Lampedusa, like Proust, has an intensely pictorial imagination and employs an extensive museum of art to visualize the major themes of *Il Gattopardo* (1958). The fresco of Perseus and Andromeda in the Rosary room; the sensual fountain of Amphitrite in the garden at Donnafugata in which ‘il senso di tradizione e di perennità espresso in pietra ed in acqua’ are fixed in a Proustian moment of *tempo congelato*; the ancestral portrait of Arturo Corberà at the Siege of Antioch and the half-obliterated painting of the consenting shepherdess in the secret chambers of the ducal palace, all illustrate and prophesy the love of Angelica and Tancredi.1 Angelica is compared to a Madonna by Andrea del Sarto, the rapacious Sedara is likened to a ‘stampa giapponese nella quale si vedesse un enorme iris violaceo da un cui petalo pendesse un moscone peloso’, and when Prince Fabrizio ‘ingoia il rospo’ and conveys Tancredi’s marriage proposal to Sedara, he remembers ‘uno di quei quadri storici francesi nei quali marescialli e generali austriaci, carichi di decorazioni e pennacchi, sfilano, arrendendosi, dinanzi un ironico Napoleone.2 Just as Lampedusa’s use of symbolic objets d’art is profoundly Proustian, so the Ponteleone’s grand ball at the end of *Il Gattopardo* is closely modelled on the last scene of Proust’s novel, ‘The Princess de Guermantes Receives’, which illuminates the themes of change and decay, and the triumph of bourgeois over aristocratic values.

During this ball the Leopard discovers a painting by Greuze called *Morte del Giusto* in the library that is decorated in the style of the 1790s, the decade of the French Revolution. (Characteristically, ‘i Ponteleone non avevano rinnovato l’arredamento da settanta anni’.)

Il vegliardo stava spirando nel suo letto, fra sbuffi di biancheria pulitissima, circondato dai nipoti affliti e da nipotine che levavano le braccia verso il soffitto. Le ragazze erano graziose, procaci, il disordine delle loro vesti suggeriva più il libertinaggio che il dolore: si capiva subito che erano esse il vero soggetto del quadro. (p. 267)

The Prince is strongly attracted to this melancholy scene and identifies with the dead father because he knows that he and his class are doomed and dying. On his own deathbed he calculates that he has *really* lived only two or three years of his long life — the rest was pain and boredom, a kind of death in life. The bourgeois death in the Greuze painting mirrors Fabrizio’s own *déclassé* death later in the novel, and predicts both the decline of his wealth and social prestige (his eldest son has already escaped to London and become a clerk) and the descent of the entire family into the middle class. The painting symbolizes the Prince’s profound conviction that nothing really matters and his fatal inability to act, except when he opposes his own interests or even his own survival.

Angelica’s triumph at the ball (her meteoric ascent is the social equivalent of Odette de Crecy’s career) completes her conquest of Concetta that began when Tancredi told the false and brutal anecdote of the convent rape, the most poignant moment of the book, when the two girls pass each other like stars, one rising, the other sharply descending. Angelica’s social success ensures the defeat of the Salinas

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1 See my essay, ‘Symbol and Structure in The Leopard’, *Italian Quarterly*, 9 (1965), 50–70.
by the Sedaras, who are an old family — or soon will be. The discovery of the painting in the context of the ball, the last spasm of the moribund aristocracy and final flaring up of a dying fire, relates Sicilian to European society and shows that Palermo receives its Bourbon taste and rulers, as well as its revolutionary ideas, from France.

The painting also plays a thematic and structural role in Il Gattopardo. It illustrates the two important themes of decadent taste and sexual license, and relates them both to the theme of death. The Greuze is a pictorial parody of an earlier scene, the return of the prodigal son, Tancredi; and it carefully connects ‘Un Ballo’ to the last two chapters of the novel, ‘La Morte del Principe’ and ‘Relique’, which take place many years later. In order to understand the significance of Greuze’s painting in Il Gattopardo (it is the only one of the numerous objets d’art that is given a specific artist and title) we must first analyse the visual and thematic content of the painting, and then show how Lampedusa’s response to the interpretation of Greuze by Diderot and the brothers Goncourt explains why this particular painting is the symbolic core of the novel.

Jean-Baptiste Greuze (1725–1805) painted three well-known deathbed scenes: La Dame Bienfaisant (in Lyons), Le Paralytique (in Leningrad) and Le Fils Puni (in the Louvre); and though none of these paintings exactly matches Lampedusa’s description, he was probably thinking of Le Fils Puni, which portrays all the salient characteristics: an afflicted family, welters of clean linen and disordered clothes that suggest sex more than sorrow. Anita Brookner writes that Greuze ‘seems rather to have been inspired by a wistful vision of the ideal family in which children are begotten easily, remain devoted to their parents, and are always there at the death’.1 It is the failure of the prodigal son (who returns, hélas, too late) to live up to this sentimental ideal of filial piety that is the ostensible subject of Le Fils Puni (1778). For Greuze depicted the manners and morals of the bourgeois class in saccharine genre pictures; he aimed at high tragedy and achieved well-executed bathos.

The bad son enters stage right — bent in grief and beating his breast in remorse — frozen (like the rigid dog) at the dramatic yet anticlimactic moment, as the heavy draped canopy over the mortuary bed seems about to fall at the end of the last act. But guided by the extended arm of the mother (handkerchief in hand) and the standing daughter (holding the father’s arm), our attention is directed first to the clean linen surrounding the nobly composed features of the dead father at the centre of the painting, and then to the distraught daughter (eyes rolled to heaven) whose grief has allowed her left breast to fall nearly out of her dress. (Is it this alarming exposure that arouses the fixed and wide-eyed stares of her siblings across the bed and that causes the kneeling lad to cover his eyes before the open Bible?) The head of the déshabillée daughter was inspired by the ecstatic saints of Guido Reni, for Greuze ‘seems to have been the first artist in the eighteenth century to respond to the appeal of this master’.2 Like Reni, Greuze was extremely successful in his own time and was called ‘a second Raphael’.

The critic who was largely responsible for establishing Greuze’s Raphaelesque reputation was Denis Diderot; and the basis, and limitations, of Diderot’s art

2 Brookner, p. 42.
Greuze and Lampedusa’s ‘Il Gattopardo’

criticism were analysed by Schiller in a letter to Goethe of 1797: ‘In his aesthetic works, I think, he still looks too much to foreign and moral aims, he does not seek these sufficiently in the subject itself and in its representation. To him the beautiful work of art must always serve some other purpose.’ Diderot’s panegyric of Le Paralytique in the Salon of 1763 reveals that he found in Greuze the perfect expression of moral and didactic art:

C’est vraiment là mon homme que ce Greuze... D’abord le genre me plaît; c’est la peinture morale. Quoi donc! le pinceau n’a-t-il pas été assez et trop longtemps consacré à la débauche et au vice? Ne devons-nous pas être satisfaits de le voir concourir enfin avec la poésie dramatique à nous toucher, à nous instruire, à nous corriger et à nous inviter à la vertu? Courage, mon ami Greuze, fais de la morale en peinture, et fais-en toujours comme cela!

Greuze’s collaboration with dramatic poetry meant that works like Le Paralytique were the equivalent in rhetorical painting of Diderot’s own sentimental play, Le Père de Famille (1758), and exemplified his theory of tragédie moyenne, ‘which would have as its subject our domestic misfortunes’. Diderot’s high praise of Greuze suggests the artist’s affinity to his contemporary English ‘men of feeling’, Henry Mackenzie and Samuel Richardson: ‘Voici votre peintre et le mien, le premier qui se soit avisé parmi nous, de donner des mœurs à l’art, et d’enchaîner des événements d’après lesquels il seroit facile de faire un roman.

Though Diderot characterized Le Fils Puni as a ‘leçon pour les pères et pour les enfants,’ he was also aware of Greuze’s veiled (and unveiled) pornography, his sexual innuendo and his orgasmic women, for he writes with disapproval of a pastel of Mme Greuze (a notorious spendthrift and adultress who helped to ruin her husband): ‘Cette bouche entr’ouverte, ces yeux nageants, cette attitude renversée, ce cou gonflé, ce mélange voluptueux de peine et de plaisir, font baisser les yeux et rougir toutes les honnêtes femmes dans cet endroit.

It is this Tartuffian hypocrisy of Greuze — the painter of The Broken Eggs and Girl Weeping for the Death of Her Canary, pictorial allegories of lost virginity — that attracted the particular condemnation of the Goncourts in L’Art du dix-huitième siècle (1871), though they also attacked the influence of Diderot and Greuze and the artist’s ‘déplorable école de la peinture littéraire et de l’art moralisateur’. To the perceptive Goncourts, Greuze’s celebration of the felicities of domestic mediocrity merely masked an insidious and dangerous corruption.

Sa main a je ne sais quoi de coquet et de léger qui ôte a la maternité son caractère de sainteté, ses signes de dignité. Qu’il pence sur sa bercelonnette d’un enfant endormi les

1 Correspondence Between Schiller and Goethe, translated by Dora Schmitz, 2 vols (London, 1879), 1, 365 (7 August 1797).
3 Diderot, quoted in Brookner, pp. 30–1.
4 Diderot, Salons, II, 144.
5 Diderot, n, 158.
6 Diderot, n, 151. A wittier critic remarked of Greuze’s La Voluptueuse in the Salon of 1769: ‘The author has been unwise in making free with an expression which should be reserved for happier moments’ (quoted in Brookner, p. 67).
7 The Salina family portraits of various aunts (‘indicavano, dolenti, il busto di un caro estinto’ (p. 205)) suggest Greuze’s The Inconsolable Widow (Wallace Collection, London), where the grieving woman is half-naked and exquisitely ready for another husband.
deux figures de bonheur conjugal, il ne saura donner aux parents que le sourire de plaisir, à la femme que le geste et la caresse de la fille du monde... Le tempérament de l'homme traverse les idées du peinture, mettant à toute cette morale en action une pointe de libertinage, ne laissant par moments entrevoir dans le moraliste qu'un Baudouin officiellement vertueux...

Car c'est là le raffinement de Greuze: il change en provocation la simplicité et le négligé de la jeune fille. Il donne une coquetterie friponne... Et la couleur consacrée à la jeunesse, à la candeur de la femme, la modestie rayonnante de son costume, le blanc devient, dans les scènes du peinture, un aiguillon, une délicate excitation de débauche, un appât.

It is clear that Lampedusa reacts against Diderot's praise, and that he employs the Goncourts's interpretation of Greuze's titillation. For the Prince thinks the studied 'disordine delle loro vesti suggeriva piú il libertinaggio che il dolore' and that the girls were obviously 'il vero soggetto del quadro'.

There are two other passages in the Goncourts's influential essay that suggest important themes in Il Gattopardo and illuminate the character of the dreamy Prince, who belongs 'ad una generazione disgraziata, a cavallo fra i vecchi tempi ed i nuovi' and ill at ease in both (p. 213). For they write of Greuze:

Il est le peintre d'illusion. Son inspiration est le suprême élancement de ce monde vers les tendresses rajeunissantes, vers les pensées, les tableaux, les spectacles qui rapportent les lueurs du matin à l'âme d'une société sur son déclin. Il parle à la sensibilité de son temps, il s'attache à ses sensibilités. Il représente et personnifie la charité dans la Dame de charité [La Dame Bienfaisante]. Il caresse et satisfait ses instincts.

Il Gattopardo concerns the hopeless attempt to maintain illusions — of class, prestige, honor and faith — in the face of revolutionary transformations, for even the pragmatic Tancredi believes 'se vogliamo che tutto rimanga come è, bisogna che tutto cambi' (p. 42). Like Greuze, the Leopard, a famous astronomer, wants to recover the lights of morning for the spirit of a sinking society. He searches for his eternal appointment with Venus in her 'propría regiòne di perenne certezza', and finds her not only in the celestial lights but also in the guise of the Woman in Brown who brings him death.

The aristocratic Prince ironically identifies with the bourgeois banalities of Greuze, emphasized by the homely bedwarmer and kitchen utensils studiously placed on the floor of the bare room, and he never imagines a more appropriately noble and heroic death (as in David) or a luxurious and exotic end (as in Delacroix). His attraction to the mediocre Greuze is the aesthetic parallel of his alliance through marriage to the rapacious Sedàras, a humiliating union that recirculates into the Prince's family some of the money stolen from him by Sedàra. Though resolutely democratic, Greuze had an aristocratic clientele (his greatest patron was the Empress Catherine of Russia) and he was ruined by the French Revolution. The Goncourts write of Greuze, in a striking parallel with the Leopard: 'Glissant

1 Goncourts, t, 434–7. Italics mine. Pierre Antoine Baudouin (1723–69), a French painter in the style of Boucher, was one of the most daring minor masters of the eighteenth century. His Confessional went too far, even for contemporary taste, and caused a considerable scandal. Some of the greatest French paintings of this period, like Watteau's The Swing (Wallace Collection), have an element of the obscene.

2 The significance of Venus in Il Gattopardo is heightened by Lampedusa's oblique allusion to the opening passage of Paradiso, viii, where Beatrice becomes increasingly radiant as she rises with Dante from Mercury to Venus. In the light of Venus Dante sees the spirits of the blessed illuminated, some more quickly, others more slowly, according to the measure of their divine regard. For a specific allusion to 'Veni, sponsa de Libano' in Purgatorio, xxx, see Il Gattopardo, p. 168.
The flattering distortion of reality and the sexual license of *Le Fils Puni* is appropriate to the moribund Sicilian aristocracy, and reflects the shabby grandeur, the revolting decor and the decadent taste of that reactionary and rococo class. Within this society, the ‘aesthetic’ judgements of the ignorant Angelica enable her to acquire ‘la fama di cortese ma inflessibile intenditrice di arte, che doveva, abusivamente, accompagnarla in tutta la sua lunga vita’ (p. 259). Even the Prince admires the taste, sentiments and affected simplicity of the age of Greuze, for his drawing room, where the Rosary takes place, is decorated in the rococo style; and the palace at Donnafugata retains an air of ‘esaltata sensualità tanto più acre quanto maggiormente rattenuta’, which it inherited from ‘il Settecento agonizzante’. He even calls his scruples concerning Angelica ‘Rousseauesque’. Fabrizio is disgusted by the nineteenth century novels of Dickens, Eliot, Sand, Flaubert and Dumas, which Bourbon censorship excludes from Sicily, and he attacks the latest writings of Proudhon and Marx. He dislikes Verdi’s tempestuous ‘Noi siamo zingarelli’ which is played for him as he enters feudal Donnafugata, and dies as a barrel organ grinds out a mechanical aria by Donizetti.

By contrast, the modern Garibaldino, Tancredi, enthusiastically discusses Bellini and Verdi (whose name was used to form the patriotic acrostic ‘Vittorio Emmanuele Re Di Italia’) with the liberal Chevalley when he escorts the politician through the village; and Tancredi is referred to by Fabrizio ‘come . . . un Mirabeau’, the great French orator who attempted to reconcile the Monarchy and the Revolution. The noble Sicilians who own Greuzes in 1862 will soon disappear like their French predecessors, who were destroyed by the cyclical revolutions of the nineteenth century.

The sexual license of Greuze’s art, thinly veiled with respectability, provides an ironic reflection of the sexual themes in *Il Gattopardo*. The phenomenal appearance of Angelica (a rose fertilized by her grandfather’s nickname, Peppe ‘Mmerda) rouses the carnal jealousy of the Prince, and Tancredi’s passionate yet ultimately restrained courtship of the voluptuous maiden makes the Leopard envy ‘le possibilità di quei tali Fabrizi Salina e Tancredi Falconieri di tre secoli prima, che si sarebbero cavati la voglia di andare a letto con le Angeliche dei loro tempi senza dover passare davanti al parroco, noncuranti delle doti delle villane’ (p. 118). Fabrizio’s liaison with his mistress Mariannina is the last spark of his atavistic lust which evolved from his masochistic ancestor the Saint-Duke, who ‘si fustigava solo, al cospetto del proprio Dio e del proprio feudo’ to redeem the land with drops of his own holy blood. While Tancredi and Angelica pursue the Keatsian promise of pleasure that would never turn to pain, the Prince must content himself with the erotic reflection, ‘le sue lenzuola devono avere il profumo del paradiso!’ (see Song of Solomon iv. 11).

Fabrizio loves the adventurous Tancredi more than his own pallid children, and though he disapproves of Tancredi’s revolutionary ardour the Leopard gives him a roll of gold pieces when he joins Garibaldi’s rebels. The moving scene of Tancredi’s return from the wars with his friend Cavriaghi is influenced generally by Odysseus’s return to Ithaca in *The Odyssey* (xviii) and specifically by the similar

1 Goncourts, i, 440.
GREUZE: Le Fils Puni

(Paris: Musée du Louvre — Giraudon)
return of Nicholai Rostov and his friend Denisov from the campaigns against Napoleon in War and Peace (iv.i). Lampedusa achieves a powerful effect by individualizing his beautifully rendered scene within the archetypal tradition of the eternal return portrayed by Homer and by Tolstoy. In both War and Peace and Il Gattopardo the young warriors are greeted with excitement by the faithful retainer at the entrance to the great house (the fictional equivalents of Odysseus’s nurse Eurycleia), rush to the surprised and highly emotional reception of the large family circle, forget to introduce their weary companions, and search distractedly for their most beloved — Nicholai’s mother and Tancredi’s fiancée — who arrive after the climactic entrance. Tancredi’s triumphant return is a parody of the retributive return in Le Fils Puni and is the literary embodiment of Greuze’s sentimental La Pieté Filiale, discussed by Diderot in the Salon of 1763.1

Yet Tancredi’s betrothal is also a betrayal: ‘E la fine dei Falconieri e anche dei Salina’. The first sentence of Il Gattopardo, ‘Nunc et in hora mortis nostrae’, is the dominant theme of the novel: aristocratic pride in a moment of decline, and the erosion and extinction of a noble fortune, fame and family. This sense of death hangs darkly over the ruined palaces, whose inhabitants foregather to congratulate themselves on still existing. Prince Fabrizio, with his keen sensibility to presages and symbols, strives to attain ‘questa vita dello spirito nei suoi momenti più sublimati, più simili alla morte’ (p. 57). Like most Sicilians he has a powerful longing for oblivion, and he reflects: ‘Finché c’è morte c’è speranza’.

The Leopard’s death is the climax of the novel for he is the last of the Salinas, and it is foreshadowed first by a series of symbolic victims and then by Le Fils Puni. The Prince sympathizes and even identifies with these victims: he prays at the evening Rosary for the eviscerated Royalist soldier whom he finds decomposing in his garden; he again commends the soldier’s soul to God when he receives the six slaughtered baby lambs from his feudal tenants; he feels compassion for the glaucous-eyed rabbit lacerated by horrible gunshot wounds at Donnafugata; and yearns for his faithful star Venus, a symbol of the perennial certitude of death, as he passes the butchered bulls, their thick blood slowly dropping to the ground.

On the way to the ball the Prince encounters an ominous priest hurrying through the crooked streets with the Last Sacrament — ‘una di quelle case sbarrate racchiudeva un agonia’ — and he descends from his carriage and kneels in respect on the pavement. He senses the atmosphere of death that pervades the decaying city of Palermo, and at the ball he attempts to escape from his black gloom and the living ghosts of his past mistresses in the silent library. As soon as he sees Greuze’s painting, the Leopard (who earlier in the novel prided himself on his white waistcoat, admired the nuns’ purest white linen, and saw himself as a white-haired old man walking beside herds of grandchildren in the iconographic tradition of Greuze), asked himself if

la propria morte sarebbe stata simile a quella: probabilmente sì, a parte che la biancheria sarebbe stata meno impeccabile (lui lo sapeva, le lenzuola degli agonizzanti sono sempre sudicie, ci son le bave, deiezioni, le macchie di medicine...), e che era da sperare che Concetta, Carolina e le altre sarebbero state più decentemente vestite. Ma, in complesso, lo stesso. Come sempre, la considerazione della propria morte rasserenava tanto quanto lo turbava quella della morte degli altri. (pp. 267–8)

1 Greuze was unduly fond of these complementary pictures. His two drawings, La Mort de bon père de famille regretté par ses enfants and La Mort d’un père dénaturé abandonné par ses enfants, were both exhibited in the Salon of 1769.
Fabrizio dies a figurative and symbolic death on the very night he sees the Greuze and this death is emphasized by the structure of *Il Gattopardo*, for nothing in his life seems very significant after the ball, and the next chapter of the novel, ‘La Morte del Principe’, takes place twenty-six years later. For a dozen years or so he had been courting death and ‘sentiva come il fluido vitale, la facoltà di esistere, la vita insomma, e forse anche la volontà di continuare a vivere, andassero uscendo da lui lentamente’ (p. 283). His aperçu that the sheets are too clean anticipates his own death in a seedy Palermo hotel where he re-enacts, in a less sanitary and aesthetic way, the Morte del Giusto, and hears his own death rattle like the earth of a parched Sicily vainly awaiting rain.

The dying Leopard is first treated by a poor doctor, ‘il testimonio impotente di mille agonie miserabili’, whose description corresponds to the old father in Greuze’s painting: ‘Al di sopra della redingote sdrucita si allungava il povero volto emaciato irto di peli bianchi, un volto disilluso di intellettuale famelico’ (p. 288). The Prince’s grandson Fabrizietto sits next to him and holds his hands, and like the little boy in the painting, ‘lo guardava fisso, con la curiosità naturale in chi assista alla sua prima agonia’. As in the Greuze, the Prince is surrounded by six figures (his grandson, nephew, three children and the doctor) and the woman in the brown travelling dress who arrives at the moment of death is the fictional equivalent of the *fils puni*, who has travelled to the deathbed direct from the road and dropped his walking stick at his grief-stricken entrance. Prince Fabrizio’s death is a bitter parody of Greuze’s sentimental idealization, for he expires far from his palace, amid the prison stench of crushed cockroaches and stale urine.

The last chapter of *Il Gattopardo*, ‘Reliquie’, which describes the final humiliation of the Salina family, is also related to the exposed daughter in *Le Fils Puni*, for like the Greuze, the painting of the fake Madonna in the family chapel is in bad taste and not at all what it is taken to be.

When the Monsignor sees this painting he chastizes the family chaplain for pretending it is a holy image and saying Mass in front of a picture of a girl waiting for a rendezvous with her lover. A few days later, when the Vatican expert exposes the falsity of the numerous relics and necessitates a reconsecration of the family chapel, the proud Salina spinsters witness the destruction of their pre-eminence with the Church. Concetta then throws out the rotting hide of her embalmed dog Bendicò, her last link with the pre-revolutionary past, and withdraws into her own closed world that ‘già avesse ceduto tutti gli impulsi che poteva dare, e che consistesse ormai in pure forme. Il ritratto del padre non era che alcuni centimetri cubi di legno ... i ritratti erano quelli di morti non più amati, le fotografie quelle di amici che in vita avevano inferto ferite ... gli acquarelli mostravano case e luoghi in maggior

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1 According to the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, Tranquilo Cremona (1837–78) had a ‘sensibilità preziosa e delicata ... [che] riassume bene lo spirito di una società e di un’epoca’.
parte venduti' (pp. 311, 326). Concetta had destroyed her future with Tancredi by her own imprudence and the rash Salina pride, and her bitter memories, like her father's, 'lasciavano in fondo all'animo un sedimento di lutto che, accumulandosi ogni giorno, avrebbe finito con l'essere la vera causa della [sua] morte' (p. 75).

Lampedusa uses Le Fils Puni to define the character of the Prince by placing Fabrizio in a reactionary and decadent tradition and at the same time endowing him with the capacity to recognize its falsity and sentimentality. By exploiting the biographical parallels between Greuze and the Leopard, and by emphasizing Fabrizio's old-fashioned rococo taste and his attraction to Greuze's painting, Lampedusa also maintains the necessary critical and ironic distance between himself and his eighteenth-century hero, although their class and their essential values are identical. Lampedusa's reference to 'una bomba fabbricata a Pittsburgh, Penn.' that destroyed the ballroom in 1943, seems like an awkward authorial intrusion; but it distinctly suggests the beginning of the end of Mussolini's twenty-five year rule in Italy which could have occurred only after political power shifted to the incapable hands of the democratic masses as a result of the Italian revolution. As the Prince tells Chevalley, 'Noi fummo i Gattopardi, i Leoni: chi ci sostituirà saranno gli sciacalletti, le iene' (p. 219).

In Il Gattopardo Lampedusa surrounds the Prince with a depth and richness by evoking echoes of the Bible, Dante, Ariosto, Tasso, Stendhal, Flaubert, Baudelaire, Tolstoy, and Proust. Similarly, he uses the literary interpretations of Diderot and the Goncourts to place Greuze in an aesthetic and cultural tradition; and he incorporates Greuze's licentious hypocrisy, Diderot's moral self-deception and the Goncourts's shrewd insight into the ambivalent character of Fabrizio. Lampedusa makes Le Fils Puni reflect a personal and historical crisis: the death of the Leopard, his memories, his traditions and his class. Though Lampedusa could not admire Greuze's 'pure forms' in the way that Proust admired Vermeer or Huysmans Moreau, his use of Greuze's painting and the values it represents is a striking example of the great strength of Il Gattopardo: Lampedusa's unusual ability to absorb and transform other works of art into his own traditional yet original masterpiece.

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