS
On the mat, in pen and brown ink, from left to right: C.L [Claude Lorrain] corrected to appear as N.P. [Nicolas Poussin]; Tanza 2 R; and at left, in pencil: 5; at right, in red ink: 801.

PROVENANCE
Emilio Santarelli (1801–1886; L. 907 at lower right); gift in 1886 to the Galleria degli Uffizi (L. 930 at lower left).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Paris 1994–95, no. 98; and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 116, illus. (recto and verso). See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, nos. 277, 278, pls. 216, 217 (recto and verso) (entry by J. Shearman); Harris 1994b, p. 41, illus. p. 41 (recto); Rosenberg in Chantilly 1994–95, under no. 104 (recto); Clayton 1996, p. 468; Harris 1996, p. 474; Mérot 1996b, p. 71; Oberhuber 1996, pp. 104–5, fig. 5 (recto) p. 112; Whitfield 1996, p. 229 n. 50; Novoselskaya in Saint Petersburg 1999, under no. 39, illus. (recto); Rosenberg 2002b, p. 107 and fig. 120.
81. View across a Valley towards Distant Hills

Brush and brown wash over light drawing in black chalk, 5⅞ x 10⅜ in. (132 x 257 mm)
The Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (1992.10)

Despite the fact that it was the object of furious bids at auction before entering an illustrious British institution, this drawing has been and continues to be the object of much discussion. It was long considered a work of Claude (when it was at Holkham), before being published by Blunt (1965) as the work of Poussin. He related it to the intriguing The Aventine (cat. 80) as well as to the background landscape of the Landscape with a Man Scooping Water from a Stream (cat. 28). Verdi (in Edinburgh 1990) took up this comparison and further insisted on the relation to the vistas in two other paintings: the Landscape with Saint Matthew and the Landscape with Saint John on Patmos (cats. 35, 36).

Shearman (in Thuillier 1960c), like Wild (1965) and Chiarini (1991), rejected the attribution to Poussin. Brigstocke (in Oxford 1990–91), who accepts it, nonetheless saw the drawing as by the same hand as a landscape (collection of Ames: Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R518) that Roethlisberger (1968, no. 421) cautiously assigned to Claude; the verso of that sheet—feeble but by the same hand as the recto—cannot, in any case, be ascribed to Poussin. Finally, Whiteley (2000) accepted the attribution but acknowledged that Poussin’s landscape drawings posed especially knotty problems.

In fact, the Oxford drawing defines the limits of connoisseurship in relation to Poussin’s drawings: although the links with Poussin’s paintings seem possible, they do not establish authorship because the drawing is so freely done, with so few details. A comparison with landscape sheets definitely by Poussin is even more complicated, as one finds few elements in common. The high quality of the Oxford sheet and the beauty of its wash alone does not establish a sufficient basis for an unreserved attribution to Poussin because neither the foliage of the trees nor the architecture in the distance displays that decisiveness that we consider an integral aspect of Poussin’s landscape drawing. All the same, in the background of some compositional drawings can be found a similar delineation of rocky crests and a similar way of layering motifs. (Blunt cites the studies for The Finding of Moses [cat. 41] and The Seven Sacraments: Baptism—Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 258—to which we would add the Landscape with a Little Temple and Three Seated Figures [cat. 82].) It is primarily this drawing’s economy of means, which Poussin always knew how to employ, that has convinced me to retain it in the corpus. A date of about 1645 seems the least improbable.

PROVENANCE
Thomas Coke, first Earl of Leicester (1697–1759); through descent, Viscount Coke and (Trustees of the Holkham Estate); Holkham Hall; sale, Christie’s, London, July 5, 1991, no. 60, illus. (sold to Jan Krugier); acquired by the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, in 1992.

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
82. *Landscape with a Little Temple and Three Seated Figures*

Brush and brown wash over black chalk, $5\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{1}{4}$ in. (150 x 451 mm)
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Inv. 5082)

*New York*

It is, above all, due to the presence of the figures that the attribution to Poussin of this largely unconstrained, panoramic view seems hardly debatable—at least so far as I can see. Here, far more visibly than in *The Aventine* (cat. 80), the artist has employed black chalk to organize his composition before laying down the shadows in wash. The same types of figures, with almost perfect ovals for faces, reappear among the studies for the second series of the Seven Sacraments, which leads me to propose a date of about 1646–47 for the sheet. Another compelling reason for the attribution to Poussin is the freeness in the use of wash: the way that the right facade of the temple is heavily shadowed echoes the wall openings in the drawings for *The Holy Family on the Steps* in Cleveland (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 313–15). Finally, beyond the connection between the figure types and technique, the sheet displays, through its subject, an elegance of layout, clarity of conception, and a kind of authority that one finds only with this painter.

The expansion of the composition in pronounced horizontality, with the three travelers resting, has nothing to do with the unfolding of a narrative in this case; rather, it suggests, between the lengthening shadows and the gently rising lines of the mountains, the nobility of a landscape magnificently organized.

**PROVENANCE**

Count Carl Cobenzl (1712–1770), Brussels; acquired, with the rest of his collection, by Catherine II in 1768; Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (L. 2061 at lower right).

**EXHIBITIONS**


**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See Paris 1994–95, no. 155; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 264, illus. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 279, pl. 216 (entry by J. Shearman); Harris 1996, p. 423; Mérot 1996c, p. 71; Oberhuber 1996, pp. 105–6, fig. 6 p. 112.
83. *Landscape with an Ancient City*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, and traces of graphite, 2 3/4 x 5 3/4 in. (71 x 143 mm) (fragment)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 35474)

The vista in this fragmentary drawing can be compared with the background in several paintings from the years 1645–55, such as *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47). Discovered by Oberhuber and Knab in 1967, and carefully catalogued by the latter in 1993 and 1996, it can be dated to the years 1645–47.

As already noted, the drawing is only a fragment and in a far from perfect state of preservation. Although it cannot be called spectacular, it has been accepted by all specialists of Poussin’s drawings—something worth remarking on. This unanimity arises from the sureness of observation, notably in the arrangement of planes, allied with a discreet poetry and a great delicacy.

**Provenance**
Sale, Dorotheum, Vienna, April 25, 1967, no. 237 (as an anonymous Italian of the eighteenth century); acquired by the Albertina, Vienna.

**Selected Bibliography**
84. **Landscape with a Fort**

Pen and brown ink over light drawing in sanguine, 4 7/8 x 7 3/4 in. (123 x 196 mm)

École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (Inv. PM 1865)

Prior to my assigning of this drawing to Poussin (in the *Melanges* in honor of Konrad Oberhuber, who has been responsible for much important work on the early work and landscapes of Poussin), it carried a variety of attributions, from Giovanni Battista Passeri to Giuseppe Passeri to (seventeenth-century engraver) Jacques Prou. The latter assignment was made, for reasons I am unable to fathom, by the drawing’s last private owner, Mathias Polakovits, who in 1987 gave his collection of French drawings to the École des Beaux-Arts. The attribution to Poussin, however, has gained general acceptance, “so recognizable is his hand: [the drawing’s] dry facture recalls several undisputed sheets by the artist” (Brugerolles in Paris–Geneva–New York 2001–2, which cites our cats. 48, 50).

The subject of a fortified castle perched on a rock with bushes at the bottom is one that fascinated Poussin, who returned to it on many occasions, in his drawings as well as in his paintings — the *Landscape with Orpheus and Eurydice* (cat. 47), for example. If we follow Brugerolles, these comparisons suggest a date at the end of the 1640s or the beginning of the 1650s, although I assigned an earlier date, toward the end of the 1630s.

Here, the pen alone is used to create hatches with a precision and efficiency and no superfluous effects. Undoubtedly done on-site, the drawing emphasizes the contrast between zones of shadow and sunlight. Two tiny figures at the entrance to the fortifications provide an indication of the dimensions of these buildings from the environs of Rome, which one hopes will be identified someday.

**Inscription**

On the upper part of the mat, an old inscription in pen and black ink: Del Sudè Pasesni.

**Provenance**

Collection Nathaniel Hone (1718–1784, his mark, L. 2793, at lower center); undoubtedly his sale, April 4–7, 1781, or the more important sale of February 7–14, 1785; gallery C. G. Boerner, Düsseldorf, in 1969 (Boerner catalogue, no. 68, pl. 15, "Giovanni Battista Passeri" [1650/6–1679]); gallery Bernard Houthakker, Amsterdam, in 1974 (Houthakker catalogue, p. 38, no. 39, "attributed to Giuseppe Passeri" [1654–1714]); sale, Christie’s, London, July 2, 1985, no. 45 ("Giuseppe Passeri"); collection of Mathias Polakovits (1921–1987; his mark, not indexed by Lugt, at lower right); gift of Mathias Polakovits to the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in 1987.

**Exhibition**


**Selected Bibliography**

Rosenberg 2000a, pp. 115–17, illus.; Rosenberg 2000b, p. 27, fig. 25.
85. Landscape with Classical Buildings and Figures

Pen and brown ink, 8 3/4 x 11 1/8 in. (208 x 294 mm)
Kunsthalle Bremen, Kupferstichkabinett der Kunstverein in Bremen (Inv. Nr. 39/121)

So far as I am aware, this drawing has been reproduced only once, in the catalogue of masterpieces in Bremen of 1998, as “circle of Nicolas Poussin.” In her entry, Anne Röver-Kann hesitated—justifiably—to pronounce in favor of Poussin. And, indeed, the portion of the sheet at the right that has been held in reserve is hard to explain and might suggest a copy of a lost work. However, the penwork, the manner of layering the planes, and the structures in the background encourage me to propose Poussin’s name. Support for this is found in the comparisons made by Röver-Kann with the drawings at Düsseldorf (cat. 50) and the British Museum (cat. 48).

In the center of the composition two women listen to a man playing the lute: Apollo? On the right, a huntress—Diana?—turns toward him. The presence of these figures in an urban landscape accentuates the Poussinesque nature of the work.

Inscription
At lower right in pen and brown ink, an old inscription: Poussin.

Provenance
Collection of Leopold von Anhalt-Dessau (1676–1747; L. 1708b); collection of Tony Straus-Negbaur (L. 2459a); at the firm of Puppel, Berlin; acquired by the Kunsthalle of Bremen in 1939 (“Gaspar Dughet”).

Selected Bibliography
86. **Landscape**

Pen and brown ink over black chalk, 8⅛ x 10⅛ in. (205 x 258 mm)

On the verso: *Study of a Palm*, pen and brown ink (fig. 98)


This lovely drawing was acquired by the Metropolitan Museum in 2002. In addition to the old inscription *N. Poussin* found on the verso of the sheet, it was ascribed to the artist through what was presumed to be its provenance: until very recently, it was thought that the monogram DC (with the two capital letters entwined) in pen and black ink on the verso of the sheet referred to Paul Fréart de Chantelou (1600–1694), Poussin’s intimate friend and a great collector of his paintings. A Chantelou provenance would almost guarantee that it is a drawing by Poussin, as confirmed by five drawings in the Louvre (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. 250, 251, 255, 259, 266), at Chantilly and in the Morgan Library (ibid., nos. 146, 314) that also bear this monogram (note, however, the exception of a drawing in Bayonne: ibid., no. R43).

It was in the nineteenth century that the connection between the monogram and Chantelou was made (Wyatt 1859, p. 42, but see, even earlier, the Lawrence sale of 1835: Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. M56), without raising any doubts (but see Schnapper 1994a, p. 236). In recent years, however, the appearance of several French drawings incontestably from the eighteenth century and having the same monogram oblige us to discard this theory and to consider it much later in date. Perhaps the monogram refers to Noël-Nicolas Coypel (1690–1784), as suggested by six drawings by that artist preserved in Rouen as part of the Baderou collection (975.4 1197–1202: see Delaplanche 2004, p. 137, nos. D.R12–17).

If the drawing in the Metropolitan Museum did not come from the Chantelou collection, must we renounce the attribution to Poussin? Certainly the number of seventeenth-century drawings that carry the artist’s name is considerable, but the manner of indicating the distant mountains with only a few, precise pen strokes, the incisive and vigorous character of the line, and the hatching all seem to confirm the validity of the old attribution. The group of trees on the right of the New York sheet recalls in particular the Group of Five Trees, formerly in Uppsala (fig. 35), which shares with the drawing the same economy of means and simplicity of layout.

The date palm on the verso of the sheet relates to Poussin’s interest in furnishing his biblical scenes set in Egypt with appropriate features, whether archaeological or botanical (see, for example, *The Finding of Moses*, cat. 41).

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**Inscription**

On the verso, at lower left in pen and brown ink: *N. Poussin.*

**Provenance**

In a French collection at the beginning of the eighteenth century (L. 775), monogram on the verso, in the lower right, in pen and black ink (see above); acquired by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 2002 (Guy Wildenstein Gift and Van Day Truex and Harry G. Sperling Funds).

**Selected bibliography**

87. Landscape with Buildings and a Bridge

Pen and brown ink over black chalk, 10⅜ x 15⅜ in. (271 x 398 mm)
Staatgalerie Stuttgart, Graphische Sammlung (Inv. C 1922/53)

Formerly considered by the hand of Agostino Carracci, this drawing was catalogued in 1977 by Christel Thiem as "by an artist active in Rome, about 1630–1640." In his entry, the author specified that, in 1965, Mahon had classed the sheet as from the circle of Poussin. Although certain details of an anecdotal nature are surprising—note the two figures passing over the arched bridge and the carriage in on the upper right—others, such as the foliage of the trees and the river in the foreground with small figures walking about, invite us to consider carefully the status of this drawing. It is one of the few landscape compositions that can be related specifically to a painting: the Landscape with Three Monks in Belgrade (cat. 53).

Not only is the general topography identical (are we in Tivoli?), but there are also correspondences with various details. Indeed, the only real alternative to an attribution to Poussin is that we are dealing with a faithful copy of a lost drawing.

PROVENANCE
Acquired by the museum in 1922 ("Agostino Carracci").

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED PAINTINGS
See cat. 53.
88. *Trees and Shrubs*

Pen and brown ink, 10¾ x 13¼ in. (263 x 338 mm)
Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica, Rome (F.C. 127445)

*Bilbao*

In 1990, Marco Chiarini, a well-known specialist of seventeenth-century Roman landscape drawings, published this drawing under the name of Gaspar Dughet (1615–1675), Poussin’s brother-in-law. The following year, in an unpublished review of his monograph on that artist, Ann Sutherland Harris proposed an attribution to Poussin, comparing it with our cats. 45, 46, 48, and, especially, with the verso of a drawing in Bayonne (fig. 75: Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 213), which, unhappily, is missing from this exhibition because of a prohibition on lending.

In 1994, Prat and I hesitated, criticizing the “hatchings . . . , too systematic, and the confusion of the planes.” The empty areas on the left and below are also troubling, but the manipulation of the pen and the fine observation of the play of light lead me, albeit with caution, to retain the attribution to Poussin. These same hesitations also apply to a drawing representing a *Valley Landscape* that recently entered into the Musée Calvet in Avignon under the name of Crescenzio Onofri (1632–1712) (fig. 99; see Musée Calvet 1998, no. 86, illus.).

**Inscription**
At lower left, in pen and brown ink (in G. Bottari’s hand): *Gaspar* Possino

**Provenance**
Collection of Cardinal Neri Maria Corsini (1685–1770), Rome; given to the Italian State in 1883 by Prince Corsini; property of the Accademia dei Lincei; on permanent deposit at the Istituto Nazionale per la Grafica.

**Selected Bibliography**

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Figure 99 Crescenzio Onofri (?), *Valley Landscape.*
Musée Calvet, Avignon (Inv. 996.7.823)
Matthias Winner first published this drawing in 1973; in 1994, Prat and I rejected it, though not without some hesitation: “With its evident weaknesses and dryness of execution, it does not seem that the attribution of the sheet to Poussin can be maintained.”

We owe to Martin Clayton (1996) two essential observations. He noticed that the inscription Daniel Heel alluded to the Flemish landscapist Daniel van Heil (1604–1662), but, more important, he did not hesitate to attribute the drawing to Poussin himself.

Though it is true that the pen line is not without dryness, this quality is frequently found in Poussin’s drawings. A comparison with Poussin’s sheets in Angers (cats. 72, 73) should allow us to resolve the question and perhaps vindicate Winner, who rightly first drew attention to this sheet.

**INSCRIPTION**
At lower right, in pen and brown ink: Daniel Heel

**PROVENANCE**
Collection of Vincenzo Pacetti (1746–1820, L. 2057 at lower right; on Pacetti, see most recently Pampalone 2004), who obtained the core of his collection from Bartolomeo Cavaceppi (1716–1799); acquired by Waagen for Berlin in 1843 (L. 1632 at lower left).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**
90. A Riverbank

Pen and brown ink, 6 x 10½ in. (152 x 270 mm)
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Inv. 8186)

New York

This drawing, as well as the next one, also from the Hermitage (cat. 91), causes hesitation. Accepted by Shearman (1965), Winner (in Berlin 1973), Blunt (1982), and Verdi (in Edinburgh 1990), both were rejected by Zolotov in 1990 as well as by Prat and me, with caution, in 1994: “We are tempted to reject the attribution to Poussin of these dry and somewhat banal sheets.”

Winner was the first, in 1973, to relate these two sheets to the drawing in Berlin (cat. 89)—with good cause. He also noted that the second Hermitage drawing (cat. 91) had vertical folds similar to those seen on the Berlin sheet. Martin Clayton (1996) considers all three sheets to be by Poussin. Seeing them together with landscape drawings unquestionably by Poussin should confirm his view.

There remains the matter of the date. Shearman, who dated them about 1660, and Blunt saw them as late works.

Shearmen related them to a text by the learned monk Vigneul-Marville (Benjamin Rountree Bonaventure d’Argonne, 1634–1701) dating from about 1700: “At that time, I met [Poussin] among the buildings of ancient Rome, and sometimes in the country and along the banks of the Tiber, where he drew what most appealed to him” (see Thuillier 1960c, pp. 256–37).

PROVENANCE
Collection Heinrich Brühl (1700–1763), Dresden; acquired in 1769 along with the rest of his collection by Catherine II of Russia.

EXHIBITION
Edinburgh 1990, no. 56, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
Friedländer and Blunt 1963, no. 288, pl. 221 (entry by J. Shearman); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R126, illus. (with previous publications); Clayton 1996, p. 469; Mérot 1996b, p. 71.
91. Landscape with Houses on the Left and Two Trees at the Center

Pen and brown ink, 3 ⅜ x 9 in. (90 x 230 mm)
The State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg (Inv. 8188)

New York

For a discussion of the work, see the previous entry (cat. 90).

PROVENANCE
Same as for the previous entry (cat. 90).

EXHIBITION
Edinburgh 1990, no. 57, illus.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 289, pl. 221 (entry by J. Shearman); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R128, illus. (with previous publications); Clayton 1996, p. 469.
92. **Two Nymphs in a Landscape**

Pen and brown ink, 5 x 7⅞ in. (127 x 193 mm)
On the verso: *Paysage*
Black chalk and traces of sanguine
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32477)

*New York*

The execution of the recto of this sheet displays not only the weaknesses of some other landscapes by Poussin, especially those of his last years, but also the economy of line that characterizes the artist's work. The verso, recently uncovered, is disappointing and cannot be by Poussin. Yet the inscription in pen and brown ink on the left of the drawing is found on many other sheets with an unimpeachable attribution to Poussin (see cats. 74, 75, 77, 79).

**Inscription**
At lower left, in pen and brown ink: Nic.Poussin.fe.

**Provenance**
Entered the Louvre with the collection of Saint-Morys (1743–1795), confiscated during the Revolution; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1886 at lower left).

**Selected Bibliography**
The “G Group” Drawings

I devoted several pages above (pp. 307–9) to Poussin’s landscape drawings, from their rediscovery to the problems of attribution that they raise. One group of spectacular drawings in particular—the “G group”—has long been the subject of debate, and if the number of scholars who defend their attribution to Poussin has dwindled, it must be admitted that the questions posed by these sheets are far from being completely resolved.

With admirable courage, the late John Shearman (1931–2003), first in 1960 and again in 1963, in the fourth volume of the Friedländer and Blunt catalogue raisonné, excluded a group of forty-two sheets representing landscapes from the corpus of Poussin’s drawings. Most of these forty-two drawings shared a similar format, technique, and provenance. In height or width, most measured about 10 7/8 x 7 3/8 in. (256 x 186 mm) or the reverse. This led to the theory that they originally came from a sketchbook. The drawings were made with brush and brown wash—often called bistre—some with a light underdrawing in black chalk. The sites chosen by the artist(s) responsible for them were inspired by the environs of Rome. Most are pure landscapes, with no figures but with trees and forests, sometimes embellished with antique structures.

Many of them had belonged to Pierre Crozat (1665–1740), one of the most important collectors of the eighteenth century. At his postmortem sale in 1741, some of them were acquired by Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774), who matted them and stamped them with his mark (but was it he?), the legendary capital M in a circle. Mariette had written the Crozat sale catalogue, and if he decided to buy certain of the landscape drawings in the sale, assuredly it was because he believed them to be by Poussin.

It is true that many statements in the Crozat catalogue are ambiguous. Further, the prices realized for the landscape drawings were modest in relation to other sheets by Poussin, especially the compositional studies; this might give the impression that some of the buyers were skeptical about the authorship of these drawings. Yet there is no reason to think that Mariette intended to deceive or mislead. At most, we may conjecture that this prince of collectors allowed himself to be led astray by his enthusiasm.

In 1963, when John Shearman rightly rejected what were then generally accepted attributions, he regrouped the forty-two drawings around the Crozat-Mariette nucleus and attributed them to Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675), Poussin’s brother-in-law. These drawings make up the famous “G group” (G for Gaspard). Shearman’s arguments are reviewed in the individual entries.

We will leave aside the details of the debate and mention only that some scholars remain attached to Poussin’s name and others have proposed a long list of alternatives (Claude Lorrain, Pier Francesco Mola, Pietro Testa, Gian Domenico Desideri, and Bartolomeo Torregiani, to name a few). Some accept the integrity of the group; others propose a different author for each drawing or group of drawings. The most one can say is that Shearman did not convince anyone wholly. Among the scholars who have explored the problem are Hugh Brigstocke, Marco Chiarini, Martin Clayton, Ann Sutherland Harris, Henry Keazor, Konrad Oberhuber, Marcel Roethlisberger, and Clovis Whitfield.
Two successive and essential discoveries have confirmed not so much the unity of the group, and even less the attribution to Dughet, as the absolute impossibility of attributing the drawings to Poussin. They concern two sheets in the Louvre that Shearman had not reattributed. The first is the celebrated *Landscape with Five Trees* (cat. 93). Its dimensions, technique, and provenance from Crozat and Mariette all accord with the qualifications Shearman proposed for the “G group,” yet the great English scholar lacked the daring to remove it. Why?

This drawing has always been connected with an inventory item written in 1603 by Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella (1636–1697), niece of the Lyonnais painter Jacques Stella ([1596–1657], the latter was recently commemorated in an exhibition in Lyon and Toulouse). Bouzonnet-Stella describes “a drawing by Poussin: five tree [sic] in pen and ink.” The provenance of the sheet (Stella was a close friend of Poussin’s), which subsequently belonged to Crozat and Mariette before being bought by Louis XVI at the great collector’s postmortem sale, seemed to give the attribution an unimpeachable status. In 1965, however, two successive articles in *Master Drawings* associated the Bouzonnet-Stella item with a different drawing by Poussin, the *Group of Five Trees* (fig. 35)—a drawing in *pen only*, completely characteristic of the artist, then in the library of the University of Uppsala. Not only its provenance—it was owned by the great Swedish collector C. G. Tessin (1695–1770), who bought it at the Crozat sale of 1741—but especially its execution (the tiny figures placed together under the trees) made the attribution incontestable. It should be noted that, in Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella’s inventory description, only pen is mentioned and not the wash that plays such an essential role in the Louvre drawing. Unfortunately, in 1971 or 1972 the Uppsala sheet, with its astonishing authority and balance, was stolen (which explains its absence from our exhibition).

The discovery of the *Five Trees* in Uppsala made it necessary to reexamine the Louvre drawing with fresh eyes. The large areas of wash in the foreground, attached to nothing in the drawing and serving to mark long shadows on the ground, are primarily decorative and constitute a surprising element. As Shearman had already observed of the drawings of the “G group,” the pen and brush are used in a “supplementary” rather than a “complementary” way.

Removing the *Five Trees* in the Louvre from the corpus of Poussin’s drawings (no. 271 in volume IV of the Friedlaender-Blunt catalogue, authored by Shearman) also entailed removing *Two Trees with, in the Right Foreground, a Tree*, in the same museum (inv. no. 3246; Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 270; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R745), as they are clearly by the same hand (and, unfortunately, absent from our exhibition, as the drawing was lent to the High Museum, Atlanta, in 2006–7; see *The King’s Drawings*, no. 85). Thus, these two drawings in the Louvre incontestably joined the “G group.”

A third drawing, also long accepted as the work of Poussin, experienced an analogous fate for completely logical but different reasons. It too does not appear in our exhibition because lending it would violate the wishes of the duc d’Aumale (1822–1897), the founder of the Musée Condé, which owns it (along with several other important landscape drawings by Poussin). It unquestionably represents Villeneuve-lès-Avignon (fig. 96)—specifically, Fort Saint-André as seen from the famous Pont d’Avignon, an arch of which can be made out at the left. Poussin could only have been in Avignon on three occasions: in 1624, on his way to Rome; in 1640, during his journey back to Paris; and in 1642 during his definitive return to Rome. What we know of drawings he made during any of these years makes it very clear that the sheet in Chantilly cannot be attributed to him; thus, the drawing in turn moves to the “G group” (a move Shearman did not dare make in 1963; see his no. 272; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R259; and Rosenberg 2001a).

Removing an illustrious name from a drawing, thus rendering it anonymous, brings no satisfaction to the one responsible for the declassification. Two questions must therefore be formulated regarding this group of works, and they are questions to which, sadly, I can propose no answer. First, are the drawings of the “G group”—consisting of the forty-two drawings brought together by Shearman, the three sheets mentioned above and several others—by the same hand or by a number of artists? I unhesitatingly opt for the second theory. Even though their layout is similar—they generally occupy the entire sheet—their quality seems far from uniform. Some drawings are distinguished by a marked panoramic conception (and, we might add, a more banal execution). Seeing about twenty of these together in the exhibition under the
generic title of the “G group” will facilitate assigning them to
different hands (we made no attempt to do so in this cata-
logue). Will we then be able to identify the artists? We can
only hope so.

One last observation, and a second question: the artists
whose names have been put in play—some well known, such
as Poussin, Claude, Dughet, Pier Francesco Mola, Giovanni
Francesco Grimaldi, Filippo Napoletano, some less known,
including Bartolomeo Torregiani and Gian Domenico
Desiderii—are all French or Italian. Shouldn’t a new gener-
ation of art historians direct research toward the numerous and
attractive colony of Dutch landscapists established in Rome
during the first half of the seventeenth century (a point of view
that Marcel Roethlisberger does not share, as he has informed
me in a letter of January 20, 2007). Many of these artists favored
the use of brown wash in their drawings, creating effects of
shadow and light and strong contrasts. We can only hope that
the exhibition will bring us answers to these questions.

From the Crozat sale catalogue, pp. 114–15:
This is why, regarding Landscape, he followed a different
method from that he employed for the figure. The indispen-
sable need to go and study in situ, led him to draw a great num-
ber of Landscapes after Nature with infinite care. He not only
became a religious observer of its forms, but he also gave
extreme attention to capturing the lively effects of light, which
he successfully applied to his paintings. Furnished with these
Studies, he then composed in his Studio those beautiful Land-
scapes, where the viewer thinks himself transported to ancient
Greece, and in those enchanted Valleys described by the Poets.
For M. Poussin’s genius was entirely poetic. In his hands, the
simplest and most unpromising subjects became interesting.
In the last days of his life, with a trembling and heavy hand that
refused to cooperate, the fire of his imagination being nowhere
near extinguished, this skillful Painter brought to light
magnificent ideas, which elicited admiration, even as they
caused a kind of pain to see them so badly executed.

Mariette sale catalogue:
1328 Twenty different Landscapes, in pen & sanguine.
1329 Twenty-seven other Studies of Ruins and Landscapes, in
pen & bistre, with a very lively effect, which will be divided
into several lots.
The primary argument in favor of an attribution to Poussin of *Landscape with Five Trees* concerns a mention in the inventory of the collection of Poussin’s fellow painter and friend Jacques Stella (1596–1657), drawn up by Claudine Bouzonnet-Stella in 1693: “Au 44° feuillet, un dessein du Poussin: cinq arbres (sic) à la plume” (at the 44th leaf, a drawing by Poussin: five tree [sic], in pen and ink [valued at eight livres]; Szanto in Lyon–Toulouse 2006–7, p. 251). In his contribution to the fourth volume of Friedlaender and Blunt’s corpus of Poussin drawings (1963)—the section dealing with landscapes—Shearman thought that this description referred to the present drawing. Today, however, it is agreed—by Bjurström (1965), myself (1965), and Bacou (in Paris 1967, p. 154)—that the notice refers to a drawing absolutely characteristic of Poussin and executed only in pen, as specified by the inventory, that, before being stolen in 1971–72, was preserved in the library of the University of Uppsala (fig. 35: see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 351, and the introductory essay to this section of the catalogue).

Given this, it is hard to see why this drawing, which nothing connects to Poussin’s art, should be retained. In 1990 (p. 154), Ann Sutherland Harris summed it up in a brilliant analysis:}

However, it is remarkable how little the penwork and application of wash in [this] drawing have to do with the way that Poussin draws landscape elements in his figure compositions in the 1630s. Whether he developed one set of conventions for landscape details in composition studies and another for finished landscape drawings and *plein air* studies in the 1630s is an issue that deserves further analysis. The situation should not inspire a series of “chain attributions” of landscape drawings like those offered here by Oberhuber [in Fort
Worth 1988), but rather should make scholars exceptionally cautious about associating landscape drawings with Poussin’s name.

I will limit myself to a few observations. The artist employs layers of wash to create decorative shadows rather than depth. In this respect, the foreground is especially disturbing. The branches and trunks are given form with the pen and the brush, but, as Shearman noted, these two media are used in a “supplementary” rather than a “complementary” way. The foliage of the trees is somewhat mechanically rendered, by pen with inexpressive freedom, or by large areas of wash or, yet again, by small, repeated parallel dabs with the brush. Such a variety of techniques goes well beyond the possibilities for a Poussin drawing. As for the lighting, the author of the drawing prefers a light with shadows falling to the left while the actual source seems almost head-on.

Finally, and more simply, for Poussin a landscape forms a whole: the scant attention given to the background here, the absence of any notation in the sky, the pre-Romantic vision: these seem to me foreign, or at least contrary, to his special genius.

I would relate the Louvre sheet to two drawings whose loan we failed to secure, the View of a Bend in a River in the Musée Fabre, Montpellier (fig. 100), like the present one also formerly in the Mariette collection, and the View of the Villa Madama in the Louvre (fig. 101). Although these two sheets (for which, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, nos. R594 and R731) were recently exhibited under the name of Poussin (Grenoble 2006–7, no. 23, illus., and no. 22, illus.), together with the present drawing they form a separate group among the forty-two sheets that Shearman catalogued in 1963 under the name of Dughet.

PROVENANCE
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Étienne Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his post mortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 1852 at lower center and lower right); his post mortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1329, acquired, with the other five sheets of the lot (there were 27 divided into six lots), by Lempereur for the Cabinet du Roi for 459 livres 19 sols; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 at lower right and L. 2207 at lower left).

EXHIBITIONS
Atlanta–Denver 2006–8, no. 86 (shown only in Denver), illus. See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1677 (for previous history).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
94. A Forest

Pen and brown ink, brown and gray wash over black chalk, 10 ⅛ x 7 ⅜ in. (256 x 186 mm)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11440)

It is difficult to summarize in a few lines the various opinions that have divided specialists concerning this and the following drawings (cats. 95–97). The author of the Crozat sale catalogue (1741), Pierre-Jean Mariette, attributed them to Poussin and then succeeded in acquiring them. (See also the introduction to this section of the catalogue.)

Until 1963, these drawings barely interested specialists, who accepted them almost as a matter of course as works of Poussin. Then, in 1963, John Shearman had the courage to create a new category for forty-two, of which eighteen—the finest—must have belonged to the same dispersed sketchbook that he attributed to Poussin’s brother-in-law Gaspard
Dughet (1615–1675). He supported his theory by analyzing the respective strengths and weaknesses of the group.

Since then, specialists have been divided on the stylistic unity of the group and, especially, the authorship of the individual sheets. There is no more agreement on the first point than there is on the second. Few have acknowledged the unity of the group, but all (Chiarini, Knab, Whitfield, Wild, Brigstocke, Oberhuber, Harris, and so on) recognize that at least some of the drawings in the group are not by Poussin. Rare are those who have accepted Shearman’s suggestion that Dughet is their author: other proposed names include Claude Lorrain, Pier Francesco Mola, the so-called Silver Birch Master, Torregiani, and Gian Domenico Desiderii. In 1994, Prat and I came to share Shearman’s opinion that the drawings are not by Poussin. Indeed, it seemed to us “impossible to retain [under the name of Poussin] in [our] corpus a single one of these sheets... Their author(s) employed with skill techniques more complex than those of Poussin, and the conception is above all anecdotal and analytic.”

I see no reason to change this view, but the opportunity to see in this exhibition drawings incontestably by Poussin with some of the sheets attributed to him will surely help to resolve the matter. It will also highlight the question of the unity of Shearman’s group and of the author (or authors) involved. Prat and I doubt that he (or they) are French, but who among the numerous members of the colony of Northern artists living in Rome in the years 1620 to 1630 could have realized these masterpieces?

For in the case of the present drawing, we are dealing with an authentic masterpiece. The layout—there is nothing panoramic about it—is immensely daring. The trunk of the tree on the left, seen with the light source behind it, divides the drawing decisively. We are submerged in a dense, shadowy forest where the sunlight breaks through in spots. This thick woods occupies the entire surface of the sheet. The virtuosity of the execution, with its subtle play of dabs of brown wash; the poetic approach to observation; the contrasts of shadow and light; and the grasp of nature point to an artist of the highest order.

PROVENANCE
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 30—May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1851 at lower left and right); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775—January 30, 1776, part of lot 1228 or 1329; Prince Charles de Ligne (1759–1792), Vienna; his sale, Vienna, November 4, 1794, no. 7; Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1812; L. 174 at lower left); Albertina, Vienna.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

RELATED WORK
A copy in the Louvre (RF 36326), identified by L.-A. Prat, is attributed to Nicolas Mignard (1606–1688); see Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1856, illus.
95. *Two Birch Trees, One Broken*

Pen and brown ink and brown wash over black chalk, 10⅞ x 7⅛ in. (256 x 186 mm)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11441)

The artist has used the point of his brush to indicate the branches of the broken tree and wash to denote the shadows and the dark masses, seen contre-jour. This drawing can be compared with a little-known sheet with a similar subject in the Louvre (inv. 14190) that is there classified with the anonymous Italians.

See also the comments in the entry for cat. 94, which is undoubtedly by the same hand.

**PROVENANCE**

According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1742); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 182 at lower left); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; Prince Charles de Ligne (1739–1792), Vienna; his sale, Vienna, November 4, 1794, no. 6; Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1822; L. 174 at lower right); Albertina, Vienna.

**EXHIBITION**

Fort Worth 1988, no. D159, illus.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

96. A Copse of Trees

Brush and brown wash over traces of black chalk, 10 x 7¾ in. (254 x 184 mm)

Private collection, Great Britain

Bilbao

This is undoubtedly one of the finest sheets of the “G group,” discussed in the introductory essay to this section of the catalogue. Its quality is such that it is understandably difficult to relinquish the name of Poussin. In the past, the names of Gaspard Dughet, Bartolomeo Torregiani, and Gian Domenico Desiderii have been suggested. The drawing was made by the same artist as catalogue numbers 94, 95, and 97, and the sheet recorded by Rosenberg and Prat 1994, under no. R744, unfortunately absent from this exhibition.

The author of this drawing has captured the freshness of a shady wood. The thick trunks of the trees dominate the sheet; their foliage and the vegetation in the foreground indicate the height of summer.

There is in this drawing a freedom, a spontaneity, a facility, a virtuosity, and an immediacy of observation quite contrary to Poussin’s temperament.

PROVENANCE
Collection of F. J. C. Holdsworth; his sale, Christie’s, London, May 24, 1921, lot 12 (under the name of J. Hackaert; 18 or 21 drawings sold for £5 5s.); collection of Paul Oppé (1928–1957); Miss Armide Oppé, London; private collection, London.

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. Gr8, pl. 228; Rosenberg in Venice 2004, p. 44 and fig. 40.
97. A Path in a Forest

Brush and brown wash over sanguine, 10 x 7 1/8 in. (255 x 186 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32464)

Bilbao

Despite the courageous but, to the eyes of Prat and myself, untenable attribution to Gaspard Dughet (1615–1675) proposed in 1963 by Shearman, until 1994 most specialists of Poussin’s graphic work maintained and supported the old attribution to Poussin, which Prat and I vigorously rejected: “This drawing . . . in our opinion has no relation to the art of Poussin.” I note, with some satisfaction, that our opinion is largely shared today. But to be fair, it is not enough to remove the name of a drawing’s author: one must propose a convincing substitution, and that we have not been able to do.

The drawing is essentially executed with the brush. Its author was primarily interested in the areas of light, glimpsed between the trunks and foliage, that endow the composition with such depth. The trees and the vegetation occupy the entire sheet in a rendering that, it should be noted, seems insubstantial and often indistinct.

Inscription
At lower right, in pen and black ink: 95 (Crozet number?).

Provenance
According to the catalogue of the Crozet sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozet (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1852 at lower left; his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 13295 acquired, with the other five sheets of the lot (there were 27 divided into six lots), by Lempereur for the Cabinet du Roi for 469 livres 19 sols; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1899 at upper right and L. 2207 at lower left).

Exhibitions
See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1680 (for previous history).

Selected Bibliography
98. Landscape Viewed through Tree Trunks

Pen and brown ink, 11⅜ x 8⅜ in. (281 x 218 mm)
Galleria dell’Accademia, Venice, Gabinetto di Disegni e Stampe (Inv. 426)

Bilbao

Although none of the specialists who have studied it has expressed reservations about its quality, this study of tree trunks has not yet yielded the secret of its author. The old attribution to Poussin, accepted by Ernst (1940) but refuted by Shearman (in Friedlaender and Blunt 1963) and then by Prosperi Valenti Rodinò (in Venice 1989), found in Chiarini (1990) a prudent defender (“forse di Nicolo Poussin”).

For my part, I hesitate to identify the author as French, though it is true that we are very far from a complete knowledge of the circle of French artists in Rome in the seventeenth century. Indeed, much less is known than is the case with the Dutch landscapists—or even the Italians (such as Bartolomeo Torreggiani and Gian Domenico Desiderii).

The relation proposed by Chiarini with the drawing in a British private collection (cat. 96), as well as with the sheets from the Louvre and the Albertina (cats. 94, 97, and Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R744)—three splendid studies of woods with a heavy use of brown wash for which no convincing name has as yet been proposed—is persuasive.

Three strong tree trunks stand out against a distant hilly landscape. No human distracts our gaze. The thick foliage indicates the suffocating heat of summer and the refreshing shadow of the large trees and the glens.

INSCRIPTION
Below the framing line, in black chalk, difficult to read: Niccolò. Pussino.

PROVENANCE
Padre Sebastiano Resta (1635–1714); Venanzio De Pagave (1722–1803); Giuseppe Bossi (1777–1815); his sale in 1818; acquired with the rest of the Bossi collection, at first by Abbot Luigi Celotti of Venice, who was unable to pay off the full price and transferred it in 1822 to the Austrian government to complete the recently reorganized collections of the Galleria dell’Accademia (L. 2 and 188 at lower right).

EXHIBITIONS
Venice 1989, no. 65, illus. (see also p. 15 figs. 3–6; entry by S. Prosperi Valenti Rodinò); Venice 2004, no. 15, illus. (entry by P. Rosenberg).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R1209, illus. (with previous publications); Rosenberg in Venice 2004, no. 15. See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, p. 58, under no. 840.
99. **Landscape with the Death of Meleager**

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 10 x 7 1/4 in. (253 x 184 mm)

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32446)

* Bilbao

According to Prosper de Baudicour (1859–61, vol. 1, pp. 230 n. 1, 235 n. 1), the drawing’s foreground figures, representing Meleager being killed by the boar of Calydon, is an eighteenth-century addition by the draftsman Pierre Lélù (1741–1810): “... in the collection of the Musée du Louvre ... can be seen ... two vertical landscapes by Poussin, in which Lélù has drawn some figures, at the request of the former owner [Saint-Morys] of these drawings: this liberty, which Lélù revealed to only a few friends, has so far gone unnoticed, but in studying it one can easily recognize his style” (in truth, it is not so easy to distinguish Lélù’s intervention).

The drawing does not display the freshness of the Albertina sheets, and the planes created by the shadow and light are therefore somewhat indistinct: shadowed buildings can be seen beyond the screen of trees. The artist has given pride of place to the abundant vegetation and the bushes.

**PROVENANCE**

Collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774: L. 1832 at lower right and at center); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; collection of Charles Paul Jean Baptiste Bourgeois Vialart de Saint-Morys (1743–1795); confiscated from royalist exiles in 1793. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1886a at lower left).

**EXHIBITIONS**

See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1685 (for previous history).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Friedländer and Blunt 1963, no. G11, pl. 233 (entry by J. Shearman); Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R730, illus. (with previous publications); Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1685, illus.
100. *Landscape with a Shepherd Playing the Flute, Two Women, and a Hunter*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, traces of sanguine and black chalk, 9 7/8 x 7 3/4 in. (251 x 185 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32447)
*Bilbao*

This drawing is by the same hand as the previous one (cat. 99). As in that drawing, the figures were added by Pierre Lélu (1741–1810).

**PROVENANCE**
See catalogue 99.

**EXHIBITIONS**
See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1686 (for previous history).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. G12, pl. 233 (entry by J. Shearman);
Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1686, illus.

**RELATED WORK**
For the reproduction of the engraving by Félix Massard, see Rosenberg and Prat 1994, p. 964, fig. 731a.
101. Trees with a Distant View on the Right

Brush and brown wash, 11¾ x 7¾ in. (284 x 200 mm)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11.439)

Although its format is slightly larger than that of the Crozat-Mariette group in the Albertina, and it does not carry Mariette’s mark, in style this drawing fits in perfectly. The almost exclusive use of the brush, the way of filling the surface of the sheet and of accenting contrasts of light and shadow, and the awkwardnesses of the composition recall certain sheets of the “G group,” especially the following entry (cat. 102) and its pendant (illustrated in that entry).

INSCRIPTIONS
At lower left, in pen and brown ink: Poussin; at lower right, in pen and brown ink: G 306. pp (?).

PROVENANCE
According to Knab and Widauer (1993), from the collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; does not carry the mark of Mariette); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; without any doubt Prince Charles de Ligne (1759–1792), Vienna; his sale, Vienna, November 4, 1794, no. 14; Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1822; L. 174 at lower left); Albertina, Vienna.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
102. A Stand of Trees

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over red chalk, 10 x 7¾ in. (253 x 188 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32469)

Bilbao

This drawing is by the same hand as our cats. 103 and 104, as well as a third drawing in the Louvre (inv. no. 32468; Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. R747; Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1681, illus.), Landscape Seen through an Arcade (fig. 102), which has identical dimensions and the same provenance.

The penwork is rapid but relaxed and rather mechanical. The wash is applied without much care, almost haphazardly, and the shadows of the trees display no real logic.

PROVENANCE
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1892 at lower right; his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; acquired, with the other five sheets of the lot (there were 27, divided into six lots), by Lemperre for the Cabinet du Roi for 465 livres 19 sols; Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1892 at lower right and L. 2207 at lower left).

EXHIBITIONS
Fort Worth 1988, no. D40, illus. See also Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1682 (for previous history).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Figure 102 Anonymous, Landscape Seen through an Arcade. Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32468)
103. *Forest Glade with a Figure Seated in the Distance*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, traces of black chalk, 10 3/8 x 7 3/4 in. (256 x 185 mm)

British Museum, London (Inv. Pp. 471)

This beautiful drawing, with an impeccable provenance, entered the British Museum in 1824. It has by turns been attributed to Poussin, Pierre LeMaire, and Gian Domenico Desiderii. Recently, Turner (2001) returned to the old attribution to Poussin and considers the sheet in London to be by the same hand as the drawing recently bought by the Getty (cat. 79), which he also takes to be by Poussin.

The artist has filled the sheet so that the trees in the foreground create a screen, concealing a clearing where there seems to be a seated man.

**Inscription**

At lower right, in pen and brown ink: 119, 115, or 113 (?).

**Provenance**

According to the catalogue of the Crozet sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhialì; collection of Pierre Crozet (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 973, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 1852 at lower center); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; collection of Richard Payne Knight (1730–1824; L. 1577 on the mat, at lower center); bequeathed to the British Museum in 1824.

**Selected Bibliography**


See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. C8, pl. 230 (entry by J. Shearman); Oberhuber 1996, p. 108 and fig. 19 p. 118; Turner 2001, p. 247, under no. 79.
104. *A Fountain in a Forest*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk and sanguine, 10 x 7 1/4 in. (255 x 189 mm)

British Museum, London (Inv. Pp. 472)

See the entry for the previous drawing (cat. 103), which has the same dimensions and is unquestionably by the same hand. Note the pair of parrots perched on the fountain in this drawing.

**PROVENANCE**

According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1852 at lower right; his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1325 or 1329; collection of Richard Payne Knight (1750–1824); L. 1577 on the mat, at upper center; bequeathed to the British Museum in 1824.

**EXHIBITION**


**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 155,8, illus. (with previous publications).

See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. Gg, pl. 230 (entry by J. Shearman);

105. View of the Tiber Valley with the Ponte Molle

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, 7⅔ x 10⅗ in. (187 x 257 mm)

Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11,443)

The dimensions here are identical (but oriented horizontally rather than vertically) to those of the previous two drawings (cats. 103, 104), which would seem to fit the theory that they all come from a notebook of landscape drawings taken apart long ago. The design of this drawing, however, is appreciably different. The artist has described with approximate fidelity a well-known site: the Ponte Molle over the Tiber seen from Monte Mario, which in A.D. 313 was the site of the encounter between Constantine and Maxentius and the victory of Christianity over paganism. The view is topographical and panoramic, and the execution, like the layout, not as bold as what we find in the two previous drawings. The author of this drawing made primary use of the brush and brown wash and exploited the contrast between the foreground of trees and the sunlit expanse of the Tiber, but the sheet is much more conventional and shows less inspiration than the finest drawings of the "G group."

Inscription
At lower right, in pen and black ink: 39 (this type of numeral is seen on many of the drawings in the "G group": could they be Crozat’s numbers?).

Provenance
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10—May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1852 at lower left; his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775-January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; Prince Charles de Ligne (1730–1792), Vienna; his sale, Vienna, November 4, 1794, no. 15; Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1738–1822, L. 174 at lower right), Albertina, Vienna.

Exhibition
Fort Worth 1988, no. D65, illus.

Selected Bibliography

Related Work
A copy slightly larger than the drawing in Vienna, attributed by Prat to Nicolas Mignard (1666–1668), is in the collection of the Louvre (RF 36937); see Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1857.
106. *Hilly Landscape with Trees and Fishermen on a River*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 11 1/8 x 14 1/6 in. (289 x 378 mm)

Biblioteca Reale, Turin (Inv. 16310)

Marco Chiarini (1990 and 1994) defended an attribution to Poussin for this drawing, previously thought to be by Dughet. (Contrary to Chiarini’s assertion [1990, 1991, and 1994], to our knowledge Shearman never published this drawing under Dughet’s name.) I believe that the drawing is by neither Poussin nor Dughet. Of high quality, it is close to the drawings of the “G group,” and Prat and I are surprised that it was not mentioned in the fourth volume of the corpus by Friedlaender and Blunt (1963).

As with the previous drawing (cat. 105), this sheet exhibits contrasts between shadows and light, as well as a rather insubstantial construction of space.

**PROVENANCE**

Collection of Giovanni Volpato (1797–1871); sold by Volpato to King Carlo Alberto of Savoy in 1839; Biblioteca Reale, Turin (L. 274 at lower right).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

107. A Distant View Framed by Trees

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, 10 7/8 x 14 3/8 in. (277 x 369 mm)
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Marseilles (Inv. D 20)

This beautiful landscape drawing, in an excellent state of preservation, as Blunt observed in 1980 (p. 578), has been subject to the usual attributive vicissitudes of the “G group”: is it by Poussin, the Silver Birch Master, Dughet, Desiderii, or another artist? Very recently, Michel Hilaire (in Grenoble 2006–7) firmly championed Dughet (1615–1675) as the author, and related the drawing to our cat. 37. We do not see Dughet’s hand in any of these sheets (any more than we see Poussin’s).

The work shares with other sheets of the “G group” the same qualities and the same defects: an affinity for the spectacular—for superficial effects, for accented contrasts of shadow and light—combined with a weak layout and construction of space, an excessive use of the brush, spreading wash over the sheet with little control, and, especially, a perfunctory attention to the forms.

PROVENANCE
According to information supplied by the Marseilles museum, collection of L. de Borely and P. L. de Panss-Passis; G. de Panss-Passis; P. Talbot (exchange with the city in 1856); entered the museum in 1869 (the museum’s mark, not indexed by Lugt, at lower left).

EXHIBITION
Grenoble 2006–7, no. 49, illus. (entry by M. Hilaire).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. G40, pl. 216 (entry by J. Shearman);
108. A Stand of Trees

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, 7 3/8 x 9 3/8 in. (185 x 251 mm)
Albertina, Vienna (Inv. 11.445)

The pen plays an important role in this work—much more so than in the previous drawing (cat. 107). The artist has used it to detail the trees at left and, especially, to indicate the distant hills. The leafy trees in the foreground, done in wash, act as a kind of screen, overlooking a valley in which we see a rapidly sketched tower.

PROVENANCE
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774; L. 1852 at lower right); his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1328 or 1329; Prince Charles de Ligne (1759–1792), Vienna; his sale, Vienna, November 4, 1794, no. 91; Duke Albert of Saxe-Teschen (1758–1822; L. 174 at lower left); Albertina, Vienna.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 8260, illus. (with previous publications).
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. 34, pl. 232 (entry by J. Shearman); Knab and Widauer 1993, no. F.207, illus.; Oberhuber 1996, p. 108 and fig. 17 p. 117; Bajou 1999, p. 123, fig. 11.
109. *Landscape with Trees and a House*

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, 7½ x 10½ in. (196 x 267 mm)


The attribution to Dughet put forth by Shearman (1963) has had few supporters. The list of proposed names given in Rosenberg and Prat in 1994, consisting entirely of French and Italian artists, is impressive. Marco Chiarini (in communication with Perrin Stein, May 6, 2002) holds to his attribution to Poussin: “I feel that the drawing is too beautiful and strong to be by Dughet.” The evident quality of the sheet is not in question. As for its author, Prat and I lean toward a Northern artist established in Italy for several or more years.

The drawing was executed primarily with the pen. The artist has sought contrasts in order to demonstrate his virtuosity in the rendering of the foliage and light effects. He seeks effect rather than solid construction. His skill has about it something of the superficial and facile — nothing that, in one way or another, might recall the severity of Poussin, in whose drawings each pen line, each brushstroke, has its precise value; with Poussin, there is never one line too many.

**Provenance**

Collection of Gustave Lebel (1870–1945); collection of Jean Dollfus (according to Virch 1962, no. 41, illus.); collection of Walter C. Baker (1893–1971); bequeathed by Baker to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, in 1971 (on the right is an instance of numbering that is found on several drawings of the group, here the numeral 6 [followed by a 3 or a 5, a Crozat-Baker number], in pen and black ink).

**Selected Bibliography**

110. Landscape with a Temple

Pen and brown ink, brown wash, 7⅛ x 10½ in. (193 x 268 mm)

Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. RF 764)

New York

What gives this sheet its originality is the spectacular effect of the tree, seen contre-jour in the center foreground of the composition. The drawing’s weaknesses are nonetheless obvious: large areas of wash were set down arbitrarily, with no particular function and, even worse, no particular descriptive effort. The drawing lacks a compositional structure; indeed, it is a composition without real depth, as though constructed haphazardly. J.-F. Méjanès (1997) declined to attribute the work to Poussin, relating it to another sheet in the Louvre, Landscape with the Ponte Molle (cat. 112).

PROVENANCE
On his death, bequeathed to the Louvre by Aimé Charles Horace His de la Salle (1795–1878; L. 1333 at lower center; the Louvre’s mark, L. 1886a, at lower right).

EXHIBITIONS
See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1043 (for previous history).

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1963, no. C32, pl. 236 (entry by J. Shearman);
111. The Ponte Molle

Brush and brown wash over black chalk, 7¼ x 14¾ in. (197 x 371 mm) (enlarged in the upper part by 1¾ in. [33 mm])
École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts, Paris (Inv. 1430)

Bilbao

Ann Sutherland Harris (1990) found this drawing weak and rightly remarked that its technique—almost exclusively with the brush—was at the time used only by Northern artists.

The author of this sheet opts for easily obtained effects, such as the reflections of the arches of the bridge in the water. Yet the shadows are not rendered correctly and the reflections, created by broad areas of wash, are badly placed. It is difficult to understand why a drawing with this sort of narrative and descriptive character—so superficial and so contrary to all we know about Poussin and admire him for—was for so long attributed to him.

INSCRIPTION
At lower right, in pen and brown ink: 126 (Crozat number).

PROVENANCE
According to the catalogue of the Crozat sale, from the collection of Éverard Jabach, Jacques Stella, or Carlo degli Occhiali; collection of Pierre Crozat (1665–1740); his postmortem sale, Paris, April 10–May 13, 1741, part of either lot 974, 979, 980, 981, 982, or 983; acquired by Mariette; collection of Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774); L. 1825 at lower left; his postmortem sale, Paris, November 15, 1775–January 30, 1776, part of lot 1288 or 1290; collection His de la Salle (L. 1321 at lower right); his gift to the École des Beaux-Arts in 1869.

A drawing by G. de Saint-Aubin (1724–1780), who may have copied the sheet now in the École des Beaux-Arts, illustrates the margin of his Fournelle sale catalogue of October 14, 1776, no. 229 (Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 878a).

EXHIBITIONS

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY
See Rosenberg and Prat 1994, no. 878, illus. (with previous publications).
See also Friedländer and Blunt 1963, no. G25, pl. 237 (entry by J. Shearman).
112. **Landscape with the Ponte Molle**

Pen and brown ink, brush and brown wash over black chalk, 7 1/4 x 10 7/8 in. (198 x 275 mm)
Paris, Musée du Louvre, Département des Arts graphiques (Inv. 32476)

*Bilbao*

The attribution of this drawing to Poussin, supported by Chiarini (1965), was more recently opposed by J.-F. Méjanès (1997). The drawing is undoubtedly by the same hand as the previous depiction of Ponte Molle, seen at a different angle, in the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts (cat. 111). The two drawings share the same weaknesses, the same artificiality, and the same descriptive approach.

**PROVENANCE**
Collection of Charles Paul Jean Baptiste Bourgevin Vialart de Saint-Morys (1743–1795); confiscated from royalist exiles in 1793; Musée du Louvre, Paris, Département des Arts graphiques (L. 1886 at lower left).

**EXHIBITIONS**
See Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1903 (for previous history).

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**
See also Friedlaender and Blunt 1965, no. G34, pl. 238 (entry by J. Shearman); Méjanès et al. 1997, no. 1903, illus.
113. The Arcus Argentariorum in Rome

Pen and brown ink, brown wash over black chalk, 14¼ x 10¾ in. (358 x 277 mm)
On the verso, in sanguine: Study of Two Figures
Windsor Castle, The Royal Collection (RL 8237)

Blunt attributed this drawing to Poussin and also identified the site, remarking that the artist took some liberties in his rendering of the architecture. This, in turn, led Blunt to ask whether the sheet was executed in situ or based on a study by another master.

Actually, the very conception of the drawing, with the monument isolated on the white sheet, certain lines drawn with a ruler, and a correction at the corner of the left-hand entablature make us doubt the attribution to Poussin. In 1902, Turner cautiously proposed restoring the drawing to Pietro Testa (1611–1650), citing similar studies, albeit carried out in a wash of a different tonality; they, too, are preserved at Windsor and come from Cassiano dal Pozzo’s so-called Paper Museum (the Museo Cartaceo). In 1995, Clayton brought up a different name—Domenichino (1581–1641)—but pressed the matter no further.

The tufts of grass differ greatly from those seen in other drawings by Poussin, when he depicts this sort of naturalistic detail. Finally, the section of reliefs drawn in pen and covered by a uniform wash in the shadow of the left pier reveals a pen line that looks nothing like Poussin’s.

PROVENANCE
Perhaps the collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo (1588–1657); collection of Pope Clement XI (1649–1721), Rome; his nephew, Cardinal Alessandro Albani (1692–1779); acquired by King George III (1738–1820) in 1782; Windsor Castle, Royal Library.

EXHIBITION
London 1993, no. 80, illus., and pp. 31–32.

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Badt: Badt 1969
Blunt: Blunt 1966
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L.: Lug 1921–46
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