the new *Hymns Ancient and Modern*. In the *Daily Hymn Book* the words are usually more carefully ascribed than the tunes, though both are sometimes indicated simply by a question mark. 'Old melody' seems to cover a number of centuries. Surely a great deal more might have been done in tracking down tunes to their sources. For example, in No. 105, the version of the tune known as the 'Old Hundredth' is simply ascribed to Bach, whereas it is actually found first in the Geneva Psalter of 1551, and was arranged in three-time and harmonised by Bach. Should not some indication of this have been given? It is not as though we have not the scholars and musicians able to do the work or give the information required. It is not as though we have not the resources upon which to draw, the whole heritage of Christian poetry and Western music is ours. Why not use it? Where was the enterprise that embarked upon the publication of the liturgical hymns when it came to selecting the English ones? Where was the courage that included *O sacred Head surrounded* and its glorious tune when it dared not give us more hymns of the same quality? The editor would have given us a great hymn book if only he had lived up to his convictions.

FRANCIS MONCRIEFF, O.P.

MR. ROGER FRY ON FRENCH ART[1]

The difficulty of dealing adequately with French painting as a whole is that the very use of the term 'French painting' implies a continuity, a unifying tradition, which among French painters is entirely absent. Appreciation of tradition alone suffices to explain why Sasseta was Sasseta or Greco Greco, but it is vain to ask Fragonard why Daumier was Daumier or to look in Watteau for the germ of Delacroix. In each separate case to find the original influence we have to go outside France, with Wat-

[1] *Characteristics of French Art*. By Roger Fry. (Chatto & Windus; 12/6.)

teau and Delacroix to Rubens, with Fragonard and Daumier to the atelier of Rembrandt. Though certain French painters group themselves together, Ingres and David and Prud'hon or Monet and Sisley and Berthe Morisot, we can look for a very long time without discovering a common denominator between any two such groups. There are French painters; there is no French painting. In French art more than in the art of any other country we are dealing with the individual as a single entity and not as part of a progressive chain and we therefore find ourselves, more frequently than elsewhere, coming up again and again against the personal, unheralded assertion of individuality that we call genius. Study of these inconsequent phenomena can necessarily only take the form of interpretative biography and not of the mere objective history certain writers have attempted to make of it.

Mr. Fry's conclusions as interpreter have the advantage of being based on the mature scholarship that was so conspicuously lacking in several of the hastier works provoked by the French Exhibition, while at the same time they are guided by aesthetic sensibility of peculiar sanity and coherence. Yet Mr. Fry in his initial attempt to find a formula explanatory of and applicable to all French painters is as inconclusive as in the succeeding pages of penetrating individual analysis he is satisfactory. Granted it is ever justifiable to explain individual by national character, it can hardly be permissible in the case of Flemings like Watteau and Pater and Philippe de Champaigne, Englishmen like Sisley, Germans like Claude, artists so conspicuously Italianate as Poussin. The temperamental differences between Fouquet and Van Eyck are after all far slighter than those between Tura and Perugino, yet who would think of applying the national characteristic principle to Umbria and Ferrara?

What distinguishes Mr. Fry's criticism is his remarkable ability to define a painter's scope, his discussion of the Le Nains, for example, or of Géricault. We may object that the Renoir of *Les Bords de la Seine* had greater linear sense than Mr. Fry would have us believe, that the Daumier of the self-portraits and the *Don Quichottes* was something more than a perspicacious journalist, that

however stupid a landscape painter Claude may have been, his sepia drawings do betray a spontaneous grasp of essential forms and their inter-relation unparalled save in Derain, that Boucher's integrity was greater than Mr. Fry suggests. But each of the statements to which we object is of general application; lack of linear sense in nine cases out of ten is Renoir's weakness, most of Daumier's *œuvre* is little better than exalted Arno, and so on. Such over-statement as there is, is in the interest of clarity.

An epitome of Mr. Fry's method is his extremely acute analysis of Delacroix, which contains a refreshing denial of the humbug that accepts him as a supreme colourist. When Mr. Fry says: 'The greatest musician cannot express the most transcendant conception on a piano of which half the strings are broken,' we acquiesce as we remember the clumsy hands and arms, the faulty drawing in the studies for the *Barque des Morts,* the hesitancy that makes the *Heliodorus,* with its unrelated top and bottom sections, almost as bad a picture as the *Night Watch,* and the theatricality that is paralleled in the mock heroics of the *Claudius Civilis.* Fundamentally there is as little of the grandiose in Delacroix as in Rembrandt, and if we admire him it must be for the *George Sand,* the intimacy of the *Amedée Berni d'Ouville* of 1826, or that strange concentration of self-dramatising romanticism, the still earlier *Delacroix en Costume d'Hamlet* and its dedication (to Carrier) 'à Ravenswood,' a curious link with the alien world of Scott and *La Fiancée de Lammermoor.*

These two lectures are an excellent piece of constructive criticism and, it is needless to say, immeasurably superior to the many studies of French art that appeared during the course of last year. In this instance what Mr. Fry has to say is always sound, often new, and sometimes brilliant.

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