

A Recently Discovered Portrait by Edward Burne-Jones

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been intended as a coronation portrait. It is also curious that neither repetitions nor engravings of the Belle portrait are known. Probably the likeness did not please the fourteen year old sovereign or (more probably) his advisors, and the idea of having a special coronation portrait lapsed.

The face in the Swinton portrait is particularly delicately painted and conveys more than any other likeness of the young king (he was just over eighteen) that sweet beauty which so struck contemporaries and, as much as anything, earned him the pet-name of *le Bien Aimé* which was to seem so ironical in the later years of his reign. Belle's portrait might almost have been painted to illustrate the old Maréchal de Villars's description of his young pupil '*il est toujours beau comme l'Amour, avec de longs cils qui frisent, un joli teint et une charmante petite bouche*'⁸ which is echoed by the words used by a very different person to Villars, the bourgeois Parisian *avocat*, Mathieu Marais, in the very year that the portrait was executed: '*on se souviendra longtemps qu'il ressemblait à l'Amour avec ses longues boucles blondes, . . . sur ses cheveux d'hyacinthe la couronne éblouit*'⁹.

Four years later, Louis was old enough to have determined views of his own on what he thought a good likeness of himself. In that year J.-B. Van Loo was to paint the portrait that became the most familiar representation of the young king, and was to make the artist the King's favourite painter.

⁸ LOUIS HECTOR DE VILLARS: *Mémoires* ed. DE VOGÜÉ, Paris, Société de l'Histoire de France [1884–1904], t. IV, p.290.

⁹ Quoted by MAUMENÉ et D'HARCOURT (*loc. cit.* p.290) but I have been unable to trace it in MATHIEU MARAIS: *Journal et Mémoires sur la régence et le règne de Louis XV, 1715–1737* ed. DE LESCURE, Paris [1863–68].

A recently discovered Portrait by Edward Burne-Jones

BY COLIN J. BAILEY

THE appearance of eight pictures by Edward Burne-Jones at the opening exhibition of the Grosvenor Gallery in 1877 marked a turning-point in the artist's career as a portrait painter. Recording his impressions of the exhibition Ruskin, who considered Burne-Jones the greatest Master of the Pre-Raphaelite School,¹ wrote afterwards: 'His work, first, is simply the only art work at present produced in England which will be received by the future as 'classic' in its kind – the best that has been or could be . . . I know that these will be immortal, as the best things the mid-nineteenth century in England could do.'² Burne-Jones's success was immediate and Ruskin's approbation decisive. Before long he found himself the darling of fashionable society and sought after as a portraitist in the highest social circles of the day.

Among the artist's new-found admirers, who included the Gladstones, Sir George Lewis and the Leighton-Warrens, was Mrs Katherine Ralli, whose portrait (Fig.37) – drawn in 1892 – has recently come to light in a Sussex private collection.³ A wealthy Greek shipping family, the Rallis owned property in Rutland Gate, not two miles from Burne-Jones's studio at The Grange, North End Lane, Fulham. For many years there was a

close connection between the Pre-Raphaelites and the Greek colony in London⁴ and Katherine Ralli's introduction to Burne-Jones may have been arranged by their mutual friend, Mrs E. Casavetti, a patron of the artist, with whose daughter, Maria Zambaco, he is rumoured to have had an affair around 1870.⁵ On the other hand, the Rallis were regular visitors to Monte Carlo, where they gambled fortunes at the gaming tables, and it is equally possible that they met through Burne-Jones's son, Philip, an Edwardian man about town, with a taste for smart society,⁶ who also frequented the casino.

Whatever the circumstances of their introduction, Katherine Ralli approached Burne-Jones in 1892 for a pencil drawing of herself and a fee of seventy guineas was agreed. Work on the portrait is unlikely to have begun before the spring as the artist was prevented from any sustained activity by a long and painful illness that endured through the winter of 1891 into the early months of the new year. Whether Katherine sat for Burne-Jones in her own home at Rutland Gate or travelled the short distance to The Grange in Fulham is not known, though in view of her age – she was 68 years old at the time – the former alternative seems the more probable. According to Georgiana Burne-Jones 'portrait-painting was distasteful to Edward, who always said so on occasion, but special reasons overcame the feeling from time to time'.⁷ What these special reasons were we can only guess; perhaps he was attracted to Mrs Ralli by his memories of Maria Zambaco. What is certain is that Burne-Jones experienced an unaccustomed empathy with his sitter. Fascinated both by her facial characteristics and her engaging personality he was inspired to produce a poignant and sensitive study of dignified old age that is unique in his *œuvre*.

Burne-Jones, it is known, held very firm opinions about portrait painting. 'Portraiture', he once said, 'may be great art. There is a sense, indeed, in which it is perhaps the greatest art of any. And portraiture involves expression. Quite true, but expression of what? Of a passion, an emotion, a mood? Certainly not. Paint a man or woman with the damned "pleasing expression", or even the "charmingly spontaneous" so dear to the "photographic artist", and you see at once that the thing is a mask, as silly as the old tragic and comic mask. The only expression allowable in great portraiture is the expression of character and moral quality, not of anything temporary, fleeting, accidental . . . The moment you give what people call expression, you destroy the typical character of heads and degrade them into portraits which stand for nothing'.⁸ Few, I think, would dispute that the drawing of Katherine Ralli belongs to the category of great portraiture. However, although the face is not distorted by any of those 'paroxysms of terror, hatred, benevolence, desire, avarice, veneration and all the "passions" and "emotions" that Le Brun . . . found so *magnifique*'⁹ and which Burne-Jones so abhorred, the portrait is far from being expressionless. On the contrary, its quintessential characteristics – trance-like introspection and wistful melancholy – would be unthinkable without the use of expression.

Apart from its sheer psychological penetration the portrait is also remarkable as a *tour de force* of technical virtuosity typical of

⁴ WILLIAM WATERS: *Burne-Jones*, London [1973], p.25.

⁵ See MARTIN HARRISON and BILL WATERS: *Burne-Jones*, London [1973], p.96, and W. S. TAYLOR: *Burne-Jones*, Catalogue of the exhibition in the Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield [October–November 1971], p.17. Understandably Georgiana Burne-Jones is totally reticent about the whole affair and neither Casavetti nor Zambaco are mentioned in her biography of her husband.

⁶ DAVID CECIL: *Visionary and Dreamer*, London [1969], p.196.

⁷ GEORGIANA BURNE-JONES: *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*, London [1904], Vol.I, p.299.

⁸ Quoted in GEORGIANA BURNE-JONES, *op. cit.*, Vol.II, pp.140–41.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹ JOHN RUSKIN: *The Works of John Ruskin*; Library Edition, 39 Vols., ed. by E. T. COOK and ALEXANDER WEDDERBURN, London [1902–1912], Vol. XXXIV, p.148.

² JOHN RUSKIN, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXIX, p.159.

³ I wish to acknowledge my gratitude to Mrs Joan Chidson for allowing me to publish her drawing and for furnishing me with valuable biographical information about Katherine Ralli, without which the present article would not have been possible.

the artist's final period. He did not use pencil to sketch with, but as a finishing instrument¹⁰ and considered 'a perfectly successful drawing as one built upon a groundwork of clear lines till it is finished'.¹¹ Consequently there is scarcely a superfluous line or an area of shading not essential to the completed design. Ruskin thought especially highly of Burne-Jones's graphic work and wrote: 'many of his best designs are pale pencil drawings . . . of which the delicacy is literally invisible, and the manner irksome, to a public trained among the black scabblings of modern woodcutter's and etcher's prints'.¹²

Probably the most celebrated examples of Burne-Jones's use of pencil to record a human likeness are his portrait of Miss Mary Gladstone, whose 'serene depth of expression'¹³ Ruskin found 'quite lovely', and the ravishing series of drawings of his beloved Maria Zambaco, most of which were executed between 1868 and 1871. An unusual feature of the portrait under discussion is the inclusion below of a predella-like scene depicting the *Marriage of St Catherine*, the saint after whom Katherine Ralli was named, and an addition which she herself presumably suggested. A subtle allusion to the sitter's nationality may have been intended in the pseudo-Greek style chosen for the figures of the three attending angels, whose disposition, pose and draperies recall the *Procession of the Panathenaia* from the east frieze of the Parthenon.¹⁴ Notable, too, is the unconventional treatment of the Christian legend. Not only is the presence of God the Father uncommon but the portrayal of Christ as an adult in pictures of the Mystic Marriage of St Catherine is something of an iconographical rarity: in the history of art He has almost always been represented as the Christ Child.

Born nine years before Burne-Jones, Katherine Ralli also survived him by more than a decade. Already a widow she died peacefully in her eighty-sixth year in the home of Fanny Psycha in The Hague. Upon Katherine's death in 1910 the drawing passed to her married daughter, Harriet Psycha, and thence into the possession of Harriet's son, Pandeli, who kept alive the memory of his grandmother and on whose evidence the details of the present article are based. Pandeli Psycha later gave the portrait to his nephew, Michael, who in turn entrusted it to the care of his sister-in-law, the present owner. Thus, but for a brief interlude during the Second World War, when it was put into storage for protection, the drawing has always remained in the possession of Katherine Ralli's descendants, who revere her portrait as a cherished heirloom.

¹⁰ GEORGIANA BURNE-JONES, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 275.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² JOHN RUSKIN, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXIV, p. 173.

¹³ JOHN RUSKIN, *op. cit.*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 302.

¹⁴ Burne-Jones's enthusiasm for Greek sculpture is well documented. As well as copying antique bas-reliefs he also advocated the purchase of casts of the finest Greek works by the city of Birmingham when the proposed new Art Museum was being planned and wrote feelingly: 'I know that if there had been one cast from ancient Greek sculpture . . . to be seen in Birmingham when I was a boy, I should have begun to paint ten years before I did'.

Watteau and Gillot: An Additional Point of Contact

BY MARTIN EIDELBERG

IT is as though there were an unwritten but nonetheless universal law that if one publishes a series of drawings, others from that series will appear afterwards. Such is the case with a set of seventeen drawings of theatre personages which I recently published in these pages and which I proposed to attribute to Gillot,

despite previous attempts to assign them to Watteau.¹

Since the time when my study appeared, two of the Gillot drawings which I discussed, but whose whereabouts were unknown, came to light once again after a forty-five-year odyssey. One is the figure of a standing woman which had been previously photographed when it was in the Rodrigues collection and so we were able to illustrate it. The other, which we knew only through a verbal description as a man wearing *brandenbourgs*, proves to be a study of a costumed actor standing with his right arm akimbo, and his face and other arm extended to the left. He is probably not Scaramouche, as was claimed most recently, and his attributes – a short tunic with *brandenbourg* braiding, a sword, and a small hood – are not those of any of the major players in the *commedia dell'arte*. It seems that after their sale from the Rodrigues collection in 1928, these pendant drawings were taken from their frames and sold separately.² After several unheralded appearances on the Paris market, both, by a strange coincidence, were put up for auction at the Hôtel Drouot within a few days of each other: the woman on 4th December and the man on 8th December, 1972.³ The former passed through the hands of Paul Prouté (who had owned the drawing on several previous occasions as well) and the latter is now in a private Parisian collection. When these drawings were in the Rodrigues collection they bore an attribution to Gillot but somehow this was lost sight of in their subsequent wanderings. When they came up at auction in 1972 they were identified only as 'French eighteenth century' but soon after their sale they were proclaimed to be by Watteau.⁴ Notwithstanding this, I would propose that for the stylistic reasons I enumerated in my previous study, they are by Gillot as was believed some forty years ago.

Of far more interest for our purposes is a previously unknown pair of drawings which are in the collection of Mrs Augustus Mills (Figs. 38, 39). Having remained in private collections all this time, they have thus managed to retain their original and correct attribution to Gillot. They show two *commedia dell'arte* characters, one of which has correctly been identified as Doctor Baloardo (Fig. 39) and the other (Fig. 38), which has been called Pierrot, is instead, also of Doctor Baloardo.⁵ The exciting thing is that these two figures appear as well in a Watteau drawing now in the Valenciennes Museum (Fig. 40).⁶ The correspondences are so exact that it might have been presumed that one was a copy of the other, but we do not believe this to be the case. On the basis of the evidence which we presented in our previous study, we can presume that both the Watteau drawing and Mrs Mills's drawings are all based on a common preliminary study by Gillot. Presumably this lost Gillot original would have shown a group of separate figures arranged side by side as in the Gillot drawing from the Paulme collection which we published; and,

¹ 'Watteau and Gillot: A Point of Contact', THE BURLINGTON MAGAZINE, CXV [1973], pp. 232–39. I am indebted to Messrs Paul Prouté and Pierre Rosenberg for their kind help, and to the Research Council of Rutgers University for its support.

² This is recorded on a photo on file at the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, The Hague.

³ Both were *hors catalogue*.

⁴ 'Cache-cache Watteau,' *Le Monde* [23rd February, 1973], p. 19. I am grateful to my colleague Jack Spector for bringing this to my attention.

⁵ See P. L. DUCHARTRE: *La comédie italienne*, Paris [1925], pp. 211–22. As with the other major players of the *commedia dell'arte*, the costume and pose of the actor are relatively standardized; cf. DUCHARTRE, pp. 101, 213, 216, as well as *L'empereur dans la lune*, a Gillot painting in the Nantes Museum, and the Watteau paintings *Pour garder l'honneur d'une belle* and *Le docteur* (E. DACIER, H. VUAFIART, and J. HEROLD: *Jean de Jullienne et les graveurs de Watteau au XVIII^e siècle*, Paris [1921–29], 4 vols., IV, Nos. 83 and 156).

⁶ K. T. PARKER and J. MATHEY: *Antoine Watteau, catalogue complet de son oeuvre dessiné*, Paris [1957–59], 2 vols., I, No. 45.



35. *Portrait of the young Louis XV beside a painting of the Infanta Marie-Anne-Victoire of Spain*, by an unknown artist, formerly attributed to Alexis-Simon Belle. Canvas, 99 by 124 cm. (Musée de Versailles.)



36. *Portrait of Louis XV in Coronation robes*, by Alexis-Simon Belle. Inscribed and dated 1724. Canvas, 335 by 183 cm. (Collection The Dowager Countess of Swinton.)



37. *Portrait of Mrs Katherine Ralli*, by Edward Burne-Jones. 1892. Pencil, 53.3 by 29.3 cm. (Collection Mrs Joan Chidson.)