that slavery did *not* create the rigidified foundations of southern society. That foundation had been brought over from Wessex, where extreme inequality and scattered rural living had been the rule. American black slavery, Fischer says, "did not create the culture of the tidewater Virginia; that culture created slavery." The first form of coerced labor was indentured servitude, not African slavery, which was a late 17th-century development.

Perhaps the most debatable of all arguments in *Albion's Seed* is its closing section on the persistence of the four regional cultures. Fischer feels compelled to show the impact of the past upon our more recent history, and his examples can be striking. For instance, he finds cultural persistence in the qualities of leadership: Franklin Roosevelt he identifies as a scion of New England rather than of Dutch New York; Virginian George C. Marshall, a reincarnation of Lee; George C. Patton, heir to Andrew Jackson's backcountry culture; and Dwight Eisenhower, "a soldier who hated fighting" as a result of his Moravian-Quaker upbringing. Indeed, in this final section Fischer sheds light on the way in which old regional political divisions endure in such matters as gun control, women's rights, and military spending.

Yet to make British origins primary in America where only 20 percent of us now acknowledge British descent, where immigrants pour in from Latin America and the Orient, where each ethnic group clamors for its rightful place in the national sun, and where materialist historians dominate the profession, is to beg for instant rebuttal. *Albion's Seed* is one of those rarities in historiography, a book that will raise a salutary firestorm.

However, so comprehensive is Fischer's thesis and so illuminating its evidence that critics will find them no easy matter to refute. *Albion's Seed* transforms our understanding of the nation's cultural heritage, both its good and bad aspects, its liberalism and its conservatism, its tolerance and its intolerance. What others have seen as paradoxes or, more invidiously, as hypocrisies of American life, Fischer sees in terms of social patterns, customs, and traditions. Americans were never innocent, as once was thought, he implies, but share with their European forebears persistent vices as well as virtues. When Fischer completes his projected five volumes of the full range of the American past, he will have altered the historical landscape in a way no previous scholar ever has.

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Art for Life's Sake

MOVING PICTURES. *By Anne Hollander. Knopf. 512 pp. $29.95*

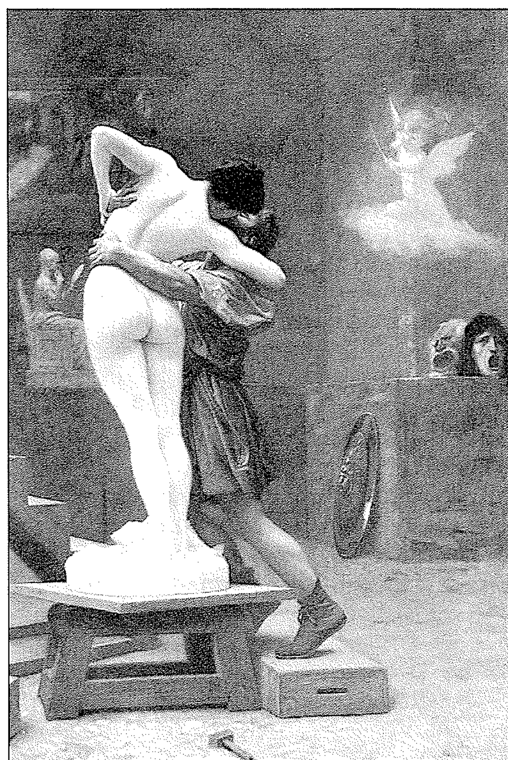
THE POWER OF IMAGES: Studies in the History and Theory of Response. *By David Freedberg. Univ. of Chicago. 534 pp. $39.95*

"This is not a pipe," announces the caption in René Magritte's famous 1928–29 painting of what most certainly *looks* like a pipe. An exercise in painterly wit? To be sure. But the painting is something else: an embodiment and validation of one of the main aesthetic principles of modernism. Indeed, for over a century, both in and out of the academy, artists and critics have taught the educated public to look at pictures not as representations of reality but as compositions of form, line, and color. This "formalist" perspective has served to distance the viewer from the work of art, to discourage moralizing about subject matter, and to promote an attitude of analytical detachment.

The impulse to distinguish "art" from non-art first became particularly strong in the overheated atmosphere of the *fin-de-siècle*. Aesthetic legislators like Bernard

Berenson began elevating some images to the status of art and sanctioning their storage in museums; others they consigned to the dim regions of illustration or entertainment. By the 1940s, the formalist criteria for certifying art had become even more stringent: Clement Greenberg, speaking from the pulpit of the influential postwar *Partisan Review*, declared that the only subject matter contemporary painting could have was the act of painting itself. Since then, literal-minded realism has been increasingly dismissed, both in theory and practice.

Yet of late there are signs that realism is coming back in fashion. The postmodern celebration of polished surfaces and clever illusions (not to mention the determination of art dealers to promote new investment opportunities) has led to a revaluation of painters like William Adolphe Bouguereau, Jean Léon Gérôme, and Lawrence Alma-Tadema—the targets of modernist scorn. The tendency to question all accepted categories of taste has promoted new appreciation for work formerly denied admission to the Temple of Art, including magazine illustrations, advertisements, and movies.



Art literally becomes life in Jean Léon Gérôme's Pygmalion and Galatea *(1927).*

On the surface, Anne Hollander's *Moving Pictures* is another shot across the bow of modernist curatorial orthodoxy. Hollander, an art historian and the author of *Seeing Through Clothes* (1980), is, like so many other contemporary writers, concerned with bursting the boundaries between high and low art. By linking Stanley Kubrick and Jan Vermeer, she aims to locate a legitimate artistic genealogy for cinema. That genealogy she finds in the romantic tradition of Northern Europe, which is "devoted to the casual fall of light on phenomena and the apparently artless dip into the flow of passing experience, rather than to the visibly composed, controlled rendering of groups in significant poses, harmonized by unifying style." Hollander traces this tradition through five centuries, mixing familiar textbook masterpieces with sentimental genre works, ranging from Rembrandt to the American illustrator Howard Chandler Christy. Throughout, as her punning title suggests, she wants to explore the ways that pictures actually move a viewer, not through their formal qualities but by engaging the emotions in a story.

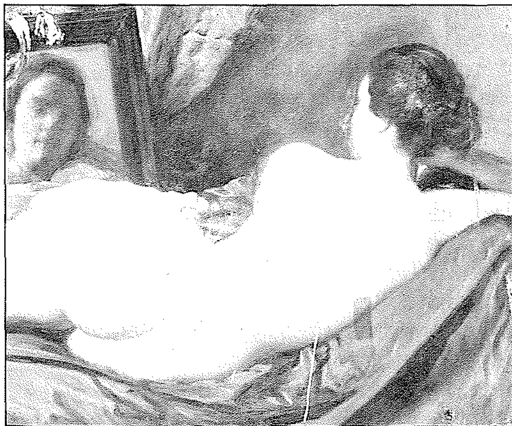
It is all good fun (one of Hollander's favorite words), but one wonders what the argument finally adds up to. She tries to recover verisimilitude as a value, but since she only acknowledges cinematic verisimilitude, she cuts a narrow path through the thickets of art history. Her argument depends heavily on oracular pronouncements and strained analogies. Of the 17th-century Dutch painter Jan Steen's "Hollywoodish style of realism," for example, she says: "Action in these works is comic and a bit pointed, as in old Technicolor comedies with Doris Day. Like them, it takes place among prosperous people whose enterprises are made to seem a little ridiculous while they are nevertheless faithfully

rendered in visual terms."

A more fundamental flaw is the ahistorical framework on which the whole exercise is based. Constantly searching for "anticipations" of cinema, Hollander makes little attempt to understand art works on their own historical terms. "More than anticipating photography," she writes of 18th-century realist painters, "they seemed to have been searching for a cinematography that at that time could only occur in still art." Some "proto-cinematic" demiurge was evidently at work in artists' minds for centuries, until art could issue forth at last in, say, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. This march-of-progress approach to art history prevents our understanding the past as anything but a prefiguration of the present. The pastness of the past, its otherness and strangeness, is lost in Hollander's version of art history.

The same cannot be said of David Freedberg's *The Power of Images*. A professor of art history at Columbia, Freedberg finds formalism a heavier burden than Hollander does. For him the battle is by no means over; indeed, he has scarcely begun to fight. His polemic, proclaiming "the uselessness of the category of art," is sharper than hers; his view of how pictures move people, more original, more historical, and more persuasive.

According to Freedberg, what is behind the whole formalist exercise is, quite simply, fear. By making the image's appeal so exclusively ethereal, the aesthete exorcises his fear of its tremendous power to evoke terror or awe or sexual longing. The aesthete, like the formalist critic, avoids looking at pictures in a way which fuses signifier and signified, enlivens the image, and animates its full capacity to move us.



The eroticism of Velázquez's Rokeby Venus *provoked a slasher's attack in 1914.*

Freedberg's argument would be less shocking, and less original, if he were discussing "primitives" and art. We are familiar with the animistic overtones and undertones of primitive art, where images have magical, fetishistic, or talismanic power to affect the viewer. But are we moderns likewise affected by the images we see? This is precisely Freedberg's contention: "Instead of beginning with the Ice Age, let us begin with ourselves." And one need only recall Anne Hollander's title—the "moving pictures" of cinema and television—to realize that modern viewers can be as much at the mercy of images as were our ancestors.

To establish his "theory of response" to images, Freedberg calls in witnesses other than art critics and museum-goers trained in unemotional discrimination. Iconoclasts—destroyers of icons and other images—have recognized far more fully than aesthetes the true power of images, Freedberg argues. And while iconoclasts have been driven by a wide range of religious and political ideologies, from Islam to extreme forms of Protestantism to Nazism, they have all been alike in seeing icons not merely as symbols of a repressive old order but as living reconstitutions of an "Other" they wish to destroy.

Defenders of images, by contrast, have fallen back on softer ground. Catholic apologists, embarrassed by popular enthusiasms, have denied what Freedberg claims is the true power of images and icons: the bodying forth of divine power in familiar human forms; the capacity to intervene in everyday life, to give maternal or even sometimes sexual succor to the panting aspirant who craves it. The official church defense of images throughout and after the Middle Ages overlooked the myr-

iad accounts of statues coming to life and performing miracles. Instead, the church defended images by arguing that paintings and statues caught the imagination of the pious multitude in a way that sermons never could. But in the end this argument denied the icon's true function by reducing it to a mere instrument of edification; the Catholic apologists assumed, falsely, that belief in the real life of images was confined to the ignorant masses.

The modern aesthete's response to iconoclasts has been, in Freedberg's view, equally weak. After a knife attack on Rembrandt's *Nightwatch* in 1975, the director of public relations at the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam is reported to have said: "The assailant and his motives are wholly uninteresting to us; for one cannot apply normal criteria to the motivations of someone who is mentally deranged." This is the standard modern response to the slashing of pictures and the smashing of statues: It is always "the work of a madman." Yet as Freedberg shows, even these isolated (and unquestionably deranged) iconoclasts show behavior similar to that of more organized iconoclasts in the past—the same messianic zeal, the same distrust of art's capacity to arouse sensual passion. ("Slasher Mary," who attacked Velázquez's *Rokeby Venus* in London's National Gallery in 1914, later explained: "I didn't like the way the men visitors gaped at it all day long.") Both the "madman" and the ideological iconoclast suspect and fear the image's fetishistic power to provoke a response mobilizing intellect, emotion, and perception all at once—a far profounder fetishism than the sort induced by commodities.

Museums deny this fetishism, elevating images to the status of ideal beauty that arouses only refined and rational sentiments. As a result, the modern iconoclast's rage brings simple bewilderment to the curatorial mind. Museums, in Freedberg's polemic, have become places where beauty is rendered safe, inoffensive, and sterile. The only places where one can feel the *frisson* of an art still living and charged, Freedberg argues, are religious shrines and waxworks parlors—and in the "Primitive" sections of museums.

I have made Freedberg's argument sound schematic, but in actuality it is encyclopedic. His ethnographic and historical range is simply stunning. He offers innumerable examples of images that have "come to life"—at least in the eye, mind, and heart of the beholder: Virgins offering their breast milk to monks, crucified Christs descending from the cross to embrace devout nuns. He piles up mountains of verisimilitude: sculptures decorated with hair, veins that bleed, eyes that move. Though Freedberg often returns to classical antiquity for illustrations, and occasionally to contemporary anthropological fieldwork in Africa, the overwhelming bulk of his evidence is from the Catholic cultures of Europe from 1400 to 1700. It is possible to complain about the absence of a broader ethnography, but that would be churlish.

The Power of Images is an extraordinary critical achievement, exhilarating in its polemic against aesthetic orthodoxy, endlessly fascinating in its details. And it would be altogether consistent with Freedberg's thesis to describe at least some of that fascination as prurient and morbid. This is a powerful, disturbing book.

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