

## Psychology of an Art Writer (Personal Observation)

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I first set myself the task of investigating what I'll call my aesthetic record mostly in order to better question others, and even to serve as an example to them. But as my self-examination began to bear fruit, in the form of observations that sometimes surprised and unsettled me, I found myself in possession of a collection of facts that bridges the gap between the subjective study of aesthetics and psychology in general. The reader will see that this fragmentary, autobiographical confession serves as evidence—purely individual and empirical evidence—for the following issues:

1. The existence of an abstract affective memory, through which an aesthetic feeling can be transferred from one set of sensations to another, and thanks to which it can enter a standby state, ready to express itself in response to sensations that wouldn't have summoned it up spontaneously, for lack of specialized training.
2. The connections between the set of distinct factors that contribute to aesthetic pleasure: the direct perception of a form as such; its interpretation in terms of what it's meant to represent; emotional qualities inherent in perceiving the form or tied to it by association; and, finally, the individual's intellectual and imaginative activity.
3. The connections between an individual's aesthetic experiences and her experience of pleasure in general. This includes issues related to the affective "tone" of

- life, to the affective partiality of memory, and to a larger or smaller need for novelty, for violent sensations—for everything the German aestheticians call *intensive Reize*.
4. The role of aesthetic phenomena in the life of the individual. Do beauty and ugliness form an ever present binary in the life of feeling? Does *beauty* correspond to a permanent and continuous internal drive, or does it constitute an exceptional psychic state? In other words, do art, poetry, and natural beauty induce intense but fleeting states of mind, acute pleasures one step removed from ecstasy? Or do they rather give rise to diffuse and enduring moods, for the most part barely or not at all distinguishable from what one might call not *pleasure* but *satisfaction*?

Turning over my memories from childhood and adolescence, I can tell right away that the words *Beauty* and *Beautiful* have played a critical role in my life, particularly from the age of twelve, when my family moved to Rome. It was then that I found myself, for the first time, face-to-face with works of art and involved in discussions where art came constantly into play. I devoted myself to reading books on art, and I began to have theories on the subject. More or less confusedly, the idea that I should become interested in aesthetics merged with my literary ambitions. By the time I was sixteen and fate sent me, as a Latin tutor, a German archaeologist who has since made a name for himself, I had already read Blanc's *Grammar*

*of Painting and Engraving*, Winckelmann's *History*, and Lessing's *Laocoön*, and I was naturally interested in my teacher's conversations and in the books I convinced him to lend me. Here, I want to return to the phrase I began with, this time with a different emphasis: the words *Beauty* and *Beautiful* have played a critical role in my life. I want to make clear that, at least *in relation to visual art*, the pleasure and meaning I attached to these terms had very little to do with objects' aesthetic features as I now perceive them. Back then, I paid little attention to such qualities, and I can hardly remember having had my own spontaneous, intuitive preferences for artworks. Instead, the opinions of others played the principle role in the formation of my aesthetic taste (including therein my occasional adoption of a willfully contrary attitude). Brought up in the company of a child who has become a famous painter, I deliberately adopted his interests, and latched on even more strongly to the preferences that my young friend's mother frequently expressed in our presence.

A single fact will serve to demonstrate just how much my taste in sculpture and painting was purely the result of imitation. Consider the following paradox, which persisted in my preferences until my sixteenth year, when I fell under the sway of my archaeologist Latin tutor.

In sculpture, I declared myself strongly in favor of beautiful forms, and for a relative lack of expression and dramatic content. On the other hand, in painting, I spurned the Renaissance masters (Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo,

et cetera), insisting that there was nothing to be found in their work but “technical” qualities. I much preferred the Bolognese painters (Guido Reni, Guercino, and the Carracci brothers), on account of the “soul” they put into their canvases. This incoherent position was due to a simple constellation of facts. On the one hand, in the conversations I’d heard and in Hawthorne’s novel *The Marble Faun*, which the tourists of the time used as an aesthetic compass, *antiquity*—the piles of statues both good and bad that stuff the museums of Rome—was on the same agenda with Canova, Thorvaldsen, and the rest of the living imitators of classical sculpture. But, in terms of painting, the Bolognese school was much more strongly represented in Rome than any other, and the literature of the era was still imbued with the sentimental preferences of the eighteenth century. Stendhal, Shelley, and nearly all the writers that were read in Rome in those days had spoken highly of Guido Reni and Guercino. Today the only good one can say about it is that those writers brought out the paintings’ sentimental side. I believe that I was completely in thrall to the opinions I heard around me, which seemed to have a certain authority in my eyes. Another circumstance occurs to me here, one that makes me think that my “preferences” in visual art had nothing spontaneous or authentic about them. I mean the fact that after the first winter I spent in Rome with the S——family, I wasn’t taken on trips to the museums anymore, and so my ideas about art were drawn from the copies I saw displayed in shopwindows,

and from a collection of photographs I’d assembled, most of them small and of poor quality. It was only after I’d turned sixteen that I came to any serious acquaintance with the galleries of Rome, under the influence of my Latin tutor and the books he lent me.

So I can say with near certainty that in those early years I hardly took any pleasure at all from the beauty of paintings or drawings. But I did experience frequent and vivid pleasure from the *idea* of that beauty, and that’s the distinction I have to make perfectly clear. Flipping through my wretched collection of photographs, glancing at the copies set up in shopwindows, and above all thinking back on the vague image of a canvas, often little more than a nebulous profile—when I spoke of and thought about art, I certainly felt the same emotion, or to put it better, I found the same affective tone that I had much later under the absolutely real and direct influence of plastic beauty. How can I explain the presence of what one might call a *borrowed* feeling? And how could I have come by it without personal experience? There’s no need to resort to the hypothesis that I was imitating feelings whose existence had been asserted by others—a hypothesis that would itself require an explanation. This feeling, which I automatically ascribed to the visual arts in what was almost a gesture of fealty, arose in me, spontaneous and personalized, in other categories of experience.

For instance, I was well acquainted with the feeling connected to the words *Beautiful* and *Beauty* in the context of music. I realize that in my childhood, as a rather

docile soul, I adopted the preferences of anyone who spoke or wrote with authority, but I'm certain that, at least where music was concerned, these preferences were combined with my own predispositions. Music pierced me, caught me in its grasp: in this corner of the arts I experienced real pleasure connected to an actual exercise of attention. The persistence of my musical tastes through time are a confirmation of this fact. While my preferences for canvases, statues, and architecture have often changed, both overall and piece by piece, my musical preferences have stayed what they already were at twelve or thirteen years old, and the new pleasures that have come to complement the older ones never constituted any kind of rupture, or even a shift in direction. The ensemble pieces from *The Magic Flute*, the *Jupiter* symphony—all of Mozart's work has remained what it was for me at the beginning of my adolescence.

In addition to music, I had a source of aesthetic enjoyment that gave me pleasures that were much more profound, more personally orchestrated, and even more spontaneous, since I could only describe them in language or through theory with great difficulty, and I often experienced them without even fully realizing it. I am alluding here to what has always been the most intimate pleasure of my life, one you would have to assign, for lack of a better term, to the vague category of "Landscape" or "Natural Beauty."

I believe I received little instruction in this realm of taste. My father must have been inclined as I was: his

passion for hunting and fishing and his keen naturalist's eye were both wedded to an intense pleasure in all things related to the outdoors. Though his drawings lacked any artistic style, they nevertheless demonstrated a remarkable sense for the shape of things, and for configurations of terrain above all: no detail of the land or weather escaped him. But, being as he was a resolutely antiliterary soul, he did not know how to communicate his impressions, and his theories, befitting a retired engineer of bridges and roads, had nothing in them to charm a child who always dreamed of "The Beautiful," and for whom *Art* was already an idol. I think my father, who devoted very little time to me, must have passed down his tastes through sheer heredity. I never learned from him how to look at a landscape, whether to admire it or dislike it. Unlike my father, my mother was my constant companion, but she was the least likely person in the world to devote herself to the observation of visible things. As she was very literary, and full of Romanticism, she thought she treasured landscapes that she couldn't even properly see. She taught me to love certain adjectives: "the silvery sheen of the olive tree," the *dove-dappled-gray* color of a lake. But I remember my surprise when I realized that she couldn't tell an olive tree from a green oak, and that she never knew very clearly where the lake stopped and the river began. As for myself, I retained clear images of places I'd left behind when very young, and I could perfectly envision the topographies of cities I hadn't seen since my sixth or seventh year.

This feeling for landscape seems to have been both absolutely spontaneous and personal to me, since it was very cleanly bifurcated into a kind of satisfaction that swelled to passionate and nostalgic love, and a distaste that degenerated into a thoroughgoing distress. I believe this binary (*beautiful:ugly::satisfaction:distress*) is the indispensable sign of an authentic aesthetic affectivity, however much the tendency to only look for aesthetic phenomena *in art*, where everything conspires to induce satisfaction and banish distress, makes us too often forget it. I must have had access to another field of spontaneous aesthetic experiences in the beauty and ugliness of the people who were part of my daily life. It's true that, in this case, my perceptions are less clear, as I don't always remember physiognomies, and my memories of people take the form of moments, of a series of consecutive states, rather than of *posed* portraits. And my preferences here stem as much from gestures, or from specific moral or organic indications, as they do from form alone. Still, these preferences have nevertheless been with me since my childhood. It even seems to me that in certain cases the affective memory was filed away without any visual image at all: for instance, I think I can remember just how much pleasure I took in the beauty (or how much distress I experienced from the ugliness) of some of my nurses and maids and other individuals whose physical appearance I can't remember at all. It's quite possible that what's at issue in cases like these is only the *trace* of an occurrence, transmitted by memory

without an authentic affective recollection attached to it, but I have no reason to believe that the judgments of others—"this girl is ugly," "this lady is very pretty"—were responsible, and that I'd have somehow carried those judgments from one stage of my life into the next.

There are two other considerations that lead me to believe that, in this domain, I had aesthetic experiences at an early age. The first is that, from nine or ten, the age I begin to have consecutive memories, I seem to recall a feeling of boredom caused by the necessarily quotidian and relative character of human beauty (relative in the sense that it's dependent on lighting, on the pose, et cetera). This boredom has followed me throughout my entire life, preventing me from finding a sustained pleasure, the kind of *stereotyped* pleasure that I aspire to, even in the beauty of the most handsome individuals or the ones I dearly love, and transforming my aesthetic relations with the people in my entourage into a little drama full of surprises, expectations, and disappointments. The other reason to think that I had spontaneous preferences in these matters is that, while *beauty* has always attracted me, *ugliness* has just as constantly posed an obstacle in my emotional relationships, enough so that I'm compelled to hunt out with great care the beautiful details in people toward whom I feel friendly for other reasons.

Awkward and retiring in nature, brought up in unusual isolation, I had very little taste for grooming and dressing myself, but furniture and the details of the house began to attract my attention as early as thirteen

or fourteen years old. I never had the least taste for the *objet d'art*, by which I mean bric-a-brac, but as I grew older, I came increasingly under the tyranny of line and color when it came to the objects around me.

The above details should demonstrate that from an early age I had access to realms of aesthetic experience in music, in “natural beauty,” and in human beauty that could have furnished me the emotions (or, perhaps more accurately, the states of mind) that I connected to the words *Beautiful* and *Ugly*, even if those same features escaped me in works of art, to which I paid only a scant, distracted attention in any case. I will soon return to the subject of this *aesthetic emotion, stored up and transferred from one thing to another*. But first I must continue to follow the development, or, rather, the diversion of my preferences in art itself.

From very early on, I aspired to become a writer, and an art writer above all else. I began to take on the mental habits of such a career around fourteen or fifteen.

Beginning around that age, my notebooks are full of wild disquisitions on the *Beautiful*, and on the connections between the *Real* and the *Ideal*, between literature and visual art. At sixteen I wrote a rather clever little philosophy of art. And at seventeen or eighteen, when my family moved from Rome to Florence, I regularly devoted myself to what I'd term the exploitation of art for the benefit of literature.

Allow me to linger here a moment, examining exactly what happens when art is used that way. All literary de-

scription is based on images stored up in the memory of the reader. Accordingly, the writer who describes a painting finds himself totally unable to evoke its true form in the mind of a reader who isn't yet acquainted with this particular work of art. Because of that, we can be certain that at least nine times out of ten (or ninety-nine out of a hundred), the description of a painting will never amount to more than a description of the objects represented in the painting. The *form*, through which the artist attempted to conjure up reality, will become a mere symbol the writer quickly deciphers in order to busy himself with the reality referred to, and with the entourage of feelings and ideas associated with that reality. Thus, there is here a substitution of the processes of one art for those of another, and attention is diverted from its proper application. The writer will naturally seek out elements that lend themselves to literary transformation; he will unconsciously be driven to give himself over more and more to associations tied to the painting's subject (and by *subject* I mean everything one could learn from a catalog), to the detriment of the specific effect that a work's form can have on a viewer, an effect that differentiates each work of art from every other representing the same thing.

This explains my very first, anomalous pieces on art. All while resolutely maintaining that the essence of art is in form (a theory I'd derived in part from philosophical considerations and in part from my taste in music), I never offered my readers anything more than descriptions

of the subject an artwork represented, and of the states of mind arising from that subject. I pause here a moment to refine my thinking in these difficult matters, typically made only more obscure by art criticism. The word *subject* ought to be understood here in its narrowest sense. For the moment, I'm not speaking of the useful material that I, as a writer, could derive from the anecdotal or dramatic event, nor do I mean to indicate the attraction or repulsion I felt in front of a canvas representing, for example, Apollo surrounded by the Muses, rather than one that depicted drunks behaving in a disgusting fashion, although that sort of distinction also played a significant role in my preferences. I'm trying to get at something subtler here, something that is easily confused with our authentic aesthetic perceptions: the preference in a canvas for chains of ideas that would be pleasing in real life. For the longest time I thought that I had more of a taste for Signorelli than I really did, only because Signorelli painted models who would have been quite beautiful in real life, and whose physical beauty vaguely resembled that of classical predecessors. On the other hand, I had an obstinate prejudice against Botticelli, because his Virgins and Nymphs were examples of physical types that would have been sickly and sullen had they been incarnated in real women. Every time I looked at Signorelli's *Last Judgment* or the *School of Pan*, what I saw was the presence of ephebes, and this immediately called forth vague visions of classical statues (via an associational process that is the essence of even literary art). Even

more than that, it summoned up a *feeling of admiration* particular to thinking about classical artists and their young men, Achilles, Paris, Hippolytus, et cetera, along with the Doryphoros and Apoxyomenos.

As an aside, I want to draw the psychologist's attention here to this example of an aesthetic emotion preserved in an almost abstract state and transferred from one object to another. This state of mind, this sympathetic *synthesis* (to use the term in the profound sense given to it by M. Paulhan) kept me from lingering on certain formal particularities of Signorelli that make him one of the primitives least suited to my personal temperament. It kept me from noticing his heaviness and bombast, for example, and other qualities we don't have names for. The idea, on the other hand, of a certain, slightly sickly preciousness in Botticelli, an element of conventional sentimentality and bad-faith mysticism, led to an affective synthesis that was hostile to the work of that great master, and which ran counter to my actual assessment. The ill will tied to this chain of ideas was so strong that even the name "Botticelli" was enough to summon it up, and years passed before I ever noticed that two-thirds of the works attributed to the painter had none of his authentic, particular qualities. I felt a sense of repulsion for the *represented objects*, the real types, the facial expressions—in other words, for parts of the work that were not its essence, and which depended to a large extent on chains of ideas, or at least on recognizing and transforming forms into images and emotional states.

I want to specify at this point in my confession that I don't intend to limit aesthetic interest simply to pure form. Every aesthetic phenomenon, even in architecture and pure decoration, normally consists of an almost inextricable *inter-action* between the perception of form and the suggestion of the represented object. And this continual interchange between the pleasure (or distaste) caused by the form, and the more or less abstract emotional states summoned up and imputed straight to the *subject*—this interchange is the very stuff of aesthetic experience. As psychologists, we're only too likely to tell ourselves that the *normal* or *legitimate* phenomenon is the one that's easy to describe. We cut slices out of living experience, and in so doing, we see life itself elude our grasp. It's precisely because I'm recounting my artistic evolution as it really happened that this memoir runs the risk of completely muddling my readers' prior notions.

The above considerations are a necessary context for understanding how my habit of making literature out of the subject matter of art substantially prevented, or at least obstructed, the development of authentic preferences, spontaneous and personalized attractions and repulsions of the sort that I'd already had since adolescence for music, landscape, and other sorts of aesthetic impressions I encountered in everyday life. I would add to this, before I move on, that the historical studies that occupied me in the early years of my literary career (*Studies of the Eighteenth Century in Italy* and two books on the

Renaissance) led me to seek out theories on the moral character of races and ages, an approach which in any case had been made fashionable by Michelet, Taine, and others. I directed my attention there rather than to an intimate acquaintance with art taken on its own terms, or a notion of its relationships with the mind of the artist and the mind of the spectator. We'll soon see the detour it took for me to wind up in the authentic presence of works of art, and to find there the phenomena of attraction and repulsion that mirrored those I already knew in other fields of aesthetic experience.

I should first lay out a handful of points that will be crucial for this story. Outside of my reading, I never received any sort of education that could have checked my overly literary tendencies. I drew from memory throughout my childhood, until the moment around thirteen years old when I discovered that the written word lent itself more easily to the expression of my daydreams. But I was never taught to draw and I've never really practiced the art, with the exception of a few months spent learning to copy the portraits I thought I needed for the historical work that kept me busy at the time. Accordingly, my visual memory, however good it may be and however much I find it a source of great enjoyment, has always lacked the kind of precision one gets from a long habit of looking at something in order to draw it. I never developed a knack for translating what I saw into pictorial forms and vice versa. Finally, for years I suffered from a kind of timidity when faced with questions of perspective,

anatomy, et cetera—the same kind of bashfulness that a gifted amateur musician might have had if presented with a thorny issue in orchestral counterpoint. My ignorance gave me the illusion that I was faced with a kingdom of mystery whose borders I dreaded to cross. It seems likely that, for a long time, the thought of my own technical incompetence kept me from occupying myself with the *visible form* in art in the same way that my eyes and feelings were ingenuously employed with respect to natural objects. Could one judge such things adequately without knowing if the foreshortening was properly executed, if a perspective was incorrect, or if a canvas had been repainted? And it was only later, after conversations with professionals—painters, sculptors, and art experts—familiarized me with these things, and after an intimate friendship with a very knowledgeable individual convinced me that technical understanding didn't alter authentic aesthetic experience in the slightest, that I began to approach the work of art without fear, and without burdening it with historical interest or literary preoccupations.

Despite these circumstances, which hindered the spontaneous evolution of my aesthetic tastes, there is some evidence to indicate their natural tendencies. From fourteen or fifteen onward, I can remember often posing myself the question of what exactly made the difference between the human figure in reality and in its painted representation. Without being able to formulate an answer, I realized that art had a special way of translating

the anatomical structure into lines and planes, and this metamorphosis, whose nature I couldn't at all guess, pleased me even more. Another clue: after I'd started visiting museums again, around sixteen or seventeen years old, I was tortured by what was for me an unsolvable enigma, one that I always chased from my mind as quickly as possible, only for it to resurface again later. The puzzle was this: How is it that works of art that reproduce exceptionally perfect anatomical forms (and above all statues, the ones by Sansovino or Canova for example) can still seem banal and even trivial? This paradox plagued me for years, until the age of twenty-five, when I finally gave an explanation for the phenomenon in my book *Euphorion*—an explanation that certain individuals were kind enough to find brilliant, but which is far from satisfactory. Other clues: a feeling of boredom or blockage when trying to look at certain canvases once I'd “extracted,” as it were, their historical or literary content, and an inexhaustible attraction to other paintings (Andrea del Sarto's *Madonna del Sacco*, for example) that hardly lent themselves to literary exploitation. In the same way, I felt a feeling that verged on physical disgust when I looked at the too-rounded contours of a late Raphael, or of the elderly Michelangelo (e.g., *Last Judgment*), and above all in Tintoretto, whose marvelous colors could never compensate for an ineffable void, a bombastic quality, something I'd almost describe as gaping in his canvases. Almost my entire life I've had an instinctive antipathy for Titian's *Assumption*, despite a

thoroughgoing adoration for his early paintings. Similarly, the sickly affectation and mystical sentimentality of the figures in Perugino could never stem the powerful attraction of his landscapes with their vast lines, their pure and airy skies, and their monumentally severe composition. Since the age of sixteen, I've noted a marked preference in myself for the Doryphoros above almost any other work of antiquity, even though this statue is emphatically nonliterary: I loved it for the arrangement of *planes* and independently of its anatomical structure. And another clue: the feeling of boredom and even aversion that sometimes gradually replaced the initial pleasure provided by an artwork. I've had to get rid of photographs and casts (the photographs in the style of Burne-Jones, for example) because I found their particular plastic characteristics unpleasant once the literary or sentimental appeal had been exhausted, however much I was unable to determine the true cause for this shift in feeling. For months, I suffered a cruel disappointment in front of the long-coveted bust of a person I'd deeply loved. I tried time and again to explain the feeling as the result of a lack of resemblance. But later on, my studies led me to understand that the bust was simply a failure from the point of view of the arrangement of its planes and the play of light across them.

On the other hand, I noticed a constant and increasing affection for certain works of art (the relief of Orpheus, some of Sargent's sketches), and for pieces of furniture and humble ceramics I've lived with for years.

All in all, everything leads me to believe that while my literary activities distracted my attention from the actual artwork, so that I could extract its subject matter and insert it in a parade of associations (I was even, for a time, in the habit of describing canvases as if the scenes really existed, treating a *Fête champêtre* like an actual garden party), all the while filling my *verbal consciousness* with chains of imagery, another consciousness destined for visual memories was furtively and unexpectedly producing authentic connections to art, discriminating between works, organizing my preferences and aversions, and storing up not only art images, but also emotions, ones as clearly aesthetic in nature as those linked to a Mozart symphony or an Italian country vista. Looking at my writing, I think one would find, along with the literary tendencies that led me to latch onto anything that could lend itself to description or symbolism, that I also had an almost automatic aesthetic discernment. That discernment was increasingly insistent, pushing me to concern myself with beautiful things rather than ugly ones, and to store up what I'd venture to call the *specific emotion* of each work—to distill an essence of it, an affective *halo* that reproduced in the reader the feeling awoken by the canvas or statue in question. But I was destined to eventually enjoy art in a much more direct and intimate fashion, and to see it take a place in my life analogous to music, landscapes, and all those objects and individuals in my daily surroundings that escaped finer classification. The development that led to this took place in a way I

didn't expect, and it might seem paradoxical to those who haven't experienced something similar themselves.

Outside of my literary work, I tended to use art as material for purely philosophical, hypothetical discussions, and, even more frequently than that, as an object for scientific observations.

At twenty-three, I'd published some short pieces on the aesthetics of Hegel and Taine, on the relationship between speech and music, and, primarily, on the impersonal evolution of form in art. I felt an ever present need to make aesthetic phenomena, both objective and subjective, conform to the rubric of science. So when I, by chance, found myself in the intimate company of people occupied with archaeology and with the school of art criticism associated with Morelli, it was perfectly natural that I became interested in their work, and that I gave up, without a backward glance, the literary output that had won me a moderate success. Aesthetics then became what it had destined to be for me since my youth: not a mere exercise of imagination and feeling, a pretext for phrase making, but a historical and primarily psychological course of study. I tried to get to the bottom of the origins of art, of its influence, the vicissitudes of various schools, the evolution of form. And, in doing so, I approached the work of art with an absolutely objective spirit. In other words: *I looked* at it with every last scrap of my attention.

And so! This purely scientific interest, which won me the opprobrium of many of my friends, who saw my ap-

proach as a sort of apostasy and insult to feeling, led to the full blossoming of what I'll call my aesthetic life. The drive to understand works of art, and the need to examine them and compare between them, led me to put myself into constant and direct contact with them. When I was obliged to experience their reality in the same way that we experience the cities we live in, the individuals that surround us, and the furniture and instruments we make use of constantly, I began to feel for canvases and statues the same spontaneous and organic attraction—or boredom, malaise, and repulsion—that came naturally to me in my immanent and unconscious relationships with the visible things in my environment. Aesthetic pleasure and displeasure, it seemed, were phenomena that qualified *attention*. Now, for the first time in my life as an art writer, I devoted my full attention to canvases, statues, and architecture, instead of letting myself be distracted by poetic suggestions, or even wandering right off into literary amplifications. The scientific study of artistic phenomena killed the dilettante and rhetorician in me, along with the author of facile historical hypotheses, and replaced that cast of characters with the naivest naïf, as innocent as a stonemason, potter, or printmaker, the kind of person who confronted a practical problem and was obliged by her sometimes charmed, sometimes aggrieved attention to resolve it in an aesthetically pleasing manner. And I can promise the reader that the more I was driven to examine artistic harmony with purely scientific aims, the larger grew the gulf between a sense of

aesthetic satisfaction that sometimes arose in my experiments and the boredom or feeling of waste that arose in others.

Visual beauty and ugliness were now real for me, because my attention had to latch onto the form of which they are qualities. I lived intimately with art. Is it surprising, then, that this intimacy should have taught me a real affection, on the one hand, and a real irritation on the other, the kind of disgust that all forced contact causes the mind subjected to it?

There I was, living in a real relationship with artworks and learning to recognize my own preferences and aversions because of it. Were these preferences and aversions, brought out by my studies, what I might have expected from my spontaneous tastes in other areas? I can answer this question, which I've often asked myself, with a categorical *yes*. At forty-six, after twenty-five years of literary work and ten years of research in art, I believe I can recognize the same aesthetic character that one might have seen in me as early as at fourteen or fifteen years old.