

10 From the era of Hilliard and Van Dyck to that of Reynolds and Gainsborough, the British nation has always been fascinated by the face of the individual, and by artists' attempts to capture a likeness on vellum, ivory, paper or canvas. With the death in 1830 of Sir Thomas Lawrence, the recorder of the great personalities of the struggle against Napoleon, a major force departed. He was succeeded as President of the Royal Academy by another portrait painter, Martin Archer Shee, few of whose works are memorable. Royalty, so dependent on the portrait painter to communicate the awe of majesty, lacked a major interpreter, although Sir David Wilkie's swaggering yet sympathetic state portrait of William IV wearing the uniform of the Grenadier Guards provides us with an engaging likeness of that amiable if dim monarch (Pl. 61). Sadly, Wilkie was never to paint the young Queen Victoria, and in the early years of her reign there was a real lack of recorders of the good and the great, although demand for portraiture soared.

20 There was a continuing demand for portrait miniatures, the most intensely British form of art. One of the most productive practitioners of this discipline was Sir William Charles Ross (1794-1860), who is said to have painted no fewer than 22,000 miniatures before a stroke brought his career to an end. Ross particularly excelled at capturing happy, cheerful likenesses, and his miniatures of Lord Melbourne, the exiled King Louis Philippe, and royal children such as *Prince Ernest and Prince Edward of Leiningen*, the sons of Queen Victoria's half-brother, playing, with a macaw and the Queen's dog Islay (Pl. 62) are among the finest portraits of his time

30 John Linnell (1792-1882), the father-in-law of Samuel Palmer and friend and admirer of William Blake, was best known for his landscapes, which he much preferred to painting miniatures. Yet his work in the miniature medium is very distinctive, whether he is depicting his teacher, the watercolourist John Varley, or *George Remie* (Pl. 63), a civil engineer and son of John Rennie, famous for his construction of London Bridge, Waterloo Bridge and Southwark Bridge.

40 There was also, of course, a demand for chroniclers of the society scene. In this field there was one very enjoyable lightweight artist, Alfred Edouard Chalon (1780-1860). Today his work is usually overlooked, but one of the first acts of the young Queen was to appoint him as Portrait Painter in Watercolour to the Queen. Chalon specialized in small full-length portraits, about 12 inches high, such as the great ballerina Tagliioni as La Sylphide (Pl. 233). One of the Queen in the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh, makes her look like a very elegant doll. He also painted delightful miniatures of fashionable women, such as the captivating portrait of Mrs Peter De Wint (Pl. 64), very much the wife of a successful regional artist up in London for a smart private view at the Royal Watercolour Society, wearing an entrancing new bonnet bedecked with ribbons.

50 When Queen Victoria asked Chalon whether he was worried by the new invention of photography, he replied, 'Ah non, Madame, photography can't flatter!' While Chalon made light of the advent of photography, his sentiments were not shared by Ross, who is said to have remarked on his deathbed that it was 'all up with future miniature painting'. Such pessimism was not entirely justified, for the art lingered on and other miniaturists of great ability continued to practise.



Julia Margaret CAMERON. *The Echo*. 1868. Black and white photograph.
The John Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles

1 In the huge gilt Venetian lantern, spoil of some Doge's barge, that hung from the ceiling of the great oak-panelled hall of entrance, lights were still burning from three flickering jets : thin blue petals of flame they seemed, rimmed with white fire. He turned them out, and, having thrown his hat and cape on the table, passed through the library towards the door of his bedroom, a large octagonal chamber on the ground floor that, in his new-born feeling for luxury, he had just had decorated for himself, and hung with some curious Renaissance tapestries that had been discovered stored in a disused attic at Selby Royal. As he was turning the handle of the door, his eye fell upon the portrait Basil Hallward had painted of him. He started back as if in surprise. Then he went on into his own room, looking somewhat puzzled. After he had taken the buttonhole out of his coat, he seemed to hesitate. Finally he came back, went over to the picture, and examined it. In the dim arrested light that struggled through the cream-coloured silk blinds, the face appeared to him to be a little changed. The expression looked different. One would have said that there was a touch of cruelty in the mouth. It was certainly strange.

20 He turned round, and, walking to the window, drew up the blind. The bright dawn flooded the room, and swept the fantastic shadows into dusky corners, where they lay shuddering. But the strange expression that he had noticed in the face of the portrait seemed to linger there, to be more intensified even. The quivering, ardent sunlight showed him the lines of cruelty round the mouth as clearly as if he had been looking into a mirror after he had done some dreadful thing.

25 He winced, and, taking up from the table an oval glass framed in ivory Cupids, one of Lord Henry's many presents to him, glanced hurriedly into its polished depths. No line like that warped his red lips. What did it mean?

30 He rubbed his eyes, and came close to the picture, and examined

it again. There were no signs of any change when he looked into the actual painting, and yet there was no doubt, that the whole expression had altered. It was not a mere fancy of his own. The thing was horribly apparent.

35 He threw himself into a chair, and began to think. Suddenly there flashed across his mind what he had said in Basil Hallward's studio the day the picture had been finished. Yes, he remembered it perfectly. He had uttered a mad wish that he himself might remain young, and the portrait grow old ; that his own beauty might be untarnished, and the face on the canvas bear the burden of his passions and his sins ; that the painted image might be seared with the lines of suffering and thought, and that he might keep all the delicate bloom and loveliness of his then just conscious boyhood. Surely his wish had not been fulfilled ? Such things were impossible. It seemed monstrous even to think of them. And, yet, there was the picture before him, with the touch of cruelty in the mouth.

45 Cruelty ! Had he been cruel ? It was the girl's fault, not his. He had dreamed of her as a great artist, had given his love to her because he had thought her great. Then she had disappointed him. She had been shallow and unworthy. And, yet, a feeling of infinite regret came over him, as he thought of her lying at his feet sobbing like a little child. He remembered with what callousness he had watched her. Why had he been made like that ? Why had such a soul been given to him ? But he had suffered also. During the three terrible hours that the play had lasted, he had lived centuries of pain, æon upon æon of torture. His life was well worth hers. She had marred him for a moment, if he had wounded her for an age. Besides, women were better suited to bear sorrow than men. They lived on their emotions. They only thought of their emotions. When they took lovers, it was merely to have some one with whom they could have scenes. Lord Henry had told him that, and Lord Henry knew what women were. Why should he trouble about Sibil Vane ? She was nothing to him now.

60 But the picture ? What was he to say of that ? It held the secret of his life, and told his story. It had taught him to love his own beauty. Would it teach him to loathe his own soul ? Would he ever look at it again ?

65 No ; it was merely an illusion wrought on the troubled senses. The horrible night that he had passed had left phantoms behind it. Suddenly there had fallen upon his brain that tiny scarlet speck that makes men mad. The picture had not changed. It was folly to think so.

70 Yet it was watching him, with its beautiful marred face and its cruel smile. Its bright hair gleamed in the early sunlight. Its blue eyes met his own. A sense of infinite pity, not for himself, but for the painted image of himself, came over him. It had altered already, and would alter more. Its gold would wither into grey. Its red and white roses would die.