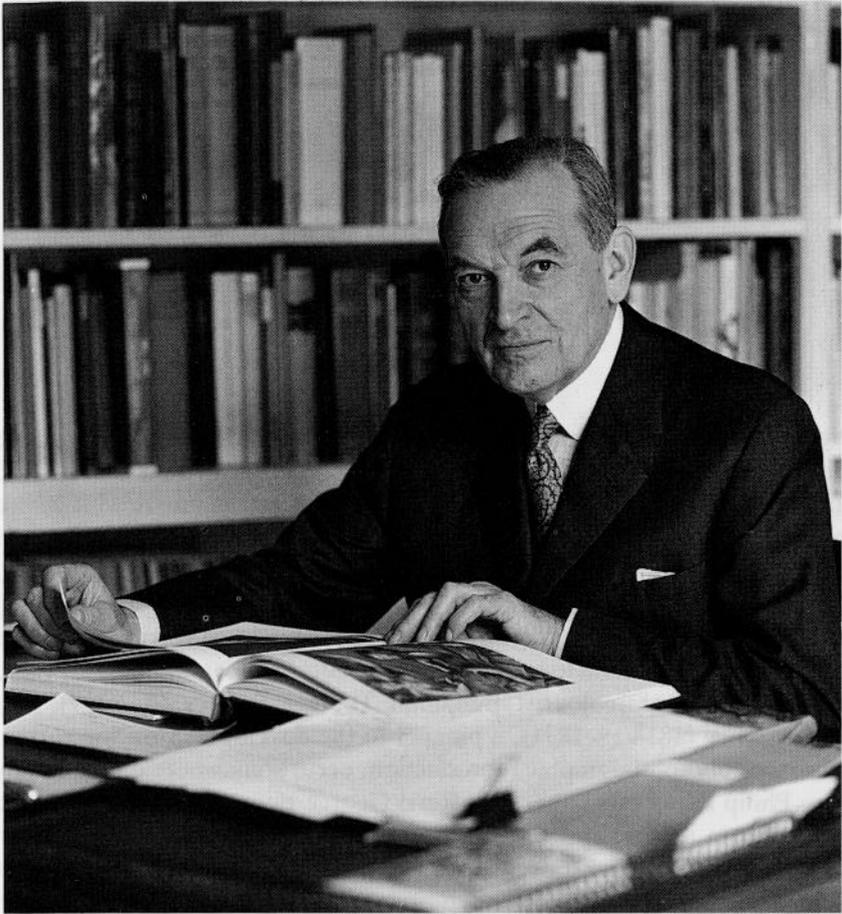


## Philip Pouncey 1910–1990

PHILIP POUNCEY used sometimes to speak ironically of himself as a ‘simple Dorset yeoman’. This paradoxical image of a cosmopolitan scholar and accomplished linguist, *méridional* in appearance and manner, with a nice taste in vintage claret and an international reputation as a connoisseur of Italian art, was not without a grain of truth, for his paternal grandfather, Thomas Smith Pouncy (the spelling varied from one generation to another) had been a prosperous saddler in Dorchester. The name is an unusual one and it seems reasonable to suppose that the late-18th-century engraver and topographical watercolourist Benjamin Thomas Pouncy (d. 1799), and John Pouncy (1818/19–1894), a pioneer in the development of the carbon process of photolithographic reproduction, occur somewhere on the family tree. Philip Pouncey’s father, the Revd George Pouncey, who had started his career in a bank and risen to be branch manager in a small town in Somerset, in his mid-40s decided to take holy orders and matriculated at Oriol College, Oxford, for the purpose of acquiring what were then regarded as the necessary academic qualifications. He accordingly moved his family to Oxford, where on 15 February 1910 was born his fourth son, Philip Michael Rivers Pouncey.

Italy was a country with which Philip’s mother was familiar (in common with all cultivated English ladies in the early years of this century, her preferred city was Florence), and she decorated the walls of her family’s successive houses with the chromolithographic reproductions of water-colour copies of Renaissance frescoes and altarpieces published in the later 19th century by the Arundel Society. Arundel prints are at two removes from the original works, and to eyes accustomed to more sophisticated techniques of reproduction seem somewhat pallid in tone and to have an unmistakable flavour of their own period; but (apart from Alinari photographs which are hardly suitable for framing) they were then the only reproductions of pre-High Renaissance paintings that were generally



P. POUNCEY

regarded as the necessary academic qualification. He accordingly moved his family to Oxford, where on 12 February 1910 was born his fourth son, Philip Michael Rivers Pouncey. His father was a country gentleman in common with all cultivated English ladies in the early years of this century; her pretence (it was Fawcett), and she decorated the walls of her family's successive houses with the chromolithographic reproductions of water-colour copies of Renaissance frescoes and stipple prints published in the latter 19th century by the Arnold Society. Arnold prints are at two removes from the original work, and to eyes accustomed to more sophisticated techniques of reproduction seem somewhat pallid in tone and to have an unmistakable flavour of their own period, but (apart from Albert photo-graphs which are hardly suitable for framing) they were then the only reproductions of pre-high Renaissance paintings that were generally

available. It was they, and particularly the print of Gentile da Fabriano's *Uffizi Adoration of the Magi* which hung in his bedroom, that first awakened Philip Pouncey's interest in Italian art.

From 1924 to 1928 he was at Marlborough, and there he discovered in the library the revised editions of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's classic history of Italian painting, the first volume of the first edition of which had appeared as long ago as 1864. This was the earliest systematic account of the subject down to the end of the High Renaissance, a turning-point marked for the authors by the death of Andrea del Sarto in 1530 (they concluded their account of Andrea's contemporary Baldassare Peruzzi with the words 'he was the last of the great masters of Siena; and if we could devote a few pages to the career of his friend and cotemporary [*sic*] Domenico Beccafumi it would be merely for the sake of illustrating the decline which now set in throughout Italy'). By combining acute stylistic analysis with sedulous investigation of all available documentary evidence, they set themselves to establish the *oeuvre* of each master, to trace his development, place him in his stylistic context, and define his artistic personality. Pioneer works are subject to the disadvantage that their correct conclusions are taken for granted and absorbed into the common stock of ideas while their errors, whether of omission or commission, become increasingly conspicuous as knowledge of the subject becomes more detailed; but it is true to say that Crowe and Cavalcaselle laid the foundation of all subsequent studies. Pouncey shared their essentially factual approach, which is summed up in Walter Vitzthum's aphorism that 'the history of art is the history of artists, not of abstraction, *Geist* and principles'.

By the time he went up to Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1928 he had found his vocation in life. The problem was how best to achieve it. The history of art had not in this country yet been accepted as an academic subject. Samuel Courtauld did not endow the institute that bears his name until 1931, and it was some years before it became a going concern (in its early days, as Pouncey recalled, its premises consisted of one small and very cramped office in a side street near the Strand, which the Director, W. G. Constable, had to share with a typist). Though *The Burlington Magazine* had been in existence for a quarter of a century the early contributors were either such independent scholars and critics as Martin Conway, Herbert Cook, Lionel Cust, Langton Douglas, Roger Fry, Charles Holmes, Herbert Horne, F. M. Perkins, Charles Ricketts, W. J. H. Weale and, briefly, Bernard Berenson, or museum officials like Sidney Colvin and Campbell Dodgson. For a young man of no independent means aspiring to work in this field a post in a museum or gallery offered the only possible opening. The art master at Marlborough had already written on

his behalf to the National Gallery for advice; his pupil was in no way deterred by the discouraging reply from the Keeper, C. H. Collins-Baker, 'I wouldn't advise anyone to take up art history, the financial rewards are so small'. In the meantime a degree of some sort was essential. Pouncey chose to read the English tripos but continued his real education in the Fitzwilliam Museum, where in the recently opened Marlay Galleries the taste and flair of the Director, Sydney Cockerell, had set an entirely new standard in the display of Italian paintings. In 1929 his father died and his mother moved to Cambridge. This enabled him after taking his degree in 1931 to live at home and continue working in the Fitzwilliam as a volunteer for another two years. Already he was one of those for whom, in the words of A. E. Housman, accuracy is not a virtue but a duty: told off to transcribe the inscriptions on the backs of pictures, he was congratulated by the Keeper of Paintings, J. W. Goodison, 'You did not make a single mistake; it should be mentioned in your obituary'. In the course of that year he applied for a vacant assistant-keepership at Birmingham, and in the meantime the generosity of Cockerell, who offered to put up £30 if his mother would do the same, made possible the first of his innumerable visits to Italy.

Sixty years ago it was possible to travel to Italy and stay for three months for a sum that would now barely cover two nights in a fourth-class hotel. After five weeks in Florence Pouncey was about to leave for Siena when a telegram summoned him immediately to Birmingham for an interview. He was determined at least to see Siena, and having done so found it impossible to tear himself away. He therefore sent a telegram withdrawing his application. His mother, greatly disconcerted, went to Cockerell and received the reassuring reply 'In his position I would have done exactly the same thing'. He had already met Berenson briefly in London, and soon after arriving in Florence called at I Tatti. His host turned to him after some technical conversation with another visitor, saying courteously 'I'm afraid all this must be Greek to you'. 'Not at all' replied Pouncey, proceeding to reveal his own familiarity with the subject under discussion. He never lost the respect of Berenson: 25 years later Roseline Bacou, of the Cabinet des Dessins at the Louvre, wrote to him 'votre attribution à Lotto est magnifique. Je n'ai rencontré à Florence que des personnes convaincues; quant à Berenson il m'a dit que vous étiez le meilleur connaisseur qu'il ait jamais rencontré. Qu'en dites vous?' In Assisi he confided to the proprietress of his *pensione* his desire to make the acquaintance of F. Mason Perkins, the elderly, reclusive and reportedly unapproachable American authority on the history of Sienese art. Her diplomacy, assisted by a plate of hot buttered scones, a delicacy to which Perkins was addicted, brought about an introduction. Touched by the young man's enthusiasm and impressed by his already considerable

knowledge of Sieneſe painting, Perkins not only invited him to his houſe but encouraged him to be a regular viſitor. For the firſt time Pouncey found himſelf in contact on more or leſs equal terms with eminent fellow-ſcholars. His tour continued with 10 days in Rome, and back by way of north Italy and Paris. He continued to correſpond with Perkins, who wrote in ſupport of his application for the aſſiſtant-keepership at the National Gallery recently vacated by E. K. Waterhouſe.

The application was ſucceſſful, and Pouncey took up his poſt on 1 January 1934, ſix weeks before his 24th birthday (his precocity was penalized by a Treasury regulation that deprived him of a proportion of his firſt year's ſalary). The ſame day ſaw the arrival of the newly-appointed Director, Kenneth Clark, of whom he always ſpoke with reſpect and affection. His junior ſtanding and his mo-deſt and eiren-ic temperament prevented him from involvement in the ſquabbles and diſſenſions that agitated the academic ſtaff of the Gallery in the 1930s. One of the new Director's projects was for a full catalogue of the Italian paintings, and after a few months ſpent in familiarizing himſelf with the collection and in ſuch routine taſks as ſorting and arranging photographs and indexing periodical literature, the new aſſiſtant keeper was told to catalogue the 14th-century paintings. His firſt publication, in 1936, was a brief but well-informed review of the la-teſt inſtalment of Offner's *Corpus of Florentine Painting* dealing with the followers of Bernardo Daddi. The *Trecento* was to remain an abiding intereſt, but his activity ſoon came to embrace the whole Italian ſchool. The firſt volumes of the new catalogue did not appear until both he and Clark had left the Gallery, but one of his ſucceſſors, Cecil Gould, paid tribute to the value of his contribution in the preface to the 16th-Century Venetian volume: 'Mr Pouncey's work covered fewer paintings, but he carried his reſearch a ſtage further than Mr Waterhouſe, and as a reſult I have uſually found it very diſſicult to add new facts of importance in the caſe of pictures investigated by him'.

Pouncey ſpent the firſt two years of the ſecond World War in Aberyſtwyth, in charge of the National Gallery pictures that had been moved for ſafety to the National Library of Wales. He later put his linguistic ability to work at the branch of the Foreign Office at Bletchley reſponsible for decoding enemy communications. It was characteristic that he ſhould have ſpent his off-duty hours at Bletchley compiling a detailed index to the ſix volumes of Filippo Baldinucci's *Notizie de'Profettori del Diſegno da Cimabue in qua*, published in Florence between 1681 and 1728.

The drawings from the British Muſem Printroom and the Royal Library at Windſor had alſo been evacuated to Aberyſtwyth, where they were in the charge of A. E. Popham, then Deputy Keeper of the Printroom. Freed

from the burden of departmental routine, Popham was able to devote his time to working on the first volumes of the catalogues of the Italian drawings in the British Museum and at Windsor. Two eminent foreign scholars were at that time also in Aberystwyth: Johannes Wilde, formerly of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, who had undertaken to catalogue the Michelangelo drawings in the British Museum and at Windsor, and Frederick Antal, one of whose many interests included the Italian later 16th century, a period very well represented in the Windsor collection. Popham, Wilde and Antal were continually talking over problems that came up in the course of cataloguing. Pouncey naturally took part in these discussions, and came to realize that drawings, surviving as they have in far greater numbers than paintings and being at the same time relatively little studied, afforded greater scope for the exercise of his particular talent for connoisseurship. Accordingly, with his Director's full encouragement, when the war ended in 1945 he transferred from the National Gallery to the British Museum. At the same time Popham succeeded A. M. Hind as Keeper of the Department of Prints and Drawings and he and Pouncey continued, now on an official basis, to collaborate on the first volume of the Italian catalogue.

In a tribute to Antal prefixed to a posthumous collection of his writings his pupil David Carritt wrote 'This instance of [his] tireless quest for accuracy may belong more properly to connoisseurship than to art-history'. If this distinction is valid than Pouncey cannot be called an art-historian. Along with 'aesthete' and 'dilettante', the word 'connoisseur' has come to acquire a slightly unfavourable connotation. Elderly readers of *The Burlington Magazine* may remember that its original title was *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, and that in 1948 a new editor sought to bring it up to date by omitting the last two words. 'The wording has lost what meaning it may once have had', he wrote, 'The word *connoisseur* now conjures up a picture of an elderly gentleman in white bow tie and trim imperial, familiar, if not in life at any rate in the pages of Aldous Huxley, He has dined well. In one hand he holds an expensive cigar and in the other a magnifying glass through which he peers knowingly at the contours of an oriental vase'.

Nothing about the agreeably self-indulgent old buffer of the editor's and Aldous Huxley's imagination suggests that he is a connoisseur in the proper sense of the word. He is, rather, a collector and a 'man of taste' with only pretensions to connoisseurship, as is clearly implied by the word 'knowingly'. A connoisseur is one who does know: in this context, one who is gifted with the ability to identify the author of a work of art and assess its quality on the basis of internal stylistic evidence. In 1903, when *The Burlington Magazine* was founded, the original title was an appropriate

one, for students were still largely engaged in the process begun by Cavalcaselle half a century before, of sorting out and putting in order the material of their studies. That process is still far from complete, and it was this aspect of the history of art that particularly interested Pouncey. His early study of Crowe and Cavalcaselle had left him with the conviction that the essence of the subject lies in the complex interaction of a host of widely differing individual artistic personalities which it is the primary duty of the historian to define and distinguish; and that no critical generalization can be accepted as valid unless based on a foundation of secure attribution. Or, as Noel Annan well put it: 'British Museum scholarship—the analysis of evidence about an object and the meticulous unravelling of the data relevant to it . . . provide[s] the stones used by the great innovators and synthesizers to build their castles'.<sup>1</sup>

Connoisseurship is to the history of art as textual criticism is to the study of literature. It is not exactly a science in the sense of being a rational system of inference from verifiable data, nor is it exactly an art. It stands somewhere between the two, and calls for a particular combination of qualities of mind, some more scientific than artistic and others vice versa: a visual memory for compositions and details of compositions, full knowledge of the relevant school and period, awareness of all possible alternative solutions, a sense of quality, an ability to assess evidence, and most important of all, a power of empathy with the creative processes of individual artists and a positive conception of their artistic personalities.

Pouncey's own thoughts on the subject were expressed in a conversation recorded by Leo Steinberg: 'It can hardly make sense to study an artist's style, development or iconography before you have learnt to distinguish the object of your studies. Mr Pouncey was of course recommending his own kind of connoisseurship as preparation for all other studies in the field. He was doing it with that off-hand air that well-bred Englishmen use to deprecate their own skills. He spoke of it as if it was the merest ABC, the trivial but essential preliminary to more ambitious and sophisticated pursuits. But the sort of perceptiveness in attribution that he had in mind was, as he knew perfectly well, not an elementary attainment, like a course in aircraft recognition for an army recruit. It was, rather, an ultimate virtuosity, compounded of many gifts and long practice'.

The connoisseurship of Italian drawings is based almost entirely on internal, stylistic evidence. Many drawings are inscribed with artists' names, but very few are signed. Inscriptions have to be taken into account and their value as evidence assessed, but more often than not they record nothing more than the credulous, over-ingenious or over-optimistic

<sup>1</sup> Review of Michael Cox, *M. R. James: An Informal Portrait*, in *TLS*, 5 August 1983.

opinions of collectors. There is more than one way of arriving at an attribution. A connexion with a signed or documented painting can sometimes be established, and here a sense of quality is required to distinguish a preparatory study from a copy by a later hand. The drawings of an artist with a strongly marked and consistent style can be recognized by the 'handwriting'—to use the German expression. Here too only a sense of quality, combined with awareness of every alternative possibility, will distinguish the hand of an influential master (Rembrandt and Guercino are obvious examples) from those of his followers and imitators. All too often it is necessary to have recourse to the laborious and uninspired method of a series of sighting shots, determining first the school and approximate date and gradually narrowing down the possibilities until they can be individually tested. But the most intellectually satisfying method is by the recognition—sometimes instantaneous, sometimes apparent only after some contemplation—of the individual artistic personality that underlies the drawing. It may at this point be asked how an artistic personality reveals itself. There are of course the Morellian criteria of such secondary physical characteristics as the form of hands, ears etc.; there is also the indefinable quality that Popham used to call 'the look of the sheet', often as difficult to define in words as is the preference of a tea-taster for one tea rather than another; there is the psychology of the artist, which reveals itself particularly in nuances of facial expression; and there are characteristic patterns of composition and grouping into which the draughtsman falls unconsciously and which are as unmistakable as a composer's turns of phrase or a writer's choice of words and the structure and cadence of his sentences. (Whether computer science will one day be able to analyse and identify such patterns in a drawing as it now can in a written text is an interesting matter for speculation.)

A young art historian once said dismissively 'Oh yes, Pouncey. He just knows who things are by', as if this was a feat of merely technical expertise like the ability to distinguish one aeroplane from another. But a correct attribution is, as it were, only the tip of the iceberg—the visible culmination of a complex intellectual and intuitive process, and the product, in Steinberg's phrase, of an 'ultimate virtuosity'. One or two examples may be cited. No drawings by an obscure Ferrarese imitator of Michelangelo, Sebastiano Filippi, called Bastianino (1532/4–1602), were known when Pouncey remarked, apropos of a black chalk study of a crouching nude man which had lain disregarded for more than 200 years among the anonymous Italian drawings at Christ Church, 'If Bastianino had made drawings, this is exactly the sort of drawing that one would have expected from him'. The observation was triumphantly confirmed by the subsequent discovery in an altarpiece by the artist of the figure for which the drawing

undoubtedly served as a study. Another instance of his extraordinary perceptiveness was when, having recognized a drawing as being by the 16th-century Veronese painter Domenico Brusatorci, he added that it looked like a study for a painting on slate. The suggestion was received with scepticism, but when the related painting did come to light in an obscure collection in Hungary, sure enough it was on slate. Such feats of divination seem miraculous, but they are achieved only by prolonged and single-minded absorption in the subject: 'behind his arresting brilliance' as was said of another 'lay patience that shrank from no drudgery, memory that let nothing slip, and absolute honesty in the pursuit of truth'.

Pouncey's attributional skill was put to the test as soon as he joined the British Museum, for his arrival coincided with the acquisition of about 2,000 drawings mostly by secondary 16th- or 17th-century Italian masters. They had been bought, apparently at random, by the eccentric bibliophile Sir Thomas Phillipps at the dispersal of the Lawrence-Woodburn collection in 1860. A catalogue by Popham of the Phillipps drawings had been privately printed in 1935, but, as its author was the first to admit, it needed radical revision in the light of later knowledge. Even greater opportunities awaited Pouncey abroad. In 1946, as soon as foreign travel was again possible, he went over to Paris, where his first port of call was naturally the Cabinet des Dessins of the Louvre, one of the two largest collections of Italian drawings in the world (the other being in Florence). This part of the collection had never been systematically studied and in the 19th century a large proportion of Italian drawings had been relegated to the category of 'Anonymous' and roughly classified by subject-matter. Specialists had of course gone through the '*Anonymes*' in search of material bearing on their own particular interests, but this was the first time that they had come under the methodical scrutiny of a connoisseur of such exceptionally wide-ranging expertise. After his first exploratory visit he was invited by the Comité National de la Recherche Scientifique to spend two months in the Cabinet des Dessins. Over the years he made many more visits to the Louvre, and it is estimated that he restored about 500 drawings to their correct place in the collection.

Leo Steinberg went on to describe how 'the great attributionist, hushing his voice, confessed that he had felt again and again how his own sensitivity to distinct drawing styles could be blunted by an interruption of even one or two weeks vacation: any pause in his continuous exposure to Italian Renaissance drawings made him feel as if some vital power had departed from him'. Such a disaster can have rarely happened, for Pouncey's single-minded application to his studies permitted little in the way of absolute relaxation: not for him the deck-chair on the beach and a doze over a detective story. In *Who's Who* he gave his recreation as 'Travel

in France and Italy', but such occasions were busman's holidays. However delightful the attendant circumstances of travel, these were mere accidents in a carefully and tightly plotted itinerary involving the methodical inspection and detailed recording of a sequence of museums, picture-galleries, churches and private collections. As a traveller he was indefatigable. There is hardly any collection of drawings in Europe, on either side of what was once the Iron Curtain, or in the United States, that he had not at one time or another explored, many of them more than once. He even pushed as far as Bucharest, and it was with embarrassment that he confessed to having given Warsaw a miss. The comments and attributions inscribed in his neat hand on the mounts of drawings have brought enlightenment and relief to generations of perplexed students; and his notes, carefully indexed and preserved together with the appropriate photographs in a series of filing-cabinets, in fact constitute the most substantial record of his life work. He probably contributed as much to Italian studies as anyone in the present century, but the extent, and value, of his contribution were perceptible to only a few fellow-specialists. It is significant that though he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 1975 he was never awarded the Serena Medal.

The bibliography appended to this memoir consists almost entirely of short articles treating specific questions of attribution. The three bulky British Museum catalogues of which he was joint author are collections of such articles, and the same can be said of the long and masterly review—a *tour de force* that few others could have attempted—of the third (Italian) edition of Berenson's *Drawings of the Florentine Painters*. He had not the temperament (though he certainly possessed the ability) to embark on *un ouvrage de longue haleine*, and he never attempted any large-scale work of synthesis. Even his separate monograph on the drawings of Lorenzo Lotto (1965), valuable though it is, is an essay of no more than 15 pages, but in this small compass the essential facts are stated with admirable concision. He never wasted a word, and was a firm believer in the maxim *Es ist besser nicht zu schreiben als Nichts zu schreiben*.

A passage from an article in which he announced the discovery of a drawing by Lotto in the Louvre well illustrates his command of English and his capacity for expounding the character of a draughtsman's style: '[The drawing is] almost frigidly deliberate in the heavily-outlined Christ, but an appreciation of its quality, as revealed for example in the foreshortening and modelling and in the much freer handling of the subsidiary figures, will convince us that this is an original study; while the juxtaposition of the very Venetian, indeed Titianesque, foreground group (the turbaned figure may remind us of the Fitzwilliam *Tarquin*) and the spectre-like, almost Pontormesque, Maries point in the direction of Lotto. Even more

characteristic of him is the way in which the figures are interlocked: in particular, the descending curve in which Christ's shoulder plays so important a part, and the tender inclination of his head towards that of the distraught supporter on the right are suggestive of the rhythm set up in the *Marriage of St Catherine* in the gallery at Bergamo. I am aware that such comparisons may seem vague, but the sceptic [should] note how well Christ's face conforms in expression as well as features (deep eye sockets; long, slightly fleshy nose) with those of such characteristic personages as the *Doria Sick Man* and the *Fogg St Peter Martyr*. No less typical of Lotto is the treatment of the hair, the knobbly modelling of Christ's torso and the foreshortening of his right foot and left forearm. For all these points, as well for a similar effect of flattened fibrous flesh (especially noticeable in the arm just mentioned), it will be found helpful to look at the *Doria St Jerome*; while Christ's left hand finds a close analogy in that of the *Kress Portrait of a Man*. The *Maries* translated into paint would resemble the women witnessing the Presentation in the very late picture at Loreto'.

The extent and significance of his discoveries, and the generosity with which he was always prepared to share them with fellow-students, have more than offset his reluctance to undertake the labour of writing them up. An enquiry about the obscurest Italian artist would elicit a dossier of neatly tabulated information and photographs of drawings and paintings usually unknown to the enquirer. The answer would appear almost with the speed of a computer, thanks to his ultra-efficient way of filing and indexing. Keenly aware of the waste of time caused by lack of method and organization, he was so conspicuously methodical and well-organized as sometimes to be the object of gentle teasing, an infliction that he bore with serene good humour. In spare moments he would be found indexing his diary, an occupation the utility of which he was always ready eloquently to defend; and on his desk stood a row of notebooks in which he entered particulars of every letter he received, with a summary of its contents and of his reply. A friend once introduced him to a visitor as 'Mr Pouncey, who is insured against everything'.

More to be regretted was his reluctance to give public lectures. He used to claim that he had done so only three times in his life: once at King's College, Newcastle, once to the Women's Institute in Sidcup and once to the Rotary Club at Southwold. Lawrence Gowing's comment after the first of these occasions, 'It was very interesting to see you thinking on your feet', exactly describes his method. He did not read from a prepared text nor even commit one to memory, but extemporized his talk round a carefully chosen sequence of slides—a method disastrous if resorted to out of laziness, but supremely successful when the lecturer can think on his feet and possesses what was described as 'Philip's infinite capacity for

instant verbalisation'. The only occasions on which he publicly put fully to use his power of lucid and fluent exposition were when he went to New York as Visiting Professor, at Columbia University in 1958 and at New York University in 1965. The seminars on drawings which he gave are still remembered by his students.

Pouncey's career in the British Museum may be briefly summarized. He was joint author of all three volumes of the catalogue of Italian drawings that have so far appeared: those of the *XIV and XV centuries* of all schools, in collaboration with A. E. Popham (1950), of drawings by *Raphael and his Circle* (1962) and by *Artists working in Rome c. 1550 to c. 1640* (1983), both in collaboration with the present writer. In 1954 he became Deputy Keeper of the department. In 1966 his friends and colleagues in this country and abroad were startled by the news that he was resigning from the Museum to become a director of Sotheby's.

In this country, unlike some others, a close relationship can exist between the official museum world and the art trade, and Pouncey had friends in both camps. His decision to cross over was not inspired primarily by financial considerations, though these did play some part in it. When he transferred to the Museum it was made clear to him that he had little chance of becoming head of his department. The reversion of the keepership was acknowledged to belong to a distinguished scholar in another field of the graphic arts, who was only a year or two older and had spent his entire career in the Museum. Pouncey had no need of whatever additional status might be thought to derive from the office of Keeper, and though an exceptionally conscientious and well-organized public servant who would have carried out its duties with punctilious efficiency, he would have grudged having to waste on administration time that could have been more usefully employed. On the other hand, he was without private means; museum salaries were still relatively low and pensions even lower; and his retiring age was fixed at 60. With promotion blocked, there seemed to be no hope of improving this state of affairs. But his real reason was his desire to, as he put it, 'get back to pictures'. His travel notes and his publications show that he paid no less attention to paintings than to drawings. He found irresistible the prospect of the continuous flow of problems and possible discoveries that pass through the rooms of a busy auctioneer; and though the Museum authorities had been as generous as possible in granting him special study leave, he was not indifferent to the promise of three months subsidized travel every year and of being supplied with as many photographs as he wanted. But he remained closely in touch with his old department, coming there regularly to work on the third volume of the catalogue of Italian drawings, which finally appeared in 1983. He also kept up with the Fitzwilliam Museum, and in 1973 was appointed Honorary

Keeper of Italian Drawings. In 1985 his 75th birthday was celebrated there by an exhibition organized jointly with Sotheby's of 62 drawings from British and Continental collections, public and private, which he had correctly re-attributed.

In 1983 he resigned his directorship of Sotheby's, but went on working for the firm as a consultant. In 1987 he was appointed CBE. In spite of a long and distressing illness, which he bore with the utmost patience and good humour, he continued to give his opinion on photographs submitted to him almost up to the day of his death, which took place at his house in Kensington on 12 November 1990. His witty feeling for language remained with him to the end: told of an apparent improvement in his condition, he replied 'let us by all means be cheerful, but not insanely optimistic'.

Pouncey usually dressed formally—or, to use a favourite word of his, correctly—in a dark suit, his neck encircled by a high, stiffly starched white collar, and on his head, in London, a bowler hat. He was always happy to expound the practical advantages of both these by now somewhat old-fashioned articles of clothing. In spite of his wholly English extraction, there was something *méridional* about his appearance and manner, his dark hair and flashing brown eyes, his mobile features and his rapid and notably articulate fluency of expression. His wife, formerly Myril Gros, whom he married in 1937, was French. They had first met, appropriately enough, in the National Gallery, where Mlle Gros had called with a letter of introduction to Martin Davies, who happened to be away that day. Of their twin daughters, one married Professor Marco Chiarini, Director of the Galleria Palatina (Palazzo Pitti) in Florence, and the other has made a name as a picture restorer. The marriage was an ideally happy one. A tireless travelling companion, his wife fully shared all his interests—the obituary in *The Times* felicitously described her as 'wife and colleague'—and made his house a centre of continuous hospitality for friends, professional colleagues and fellow-students from home and abroad, who came to consult her husband, who had by now attained the status of an oracle. In his rather austere way, he was something of a gourmet, and the proud owner of a small but carefully chosen and lovingly cherished cellar of claret which was indexed as scrupulously as his collection of photographs; and it was not the least of his wife's many qualities that she was a superb cook.

He brought together a very complete working library, which included all the old source books from Vasari onwards in original vellum-bound editions, and also—for he was not one of those art-historians who rather dislike works of art—a small but choice collection of Italian drawings and about 25 paintings, including a *tondo* of *The Virgin and Child* by Sebastiano del Piombo; a *Holy Family in a Landscape*, one of the rare panel paintings

by Baldassare Peruzzi, an artist who had always particularly fascinated him; a *Dead Christ supported by Child-Angels* by Liberale da Verona; a small painting on copper of *The Marriage of the Virgin* by Lodovico Carracci (which has for some years been on loan to the National Gallery); and a *bozzetto* of *Christ carrying the Cross* by Polidoro da Caravaggio. The drawings, all recondite and recherché problem-pieces, hung in his study beautifully mounted and framed, each one protected from the damaging effect of daylight by a small curtain. In this memoir I have tried to convey something of Philip Pouncey's intellectual single-mindedness. Though by nature kind-hearted and tolerant and prepared to put up, even if he could not entirely sympathize, with the more diffuse and less sharply focused interests of some of his friends, he found it difficult to believe that his own interest in Italian drawings was not universally shared. His house was once broken into, and in answer to an anxious enquiry whether any of his works of art had been stolen or damaged he replied, in a tone of voice that showed that he was genuinely incredulous and even slightly offended, that the burglars had not so much as lifted the curtains to see what was underneath. He found it astonishing that the criminal classes should be so completely without intellectual curiosity.

J. A. GERE

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Other, printed, sources are: Leo Steinberg, in 'Objectivity and the Shrinking Self' in *Daedalus: Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 98 (1969), pp. 829 f.; Gianvittore Dillon, 'Le focaccine di F. M. Perkins' in *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, November 1985; and obituary notices by Julien Stock (*The Independent*, 16 November 1990); David Scrase (*The Times*, 20 November 1990) and Alvar González Palacios (*The Art Newspaper*, December 1990).

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