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The Madonna in Profile

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## The Lane Bequest Again

date and of our action will be clear to Mr. Bodkin if he will turn back to his page 33, where Lane is quoted as writing to the Town Clerk of Dublin in November 1912 to say that the pictures "will be removed from Dublin at the end of January, 1913, if the building of a new and suitable gallery is not decided on." We knew that the Dublin deadlock was unlikely to be solved, and that the threatened alternative was a sale of the pictures. But Lane, quite excusably, seized on the conversation as a new weapon in Dublin and extended his time-limit by nine months: his phrase about a "plot" was for Irish consumption. Lady Gregory's gallant campaign in America also raised fresh hopes.

Up to this time I had, in Lane's words of 1908 (p. 23), "steadily and earnestly supported the scheme from its inception." Here is one of his letters:

Feb. 9th, 1908

It is difficult not to suffer from "swelled head" after reading your splendid article ["Lessons from Dublin," *Saturday Review*, Feb. 8.] However, it is a wonderful help to us all here. Yeats is greatly delightful and wants to apply your moral to his theatre work. The Editor of the *Irish Times* wants to reproduce the article. I said that I thought that there would be no objection, and have taken the responsibility on myself. The Corporation here has daily got more interested in their Gallery, and your article will, I think, decide them once for all.

I long to begin weeding again—to have only important things, but that is not possible just yet. I heard to-day that Dr. Mahaffy was preparing a letter for the Press to prove that the Manets, etc., "being ugly" must be bad! I don't think that he will publish it now!

I wrote also in the Irish Press at another critical moment, and till the imminence of what appeared to be a final break, my attitude was unchanged.

There is a second gap in Mr. Bodkin's narrative after the failure of the proposed exhibition at our National Gallery. In his quotation from Lane's final letter to the Board he omits the very "material" sentences.

I have no objection to repeating what I

originally said to Lord Curzon, viz: that if I thought the giving of the Collection to London would mean that steps were taken to create a Gallery for Modern Continental Art, which I feel is a crying want, I should be greatly tempted to give them [they were already bequeathed].

This is represented by asterisks. As I had to say of a more flagrant treatment of the document, this is "something less than scholarly." When nothing came of this letter, Lane was again of a mind to sell the pictures, but he called a meeting of his London friends, and I was empowered to reopen negotiations with Lord Curzon on the basis of an exhibition at Millbank. Lane stood by his former statement, which this time was accepted as sufficient, and privately he assured me that a Gallery, if obtained, would decide him. Two months later (May 7, 1914) I was able to tell him that there was a solid prospect of its construction. All this is suppressed in Mr. Bodkin's account, and he attempts to weaken the effect of Mr. Aitkin's testimony that six or seven weeks after he had written the codicil, Lane repeated to him the assurances he had given to me. He encouraged other friends in the opposite sense, but made no mention of the codicil or of any definite intention to the two who were named in it, Lady Gregory and Mr. Bodkin.

It must be clear to an impartial critic that Lane, after his return to Dublin, played a double game, with vacillating intentions. We took him at his word and carried out the conditions he laid down. The wavering indicated by the unattested codicil would have given Dublin five years' grace to provide a gallery. Seventeen have passed, and Charlemont House, with additions behind, has been substituted for Clonmell House. If legal effect were now given to the codicil, the thirty-nine pictures would be sold. We may claim a modest credit for preventing that. If an unattested codicil had left Lane's Old Masters to London, it is unlikely that Ireland would have clamoured for its execution in the name of hypothetical justice. In that name Mr. Bodkin's contention for setting aside both will and codicil is plausible for those unacquainted with all the facts.

## THE MADONNA IN PROFILE BY KENNETH CLARK



ALL students of Leonardo are familiar with the list of his works drawn up in his own hand, which is to be found on folio 324 recto of the "Codice Atlantico." Calvi ("I manoscritti di Leonardo da Vinci," 1925, 54) has shown that the evidence of handwriting alone places this list in an early period of

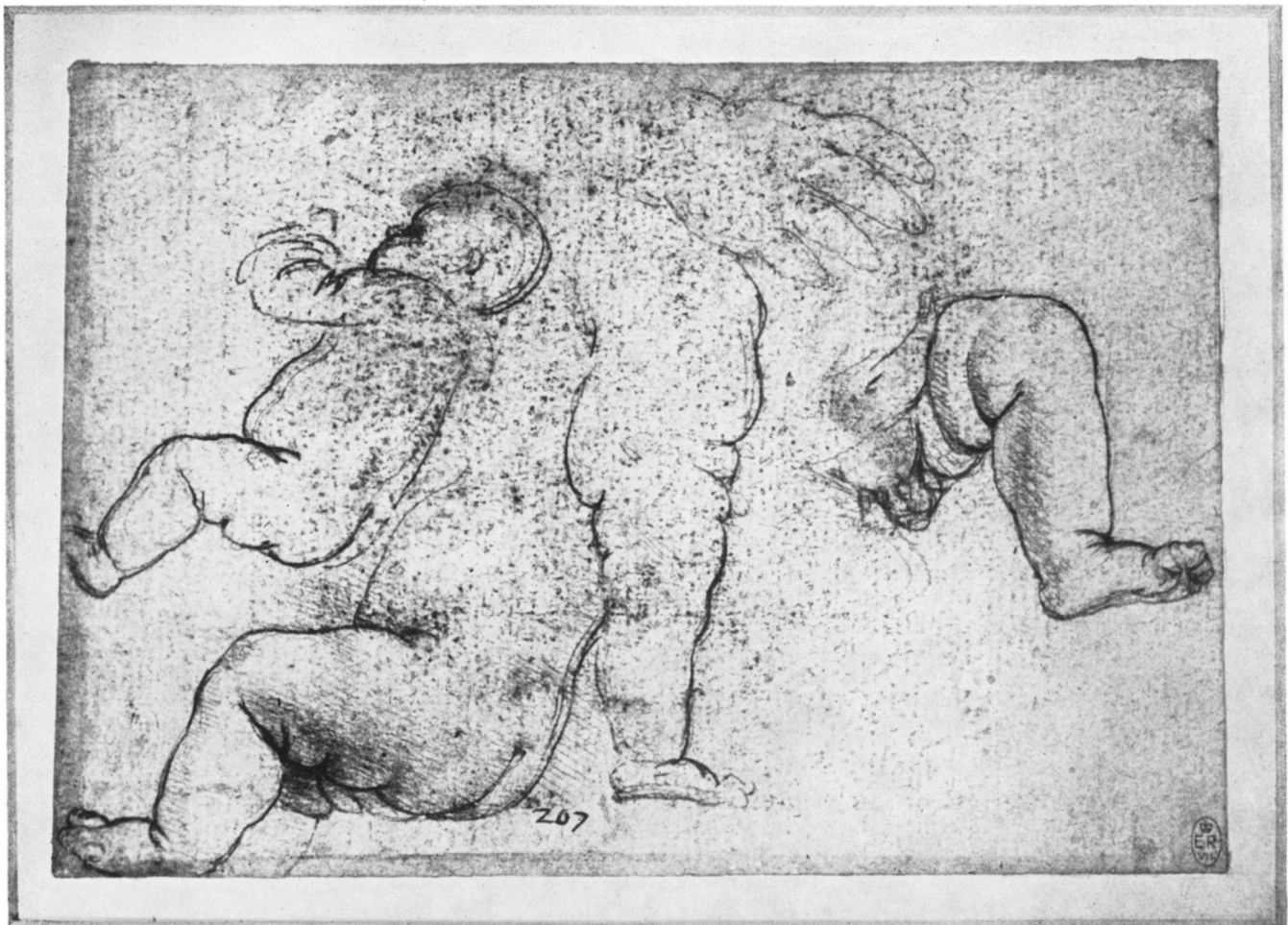
Leonardo's career—almost certainly before 1485; and the fact that it makes no mention of *The Virgin of the Rocks*, which was begun in April, 1483, suggests that we have to do with the actual list of the works of art in his possession drawn up by Leonardo when he had moved from Florence to Milan sometime in 1482. Each of the thirty-four entries is of the greatest interest,



A—The “*Madonna Litta*,” after Leonardo da Vinci. (The Hermitage, Leningrad)



B—Studies for *The Virgin and Child*, by Leonardo da Vinci (British Museum)



C—Studies of a Baby, by Leonardo da Vinci (Windsor Castle)

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and a few have been hesitatingly identified with existing works by Leonardo, but the entry which is the subject of this note does not seem to have been commented on. The twenty-fifth item on the list is *vna nosstra donna finjta*, the twenty-sixth *vn altra qu(a)si chē proffilo*. The finished picture of Our Lady is usually identified with *The Virgin with the Flowers*, perhaps the so-called *Bénois Madonna*, now in the Hermitage, Leningrad; but students have offered no suggestions as to the other "almost, in profile." There is one celebrated Leonardesque picture which answers to the description, *The Madonna Litta* [PLATE A], also in the Hermitage. The reason why this picture has never been associated with the entry in the list is clear: the list was drawn up before 1485, and *The Madonna Litta* has many of the characteristics of the Milanese School of the 1490's, in particular its smoothness of modelling and sweetness of sentiment. But no one has ever succeeded in identifying it as the work of any particular Milanese painter. Morelli and his followers attributed it to the second-rate Bernardino dei Conti; others have attributed it to Ambrogio da Predis. Mr. Berenson, in the new edition of his lists ("Italian Paintings of the Renaissance," 1931, p. 279) has called it an unfinished Leonardo da Vinci, with a question mark.

I believe that the study of Leonardo's drawings may throw some light on the problem. Hitherto only two sheets have been associated with *The Madonna Litta*. One of these, the beautiful silver-point of a woman's head in the Louvre (No. 2376),<sup>1</sup> is clearly for the Virgin's head, and has been acknowledged as such by every student, except Professor Suida. Another is in the Arundel MSS., British Museum, No. Folios 253 verso and 256 recto, which was first identified by Horne ("Leonardo da Vinci," p. 40) as bearing studies for the Child in *The Madonna Litta*. On the strength of this identification Horne dated *The Madonna Litta* c. 1508, and suggested that it was one of two pictures begun by Leonardo for the French king, and mentioned in a draft of a letter in the "Codice Atlantico" 317<sup>r</sup>. The suggestion was doubly unfortunate. The head is not that of the Child in *The Madonna Litta*, being turned in the opposite direction, but is quite clearly a study for the head of the Child in *The Virgin of the Rocks*. And the drawing is not datable 1508. The earlier part of the Arundel MS. is dated 1508, but it is surprising that such a careful scholar as Horne did not see that the later sheets of the MS. are a collection of all dates, earlier and later, bound up

<sup>1</sup> Reproduced in Bodmer's "Leonardo," p. 230, where it is dated 1490-93.

together without any order. The sheet in question is clearly very early, and has on its verso a piece of writing of an early type. Indeed, since it is a study for *The Virgin of the Rocks* it can safely be dated 1483. Horne's hypothesis, therefore, which has misled several scholars as to the date of *The Madonna Litta*, may be put aside. There are three other drawings which do not seem to have been identified with this picture. They are as follows:—A slight sketch of *The Virgin and Child* in black lead, on the middle of the well-known sheet bearing studies in pen and ink for a *Last Supper*, in the Louvre (No. 2258) [Bodmer, p. 134]; a slight sketch of the Virgin and Child in silver-point on the bottom left-hand corner of the drawing for *The Virgin with the Flowers* in the British Museum [PLATE B]; and finally studies of a baby in red chalk in the Royal Collection, Windsor Castle, No. 12568 [PLATE C].

There can be little doubt that all three drawings are connected with the original of *The Madonna Litta*. In both studies of the Virgin she is in the same characteristic attitude, her body almost facing the spectator, her head almost in profile looking down to the right. Of the sketches one is a little ampler, and the line of the neck and left shoulder is more emphasized than in the finished painting. It will be noticed that in these two sketches the Child is in different positions. In the Louvre drawing he is resting on the Virgin's left arm, in the British Museum drawing on her right, much as in the finished picture. And it is interesting to find studies for both these positions in the drawing at Windsor, where the study of baby's legs is almost identical with that finally used and reproduced in *The Madonna Litta*. The other studies on the sheet show the Child turned the other way; but Leonardo has already thought of him as taking his mother's breast—the motive which distinguishes *The Madonna Litta* and is, as far as we know, unique in Leonardo's work.

All these drawings must be dated before 1482. One of the sketches for the Virgin and Child is on the same sheet as the study for *The Madonna with the Flowers*, which is usually identified as one of the two Madonnas begun in the Autumn of 1478, referred to on a sheet in the Uffizi. The other sketch of the Virgin and Child is on a sheet which bears on its verso two pen-and-ink studies used in *The Adoration* in the Uffizi, commissioned in March, 1481. The study of the Virgin's head in the Louvre has been dated c. 1485, and compared to the study at Turin of the angel's head in *The Virgin of the Rocks*; but examination of the original drawing shows that it is earlier. It is even earlier than the famous silver-point drawing at Windsor, the study of hands (12558), which is

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probably before 1483. The use of silver-point is less bold, the lines finer and more fused. The whole technique is closest to the most Verrocchiesque of all Leonardo's drawings, the magnificent head of *A Warrior* in the Malcolm Collection, British Museum. Finally, the studies for the Child at Windsor can hardly be dissociated from the other Windsor drawing of babies (12569), which is clearly connected with the Child in *The Virgin with the Flowers*. The apprehension of form, sense of pose and even the touch is identical in both drawings. Only one fact makes me hesitate—the drawing is in red chalk. The date at which red chalk first began to be used is one of those facts for which we seek, and seek in vain, in Dr. Meder's great encyclopedia "Die Handzeichnung." Without Dr. Meder's erudition it would be unwise to suggest too definite a date, but certainly no drawing in red chalk is known to me earlier than 1490.<sup>2</sup> *A priori*, then, it seems most improbable that the Windsor drawing of the Child can be as early as 1480. But examination of the original drawing shows a handling entirely different from that of Leonardo's later red chalk drawings. The chalk itself is different—harder and more orange-coloured—and Leonardo used it like a metal point. Instead of the sense of texture and the nervous emphasis of his later drawings, the line is hard, and rather uncomfortable. Leonardo was trying an experiment; we may guess that he was not too well pleased with the result, and the red stone was laid aside until, ten years later, his touch became too free and emphatic for silver-point. We need not

<sup>2</sup> There is a drawing in red chalk which shows the method of packing a model horse in the "Codice Atlantico," f. 216, recto. It is usually connected with the transport of the Sforza horse for exhibition at the marriage festivities of Bianca Sforza and the Emperor Maximilian in 1493. Some of the red chalk drawings in MS. H may be as early.

hesitate, therefore, to date the red chalk drawing of babies with its obvious companion, the study for *The Virgin with the Flowers*. All four drawings, therefore, can be dated about 1480; and the original of *The Madonna Litta* must have been designed before Leonardo left Florence.

We can now return to the entry in Leonardo's list, which I have suggested was a list of the works of art in his possession directly after he had moved from Florence to Milan.<sup>3</sup> The entry, *un'altra qu(a)si chē proffilo*, has been translated by Richter as *another, almost in profile*, but I believe that Italian scholars will bear me out in saying that the word *quasi* cannot be made to qualify *proffilo*. The natural grammar of the sentence is that it should qualify the preceding entry. The Virgin therefore was not *quasi in proffilo* but *quasi finita*. This I believe to be the solution of the problems raised by *The Madonna Litta*. The panel is actually that which Leonardo took from Florence to Milan, almost finished, and it was completed some ten years later, under his eye, by one of his Milanese pupils. Such a solution explains the strongly Florentine, almost Crediesque, element in the composition and the drawing, especially the drawing of the draperies. I have not seen the original picture, but from coloured reproductions and from the descriptions of those who have, I am led to believe that the colour is more Florentine than Milanese. Indeed it is on the two heads that the Milanese pupil has done the most work, in particular on the smooth and pretty head of the Child. How little and how subtly he altered the Madonna's head may be seen by comparing the picture with the original drawing in Paris.

<sup>3</sup> That it must date from after his arrival in Milan is shown by the entry, "vna testa del ducha."

## SHORTER NOTICES

### THE BRITISH THEATRICAL LOAN EXHIBITION

Works of art relating roughly to four centuries of theatrical enterprise in Great Britain are included in the British Theatrical Loan Exhibition, at Dudley House, Park Lane, which begins with the early sixteenth century and, save for a few items, ends with the opening years of the twentieth. In addition to providing means to tracing the aesthetic development of the stage during this period, it incidentally throws some interesting sociological light upon the progress of the mime from a status of vagabondage to one of no mean social position. The gap between 1900 and the present day in respect of stage designs is being bridged at the Victoria and Albert Museum by a supplementary exhibition, in which drawings by the late Charles Ricketts, R.A., represent the effort of our own time.

In deference to the debt which the modern stage owes to Gordon Craig, there has been included amongst the models of theatrical décor one showing his setting for the Third Act of "King Lear," and belonging to the year 1925. This is the last in a series of five models, lent by the British Drama League, and illustrative of the evolution of theatrical stage design from the Restoration onwards. An interesting model of the old Globe Theatre in the time of Shakespeare has been made to specifications provided by the same source.

Prior to the seventeenth century, portraits of personalities in the world of the theatre seem to have been rare, the "profession" being then held in insufficient esteem to warrant such attention. Amongst the Restoration portraits is that of John Lacy, comedian, in three different characters, lent by His Majesty the King. This work, which is by Michael