

established at Wolfson College, Oxford, and three Fellows were nominated for two years each until 1984, when the arrangement with Wolfson College was not renewed. As our readers may have noticed in the September issue of *Print Quarterly*, the Michael Bromberg Fellowship has not only been revived, but is also here to stay. With exemplary generosity the Bromberg family have endowed a fellowship to run in perpetuity at Worcester College, also in Oxford: the first candidate will be appointed from 1 October 1987 for two (or three) years. The fact that Professor Christopher White, the director of the Ashmolean Museum – and the author, with Professor Boon, of the standard work of reference on Rembrandt prints – is a fellow of Worcester College (as is the editor of this journal), together with the proximity of the College and the Museum, should encourage the Michael Bromberg Fellow to make use of

the facilities offered by the latter. Its collection is little known to most print scholars, but is extremely rich in many areas of printmaking, particularly early northern, seventeenth- to twentieth-century English, and portrait prints; a considerable number of prints are still undescribed and many deserve further study. The very rich art library, next door to the print room, will make research much easier. The fellowship is not confined, however, to the study of the *history* of printmaking, and any other approach to prints, such as an aesthetic one, would be welcomed by the benefactors and the electors. There are currently very few similar posts in the world, and print lovers should not only be grateful to the Brombergs for their generosity, but also hope that their example will inspire others to make funds available for research in prints.

Exhibition and Book Reviews

'Mantegna's *Tarocchi*'

Kristen Lippincott

Suites d'Estampes de la Renaissance italienne dite Tarots de Mantegna ou Jeu du Gouvernement du Monde au Quattrocento Ferrare vers 1465, by Laure Beaumont-Maillet, Gisèle Lambert and François Trojani, Paris (Editions Arnaud Seydoux), 1986, 2 vols., 143 pp., 50 col. pls.

For the most part, the boundaries of our knowledge concerning the so-called 'Mantegna *tarocchi*' were set by Hind in 1910 in his *Catalogue of the Early Italian Engravings . . . in the British Museum*. The 'pack' consists of fifty related illustrations each of which is numbered consecutively by a Roman numeral in the centre bottom margin and by a corresponding Arabic numeral in the lower right corner. The subject-matter of the cards, explained by inscriptions in the centre bottom margin of each card, falls into five distinct groups depicting the States of Man, Apollo and the Muses, the Liberal Arts, the Virtues and the Celestial Spheres. Each group is designated according to letters placed in the lower left corner of each card. There are two different versions of the prints. In the first version, referred to as the 'E-series' and most likely produced in Ferrara between 1465 and 1467, the letters run as follows: E (cards 1–10) the States of Man, D (cards 11–20) Apollo and the Muses, C (cards 21–30) the Liberal Arts, B (cards 31–40) the Virtues, and A (cards 41–50) the Celestial Spheres. In the second version, a free, reversed copy of the first,

also probably produced in Ferrara and dating from around 1475, the 'E' had been inexplicably replaced by an 'S' – hence its name, the 'S-series'. Within each group the images are arranged in what appears to be a hierarchical ordering. For example, within the States of Man group the lowest card (E₁ or S₁) represents the lowest rung on the social ladder – *il Misero*, the beggar (fig. 236). The next card depicts *il Fameio*, the servant and the next *il Artizan*, the craftsman. The highest cards in the group illustrate the Doge (7), the King (8), the Emperor (9) and the Pope (10). Similarly, the Liberal Arts run from Grammar (21) to Theology (30), and the Celestial Spheres from *Luna* (41) to the *Prima Causa* (50).

The original format and use of this set of images remain the subject of debate. It is unlikely that they were used for any sort of fortune-telling, since there is little evidence to suggest that even the legitimate tarot cards were used for this purpose prior to the eighteenth century. Equally, the rather awkwardly large dimensions of the cards, approximately 180 × 100 mm, diminishes the likelihood that they were used as part of a game in which an appreciable degree of manual dexterity was required such as in shuffling the deck. The location of the numbers and letters in the lower corners would also be inconvenient for a game in which the cards were held in the hand.

If a game at all, the 'Mantegna *tarocchi*' are probably

similar to those 'playing cards' whose purpose is described in contemporary documents as somehow educational. For example, there is the now lost *ludus* commissioned by Filippo Maria Visconti from Michelino da Besozzo consisting of sixteen images of classical divinities which were divided into four sets representing Virtue, Virginity, Riches and Pleasure. A second *ludus*, devised by Marziano da Tortona for Filippo Maria, was made up of images of the pagan gods and the animals and birds subject to them. Apparently similar games are listed in the 1525 inventory of the contents of Antonio di Francesco Rosselli's shop in Florence, which describes a 'giuoco d'apostoli cho' nostro signore in sette pezzi', a 'giuoco di sete virtù in 3 pezzi', a 'giuoco del triunfo del petrarca in 3 pezzi' and a 'giuoco di pianeti cho loro frigi in 4 pezzi'. There is also the game described by the Franciscan friar, Thomas Murner, in which the fifty-two cards of the pack are arranged in sixteen suits according to the steps of logic. And finally, there is the *ludus globi* which appears in a discourse by Nicolaus of Cusa as a 'game' played by the Cardinal, Pope Pius II (Piccolomini) and Cardinal Bessarion during the Council of Mantua in 1459.

In none of these cases, though, have directions survived which indicate how the supposed instruction was to be achieved. It seems certain that the hierarchies into which these groups of images were arranged must have played a major role in the instructional process. Perhaps instruction was gained merely through learning the hierarchies. It is also possible that there was some sort of catechism connected to each of the images that one had to memorize, or maybe the cards were intended to be either visual mnemonics or inspirational catalysts toward the improvised composition of verse or oratory.

It is equally possible, however, that the primary purpose of the cards was to provide a set of the gods and goddesses, Muses, Liberal Arts, and so on. Lodovico Lazzarelli (1450-1500) is credited with having described the 'Mantegna tarocchi' as 'una raccolta di bellissime figure di Deità de' Gentili, con molte immagine rappresentanti le Arti liberali', suggesting that, for him at least, the *tarocchi* were not playing cards, but an iconographic source or model book. This idea is further supported by the fact that the 'Mantegna tarocchi' repeatedly served as the iconographic model for manuscript and book illustration as well as for large-scale decorative cycles on both sides of the Alps. In particular, the *tarocchi* seem to have been especially important in initiating an iconographic tradition for the representation of the Muses. Prior to the appearance of the *tarocchi*, the Muses are very rarely depicted individually. Only three examples come to mind: the series illustrated in the *Regia Carmina* of Convevole da Prato (see Vienna, ÖNB, ser. nov. 2699; London, BM, Royal 6. E. IX; and Florence, BN, II. I. 27.), the cycle in the Badia at Fiesole, and those executed for Leonello and Borso d'Este for the villa at Belriguardo based on iconographic suggestions from Guarino da Verona. Following, and based directly on the *tarocchi*, however, are the cycles of Muses for the Tempietto at Urbino, the Cremonese cupola currently in the Victoria

& Albert Museum, the frescoes of the *Sala dell'Astronomia* in the Castello Isolani in Minerbio, the cycle formerly in the Villa della Magliana, and the ceiling frescoes in the Palazzo Vitelli alla Cannoniera in Città di Castello. Also mention should be made of the sixteenth-century model book based on the 'Mantegna tarocchi' (Paris, Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal, fr. 5066), in which the pictures are accompanied by short explanatory French verses, and the fifteenth-century French calendar manuscript (London, BM, Add. 11866), where the lists of feast days are accompanied by illustrations of planetary gods, Virtues and Liberal Arts copied from the *tarocchi* deck.

The question of use, purpose, and more specifically, the iconographic and 'cultural' significance of the 'Mantegna tarocchi' has been recently reopened by the texts which accompany the new two-volume facsimile edition of the Bibliothèque Nationale's 'E-series' set. Before all else, it must be said that these two volumes have been exquisitely produced. The quality of the reproductions is extremely high, the 112-grammes rag paper is sumptuous, and the typesetting elegant. The books are a pleasure to look at and to touch and will make a welcome addition to any true bibliophile's library. Unfortunately, however, the attention lavished on the design of the books seems lacking when it comes to the text.

The first volume contains the reproductions and a short art historical excursus on the *tarocchi*. The second volume presents a lengthy commentary on the alchemical significance of each separate *tarocchi* image. The text of the first volume relies rather heavily on the previous research of Hind, Moakley (*The Tarot Cards painted by Bonifacio Bembo...*, New York 1966) and Levenson (*Early Italian Engravings from the National Gallery of Art*, Washington, D.C., 1973). One would be happy to see a synthetic *resumé* of the literature were it more free of error. Many of the errors are merely typographical (for example, 'Ludovico' for Ludovico on page 17 and 'Paola' for Paolo d'Ancona on page 69). But, unfortunately, the text also contains a number of factual errors. For example, Leonardo da Vinci did not paint a 'Venus and her nymphs and the seven Liberal arts welcoming Lorenzo Tornabuoni' in the Villa Lemmi in 1483 - Botticelli did, nor did Francesco Laurana play any part in the sculptural decoration of the Tempio Malatestiano. The presentation of information regarding the two manuscript copies of Ludovico Lazzarelli's *de gentium deorum imaginibus* is unclear. To set matters straight, Vatican, Urb. lat. 716 is the original version of the text. As Saxl noted, it was originally dedicated to Borso d'Este, but all references to Borso have been erased. Since each occurrence of *dax* in the text has been replaced with the appropriate form of *princeps*, these changes must date prior to 1474, when Federico da Montefeltro was made Duke of Urbino. Vatican, Urb. lat. 717 is a corrected copy of Urb. lat. 716. Both manuscripts entered the Biblioteca Apostolica from the Ducal Library at Urbino. Finally, there are a number of arguments proposed which, though not incorrect as such, seem inappropriate in an art historical discussion of the 'Mantegna tarocchi'. There is certainly



236. Anonymous of the Ferrarese School, *Misero I*, c. 1465, engraving, 180 × 100 mm (London, British Museum).

a wide scope for interpretation here, but I find the evocation of the neo-Platonism of the Florentine Academy to explain the cosmological viewpoint of the 'Mantegna *tarocchi*' problematic. Ferrara of the mid-1460s was not Florence of the 1490s: their respective intellectual and academic concerns were strikingly different. Further, both the hierarchical ordering as well as the iconography of most of the individual images is patently medieval, stemming from Martianus Capella, Fulgentius, the Vatican Mythographers, the *Osiede moralisé* and the *Épître d'Othéa* of Christine de Pisan. I also question the extent to which one needs to 'decipher' these images. Far from demanding a 'connaissance approfondue de la culture médiévale et humaniste,' the *tarocchi* seem remarkably straightforward. Any difficulty in understanding a particular picture or its relative position in the overall schema is alleviated by the numbers, letters and explanatory titles on each card. Finally, though Dante does secularize Thomas Aquinas's four methods of scriptural exegesis in his *Convivio*, to cite this as the *tarocchi*'s 'première règle du jeu' seems unwarranted.

The premise of the second volume, the *Commentaire alchimique*, is that since the *tarocchi* are 'emblématique' they evoke a multiplicity of meanings. Of the possible interpretations Trojani proposes – historical, geometric, moral, religious, astrological and magical – he chooses the alchemical. Claiming to base his readings 'en conformité avec les traditions de cette époque,' he proceeds to analyse the *tarocchi* with the aid of twenty-five 'sources', not one of which was edited prior to 1505. Of course, the *Hieroglyphica* of Horapollo was probably available in manuscript form from the early fifteenth century, but it is rarely used as an iconographic source before the 1490s. In short, Trojani's readings of the 'Mantegna *tarocchi*' are, at the very least, anachronistic. Beyond this, however, his understanding of pictorial conventions seems equally infirm. One might question any number of his explanations, but to take one example, several difficulties arise from his interpretation of *il Misero* (fig. 236). The figure appears larger than the trees not because he is a giant, as Trojani suggests, but because he is placed in the foreground and the trees

in the background. Why are the ruins 'sans doute' those of a house and what categorizes the bits of grass and weeds growing on the ruins as 'quelques herbes rares'? If the beggar's staff is a caduceus, where are the snakes? If the images are hierarchical, why would the author place the 'wise man' at the very bottom of the social scale? And surely, are not the 'three stars' drawn on the ground merely schematized

tufts of grass? The premise and the particulars are unconvincing. Common sense seems to have been abandoned altogether. In light of this, Trojani's claim to have satisfied our curiosity regarding the 'details of these emblematic compositions' – 'Détails restés, semble-t-il, inouïs des historiens de l'art' – seems remarkably inappropriate.

Manet Continued . . .

Pat Gilmour

It seems to me that the great Manet *gillotage* controversy (see *Print Quarterly*, III, 2, pp. 144–49) will not be conclusively solved until either somebody turns up cast iron documentary evidence, or a larger number of people knowledgeable in nineteenth-century printmaking techniques look at copies of *The Raven* and exchange notes. If I enter the fray, it is not because I have the answer to the many mysteries surrounding this work but only because during the recent exchanges certain primary evidence from observation of the work itself seems to have been overlooked.

As far as *The Raven* is concerned, Barbara Shapiro in reviewing Jay Fisher's catalogue has noted an irregular file-marked matrix impressed into the right-hand top corner of *Under the Lamp* from her 'Chinese paper' edition (*Print Quarterly*, III, 2, fig. 7B) and argues that this mark, plus the smoothing and flattening of the paper could only have come from the pressure on stone of the scraper bar on a lithographic press.

This irregular mark and smoothing can also be seen on the Australian National Gallery Holland paper edition, but even so, it strikes me as problematic to interpret it as necessarily attributable to stone. Lithographic stones would normally be far more rounded, particularly after being broken. This mark seems both shallow and sharp. What is more, the smoothing of the paper (which has very sharp right angles at all corners) extends in our impression beyond this irregular indentation so that at the very least, even if the inner irregularity is indeed from stone, then a double imposition is suggested. Could both metal plate and stone have been used? If this is the case, is the plate an image-carrying one, or has it merely been used to smooth the rugosity of the paper – a quite common practice?

The text paper, which is of the same kind, is similarly smoothed before the printing of the letterpress, but it seems to me very odd to use a paper having a very definite roughness of surface only to smooth it in advance before both the textual and the image imposition.

Our Conservator, Geoff Major, is quite sure that the paper has been dampened, and in *Under the Lamp*, the stretch and wrinkle marks caused by the printing are more

insistent on the right than on the left, suggesting a movement across the paper in that direction. I do not have a very clear image of the likely configuration of a very large *gillotage* plate to assist me in interpreting this marking. Would the metal have been cut away irregularly close to Manet's drawing, as I imagine? Or could it, on this scale, have had an outer framework left, well clear of the area to be inked? If a *gillotage* is printed onto already flattened paper, would that minimise tell-tale indentation? Would it be printed by vertical rather than horizontal pressure?

The fact that the drawn image of *Under the Lamp* has a very sharp base line confirms its transfer at some stage from one surface to another. Our impression has a very straight fine ink line a few cm below the image area. It does not seem to be related to the edge of a matrix since it is well within the smoothed area. Can other observers find additional ink marks of this kind? Do they suggest some kind of double transfer? Or merely a paper framework used during lithographic inking?

Turning now to the use, in the poster for the publication, of the word '*dessins*', there have been many suggestions that Manet's use of this word to describe an autography may spring from Corot's example in *Douze croquis et dessins originaux* of 1871–72. What about Corot's curious *Souvenir of Solagne*, deposited in 1873, which was printed lithographically by Schmit et Cie in the *Album contemporain: collection de dessins et croquis des meilleurs artistes de notre époque*? Melot publishes the notice accompanying this portfolio which mentions a 'New Process of Printing' and continues 'Here in fact, there are no longer these Photographs done with silver salts whose inevitable alteration, in portfolios especially, is the despair of Collectors . . . The New Process on the contrary, assures to our Copies an unlimited duration . . .¹ Are we in the presence here of photo-*gillotage*, or photolithography? And yet, are they not still called '*dessins*'?

1. M. Melot, *Graphic Art of the Pre-Impressionists*, 1974, p. 262, c.34.