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978-1-107-49243-1 - Catalogue of the Engraved Portraits by Jean Morin (C. 1590-1650)

Murray Hornibrook and Charles Petitjean

Excerpt

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JEAN MORIN

Curiously little is known about the life of this great French Master, who was born in Paris *circa* 1590 and died about 1650. Commencing as a painter he soon turned his attention to engraving, to which he devoted his unusual talents. He was son-in-law to Philippe de Champaigne and found, in the portraits painted by his father-in-law, a perfect outlet for his genius; possibly no other engraver has enabled us to realize, in black and white, the tints of the flesh and the colours of the costumes of his subjects. The position of his father-in-law as a Court Painter gave Morin a choice of subjects which included most of the people of importance of his day, and Champaigne found in Morin the engraver best suited to translate his paintings into black and white—it was a perfect partnership and, as a result, we have handed down to us about fifty portraits of supreme interest, both artistically and historically.

Morin's work was executed in a mixture of etching and stippling, and to many connoisseurs, especially in France, his work is appreciated above that of any other contemporary Master; nevertheless, to very many print lovers it is curiously little known, and I was, at first, sometimes surprised at the lack of knowledge of his work by otherwise well-informed collectors until I realized that the number of impressions of his portraits in circulation is comparatively very small, and while there are about a dozen of his portraits, mostly the least interesting, like those of the brothers de Thou, that are met with fairly frequently in sales of Old Master engravings, impressions of many others are so rare, in any state, that they are almost unknown; but few people who have seen the earlier impressions of such portraits as those of Richelieu, Mazarin and Cardinal Bentivoglio, for instance, would not wish to possess them; unfortunately they are extremely rare. Almost equally interesting are the portraits of de Retz, Andilly, Tubœuf, Vignerod, de Netz and the charming Marguerite Lemon.

In addition to those already mentioned, any impressions of de Valois, de Gevres and de Sales are rare, and of Conti, Louis XI and the two of Verger d'Hauranne, extremely rare; in fact the second portrait of Verger is so scarce that the late John Charrington, whose very fine collection of Morins was among his gifts to the Fitzwilliam

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Museum at Cambridge, was trying for nearly fifty years to obtain an impression of it, although he had correspondents in most parts of the world; and I came across only two impressions for sale, both of which I bought and, by great good fortune, one of them proved to be the first state of which, as far as is known, the impression in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris is the only other.

After the description of a state, in the text, the addition of the words in brackets: (Paris, etc.), indicates that this state is not unusually rare. In the case of states of which only a very few impressions are known, the names of the collections, public or private, containing them are given.

A word on Morin's technique. The etched lines on a wax surface being bitten into the plate by acid, somewhat pear-shaped depressions are made on the plate, the narrow end being uppermost. Line engraving, on the other hand, makes a 'V'-shaped impression on the plate and, in comparing Morin's work with that of contemporary line-engravers, one must realize that the two different methods give two entirely different types of printed impressions. The early line impressions are 'brilliant' while the lines are sharp, but become dull with the use of the plate. The very early Morins, however, are never 'brilliant', but have a wonderfully soft silvery tone that once seen can never be forgotten. With the use of the plate and consequent widening of the neck of the 'pear', the impressions commence to lose their definition and, on being re-worked, the new impressions are 'brilliant' but hard, with violent contrasts owing to the accentuation of the blacks; 'brilliant impressions', in the case of Morin's portraits, should therefore always be regarded with suspicion, as it is practically certain that they will be found to be late states.

WATERMARKS

As regards the order in which Petitjean placed the watermarks, we can definitely state that we have never met with an impression bearing the watermarks 1 & 1 which has not proved to be the very earliest of that portrait. In cases where there is no impression bearing the watermarks 1 & 1 the earliest state has been, almost invariably, 0 & 2, but, exceptionally, in two cases, those of Omer Talon and J. A. de Thou, where the first state has watermarks 3 & 4, impressions of their second state have been met with 0 & 2, and in the case

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of the first portrait of Cardinal Borromeo, while the first state has 0 & 2 and the second state 3 & 4, odd impressions of the first state have been met with watermarks 5 & 6.

My own opinion about these few exceptions is that they are due, in all probability, to the errors made by pupils and were not intentional. Engravers left a good deal of the spade work to their pupils and Morin seems to have suffered from some particularly careless ones. In several cases, specially mentioned in the text, and in several others not so mentioned, careless errors in misspelling inscriptions can be noted; in most cases the badly effaced letters can be plainly seen under the corrections, but in the portraits of Gondy and de Netz, impressions bearing the misspellings were actually issued before the mistakes were observed and corrected. Similar carelessness is displayed in engraving the artists' names, e.g. on the portrait of Philippe II, upside down on the top of the plate instead of right way up on the bottom, and I think, therefore, that one can very fairly assume that these rare deviations from the rule of arithmetical progression are due to carelessness and not to intention.

Apart from these exceptions, the establishment of this rule of progression of watermarked papers allows one not only, in some cases, to determine the state but also, in normal cases, to estimate the earliness of an impression in that state. Thus, in the case of Andilly, as the impressions of the third state bear watermarks 0 & 2, 3 & 4, 5 & 6, 7 & 8, 11 & 12 and thick papers with a single watermark in the centre, we may assume that those bearing the watermarks 0 & 2 were the earliest printings of this state, and those bearing 11 & 12 and the thick papers with a single watermark, the last. Just as the watermarks 1 & 1 are the very earliest impressions, so those on thick paper with a single watermark in the centre are invariably the latest. One meets occasionally with impressions on very thin paper with no watermarks and, more rarely, on thick paper without a watermark.

Where an asterisk appears after the description of a state it indicates that the state, though reported on reliable authority, had not been seen by either Petitjean or myself.

As regards the known collections of Morin's portraits, full collections are extremely rare and, as far as my information goes, do not exceed five—these being at Paris, London, Cambridge, Boston (Mass. U.S.A.), and, finally, my own. The Paris collection at the Bibliothèque Nationale is possibly the finest, but even that does not

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contain all the earliest states; that of the British Museum in London, being laid down in a bound volume, many of the watermarks could not be determined, but, generally speaking, the later states considerably outnumber the earlier ones, Petitjean disposed of his own very fine collection, shortly before his death, to Boston, and John Charrington's, not quite so fine, has gone to the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. My own was about equal to Petitjean's, but the greater part of it had to be left in my French home when the German invasion drove me out of it, and although French friends sent me word that they had taken most of my collections out of the house before the Germans seized it, I shall not be surprised to learn that they have been sent, with many other treasures, to Berlin.

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LIST OF THE PORTRAITS
WITH THEIR CORRESPONDING NUMBERS
IN ROBERT-DUMESNIL'S *CATALOGUE*

1.	Anne of Austria	R.D. 40
2.	Anne of Austria	41
3.	Arnauld d'Andilly	42
4.	Charles de Valois, duc d'Angoulême	81
5.	Cardinal Bentivoglio	43
6.	Pierre Berthier, évêque de Montaubon	44
7.	St Charles, Cardinal Borromeo	45
8.	St Charles, Cardinal Borromeo	46
9.	Honorine Grimberge, comtesse de Bossu	55
10.	Armand de Bourbon-Conti	47
11.	Théophile Brachet de la Milletière	48
12.	Jean Pierre Camus, évêque de Bellay	49
13.	Anne Sophie Herbert, comtesse de Carnarvon	56
14.	Gilbert de Choiseul du Plessis Praslin, évêque de Comminges	50
15.	N. Chrystin	51
16.	Jérôme Franck, peintre	52
17.	François Potier, marquis de Gevres	53
18.	Jean François Paul de Gondy	54
19.	Henri de Lorraine, duc de Guise	57
20.	Henri de Lorraine, comte d'Harcourt	58
21.	Jean du Verger de Hauranne	82
22.	Jean du Verger de Hauranne	83
23.	Jean du Verger de Hauranne	84
24.	Henri II	59
25.	Henri IV	60
26.	Corneille Jansénius, évêque d'Ypres	61
27.	Marguerite Lemon	62
28.	Louis XI	63

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29. Louis XIII	R.D. 64
30. René de Longueil, marquis de Maisons	65
31. Michel de Marillac	66
32. Pierre Maugis	67
33. Cardinal Mazarin	68
34. Jacques le Mercier	69
35. Nicholas de Netz, évêque d'Orléans	70
36. Philippe II, roi d'Espagne	71
37. Cardinal Richelieu	72
38. St François de Sales	73
39. Omer Talon	74
40. dom Jean Grégoire Tarrisse	75
41. Michel le Tellier	76
42. Augustine de Thou	77
43. Christophe de Thou	78
44. Jacques Auguste de Thou	79
45. Jacques Tubœuf	80
46. Jean Baptiste Amidor Vignerod	85
47. François de Villemontée	86
48. Nicholas de Neufville, marquis de Villeroy	87
49. Antoine Vitré	88

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NOTE ON THE WATERMARKS ON THE PAPERS UPON WHICH THE PORTRAITS OF JEAN MORIN ARE PRINTED

The watermarks on the papers upon which the portraits of Jean Morin are printed are found either at the top and at the bottom, or in the centre of the sheet.

I

In the first case, there are nearly always two different watermarks. For example, the watermark no. 3 is seen always on the same sheet as no. 4—one at the top and the other at the bottom of the sheet. The same in the cases of watermarks 5 & 6, 7 & 8, 7 bis & 8, 9 & 10, 11 & 12, 13 & 14, 15 & 16, 17 & 18—one meets them always together, two by two.

Exceptionally, watermark no. 1 always appears by itself, but is repeated twice—once at the top and once at the bottom of the sheet.

Equally by exception, watermark no. 2 is always alone, and one sees it only once, either at the top or at the bottom of the sheet. In the text of the work this paper is indicated by the abbreviation WM 0 & 2.

Finally, on papers marked with watermarks 9 & 10, one finds also, on the side of the paper, a third watermark.

II

The watermarks on the centre of the sheet one finds almost invariably on rather thick paper and, in consequence, they are often difficult to recognize.

III

There exist, also, other papers, without any watermarks. These, as a rule, are of the same quality as those of the first series and are sufficiently thin to put the absence of watermarks beyond question.

Sheets I and II contain nearly all the watermarks that one meets at the tops and bottoms of the sheets. Sheet III contains a certain number of those one finds in the centre of a sheet. Watermarks nos. 14 and 26 are incomplete.

The watermarks illustrated on Sheet I are about actual size, those on Sheets II and III are reduced to about 9/10ths of actual size.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE VALUATION OF MORIN'S WATERMARKED PAPERS

I do not know whether there is an accepted absolute definition of the qualification for a new 'state', but such authorities whose remarks on the subject I have read seem to be in general agreement that changes that constitute new states take place in either (a) the inscription, or (b) the work. With such a definition I am in agreement as, to my mind, there should be some *material* alteration in detail in either the one or the other as justification. It would seem, however, when one comes to consider the recognized states of some of the Masters, that the definition can be so loose that it would seem to include any mark on a plate which is reproduced in printing and, in enumerating the states of Jean Morin I have been puzzled as to how one can adequately assess the valuation of his watermarked papers. They are his method of indicating a different 'tirage', or a printing of a new set of impressions, and they are invariable.

Robert Nanteuil's methods, on the other hand, varied considerably. For instance, in the case of his portrait of La Vrilliere, the earliest impressions bear the date followed by a 'dot', the next have a 'crochet' added, the next an added comma and the last a second comma. *There is no alteration to either the inscription or the work in these successive tirages.*

In the case of his Boucherat, the second tirage is differentiated by an 'A' faintly scratched on the bottom margin, and in the case of his Louvois, the letters A to E are scratched on the oval, followed by from one to five 'dots', giving in all, about thirty tirages, of which seventeen have been seen, *but it is only in the last that any change in work or inscription appears.*

Nevertheless, in Nanteuil's case, in these and all similar instances both Robert-Dumesnil and Petitjean recognize these 'tirage indications' as separate states, but in Morin's case Petitjean's original notes left them merely as tirages and the point about their valuation did not arise until some time after his death. Since the two normal

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states of Louvois, for instance, are raised to a known seventeen, and a possible thirty, states by the inclusion of the tirage indications, it is obvious that some equivalent valuations must be placed on those of Morin—but in his case these are not scratches on the plates but watermarked papers in arithmetical progression.

Let us take Morin's portrait of Verger de Hauranne, R.D. 82, as an example. Of the three known states two tirages of the first have been seen, three of the second and one of the third. If these had been on a portrait of Nanteuil's, it would be credited with six states—as it is we have, in the case of Morin, three states but six tirages.

Again, in the case of J. P. Camus, there were a good many tirages of the first state of which five have been seen, ranging from 1 & 1 to 15 & 16 and it is obvious that the first impressions off a soft copper plate are far more desirable to the connoisseur, and therefore of more value, than those as late as 15 & 16, and, finally, in the case of Henri II, during the forty years of research covered by Petitjean and myself, all the impressions which have passed through our hands have been on papers with the watermarks either 9 & 10 or 17 & 18, but lately a unique impression has come into my possession bearing the exceptionally early watermark of 3 & 4, and if an impression of Nanteuil's can be termed a 'unique first state' simply because it differs in tirage marks from those that follow it, then some equivalent valuation must be placed on Morin's unique Henri II and some distinguishing valuations upon his other watermarked tirage indications, and if, as it would seem, that one is not entitled to distinguish them as different states, then I would suggest the adoption of the method of valuation that I have used in marking my own impressions.

I utilize the ten letters—A to K (omitting I)—to represent the ten groups of watermarks *so far as they are known for each state of a portrait*; for instance, of Anne Herbert, Countess of Carnarvon, there are two known tirages of the first state, 1 & 1 and 0 & 2, and three of the second state, 0 & 2, 5 & 6 and 9 & 10. I therefore mark these impressions of the first state, I, a and I, b, and of the second state, II, a, II, b, and II, c. If, later, a second state is found with watermark 7 & 8, then it would be II, c and the 9 & 10 would be II, d.

As regards the very thin and fine papers without any watermark, we find these very rarely and almost always in first states—as in Conti and Louis XI—where they seem to have been used instead of

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WM 1 & 1; therefore, in cases where they are found among other tirages of a state I place them before 0 & 2.

I think it will be agreed that some system of valuation is needed, and the method I suggest is preferable to the more cumbersome one of calling the impressions of a state 'earliest', 'second earliest,' 'latest', etc.