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Editorial

NEW ROOMS AT THE METROPOLITAN

VISITORS to the paintings department of the Metropolitan Museum, New York have always been disturbed in the past by the necessity to pursue the works of a single artist or school through a succession of rooms. Rembrandts and Vermeers, Italian Quattrocento altar-pieces, the Venetian High Renaissance were scattered throughout the vast building on Central Park, so that those of us who hoped to get beyond fleeting pleasure to reach the deeper satisfaction of enlightenment by making comparisons, found our efforts frustrated – and this was all the more aggravating since we sensed that the standard of quality throughout the building was uniformly high and that the possibilities of understanding were there, if only they could be exploited. But the very nature of the formation of the collection precluded any proper sense being made out of it. The Metropolitan had received fabulous bequests of whole collections of pictures only on condition that each one should be kept intact, with the result that instead of becoming a single public collection, it grew into a series of private collections competing with its own separate acquisitions. This situation could not be allowed to continue indefinitely, and permission was obtained from the Trustees or heirs of the Altman, Bache and Friedsam families for the integration of these bequests as far as possible with the remainder of the collection. The four galleries of the Altman Bequest, for example, are no longer contiguous, and now each one is adjacent to the galleries containing related pictures from the Museum's collection.

This change was accelerated by the fact that all forty-three rooms disposed on the second floor at the head of the grand staircase had to be stripped for use for a series of special exhibitions commemorating the Museum's Centennial, while the permanent collection was displayed for two years in the north wing or put into storage. The opportunity to rehang the main rooms after the exhibitions were over was too good to be missed. And by a lucky chance the opportunity coincided with the appointment of a new young curator, Everett Fahy, who was blessed with both the energy and the sensibility necessary to carry out the formidable reconstruction. Only a young man with a fresh outlook could have undertaken such a task, and his superiors' confidence in him has been justified by the results.

Anyone who has been responsible for the rehanging of galleries will know that one can never do exactly what one would like, that certain limitations on lucidity are imposed by, for example, the size of certain canvases which will only go into certain rooms. Galleries have a tiresome habit of refusing to lend themselves to the works of art one wishes to put into them. But within the restrictions imposed by the architecture, Mr Fahy has been most successful in conducting the eye and mind through six centuries of European history. The system has been adopted of exhibiting the collection more or less chronologically by national schools, each room painted in the colour appropriate to the school it houses. Thus the Italians are against dark red backgrounds, the Dutch against dark green, the French against dark blue, and so forth. These deep, saturated colours have the effect of making the pictures appear much brighter than they used to when set against pale beige or pastel shades. Especially successful are the Impressionist pictures against blue walls, now looking as though they really were windows opening on the countryside, as their painters intended them to look. In contrast, one now appreciates how much the moderns (still hanging on white walls) would benefit if set against darker backgrounds: only pictures by the greatest masters like Picasso survive, but they would survive anywhere.

Other excellent innovations are the installation of fuller and more informative labels, attached to the walls instead of to the frames, giving as well as the usual summary information, the date or approximate date of each picture, and various changes in attribution; and the reframing of no less than 137 European paintings, replacing the existing frames with antique frames of the same period as the pictures. The Raphael altar-piece has been placed in a magnificent Renaissance tabernacle made about 1505 in the workshop of Antonio Barile. One room is set aside for temporary exhibitions drawn largely from the Museum's collections. The inaugural exhibition 'The Painter's Light' was a selection of thirty-five paintings of all periods in which light played a positive role in a composition. Later exhibitions will adopt similar themes, cutting across the normal divisions of time and place.

To the Rembrandt *Aristotle* have now to be added two outstanding acquisitions: the Velazquez *Juan de Pareja*, much improved in a recent cleaning; and the Annibale Carracci *Coronation of the Virgin* from the Aldobrandini Collection, bought from Mr Denis Mahon, a key picture of the last years of the Cinquecento and a blue-print for Seicento Classicism. We have not found an excuse for illustrating any works from the European Paintings Galleries in this issue. But among the sculpture in the Metropolitan Mr Draper has resuscitated a beautiful forgotten *Spinario* which he publishes with a new attribution in the article that follows.

JAMES DAVID DRAPER

A Bronze Spinario Ascribed to Antonello Gagini

THE *Spinario* given to the Metropolitan Museum by George Blumenthal in 1932 (Figs. 1 and 3) sits in calm obscurity in a corner of the marble patio from Vélez Blanco. Passers-by have rubbed the boy's toe gold, but despite its exceptional quality, no scholar seems to have paid particular attention to the bronze.

The piece was twice published, in the 1927 Blumenthal catalogue, and in a note by Joseph Breck soon after it was

1. *Spinario*, here attributed to Antonello Gagini. Bronze; height, 87 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.)

presented to the Metropolitan Museum.[1] Breck noted that it had been in the collection of Count Friedrich von Pourtalès, the last German ambassador to czarist Russia, an erroneous assertion arising from a letter of 1922 from Bode to Arnold Seligmann and Rey.[2] Seligmann had sent a photograph, apparently inquiring rather nervously whether it was identical with the Pourtalès *Spinario* that disappeared when the German embassy was plundered in 1914.[3] Bode assured him it was the same and that it had been included in the Berlin Renaissance exhibition of 1898 but never photographed. The *Spinario* lent by Pourtalès to the Berlin exhibition measured 72 cm, whereas the present one measures 87 cm.[4] And the Pourtalès piece can be seen, after all, in a photograph of the principal gallery of the exhibition. It shows a boy with much longer hair and a knottier tree stump.[5] The Blumenthal bronze clearly did not come from the Pourtalès collection.

The famous ancient bronze of the boy extracting a thorn from his foot was ever a source of inspiration to artists, especially after Sixtus IV gave it greater prominence by causing it to be moved in 1471 from the Lateran to the Palazzo dei Conservatori where it remains.[6] Numerous copies made throughout the Renaissance are known, ranging in size and degree of independence from an Antico statuette with gilded hair[7] to the large and faithfully exact replica supplied to Fontainebleau by Jacopo Sansovino and Giovanni Fancelli in 1540 (Fig.2).[8] But no copy has both the size and distinct personality of the Blumenthal *Spinario*.

The figure has always been labelled 'Italian, XVI century', and its mellow, pleasingly rounded forms and harmonious rhythms self-evidently are in the normative, pre-High Renaissance style of a sculptor around 1500. But it does not look quite like any bronze made in one of the known centres of Italian bronze manufacture. The remote sweetness of the style reminded me instead of a sculptor who is known only for his work in marble, Antonello Gagini, the gentle Sicilian. My interest was quickened even more when I found in the Gagini literature two mentions of *Spinarios* by him, one in bronze. For even though he has been studied very little in recent years,[9] Gagini was deeply admired through the last century and is one of the best documented of Italian artists.

The first mention of a Gagini *Spinario* is in Cajo Domenico Gallo's *Annali della città di Messina* of 1758. Although we know now that Antonello was born in Palermo in 1478, the son of Domenico Gagini, Gallo was patriotically eager to present him as a Messinese artist. Thus he says Antonello was born about 1484 in Messina.[10] Gallo gives a brief, fantasy-history of Antonello's student days in Rome, learning drawing from Raphael and sculpture from Michelangelo, going so far as to say he executed reliefs for the Julius tomb, where he excelled in drapery and where Michelangelo said *'che i Scultori nell'avvenire andassero dal Gagino per far vestire le loro statue'*.[11] His early history cannot of course be known with any such assurance, but it is likely that Gagini was versed in the art of the mainland.

On his return to Messina, continues Gallo, Antonello *'Dilettossi ancora di gettare statue di Bronzo, come fello a conoscere in quella d'un Giovanetto al naturale in atto di cavarsi dal pie una spina, ad imitazione d'un altra simile, che vedesi in Campidoglio, si scorge in questo lavoro il buon gusto antico statuario assai ben inteso, e leggesi a piè di essa* Opus Antonii Gaginu A. MD. *Conservasi la detta statua nel Palazzo del Principe d'Alcontres, accomodata per uso della fonte al capo della bellissima scala. Da Messina, divulgatasi la sua fama, fu chiamato in Palermo.'*[12] Gallo's life of Gagini does abound in errors. He gives a death date of 1571, for example, instead of 1536. But Gallo was correct in locating Gagini early in Messina, where we know he was active from 1498 to some time before 1503. And there is no reason not to accept the entire statement concerning the fountain with a bronze *Spinario* of 1500, although it is the only recorded Gagini bronze. The inscription in Gallo's account has a wholly authentic ring.[13] Di Marzo in his great work on Gagini could find no trace of the statue, which he assumes perished in the Messina earthquake of 1783.[14]

Di Marzo found a document of 1527 referring to a second

[1] STELLA RUBINSTEIN-BLOCH: *Catalogue of the Collection of George and Florence Blumenthal,* Paris [1926], II, pl.LI, as North Italian, second half of the sixteenth century, no provenance; JOSEPH BRECK: 'Gifts from George and Florence Blumenthal: A Renaissance Bronze', *Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin,* XXVII, No.11 [November, 1932], pp.234–235, as sixteenth-century Italian.

[2] Metropolitan Museum, Secretary's Archive, letter of 6th July, 1922. It was obviously from Seligmann that Blumenthal acquired the piece.

[3] The sack of the German embassy was described by Pourtalès's French colleague, MAURICE PALÉOLOGUE, in *Memoirs of an Ambassador,* fourth American edition, New York [1925], I, p.58. Bode's answer counselled Seligmann to inform Count Fritz von Pourtalès he had the bronze, as Bode was uncertain of the French law governing plundered works of art.

[4] Berlin, Kunstgeschichtliche Gesellschaft, *Ausstellung von Kunstwerken des Mittelalters und der Renaissance aus Berliner Privatbesitz* [May–June, 1898], p.66, No.396.

[5] In the illustrated album of the exhibition, printed in 1899, unnumbered plate near the end of the book. Bode's lapse of memory is the more peculiar in that he published a mention of the Pourtalès *Spinario* in 'Florentiner Bronzestatuetten in den Berliner Museen', part I, *Jahrbuch der Königlichen Preussischen Kunstsammlungen,* XXIII [1902], pp.67–68.

[6] See H. STUART JONES: *The Sculptures of the Palazzo dei Conservatori,* Oxford [1926], pp.43 ff., and WILLIAM S. HECKSCHER: 'Dornauszieher', in *Reallexikon zur deutschen Kunstgeschichte,* IV [1958], pp.289–299.

[7] Wrightsman collection. F. J. B. WATSON: 'From Antico to Houdon', *Apollo,* XC [September, 1969], pp.214–215.

[8] Now in the Louvre, only one cm shorter than the ancient original. An exhaustive list of Renaissance copies and adaptations is in HEINZ LADENDORFF: *Antikenstudium und Antikenkopie,* Berlin [1958], notes, pp.87–89; bibliography, pp.179–180.

[9] There is no detailed study of any of Antonello's sculpture in English. B. C. KREPLIN's entry in THIEME-BECKER, XIII, 53, is good but incomplete. Among specialized Italian publications, D. VINCENZO REGINA: *Antonello Gagini e sculture cinquecentesche in Alcamo,* Palermo [1969], can be cited as worthwhile.

[10] CAJO DOMENICO GALLO: *Annali della città di Messina capitale del regno di Sicilia, dal giorno di sua fondazione fino a tempi presenti,* Messina [1756–1758], II, p.555. Gallo refuted the bias of a Palermitan work, PIRRO VINCENZO AURIA: *Il Gagino redivivo,* Palermo [1698], an *'inutile fatiga'*.

[11] *Ibid.*

[12] *Ibid.,* p.556.

[13] Like all artists' names of the period, Gagini's was spelled many ways. In a document of 1499 (GIOACCHINO DI MARZO: *I Gagini e la scultura in Sicilia,* Palermo [1880–1883], II, p.58) he is 'Antonius Gaginu', very close to the inscription cited by GALLO.

[14] *Ibid.,* I, pp.203 and 354. I have been unable to trace the Palazzo Alcontres apart from a mention in GALLO's first volume [1756], where the palace of Principe d'Alcontres Arduino, praised for its spaciousness and elegance, heads a short list of the most beautiful palaces of Messina. The princes of Alcontres were among the great Sicilian nobles, but the earliest prince was a Spaniard, the Marchese of Roccalumera, who received his Sicilian title only in 1642 (FRANCESCO SAN MARTINO DE SPUCCHES: *La Storia dei feudi dei titoli nobiliari di Sicilia,* Palermo [1924], I, pp.63 ff). Since the early history of the palace is unknown, it cannot be guessed how the eighteenth-century family came by its *Spinario*.

Spinario. In 1523, Gagini was engaged to work the marble monument for Matteo Barresi, first Marchese of Pietraperzia, in the *chiesa maggiore* of Pietraperzia. In April of 1527, Gagini received payment of sixty-two *once* for the tomb, for some marble windows and for *'cuiusdam juvenis, ut dicitur, che si leva la spina di lu pedi'*.[15] There is no mention of the material of which the youth was made, and Di Marzo did not know what became of it.

Its style strongly supports the conclusion that the Blumenthal *Spinario* is probably identical with the bronze of the Palazzo Alcontres fountain, once dated 1500. Gagini was an artist who attained a pre-High Renaissance station on the level of Andrea Sansovino and the early Raphael. He stayed on that plateau, ever refining his style but retaining certain International Gothic means. His draperies were justifiably famous, but ornate to a degree and he clothed his figures in voluminous bolts of them. It is so rare to find an undraped Gagini figure that one is forced to take Madonnas as points of comparison. But that is for the best in view of a second Gagini characteristic, the wide range of quality in his work, due to his exceptional success in commissions and the largeness of his studio. Two poles by which to match the documented 1500 and 1527 *Spinarios* in time and the Blumenthal *Spinario* in quality are the *Madonna della Scala* in the Cappella del Tesoro, Palermo Cathedral, dated 1503, and the *Ansaloni Madonna* in the Museo Nazionale, Palermo, dated 1528.

The 1503 *Madonna* (Fig.4) was made soon after Antonello moved back to Palermo, and is the first evidence of him there since his birth. It has extraordinary freshness and amplitude, the more surprising in view of a *Madonna* Gagini made in 1498, in the church of Bordonaro near Messina,[16] a work conceived in the svelte but outdated manner of Laurana and Antonello's father, Domenico Gagini. The earlier *Madonna* in no way predicts the strength of Gagini's later sculpture. A work like the *Spinario*, adapted from the classical nude, must have helped bridge the gap in understanding between the 1498 and 1503 Madonnas. The 1503 *Madonna della Scala* is conceived more broadly and humanely, in a simple oval whole within which the forms move in a slowly serpentine fashion. The *Spinario* shares these characteristics, and the same broad, smooth and rounded planes. Gagini's method is conspicuous in the limbs, which seem to turn slowly but as if without the aid of bone or muscle. Thus the legs of the 1503 Christ Child, like the *Spinario's* legs, have wide knees, small calves, wide ankles and scarcely any arches. A telling Gagini device is the acute angle to abbreviate the space between thumb and forefinger. The heads in both cases have the sweet, gentle, wooden, purely symmetrical and slightly oriental expressions of those who are absorbed in themselves. The oval faces have broad foreheads, small almond eyes and short, straight, characteristically puppetlike noses. The puffy cheeks frame short, straight mouths. The dainty but slightly messy curls are kept close to the skull. The *Spinario's* hair is cropped, a marked departure from the antique statue. Antonello himself would surely have preferred it so, as an Augustan rather than a Phidian semblance of classicism.[17] His style quite naturally grew out of the ovoid representations of his father and Laurana, but he enlivened their forms and made them more elegantly full. His models in the latter case were probably the Neapolitan works of Benedetto da Maiano of fifteen years earlier, as well as the antique.

Later, as in the *Madonna* made in 1528 for the Ansaloni family,[18] Gagini fashioned increasingly slim and regular figures, with the bony structures more pronounced and the profiles cut more sharply. The 1528 *Madonna* is of course, for all its sinuous refinement, a conscious revival of the 1503 pose, just as Gagini repeated the *Spinario* at least once. After the *Madonna della Scala*, Gagini developed an effortlessly repeatable formula for his beautiful, waxen saints and Madonnas. That, and his increased reliance on the workshop, may be why his work has discouraged recent scholarship. His most important commission, the host of marble saints for the tribune of Palermo Cathedral, executed from 1507 until his death in 1536, have never been properly brought together and studied. The *St Catherine of Alexandria* in the City Art Museum of St Louis, presumed to come from the partially dismantled Palermo Cathedral series,[19] has much the style of the 1528 *Madonna* and must be very near in date. It is the finest Gagini marble outside Sicily. Comparison between the profiles of the *St Catherine* and the *Spinario* (Figs.5, 3) might momentarily temper the view that the *Spinario* is necessarily the earlier of the two documented ones: they are remarkably alike. The *Spinario* has also to be considered precociously fluid in its composition if made at the earlier date. However, the greater breadth of the *Spinario* and its oddity of detail indicate the younger and perhaps more earnest artist.

Although Gagini may well have seen the antique *Spinario* in Rome, his own has a character sufficiently different to suggest that it was modelled as well as cast in Sicily. In addition to the short curls, the softer, ampler body changes the conception of the antique. The mood established is yet dreamier and the expression less virile. The draping of the tree stump contributes subtly to this change. Even so, Gagini's figure is a striking justification for the observation of Arnold von Salis on the relationship between Renaissance copies and the original *Spinario*: 'There are on the whole few examples in art history where the natural affinities of two epochs are so closely expressed as here.'[20]

The cast is a technically superior one, the bronze having been rather deceptively thinly poured.[21] The metal has a very golden colour, and is lacquered a dark brown. On top of the old lacquer are abundant remains of a less successful layer of coppery paint, no doubt of recent date.[22] This does not conceal the splendid variety of chasing, however.

[15] DI MARZO, *op cit.*, I, pp.305–306; pp.352–353.
[16] ENRICO MAUCERI: 'Opere primitive di Antonello Gagini', *L'Arte*, XXI, No.12 [1918], fig.1, p.89.
[17] Many Renaissance statuettes after the *Spinario* share the short haircut. See WILHELM BODE: *Die italienischen Bronzestatuetten der Renaissance*, Berlin [1922], pl.81.
[18] A. VENTURI: *Storia dell'arte italiana*, X, i figs.629–630, pp.840–841.
[19] FRANKLIN M. BIEBEL in *Bulletin of the City Art Museum of Saint Louis*, XXI–XXII [1936–1937], pp. 2–4.
[20] ARNOLD VON SALIS: *Antike und Renaissance*, Zurich [1946], p.125.
[21] The chest has a lateral crack and a plugged hole, and the hole in the crown of the head has lost its plug, but these are of little consequence.
[22] BRECK, *op. cit.*, p.235, misconstrued this layer as the remains of gilding.

Areas around the ears and stump were left unchased just as they emerged from the mould. The marks of a hammer are observable on the ankles and arms. The strokes of a scraping tool defined the relaxed muscles of the abdomen, while the smallest chisel finished the hair.

Gagini may or may not have learned the art of casting for this one bronze. There are goldsmiths aplenty but no founders in Messina recorded at this time. In Palermo, the brothers Antonio, Gaspare and Pietro Campana or del Campanaio da Tortorici cast mortars dated 1480 and 1507 and the great bell of the Cathedral in 1487.[23] Gagini could have turned to a local goldsmith or to one of the Campana family for casting advice. Di Marzo realized how precious was the mention of the 1500 *Spinario* as a bronze figure cast in Sicily[24]. The attribution of the *Spinario* to Gagini gives it the greatest possible interest as the unique example of Sicilian figure casting before the end of the sixteenth century.

The possibility that the *Spinario* was part of a fountain could explain the fact that the boy's right foot swings unsupported well below the bottom of the tree trunk and its unfinished rim. Clearly another element fitted around the rim. It is possible that water played in a basin beneath the foot. The lost inscription would have been on the missing support or basin. The bronze was well situated at the top of a staircase, as is clear from the artist's perspectival arrangement of the anatomy. We know that the ancient *Spinario,* like many classical statues in the Renaissance, was set free-standing on a column.[25] When this Renaissance figure is seen from below as it was probably meant to be seen (Fig.1), a series of delicately rounded triangles opens from the toe upwards. In his recess beside the stair of the contemporary patio from Vélez Blanco, the boy fills by chance a rôle strikingly like the rôle he once played in the Palazzo Alcontres in Messina.

[23] DI MARZO, *op. cit.*, II, 635.
[24] *Ibid.* Here DI MARZO gives an incorrect date of 1501 for the Alcontres figure.

[25] HECKSCHER, *op. cit.*, p.292. H. STUART JONES, *op. cit.*, p.47, believed that the extremely bowed head of the ancient original implies that it was raised on a column of at least six feet in antiquity. Mabuse drew it from below and did not fail to appreciate the nakedness of the boy seen in peek-a-boo perspective. Drawing in Leiden, University Library, ill. in catalogue of the exhibition, 'Jean Gossaert, dit Mabuse', Rotterdam/Bruges [1965], No.45, pp. 243–244.

B. W. ROBINSON

Shāh 'Abbās and the Mughal Ambassador Khān 'Ālam: The pictorial record

THE latter months of the year 1618 must have been a season of almost continuous pageantry at the court of Shāh 'Abbās the Great.[1] In the summer Don Garcia de Silva Figueroa and his suite arrived with rich presents from his master Philip III of Spain; the Don was aware of the Persian monarch's taste for painting, and his personal gifts took the form of portraits of the Infanta of Spain and the Queen of France. Two Muscovite ambassadors followed hard on the Spaniards with gifts of furs and barrels of vodka (pandering to a less creditable royal taste); portraits of them (probably by Rizā), wearing long bulky coats and enormous fur hats, are preserved among the albums of the Topkapi Library at Istanbul.[2] The next to be received by the Great Sophy was the envoy of Muhammad Qutb-shāh of the rich East Indian kingdom of Golconda, and finally, in November of the same year, accompanied by a suite of 800, arrived the ambassador of the Grand Mughal Jahāngīr, Mīrzā Barkhurdār generally known as Khān 'Ālam.[3] The presents he brought were on a scale befitting the magnificence of the court of Delhi; ten elephants headed the list. Notable among the envoy's entourage was the gifted painter Bishan Dās, described by his master Jahāngīr as 'unequalled in his age for taking likenesses'.[4]

He had instructions to make a pictorial record of the occasion and to take likenesses of Shāh 'Abbās and the most prominent figures at the Persian court. 'Abbās likewise commanded his court painter Rizā to portray his friendly meeting with Khān 'Ālam, whom he seems to have treated with singular affability. In all, eleven representations of the meeting are so far recorded, of which it would seem that those of Bishan Dās are the only ones contemporary with the incident depicted. Rizā's original is not known to have survived, but its general features can be deduced from later versions.

These two artists seem to have depicted the scene each in his own way; in Rizā's version the figures are standing, and in those by Bishan Dās they are seated. Furthermore, the Indian painter seems to have produced two representations of the meeting, one more elaborate than the other, and with a greater number of figures. Later copies and adaptations of all these exist. It may therefore be of interest to list and describe those so far known in their various groups:

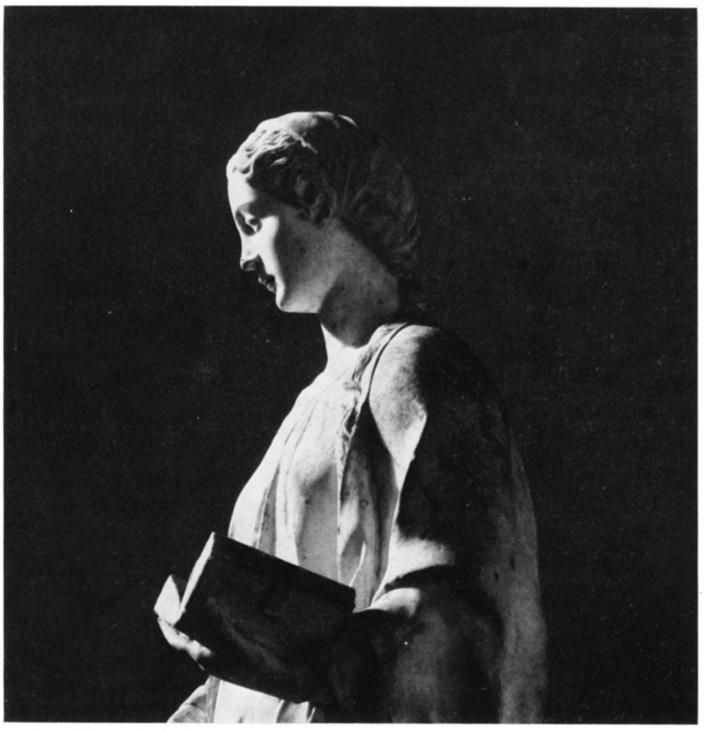
[1] I. STCHOUKINE: *Les Peintures des Manuscrits de Shah 'Abbas Ier,* Paris [1964], pp.21 ff.
[2] Topkapi Sarayi Library, H.2155, ff.19b, 20a.
[3] See *Tuzuk i Jahangiri,* tr. Rogers, London [1909–14]; E. KÜHNEL: 'Khan 'Alam und die diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Jahangir und Shah 'Abbas' in *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenl. Gesellschaft,* Vol.96 [1942].

[4] Amongst other recorded works by Bishan Das are miniatures in a copy of *Anwar i Suhayli* at Benares; Chester Beatty Library, Dublin, MS 4, f.249; some miniatures in the British Museum *Anwar i Suhayli* (published by J. V. S. WILKINSON as 'The Lights of Canopus'); Leningrad, Institute of the Peoples of Asia, Album presented to the Russian Museum by Tsar Nicholas II in 1910, ff.36, 37 (both portraits of Shah 'Abbas); and several other portraits. I am indebted for most of these references to my colleague Mr R. W. Skelton.

2. *Spinario,* by Jacopo Sansovino and Giovanni Fancelli. Bronze; height, 72 cm. (Musée du Louvre.)

3. Another view of the bronze illustrated in Fig. 1.

4. Detail from the *Madonna della Scala,* by Antonello Gagini. (Cappella del Tesoro, Palermo Cathedral.) *Photo. Alinari.*



5. Detail from *St Catherine of Alexandria,* by Antonello Gagini. (City Art Museum, St. Louis.)