

increasing Rococo tendencies in eighteenth-century France, yet it is a difference that becomes quite explicit when one examines the two sets of *Horses*. What is, however, equally true is that Guillaume's *Marie Leczinska* does appear 'rococo' when compared with Nicolas' companion piece of Louis XV as Jupiter (executed in the same years). This is simply a heroically posed, somewhat dull, Baroque statue. Guillaume's is animated by a feeling once again for character: not yet the placid bourgeoisie of Nattier's familiar image, the queen is shown youthful, unflattered, with an individual likeness which has its own piquant, unexpected, charm. The flying putto at her thigh gives an otherwise static composition welcome vivacity and softens the mood into playfulness. The putto presses forward with the sceptre; Marie Leczinska half-idly grasps the crown of France, while the shield with the lilies is barely noticeable. All that in Coyzevox seems taut grace is here relaxed. The personification as Juno is only partly serious, though it has certainly its apt application for a woman whose husband was so constantly to deceive her.

But Guillaume Coustou remains, above all, the sculptor of the Marly *Horses* [69, 70]. To nearly everyone – except Caylus, the champion of Bouchardon, Coustou's pupil – the *Horses* were one of the finest achievements of the century. They originated in a significant discovery, made only after the death of Louis XIV, that the pair designed by Coyzevox for the abreuvoir at Marly was not sufficiently large to fill this somewhat difficult position. And with this new aspect of taste went a change in the concept of what might, superficially, seem similar. Coyzevox's pair are specific allegories: divine, winged animals, effortlessly bounding skywards, and as effortlessly bearing Mercury and Fame, who do not even sit astride but perch, enchanted, against the horses' flanks [56, 57]. They enshrine the idea of military victory, with a tumble of armour over which they rear. It is they who have a sort of Rococo abandon, symbolized by the essentially decorative twist to the tail of Mercury's horse, which curls round completely to touch its rump. Throughout, they are animated by decorative poetry; they are steeds sprung into existence beside some classical stream and themselves, like Pegasus, capable of making a fountain gush over their hooves. And all this must have seemed more obvious when they stood beside the water of a horse pond.

That is the starting-point for Coustou's conception. His *Horses* are not so much decorative, still less elegant, but romantic and natural. Rough-hewn rocks replace those trophies of arms, and emphasize the natural and untamed spirit of the rearing animals whom their naked attendants can barely control. Man and beast are in conflict now. These horses, for all the savagery of their jagged manes and staring eyeballs, remain earthbound, just as they remain riderless. They break out of the monumental Baroque into a wilder manner and express a desperate urge towards the freedom of being natural. All the formal beauty of the gardens at Marly virtually ended with the horse pond: closed at one end by a terrace where originally Coustou's *Horses* stood, and at the other shallow and open to allow ordinary, real, horses to enter the water.⁸ Nor were Coustou's statues placed, as far as one can judge, at anything like the extreme height they now are at the entry to the Champs-Élysées. Their plinths were quite low, keeping some contact between the onlooker and these

forces of nature held in stone. Part of their power is in their directness. They are not meant to glorify *La France*, nor were they ever intended for an urban setting. Surrounded by the woods and ponds of Marly, they were, rather, an early expression of the romantic wildness of nature. The men who struggle with them are identified by Dezallier d'Argenville as a Frenchman and an American⁹ – and they adumbrate in more ways than one a new world. Only Napoleon will be able to mount such fiery horses; and only Géricault will do full justice in paint to the battling sense of man versus beast.

The models for Coustou's *Horses* were ready by the Salon of 1740 but could not be exhibited there owing to their size. They are mentioned in the *livret* as available to be seen in the sculptor's studio. And in 1745 the groups themselves, the marble for which had been selected at Carrara by Michel-Ange Slodtz, were set up at Marly, where they remained for fifty years. Their popularity probably dates from 1740 and is attested by numerous small-scale replicas as well as by written testimony. Yet it is doubtful if they exercised any significant influence on any French sculptor of the century – except Falconet. Coustou himself was briefly to train Bouchardon, but this would hardly be guessed from their two styles; and they appear to have retained a natural antipathy to each other. Coustou's son Guillaume II was established as a successful sculptor before his father's death in 1746, but he was another sort of artist who was to achieve his own minor masterpiece in a very different key.

VAN CLÈVE – CAYOT – LEPAUTRE AND OTHER CONTEMPORARIES

Much older than Nicolas Coustou was that long-lived sculptor Corneille van Clève,¹⁰ President of the Académie when Watteau was admitted in 1712. Like Watteau, Van Clève was Flemish in origin. The son of a goldsmith, he was born in 1646 and did not die until 1732, only a year before Nicolas Coustou. He was to be employed at Versailles and Marly on very similar decorative work to that of the Coustou. Like them he studied at the French Academy at Rome and, rather unusually, spent a further three years at Venice. He returned to France in 1678, impregnated not only with Bernini but with – one may guess – the work of another Fleming like himself, Duquesnoy. Nor had he failed to study Annibale Carracci's frescoes in the Farnese Gallery; his *morceau de réception* (presented in 1681), the *Polyphemus* [71], is directly derived in pose from Annibale's composition there, and his inventory at death recorded, among much else, 'la gallerie de Carach, complete gravé'. Nevertheless, despite its derivative nature, the *Polyphemus* is important as the first reception piece to be a completely modelled statue and not a bas-relief. Its forceful musculature and robustly confident air initiate a whole series of such pieces; and its influence can be traced as late as Guillaume Coustou II's reception piece, the *Vulcan* of 1742.

Van Clève was only one of a talented generation of sculptors born in the middle years of the seventeenth century and living on into the reign of Louis XV. He was not necessarily the most accomplished of them but he enjoyed a distinguished career, with considerable royal patronage, lodgings in the Louvre, and a succession of high offices at the Académie,