

Caylus dont il fait l'ancêtre de tous les hommes de terrain. Mais en vengeant la mémoire de l'antiquaire des attaques de Diderot et d'Alembert qui ne voyaient en lui qu'un « érudit », Bazin a pris parti pour une histoire de l'art pragmatique, faite de l'étude scientifique des témoignages matériels, des « guenilles » comme disait Caylus, des breloques, fadaïses, babioles antiques que Marmontel reprochait au Comte de collectionner. Pour Bazin c'est une illusion de croire à quelque forme que ce soit d'intelligence intuitive de l'oeuvre d'art. Pour être comprise l'oeuvre doit être examinée longuement, encore et encore; sa provenance, son authenticité doivent être assurées; le contexte historique de sa production doit être fermement établi, le laboratoire doit jouer son rôle. Voilà l'idée qui soutient tout l'édifice. C'est pourquoi ce livre n'est pas seulement une historiographie mais une vivante introduction à l'histoire de l'art.

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ROBERT BAYNE-POWELL *Catalogue of Portrait Miniatures in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*. Cambridge, At the University Press, 1985, 221 pp.

DAVID M. LUBIN *Act of Portrayal/Eakins, Sargent, James*. New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1985, 151 pp.

These books are both about portraits. They have nothing else in common. Indeed, they are so different that they make a fascinating case study of the outer limits of methodological possibilities in dealing with portraits, each being an extreme example of its type.

Mr. Bayne-Powell is Honorary Keeper of portrait miniatures at the Fitzwilliam Museum, a recently retired barrister who continues the venerable tradition of the gentleman-amateur, even to the point of co-underwriting publication costs of the catalogue, with the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art. The book, too, is in a venerable tradition, very much old-school in its methodology, and enormously useful to students of the field inasmuch as it reproduces in black and white every miniature in the Fitzwilliam collection, and in colour 35 of its most prominent masterpieces, as well as synthesizing all available literature under each catalogue entry.

As the Fitzwilliam's is unquestionably the finest public collection of portrait miniatures in Britain after that of the Victoria and Albert Museum, the publication of this volume is of considerable interest. The collection spans four centuries and includes the oldest known portrait miniature in England, Lucas Horenbout's portrait of Henry VIII, undated but probably ca. 1525-26 (replicas in the Royal collection, Windsor, and in the Buccleuch collection). It was Horenbout who introduced independent portrait miniatures into England, and who was almost certainly Holbein's teacher in the art.

Mr. Bayne-Powell presents his information in a logical and straightforward manner. In addition to the requi-

site factual information, each entry includes a description, what he calls iconography (i.e., identification of the sitter with pertinent historical information), and comparative connoisseurship. Here he is terse and combative and seems to take special delight in contradicting Sir Roy Strong. One example, a particularly quixotic one, should suffice. A *Portrait of an Unknown Man*, dated 1588 (no. 3882, p. 65), formerly unattributed ("perhaps foreign" was its official designation) was attributed by this writer to Isaac Oliver in 1979 (see Jill Finsten, *Isaac Oliver Art at the Courts of Elizabeth I and James I* [Ann Arbor: Garland Press, 1981]), and subsequently accepted as Oliver by both Roy Strong and V. J. Murrell, chief conservator at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Since Oliver was one of the two greatest portrait miniature painters of the era (the other being Nicholas Hilliard) and this portrait an important addition to his oeuvre, the re-attribution might be considered a coup for the Fitzwilliam; Mr. Bayne-Powell's unsubstantiated insistence that it be returned to "Unknown Foreign" status is incomprehensible.

Connoisseurship is not Mr. Bayne-Powell's strong suit. He seldom explains his reasons for the opinions set forth; rather, these are presented in a pre-emptive, harrumphing tone that brooks no insubordination and is very much of the "never apologize, never explain" school of thought. As for psychology, invariably a thorny issue in the study of portraits, Mr. Bayne-Powell issues an all-purpose proclamation in his Introduction:

In men the artist brings out, among other characteristics, the strength or weakness of his subject, his intelligence or lack of it, his good nature and even his pride or deviousness. In women he portrays beauty, charm, attractiveness, calm, resignation, even wilfulness (p. ix).

So much for psychology. Like most of the gentleman amateurs who have traditionally gravitated to this field, Mr. Bayne-Powell is more interested in genealogy than psychology.

Not so David Lubin, who has opted to reject the wise advice of Michael Levey that wading into the deep waters of psychoanalysis can expose the art historian to mockery and ridicule. Levey recounts how he once observed in a lecture that there might be something sexual to the ejaculating tap in Ingres's *Valpinçon Bather*, whereupon an English woman art historian, who remains discreetly nameless, took him sternly to task. If this woman were to read David Lubin's *Act of Portrayal*, she would have apoplexy. For Lubin's book, which consists of three long essays analyzing three American portraits of the 1880s, is a veritable orgy of state-of-the-art psychosexual deconstruction. The three works are Thomas Eakins's *The Agnew Clinic* of 1889, John Singer Sargent's *The Boit Children* of 1882-83, and Henry James's *Portrait of a Lady*, 1881. The Eakins and Sargent paintings are reproduced, badly, in black and white, as is comparative material.

Whereas the most annoying things about Mr. Bayne-Powell's book were his unwillingness to number his entries and an adherence to alphabetical order so strict as to create jarring chronological and national dislocations, just about everything in Mr. Lubin's book is annoying. One scarcely knows where to begin.

Perhaps the most profoundly tiresome aspect of the book is his use of these works of art as a means of

showing off his own cleverness. If this is the future of art history, it is a depressing one. Not that he is not entertaining: Mr. Lubin is a new type, the art historian as *tumbler*—self-proclaimed magician/card shark/surgeon/psychoanalyst/agent provocateur. “Look at me, look at me” is the relentless subtext of his book.

His stated ambitions are formidable:

Discussing several contradictory tendencies evident in the three works, Lubin probes at greatest length the contradiction each artist sensed between masculine power and feminine passivity and relates this troublesome dichotomy to issues of property, propriety, social and authorial control, formalism, realism, and patriarchal family life. He argues that the conflict enacted depicts the pressures of a masculine-ordered bourgeois ideology and speaks of social problems in American culture both a century ago and today (Flyleaf).

A heavy load of semiological baggage for three little portraits. Despite the portentous prose, here and fitfully elsewhere (for example, regarding *The Agnew Clinic*, “we come to realize at a deeper level that the true story of the painting is the manner in which society’s superstructure [Law/Art/Medicine] masks its own devices, its repressing/sublimating/sterilizing of erotic, irrational, anti-judicial, and anti-antiseptic desire”), what it really all boils down to is phallic thrusts.

The strange thing is that, although he has stacked the deck in his choice of works—which he readily acknowledges—there is frequently the germ of an interesting and possibly even valid observation that Lubin invariably subverts by taking it to preposterous extremes. Thus, for example, the not-altogether-improbable observation that *The Agnew Clinic* could be likened to a gang-rape is followed by: “With Eakins the outer ear is sometimes depicted in such a way as to resemble the female sex organ. . . . An absence of ears might, therefore, indicate a denatured and feckless state of existence” (p. 79). Or, describing the central medical student: “Is it not lust aglow beneath his half-closed eyes? And could that therefore be a covered but erect penis touched lightly, lingeringly by his pocketed hands?” (p. 73). In the very next sentence he notes that this same fellow is actually looking away from the naked patient and probably not involved in the activity portrayed. Dr. Agnew himself is described as “some sort of projectile ripping upward into [the students’] space—a rocket cleaving the heavens, a vessel parting the waves, a phallic object penetrating a region dark and womblike.”

Mr. Lubin finds even deeper meaning in word-play. Dr. Agnew is revealed (p. 51) as “agneau” or “Agnus Dei,” which leads to Agnew as God or slaughter-butcher of the sacrificial lamb on the table who, oh yes, by the way is a more appropriate sacrificial lamb than Agnew himself.

This is just the warm-up for the word-play that is the central argument of his analysis of *The Boit Children*. Boit = boîte = box, the missing “s” for which the circumflex stands = sperm (p. 110), the circumflex itself is “a receptacle into which the central letter of boîte, the ‘i’ is phallically plunged. . . . the insertion might also connote a mother’s ready nipple entered into her infant’s expectant and parted lips” (p. 110). Earlier, Lubin asserts that the daughters of Edward Boit are also “trapped within a biological box; the lack of the father’s E, his penis” (p. 106).

Henry James is treated with a little more dignity, his portrait of Isabel Archer being described as a kind of self-portrait, an attempt to come to terms with his own sexual duality. But here, too, the text is larded with absurdities. Thus, “another important congruence between Mr. Archer [Isabel’s absent father] and Mr. Osmond [her husband] is probably, for Isabel, the most significant: their father-daughter relationships. Interestingly, both men’s names begin with the sound ‘ah,’ the primal sound of pleasure” (p. 142).

Does Yale Press not employ editors? How is it possible that such sophomoric self-indulgence has been rewarded with publication? It is enough to make one grateful for the Robert Bayne-Powells of the world, and long for Vasari. The worst of it is that by encouraging the notion that the art historian is the true creator of the work of art, and that the trade we ply is just a game, it trivializes and diminishes us and our field.

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EUNICE LIPTON *Looking into Degas: Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London, University of California Press, 1986, 237 pp.

Il faudra analyser, un jour, pourquoi le XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle est devenu un terrain d’élection pour toutes les tentatives de révision en histoire de l’art. Le fait qu’il marque le moment où la modernité sociale et le modernisme esthétique précisent leurs enjeux n’est certes pas étranger à cette situation. En proposant une relecture de Degas, le livre de Eunice Lipton, *Looking into Degas, Uneasy Images of Women and Modern Life*, s’inscrit dans une tradition déjà bien établie de réévaluation de l’impressionnisme par les historiens sociaux et par les historiennes féministes de l’art (Clark, Tucker, Broude). Le sous-titre de l’ouvrage nous laisse deviner que l’auteure se situe dans cette double lignée critique. Elle va s’y démarquer, cependant, par l’originalité de son objet et par la nature de sa démarche.

Eunice Lipton croit en la nécessité de mettre à jour les liens qui rattachent l’œuvre de Degas à son époque, une période de consolidation du capitalisme où l’exaltation de la consommation et de la marchandise préside à une reformulation des rapports entre les classes et entre les sexes. Contrairement à beaucoup d’historiens inspirés par le marxisme, toutefois, elle ne conçoit pas l’œuvre d’art comme un simple reflet des conditions socio-économiques qui président à son élaboration. Par la manière dont elle organise son matériel iconographique et plastique, l’œuvre aurait cette capacité de produire des significations dans l’histoire; elle aurait en son pouvoir de dévoiler les mécanismes qui régissent en profondeur l’appareil social et en contrôlent les valeurs. L’art n’est pas nécessairement en collusion avec l’idéologie dominante; dans les meilleurs cas, il entre en collision avec elle.

Degas est intéressant, selon Eunice Lipton, parce que la tension qui traverse ses images est en prise sur une époque de grandes perturbations. Écartelées entre la