

Barthélemy travailla pour René pendant sa captivité dijonnaise vers 1435—1436, puis le suivit à Naples entre 1438 et 1442, après quoi il rentra avec lui en France et travailla auprès de lui en Anjou et en Provence où, «incité sans doute par l'exemple de son confrère Quarton, il participa à l'art provençal». Sterling situe sa mort entre le 22 mars 1475 (date d'une lettre d'anoblissement, enluminée par le Maître du Coeur selon Pächt) et le 28 mars 1476.

Cette dernière date a été déduite par Durrieu d'un curieux document, où ne figure apparemment pas d'indication d'année, que l'on aurait aimé voir publié et commenté ici, tant il est instructif pour les rapports entre René et son artiste (Bibl. Nat., ms. N. a. fr. 6658): la lettre de Jeanne de la Forest, veuve de «Berthelemy deik», au Roi René, de Brion près d'Angers, le 28 mars [1476?]. On y voit que René lui réclamait les «pourtraistures» laissées par son défunt peintre (ce qui semble répondre à l'objection de Châtelet, 1983, selon qui rien ne prouve que Barthélemy ait effectivement exercé son art pour le roi): René s'intéressait suffisamment à ses ouvrages pour tenir à posséder même les dessins préparatoires du peintre, «fonds d'atelier» ou oeuvres inachevées.

Mais c'est déjà là presque un second livre en puissance indispensablement adjoit au premier et les commentaires que suggèrent différents points (voyage napolitain, date des miniatures Egerton que j'ai des raisons de croire peintes toutes après le retour de Naples de René, adjonctions aux Très Riches Heures de Berry, etc.) ne peuvent trouver place ici.

Ce compte-rendu insuffisant permettra néanmoins de juger de l'importance et de l'ampleur des sujets traités dans l'ouvrage de Ch. Sterling: grâce à l'acuité des analyses de l'auteur, à sa capacité de dégager «l'esprit» d'un art, à la justesse exemplaire de sa langue, il rend présente et sensible la grande figure d'Enguerrand Quarton et la situe dans son siècle à la place éminente qui est la sienne.

Nicole Reynaud

ROY STRONG, *The English Renaissance Miniature*. London, Thames & Hudson 1983. 208 pages with 255 illustrations, 8 in colour. £ 18.

Sir Roy Strong has described the portrait-miniature as 'England's unique contribution to the art of the Renaissance'. These works, usually small enough to be held in the palm of the hand or worn on the person (Elizabeth I kept hers in a little pearl-encrusted cabinet in her bedchamber), derived mainly from the illuminated mediaeval manuscript: they were known as *limnings*, and the artists as *limners*. In the 16th and 17th centuries they were painted in watercolour, on fine vellum stuck to a stiff backing, usually a playing-card, and were often set in jewelled cases or turned ivory 'boxes'. Their small compass, the rapid watercolour medium, and the fact that they were executed in the sitter's presence and without preliminary drawings, contribute to their compelling immediacy. More often than not they were commissioned by royal or high-born sitters, and it is only in the present century that they have become widely known. The national collection is

now in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and most of the rest are in museums or private collections in Britain.

The first public exhibition was at the V & A in 1947; since then, research has proceeded apace — and in the decade since Sir Roy became Director of the Museum, he and Jim Murrell of the Conservation Department have had the probably unrepeatable opportunity of studying a considerable proportion of surviving limnings using all the most advanced techniques. In 1983 the second major exhibition was put on at the Museum, entitled *Artists of the Tudor Court: The Portrait Miniature Rediscovered 1520—1620* (an odd title, since the works dated well into the Jacobean period). Roy Strong's accompanying book, *The English Renaissance Miniature*, needs to be read in conjunction with the exhibition catalogue (£ 4.95. The latter includes contributions by V. J. Murrell).

Sir Roy sees the portrait-miniature as resulting from the importation by Henry VII, and to a much greater extent by Henry VIII, of artists of the Ghent-Bruges school of illuminators to work in the library of the new Palace of Richmond and add lustre to the Tudor dynasty. Prominent among these artists were members of the Hornebolte and Benninck families, and it is Lucas Hornebolte who is believed to have instructed Hans Holbein the Younger in the techniques of limning during the master's last years (1532—43) in London. Hornebolte, to whom Strong believes that twenty-three surviving miniatures can be attributed, is now presented as 'the founding father of the English miniature', and as 'for twenty years *the* painter to the Court'. This latter assertion is based on the mistaken belief that Hornebolte received a 'huge' annuity, more than twice the size of Holbein's, from Henry VIII: in fact, the two men received almost the same, Holbein £ 30 and Hornebolte just over £ 3 more. Sir Roy has some sharp words about the 'art-historical straitjacket' into which 'a certain type of historian' would like to confine the study of painting in England, but contemporary documentation cannot be ignored. (In a revised edition of the book — paperback, 1984, £ 8.95 — statements about Hornebolte's annuity are partially corrected, but the assessment of his standing at Court remains unaltered).

After the deaths of Holbein and Hornebolte in London in the early 1540s, there was no outstanding limner until the advent in the 1570s of the first great English master, Nicholas Hilliard. Strong attributes a group of works of the intervening period to an indifferent artist, Levina Teerlinc *née* Benninck, who was employed as a 'gentlewoman' at Court, but not all of them appear to be by the same hand, nor are the suggested identifications of sitters very convincing: in particular, a stodgy, snubnosed girl (book no. 57, catalogue 37) can surely not have become the oval-faced, aquiline-nosed Elizabeth I.

It is argued, less than persuasively, that limning was 'a family tree', and that the tricks of the trade were secret processes passed on from father to son, or master to pupil, 'in the inner sanctum of the studio'. It is further argued that a deliberate attempt was made to find and groom a successor to Levina to portray the 'image' of the Queen, and that the choice fell upon Hilliard. Who, Strong asks, other than

Levina Teerlinc, could 'conceivably' have trained Hilliard. There is no evidence that she did train him: several other artists of the period, both English and immigrant, are known to have practised limning, and one or more of these, or others unknown, may well have instructed the youth while he was serving his seven-year apprenticeship to a goldsmith and jeweller.

The major part of Sir Roy's book is devoted to the two limners who provide so much of our knowledge of what the great ones of Elizabethan and Jacobean England actually looked like — Hilliard himself (1547—1619), son of a leading citizen and goldsmith of Exeter, and Isaac Oliver (d. 1617), born Olivier at Rouen and brought to London in 1568 when his parents (his father, too, was probably a goldsmith) came over as Protestant refugees. And it is their works and lives which prompt Strong's most stimulating and provocative suggestions. He accords Oliver deserved and overdue attention, and proclaims him 'by far the greatest painter to work in England between Holbein and Van Dyck'. In particular he makes the point that Oliver's drawings — strongly represented in book and catalogue — were works of art in their own right. He is on much more debateable ground when he argues that Oliver was never a 'pupil' of Hilliard in the accepted sense: he believes that the relationship was one of master and master — that Oliver went to Hilliard as an already fully-trained artist, as did Holbein to Hornebolte, simply to learn the techniques of limning. The argument relies crucially upon an almost illegible inscription on an Oliver drawing in the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ* (book 182, cat. 136). It is asserted, on the strength of examination under ultra-violet light, that the date — of which the third figure is illegible — must be 1586, which would mean that this assured drawing preceded the artist's earliest known miniature (book 186, cat. 137) by a year. But Sir Roy concedes elsewhere that the dating of *all* Oliver's drawings is 'extremely problematic' — and the date could surely be 1596, when we know that the artist was travelling on the continent. We are told that a word in the inscription on the *Lamentation* could be a Latinised version of 'Tournai', and this in turn is taken as evidence that the young Oliver was training on the continent in 1586: soon this has hardened into a 'certainty'. A blown-up photograph of the inscription would have been welcome.

The case for Oliver's having studied on the mainland of Europe as a young man remains unproven. As I have shown (*Hilliard and Oliver*, Robert Hale, 1983), the artist spent his London life within the community of immigrant artists and craftsmen (among them his brother-in-law by his second marriage, the fashionable portrait-painter Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger), and he could have kept up with continental developments through them. His second wife, Sara, was a half-sister of Gheeraerts. It is stated that his limning of one of his wives (book 238, cat. 173) 'must be' (favourite Strong words) of the third, Elizabeth Harding, daughter of a French-born Court musician: but her appearance is surely Dutch/Flemish rather than French, suggesting that the miniature is of Sara and not Elizabeth. This is one of several over-positive assertions: for example, the well-known *Man Against a*

*Background of Flames* (book 215, cat. 163) is here firmly assigned to Oliver, although to many eyes it would appear to be a typical Hilliard — and has very often been so described in the past. A more detailed account is needed of the technical and stylistic factors influencing the change of attribution.

Sir Roy presents Nicholas Hilliard as England's last great mediaeval artist, 'forced to open up shop in the City like any other tradesman or artificer', and turning his hand to anything required of him — including large-scale portraiture. He believes the artist's workshop in Gutter Lane to have been a large establishment 'off the Strand' or 'off Fleet Street'. However, Gutter Lane was (and is) a short alleyway off Cheapside, in the heart of the City of London and adjoining the premises of the Goldsmiths' Company, of which Hilliard was a freeman: the artist rented one of several tenements in the Lane owned by the Company, and their manuscript records show that all the tenements were small. This suggests that all the forms of art practised by Hilliard were also small — limning, goldsmithery, jewellery, calligraphy, engraving, medalling. There is as yet no conclusive evidence that he ever executed large-scale portraits.

The laudable desire to do justice to Oliver has resulted in a regrettable demotion of Hilliard. The English artist is presented as one whose career after the 1570s was 'a steady spiral downwards' — although elsewhere it is conceded that his genius 'lasted to the end'. He is dismissed as 'insular' — although as a boy he had had the unusual and valuable experience of a spell in Geneva during the Marian persecution of Protestants at home, and later of two years in France, where his fame had preceded him. His *Treatise concerning the Arte of Limning* (c. 1600), the first essay on the art of miniature-painting, is condemned as a 'disjointed and unhappy document', and the man himself as 'far from attractive', an odd interpretation of the records. He is repeatedly assailed for alleged total ignorance of the laws of perspective — but perhaps they were not relevant to his designs: one could as soon, and perhaps as unjustly, apply the criticism to some masters of our own century. For example, the perspective in the *Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland* (book 132, cat. 266), now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, is condemned as totally inadequate: Sir David Piper more acceptably describes this haunting work as a 'surreal image'.

Sir Roy calls Oliver a 'chameleon' artist, a leading mannerist who was happy to become conservative if it suited a client: he cites the *Richard Sackville, 3rd Earl of Dorset* (book 244, cat. 276), which is said to be completely uncharacteristic of Oliver, who is simply 'responding to the reactionary aesthetic demands of his patron' — oddly, it is this work which is chosen for the book-jacket. No similar defence is proposed when Hilliard is condemned as 'old-fashioned' and 'reactionary'.

Many of Oliver's miniatures are indeed brilliant evocations of character, brilliantly executed; but it is Hilliard's which linger in the mind's eye. Even Sir Roy acknowledges that his *Young Man Among Roses* (book 125, cat. 263) is a masterpiece, and 'perhaps the most famous miniature ever painted'.

Mary Edmond