

To grave diggers 16 " For the approval--to the officials 1 " ----- To sum up 108 florins

Previous expenses: To the doctor 4 florins For sugar and candles 12 " 16 florins ----- Sum total 124 florins

The writer Merejkowski is the only one who can tell us who this Caterina was. From two different short notices he concludes that she was the mother of Leonardo, the poor peasant woman from Vinci, who came to Milan in 1493 to visit her son then 41 years old. While on this visit she fell ill and was taken to the hospital by Leonardo, and following her death she was buried by her son with such sumptuous funeral.[48]

This deduction of the psychological writer of romances is not capable of proof, but it can lay claim to so many inner probabilities, it agrees so well with everything we know besides about Leonardo's emotional activity that I cannot refrain from accepting it as correct. Leonardo succeeded in forcing his feelings under the yoke of investigation and in inhibiting their free utterance, but even in him there were episodes in which the suppression obtained expression, and one of these was the death of his mother whom he once loved so ardently. Through this account of the burial expenses he represents to us the mourning of his mother in an almost unrecognizable distortion. We wonder how such a distortion could have come about, and we certainly cannot grasp it when viewed under normal mental processes. But similar mechanisms are familiar to us under the abnormal conditions of neuroses, and especially in the so-called *compulsion neurosis*. Here one can observe how the expressions of more intensive feelings have been displaced to trivial and even foolish performances. The opposing forces succeeded in debasing the expression of these repressed feelings to such an extent that one is forced to estimate the intensity of these feelings as extremely unimportant, but the imperative compulsion with which these insignificant acts express themselves betrays the real force of the feelings which are rooted in the unconscious, which consciousness would wish to disavow. Only by bearing in mind the mechanisms of compulsion neurosis can one explain Leonardo's account of the funeral expenses of his mother. In his unconscious he was still tied to her as in childhood, by erotically tinged feelings; the opposition of the repression of this childhood love which appeared later stood in the way of erecting to her in his diary a different and more dignified monument, but what resulted as a compromise of this neurotic conflict had to be put in operation and hence the account was entered in the diary which thus came to the knowledge of posterity as something incomprehensible.

It is not venturing far to transfer the interpretation obtained from the funeral expenses to the accounts dealing with his pupils. Accordingly we would say that here also we deal with a case in which Leonardo's meager remnants of libidinous feelings compulsively obtained a distorted expression. The mother and the pupils, the very images of his own boyish beauty, would be his sexual objects--as far as his sexual repression dominating his nature would allow such manifestations--and the compulsion to note with painful circumstantiality his expenses on their behalf, would designate the strange betrayal of his rudimentary conflicts. From this we would conclude that Leonardo's love-life really belonged to that type of homosexuality, the psychic development of which we were able to disclose, and the appearance of the homosexual situation in his vulture-phantasy would become comprehensible to us, for it states nothing more or less than what we have asserted before concerning that type. It requires the following interpretation: Through the erotic relations to my mother I became a homosexual.[49]

IV

The vulture phantasy of Leonardo still absorbs our interest. In words which only too plainly recall a sexual act ("and has many times struck against my lips with his tail"), Leonardo emphasizes the intensity of the erotic relations between the mother and the child. A second memory content of the phantasy can readily be conjectured from the association of the activity of the mother (of the vulture) with the accentuation of the mouth zone. We can translate it as follows: My mother has pressed on my mouth innumerable passionate kisses. The phantasy is composed of the memories of being nursed and of being kissed by the mother.

[Illustration: MONA LISA]

A kindly nature has bestowed upon the artist the capacity to express in artistic productions his most secret psychic feelings hidden even to himself, which powerfully affect outsiders who are strangers to the artist without their being able to state whence this emotivity comes. Should there be no evidence in Leonardo's work of that which his memory retained as the strongest impression of his childhood? One would have to expect it. However, when one considers what profound transformations an impression of an artist has to experience before it can add its contribution to the work of art, one is obliged to moderate considerably his expectation of demonstrating something definite. This is especially true in the case of Leonardo.

He who thinks of Leonardo's paintings will be reminded by the remarkably fascinating and puzzling smile which he enchanted on the lips of all his feminine figures. It is a fixed smile on elongated, sinuous lips which is considered characteristic of him and is preferentially designated as "Leonardesque." In the singular and beautiful visage of the Florentine Monna Lisa del Giocondo it has produced the greatest effect on the spectators and even perplexed them. This smile was in need of an interpretation, and received many of the most varied kind but none of them was considered satisfactory. As Gruyer puts it: "It is almost four centuries since Monna Lisa causes all those to lose their heads who have looked upon her for some time." [50]

Muther states: [51] "What fascinates the spectator is the demoniacal charm of this smile. Hundreds of poets and writers have written about this woman, who now seems to smile upon us seductively and now to stare coldly and lifelessly into space, but nobody has solved the riddle of her smile, nobody has interpreted her thoughts. Everything, even the scenery is mysterious and dream-like, trembling as if in the sultriness of sensuality."

The idea that two diverse elements were united in the smile of Monna Lisa has been felt by many critics. They therefore recognize in the play of features of the beautiful Florentine lady the most perfect representation of the contrasts dominating the love-life of the woman which is foreign to man, as that of reserve and seduction, and of most devoted tenderness and inconsiderateness in urgent and consuming sensuality. Müntz [52] expresses himself in this manner: "One knows what indecipherable and fascinating enigma Monna Lisa Gioconda has been putting for nearly four centuries to the admirers who crowd around her. No artist (I borrow the expression of the delicate writer who hides himself under the pseudonym of Pierre de Corlay) has ever translated in this manner the very essence of femininity: the tenderness and coquetry, the modesty and quiet voluptuousness, the whole mystery of the heart which holds itself aloof, of a brain which reflects, and of a personality who watches itself and yields nothing from herself except radiance...." The Italian Angelo Conti [53] saw the picture in the Louvre illumined by a ray of the sun and expressed himself as follows: "The woman smiled with a royal calmness, her instincts of conquest, of ferocity, the entire heredity of the species, the will of seduction and ensnaring, the charm of the deceiver, the kindness which conceals a cruel purpose, all that appears and disappears alternately behind the laughing veil and melts into the poem of her smile.... Good and evil, cruelty and compassion, graceful and cat-like, she laughed...."

Leonardo painted this picture four years, perhaps from 1503 until 1507, during his second sojourn in Florence when he was about the age of fifty years. According to Vasari he applied the choicest artifices in order to divert the lady during the sittings and to hold that smile firmly on her features. Of all the gracefulness that his brush reproduced on the canvas at that time the picture preserves but very little in its present state. During its production it was considered the highest that art could accomplish; it is certain, however, that it did not satisfy Leonardo himself, that he pronounced it as unfinished and did not deliver it to the one who ordered it, but took it with him to France where his benefactor Francis I, acquired it for the Louvre.

Let us leave the physiognomic riddle of Monna Lisa unsolved, and let us note the unequivocal fact that her smile fascinated the artist no less than all the spectators for these 400 years. This captivating smile had thereafter returned in all of his pictures and in those of his pupils. As Leonardo's Monna Lisa was a portrait we cannot assume that he has added to her face a trait of his own so difficult to express which she herself did

not possess. It seems, we cannot help but believe, that he found this smile in his model and became so charmed by it that from now on he endowed it on all the free creations of his phantasy. This obvious conception is, e.g., expressed by A. Konstantinowa in the following manner:[54]

"During the long period in which the master occupied himself with the portrait of Monna Lisa del Gioconda, he entered into the physiognomic delicacies of this feminine face with such sympathy of feeling that he transferred these creatures, especially the mysterious smile and the peculiar glance, to all faces which he later painted or drew. The mimic peculiarity of Gioconda can even be perceived in the picture of John the Baptist in the Louvre. But above all they are distinctly recognized in the features of Mary in the picture of St. Anne of the Louvre."

But the case could have been different. The need for a deeper reason for the fascination which the smile of Gioconda exerted on the artist from which he could not rid himself has been felt by more than one of his biographers. W. Pater, who sees in the picture of Monna Lisa the embodiment of the entire erotic experience of modern man, and discourses so excellently on "that unfathomable smile always with a touch of something sinister in it, which plays over all Leonardo's work," leads us to another track when he says:[55]

"Besides, the picture is a portrait. From childhood we see this image defining itself on the fabric of his dream; and but for express historical testimony, we might fancy that this was but his ideal lady, embodied and beheld at last."

Herzfeld surely must have had something similar in mind when stating that in Monna Lisa Leonardo encountered himself and therefore found it possible to put so much of his own nature into the picture, "whose features from time immemorial have been imbedded with mysterious sympathy in Leonardo's soul." [56]

Let us endeavor to clear up these intimations. It was quite possible that Leonardo was fascinated by the smile of Monna Lisa, because it had awakened something in him which had slumbered in his soul for a long time, in all probability an old memory. This memory was of sufficient importance to stick to him once it had been aroused; he was forced continually to provide it with new expression. The assurance of Pater that we can see an image like that of Monna Lisa defining itself from Leonardo's childhood on the fabric of his dreams, seems worthy of belief and deserves to be taken literally.

Vasari mentions as Leonardo's first artistic endeavors, "heads of women who laugh." [57] The passage, which is beyond suspicion, as it is not meant to prove anything, reads more precisely as follows: [58] "He formed in his youth some laughing feminine heads out of lime, which have been reproduced in plaster, and some heads of children, which were as beautiful as if modeled by the hands of a master...."

Thus we discover that his practice of art began with the representation of two kinds of objects, which would perforce remind us of the two kinds of sexual objects which we have inferred from the analysis of his vulture phantasy. If the beautiful children's heads were reproductions of his own childish person, then the laughing women were nothing else but reproductions of Caterina, his mother, and we are beginning to have an inkling of the possibility that his mother possessed that mysterious smile which he lost, and which fascinated him so much when he found it again in the Florentine lady. [59]

[Illustration: SAINT ANNE]

The painting of Leonardo which in point of time stands nearest to the Monna Lisa is the so-called Saint Anne of the Louvre, representing Saint Anne, Mary and the Christ child. It shows the Leonardesque smile most beautifully portrayed in the two feminine heads. It is impossible to find out how much earlier or later than the portrait of Monna Lisa Leonardo began to paint this picture. As both works extended over years, we may well assume that they occupied the master simultaneously. But it would best harmonize with our expectation if precisely the absorption in the features of Monna Lisa would have instigated Leonardo to form the

composition of Saint Anne from his phantasy. For if the smile of Gioconda had conjured up in him the memory of his mother, we would naturally understand that he was first urged to produce a glorification of motherhood, and to give back to her the smile he found in that prominent lady. We may thus allow our interest to glide over from the portrait of Monna Lisa to this other hardly less beautiful picture, now also in the Louvre.

Saint Anne with the daughter and grandchild is a subject seldom treated in the Italian art of painting; at all events Leonardo's representation differs widely from all that is otherwise known. Muther states:[60]

"Some masters like Hans Fries, the older Holbein, and Girolamo dei Libri, made Anne sit near Mary and placed the child between the two. Others like Jakob Cornelicz in his Berlin pictures, represented Saint Anne as holding in her arm the small figure of Mary upon which sits the still smaller figure of the Christ child." In Leonardo's picture Mary sits on her mother's lap, bent forward and is stretching out both arms after the boy who plays with a little lamb, and must have slightly maltreated it. The grandmother has one of her unconcealed arms propped on her hip and looks down on both with a blissful smile. The grouping is certainly not quite unconstrained. But the smile which is playing on the lips of both women, although unmistakably the same as in the picture of Monna Lisa, has lost its sinister and mysterious character; it expresses a calm blissfulness.[61]

On becoming somewhat engrossed in this picture it suddenly dawns upon the spectator that only Leonardo could have painted this picture, as only he could have formed the vulture phantasy. This picture contains the synthesis of the history of Leonardo's childhood, the details of which are explainable by the most intimate impressions of his life. In his father's home he found not only the kind step-mother Donna Albiera, but also the grandmother, his father's mother, Monna Lucia, who we will assume was not less tender to him than grandmothers are wont to be. This circumstance must have furnished him with the facts for the representation of a childhood guarded by a mother and grandmother. Another striking feature of the picture assumes still greater significance. Saint Anne, the mother of Mary and the grandmother of the boy who must have been a matron, is formed here perhaps somewhat more mature and more serious than Saint Mary, but still as a young woman of unfaded beauty. As a matter of fact Leonardo gave the boy two mothers, the one who stretched out her arms after him and another who is seen in the background, both are represented with the blissful smile of maternal happiness. This peculiarity of the picture has not failed to excite the wonder of the authors. Muther, for instance, believes that Leonardo could not bring himself to paint old age, folds and wrinkles, and therefore formed also Anne as a woman of radiant beauty. Whether one can be satisfied with this explanation is a question. Other writers have taken occasion to deny generally the sameness of age of mother and daughter.[62] However, Muther's tentative explanation is sufficient proof for the fact that the impression of Saint Anne's youthful appearance was furnished by the picture and is not an imagination produced by a tendency.

Leonardo's childhood was precisely as remarkable as this picture. He has had two mothers, the first his true mother, Caterina, from whom he was torn away between the age of three and five years, and a young tender step-mother, Donna Albiera, his father's wife. By connecting this fact of his childhood with the one mentioned above and condensing them into a uniform fusion, the composition of Saint Anne, Mary and the Child, formed itself in him. The maternal form further away from the boy designated as grandmother, corresponds in appearance and in spatial relation to the boy, with the real first mother, Caterina. With the blissful smile of Saint Anne the artist actually disavowed and concealed the envy which the unfortunate mother felt when she was forced to give up her son to her more aristocratic rival, as once before her lover.

Our feeling that the smile of Monna Lisa del Gioconda awakened in the man the memory of the mother of his first years of childhood would thus be confirmed from another work of Leonardo. Following the production of Monna Lisa, Italian artists depicted in Madonnas and prominent ladies the humble dipping of the head and the peculiar blissful smile of the poor peasant girl Caterina, who brought to the world the noble son who was destined to paint, investigate, and suffer.

When Leonardo succeeded in reproducing in the face of Monna Lisa the double sense comprised in this smile, namely, the promise of unlimited tenderness, and sinister threat (in the words of Pater), he remained true even in this to the content of his earliest reminiscence. For the love of the mother became his destiny, it determined his fate and the privations which were in store for him. The impetuosity of the caressing to which the vulture phantasy points was only too natural. The poor forsaken mother had to give vent through mother's love to all her memories of love enjoyed as well as to all her yearnings for more affection; she was forced to it, not only in order to compensate herself for not having a husband, but also the child for not having a father who wanted to love it. In the manner of all ungratified mothers she thus took her little son in place of her husband, and robbed him of a part of his virility by the too early maturing of his eroticism. The love of the mother for the suckling whom she nourishes and cares for is something far deeper reaching than her later affection for the growing child. It is of the nature of a fully gratified love affair, which fulfills not only all the psychic wishes but also all physical needs, and when it represents one of the forms of happiness attainable by man it is due, in no little measure, to the possibility of gratifying without reproach also wish feelings which were long repressed and designated as perverse.[63] Even in the happiest recent marriage the father feels that his child, especially the little boy has become his rival, and this gives origin to an antagonism against the favorite one which is deeply rooted in the unconscious.

When in the prime of his life Leonardo re-encountered that blissful and ecstatic smile as it had once encircled his mother's mouth in caressing, he had long been under the ban of an inhibition, forbidding him ever again to desire such tenderness from women's lips. But as he had become a painter he endeavored to reproduce this smile with his brush and furnish all his pictures with it, whether he executed them himself or whether they were done by his pupils under his direction, as in Leda, John, and Bacchus. The latter two are variations of the same type. Muther says: "From the locust eater of the Bible Leonardo made a Bacchus, an Apollo, who with a mysterious smile on his lips, and with his soft thighs crossed, looks on us with infatuated eyes." These pictures breathe a mysticism into the secret of which one dares not penetrate; at most one can make the effort to construct the connection to Leonardo's earlier productions. The figures are again androgynous but no longer in the sense of the vulture phantasy, they are pretty boys of feminine tenderness with feminine forms; they do not cast down their eyes but gaze mysteriously triumphant, as if they knew of a great happy issue concerning which one must remain quiet; the familiar fascinating smile leads us to infer that it is a love secret. It is possible that in these forms Leonardo disavowed and artistically conquered the unhappiness of his love life, in that he represented the wish fulfillment of the boy infatuated with his mother in such blissful union of the male and female nature.

[Illustration: JOHN THE BAPTIST]

V

Among the entries in Leonardo's diaries there is one which absorbs the reader's attention through its important content and on account of a small formal error. In July, 1504, he wrote:

"Adi 9 Luglio, 1504, mercoledì, a ore 7 mori Ser Piero da Vinci notalio al palazzo del Potestà, mio padre, a ore 7. Era d'età d'anni 80, lasciò 10 figlioli maschi e 2 feminine."[64]

The notice as we see deals with the death of Leonardo's father. The slight error in its form consists in the fact that in the computation of the time "at 7 o'clock" is repeated two times, as if Leonardo had forgotten at the end of the sentence that he had already written it at the beginning. It is only a triviality to which any one but a psychoanalyst would pay no attention. Perhaps he would not even notice it, or if his attention would be called to it he would say "that can happen to anybody during absent-mindedness or in an affective state and has no further meaning."

The psychoanalyst thinks differently; to him nothing is too trifling as a manifestation of hidden psychic processes; he has long learned that such forgetting or repetition is full of meaning, and that one is indebted to