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Review by: April Kingsley
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Nicholas Pocock, 1740–1821. By David Cordingly. 120 pp. + 8 cols. pls. + 77 b. & w. ills. (Conway Maritime Press in association with the National Maritime Museum, 1986), £12.95. ISBN 0–85177–377–X.

This is the first of a series of monographs on British marine artists. The next two artists scheduled, Thomas Luny and Charles Brooking, arouse greater expectations aesthetically, but the career and work of Nicholas Pocock are particularly interesting on account of their richness and variety. As he was Master of a number of ships trading across the Atlantic and in the Mediterranean, his depictions of maritime life were based to an exceptional degree on first-hand experience. Even before he took up painting as a second full-time career he had illustrated his logs with depictions of ships in varying seas and with coastal profiles of the kind still found in naval charts. Pocock is also a particularly interesting choice in view of the large amount of material that has survived, including a notebook with a detailed account of the Battle of the First of June, at which he was present, again accompanied by pictorial notes. The whole process from on-the-spot sketches to finished paintings, in water-colour or oils, is therefore fully covered by the available material.

David Cordingly has written a book that will appeal to the general reader, while making full scholarly use of this material. Comparisons are made with other artists working in the field, influences are suggested, and a fair, not over-enthusiastic assessment of Pocock's art is given. I have only two very minor criticisms of the text. In the first place there seems to be some confusion, as between the family tree on page 8 and the text on page 15, over whether Nicholas Pocock's sister Mary was older or younger than himself. Second, to use the painting of *The cutting out of the 'Hermione'* to justify the description of Pocock as 'an artist of the Romantic movement' is surely going too far, particularly if one compares this picture, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1800, with Turner's *Shipwreck* of 1805.

As this is the first of a series it is perhaps worth pointing out some defects in presentation. The worst is the absence of dimensions in the captions to the illustrations, which in other ways are perhaps almost too full, often repeating information given in the text. If a painting is in a public collection, and if, in the case of the National Maritime Museum, it is in oils rather than water-colour, one can find the dimensions by looking in the 'List of Pictures in British Public Collections' given as Appendix II, but there are no cross-references in this list back to the illustrations. Moreover, the general index is inadequate. The allocation of plate numbers is somewhat idiosyncratic, particularly that of plate 1, which is placed two pages after plates 2 and 3. The lay-out of chapter openings is cramped, and the title-page and spine are cluttered with the various emblems of the joint publishers. Nevertheless, this is an attractive, well-written, scholarly introduction to the life and work of a most interesting artist, and one looks forward to the further volumes in the series.

MARTIN BUTLIN

Republican Art and Ideology in late Nineteenth-century France. By Miriam R. Levin. 339 pp. + 46 b. & w. ills. (U.M.I. Research Press, 1986), £54. ISBN 0-8357-1670-8.

A desire to understand 'the relationship between stylistic change and social change' underpins Miriam Levin's ambitious exploration of the impact of official ideology on the visual arts during the early decades of the French Third Republic. Departing from an analysis of the social and aesthetic philosophies of five of the period's leading protagonists in political and artistic life (Jules Ferry, Antonin Proust, Victor Hugo, Edouard Lockroy and Jules Simon), she elaborates a complex argument which ranges widely across developments in poetics, education, scientific thought, socio-economic theory and the arts.

Her central thesis is that the period witnessed the elaboration of an officially sponsored aesthetic designed to resolve the tensions generated within a liberal democratic society prey to class antagonism, commercial rivalry and the alienating effects of mass production associated with corporate capitalist enterprise. This aesthetic, rooted in a political model which looked to developments in atomic theory and thermodynamics to explain society as an inter-active system in dynamic equilibrium, stressed formal values of order, reason and harmony and invested the artist with a power to forestall the disintegrative tendencies threatening the nation through the beneficial psychological effect of his work. The paradigm of artistic production and consumption charted here represents for Levin a strategic attempt by the middle-class groupings who had attained power under the Republic to instil their values among the subordinate classes – a process which she traces in the attitudes informing drawing instruction within the Republic's educational programme, in the spectacle of commercial and artistic supremacy at the *Expositions universelles*, and in the monuments erected for these occasions as celebrations of industrial and technological achievement, notably Dutert and Contamin's *Galerie des machines* and the Eiffel Tower, both constructed for the great exhibition of 1889.

Throughout this account, Levin is inclined to treat ideology as a coherent system of thought, articulated self-consciously rather than structuring the conditions within which consciousness can operate. As a consequence, her analysis of Republican art theory tends to be somewhat functionalist in tone, with artists knowingly adjusting compositional and thematic elements in their work to comply with the elaborate instrumental rôle ascribed to visual sensation within official aesthetic discourse. Her history of ideas perspective further leads to the imposition of an artificial homogeneity upon this discourse and its underlying political principles, sacrificing the complex and contradictory nature of the régime and its informing social philosophies in favour of an excessively schematic interpretation. This unproblematic, *a priori* notion of Republicanism typifies the predominantly abstract nature of Levin's approach to the issues she explores. Areas of practice germane to her thesis, such as the mechanisms of art administration, government commissioning policy, the changing nature of the artistic professions consequent on the 1880 Salon reform and consolidation of the dealer gallery system, are largely absent from her account. Yet, despite such misgivings, this remains a valuable contribution to a largely neglected area of cultural history, meriting serious consideration by scholars working in the field.

NEIL MCWILLIAM

Morris Louis: The Complete Paintings. A catalogue raisonné by Diane Upright. 264 pp. + 741 col. pls. including 81 hand-tipped in, + 25 b. & w. ills. (Abrams, New York, 1985), $100.

The artistic career of Morris Louis was an unusual one. Born in 1912, he was a professional working artist by 1932, but apparently he painted nothing original or worthwhile until 1954 when he created his first stained paintings, the 'veils'. Then, as if in retreat from success, he proceeded to spend three years working in a variety of techniques on more than 300 paintings which he subsequently destroyed, before returning to the 'veils'. Between 1958 and 1962 when he died of lung cancer at the age of fifty, he painted over 600 canvases, 'florals' and 'columns', then the 'unfurleds' and lastly the 'stripe' paintings. More than 400 of these canvases were huge, and the majority of them remained unstretched on rolls in his studio at the time of his death. Not only his reputation, but to a certain extent even the appearance of the work itself, then, was established posthumously. Normally, the central concerns of a catalogue raisonné are chronology, authenticity, and categorisation. In this case, however, those are givens and, instead, the crucial concerns become problems of artistic intention and identity.

Morris Louis's artistic contribution is inextricably bound up with the influence that the critic Clement Greenberg had on his work. In his rôle as advisor to artists, Greenberg has been seen as everything from Svengali to interested observer. Despite Diane Upright's statement that Greenberg's influence on Louis has been exaggerated, the information she presents suggests instead that Greenberg might even be more aptly considered Louis's collaborator than his advisor. For example, Louis wanted the striped paintings he called 'pillars' to be hung the way they had been painted – starting with paint pools and squirts at the top to smooth runoff at the bottom,

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standing upright like columns. However Greenberg and Andre Emmerich (Louis's dealer) liked them better upside down, hanging suspended weightlessly from the top. Despite the possibility that Louis's name for the series – 'pillars' – might mean something, or that the left to right sequence of colours might not work the same way in reverse, they persuaded Louis to hang all but two of the 'pillars' their way in his exhibition and, to this day, museums and collectors all over the country hang them the way they were purchased. As a result, Upright states, 'Widespread confusion surrounds the issue of the correct hanging orientation for Louis's Stripe paintings'. She made the decision to reproduce the paintings as Louis originally wanted them, and as Greenberg himself finally came to agree was better, but that, of course, will only add to the confusion when the owners of these paintings find their pictures 'upside down' in the book.

Orientation, interval, and placement are obviously crucial decisions for a minimal abstractionist like Louis, but equally important is the degree of incident. In this context the 'stripe' paintings present an even stickier problem. Upright quotes Michael Fried (the author of the artist's earlier monograph) saying that Greenberg dissuaded Louis from cropping the tops of the 'pillars' at the juncture of the irregular, accidental puddles and the smooth, uniform bands of paint; in other words, where the actual image begins rather than where paint first hit the canvas. That kind of cropping produced (in the few cases where Louis did it his way) paintings divided into vertical sections by strips of colour extending completely from top to bottom, paintings, in fact, that look very much like those of Barnett Newman, but with wide slow-moving space-cutting divisions instead of speedy 'zips'. Perhaps this was why Greenberg objected to Louis's vision of his own paintings, but the reason may also have been that these additional spurts and splatters make visual sense when the paintings are hung upside down, the way Greenberg preferred them. Now Diane Upright has oriented the 'stripe' paintings the way Louis originally wanted them, like the 'pillars', but, since the tops are not cropped to the even stripes as Louis had also intended, the resultant configuration is decidedly object-like, phallic, even ejaculatory, a connotation the painter undoubtedly had not planned.

But the Louis-Greenberg collaboration is even more complex. As Upright points out, Greenberg supplied titles, assigned dates, and decided some of the dimensions of the paintings in addition to dictating their orientation. During Louis's lifetime Greenberg selected work for exhibition and promoted it in print and with dealers and collectors. He even takes credit for providing Louis with the inspiration for the first breakthrough 'veils' when he introduced him to Helen Frankenthaler's stain imagery in 1953. When Louis himself selected nine paintings to be sent to Pierre Matisse on Greenberg's suggestion for possible exhibition he apologetically submitted the group, 'with all the doubts about anything I've ever chosen alone'. And when he eventually came around to agreeing with Greenberg that his 1955-57 paintings were no good, Louis destroyed all 300 or more of them still in his possession. Lastly, between 1962 and 1970, Greenberg was the advisor to the Louis estate which 'assumed a major responsibility when it came to titling, dating, stretching, and hanging . . . the more than four hundred paintings [Louis] produced between 1953 and his death [which] remained stored on rolls in his Washington home'.

Given the unclarifiable ambiguity of such a symbiotic artistic relationship, Upright does the best she can with a difficult job. She marks out the major problems in informative chapters on Louis's practices and techniques. Though far from exhaustive, her text is clear and readable, unlike most writings on Louis. (Greenberg has been outdone only by Michael Fried in the production of obfuscating formalist prose about Louis's work.) But she seems to have done little digging around for new information about Louis, accepting the long-established 'truths' that he was an unknowable noncommunicator, a loner who never let anyone into the studio when he was working and who would not talk about art, his own or anybody else's. He worked side-by-side and on the same paintings as Kenneth Noland in 1953-54 when they were experimenting with Frankenthaler's stain technique, but no new insights from Noland about Louis are included here. Many artists who knew Louis in the 30s and 40s including Joe Solman, a painter who wrote a review of an early exhibition, are still alive, as are many of his students and friends, such as Lila Katzen, but apparently none of them was interviewed by Upright, so the artist remains veiled in mystery.

The 'veils' and the 'unfurleds' (which, incidently were painted without Greenberg's advice and which needed no estate decisions after his death concerning cropping or orientation) are Louis's most original contributions and, appropriately, Upright gives them extensive analyses. She stresses their quasi-geometrical compositions which have not, to my knowledge, received much attention in the past. On the issue of colour, though, she falls in step with the standard formalist position, seeing him as a great colourist. But since the book reproduces all the paintings in colour, usually twelve to a page so that you can see up to twenty-four works in a given series at a time, it becomes evident that he used colour somewhat mechanically and predictably, and not as a true colourist does, in terms of space-creating temperature contrasts. He often worked more or less monochromatically – for example, in the 'veils' where a black or burnt umber wash unifies and subdues the pure underlying hues into a single bronze or greenish overall tonality – or he exploited strong dark and light contrasts to set off the separate hues. Both procedures break with the formalists' rules for pure opticality. The somber and sonorous tonalities of the 'veils', the crisp drawing with colour of the 'unfurleds' and the amazing technical virtuosity he displayed in applying paint to canvas in the 'stripe' paintings are important achievements, and they are his alone.

The Museum of Modern Art in New York are mounting a retrospective of his work this autumn. It will be interesting to see whether Diane Upright's decisions are reinforced by curator John Elderfield's selection and installation.

APRIL KINGSLEY

A History of Illuminated Manuscripts. By Christopher de Hamel. 256 pp. inc. 81 col. + 170 b. & w. ills. (Phaidon Press Limited, 1986), £25. ISBN 0-7148-2361-9.

A definition of the word *manuscript* opens Christopher de Hamel's introduction, and throughout his fascinating and informative book the emphasis is on manuscripts rather than their illumination. Since decoration is necessarily subservient to the text it accompanies, this is in many ways a welcome corrective to the publications which present miniatures as paintings absentmindedly misplaced from easel to book. Here we are shown aspects of the history of medieval manuscripts where illumination is very much just one of the elements in their production and subsequent value. While this may disappoint expectations raised by the title, it gives the reader an excellent background knowledge of manuscripts from which to proceed to a more detailed consideration of their decoration. The plates go some way to compensate for the absence of comment on evolving painting styles and decorative systems, but the sheer mass of material means that coverage is inevitably incomplete, both geographically and chronologically.

The subject is explored through patronage, linked to certain types of text within specific periods. Thus, there are chapters devoted to missionaries with books for the conversion of the English and for the missions from Britain to the continent; to emperors with the 'treasure' books of the Carolingian and Ottonian courts; to monks with the English monastic libraries of the twelfth century; to students with text books for the University of Paris in the thirteenth century; to aristocrats with mainly French secular texts of the fourteenth century; to 'everybody' with books of hours; to priests with liturgical books; and to collectors with Italian manuscripts of antique authorities and humanist scholars – the latter three predominantly of the fifteenth century.

The rationale behind these divisions, and the weaknesses inherent in any process of selection and organisation in such a wide field, are carefully outlined. However, the categories do then play a significant role in the interpretation of the material and not just in its ordering. This is most noticeable in the chapter on collectors, where the Italian humanists are cast as the first true bibliophiles. While the books they collected often differed in content and appearance from those of their contemporaries, is it justifiable to assume that their fundamental love of fine books was similarly different in kind? The French patrons classed as aristocrats out for untax-

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