John Donne Journal
Vol. 6, No. 1 (1987)

Sister Arts

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William H. Halewood. *Six Subjects of Reformation Art: A Preface to Rembrandt*. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1982. Pp. xiv + 154. Illus. 79.

William Alexander McClung. *The Architecture of Paradise: Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem*. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1983. Pp. xiv + 186. Illus. 62.

James V. Mirollo. *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry: Concept, Mode, Inner Design*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1984. Pp. xviii + 226. Illus. 10.

The propensity of English literary critics to range widely beyond literature is well known. They may stray into neighboring fields and carry back what they find; indeed, they may systematically invade domains whose rightful proprietors are weak or negligent. Thus Freud, Jung, and Lacan have been kidnapped from the academic psychologists, traditional theology from the theologians, and much philosophy from the philosophers. With stronger fields, there is commerce instead of robbery. Literature and the visual arts have enjoyed a long history of cross-pollination, and art historians have made as fertile use of texts as literary critics of pictures. No critic of Renaissance or seventeenth-century literature could do without Erwin Panofsky, Edgar Wind, or Carl Friedrich. Yet relations between these visual and verbal sister arts are theoretically difficult and often have been vexed by disputes.

In *Six Subjects of Reformation Art: A Preface to Rembrandt*, William H. Halewood devotes no more than a few paragraphs to literary analogies. The author of *The Poetry of Grace* has simply set up as an art historian and applied the principles he used to analyze seventeenth-century English verse to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Netherlandish paintings and prints. His underlying assumption is that although

many qualities of the Reformation mind might be posited—such as puritanism, individualism, evangelistic fervor, pessimism, or tendencies favoring democracy and capitalism—nevertheless, the essential mark of the Reformation is "what the Reformers themselves proclaimed as essential—the evangelical doctrine of salvation through God's grace alone" (p. 5). Grace; grace: everything, a reader of this study finds, comes back to grace.

The "six subjects" of the title are favorite biblical subjects for painting and illustration during this period: the calling of Matthew, the raising of Lazarus, the return of the Prodigal Son, the preaching of Jesus and of John the Baptist, Jesus blessing the children and healing the sick, and the conversion of St. Paul. These subjects, Halewood argues, were especially suitable for Protestant artists who were learning to steer an acceptable and ultimately creative course between a destructive Reformist urge toward iconoclasm and the traditional assumptions inherited from Catholic Renaissance humanism.

Halewood, as readers of his earlier book will know, is an incisive critic with many fine things to say. What disturbed me about that book was not its discussion of individual devotional poems, which are invariably intelligent and sympathetic, or its discovery of a general pattern or "paradigm" of doubt and faith, sin and grace, humiliation and exaltation, but its failure to address the perhaps insoluble question of where Protestantism begins and general Christianity ends. What Halewood argues to be a Protestant paradigm in devotional poetry seems to me arguably a Christian, even a Judeo-Christian, paradigm. I feel the same stirrings of objection as I read this later book. The "six subjects" were favored by Reformation artists; true. Yet most were also commonly treated by pre-Reformation and Counter-Reformation artists. We are given approximate counts of how many examples survive from among the works of Netherlandish painters, but no general count or detailed discussion of how these subjects fared at the hands of other, non-Reformation artists.

Halewood's usual procedure is to set against half-a-dozen or more realizations of a subject texts from Luther and Calvin. Sometimes the juxtapositions are illuminating, sometimes forced: as when one of Luther's sermons urges that Lazarus represents the worst of three kinds of sinner, that he "signifies those who are so entangled in sin that they go beyond all bounds." Then Halewood admits that the "Northern painters of this story did not adopt Luther's . . . linking of Lazarus with sin" (pp. 41-43). How, then, is Luther more relevant to understanding these paintings than, say, any half-dozen Roman Catholic devotional writers

or humanist biblical commentators who could be cited with equal pertinence? How, speaking more broadly, does one know that a painting illustrates not only grace, common to all Christian theological systems, but grace-without-works or irresistible grace, the peculiar marks of the Lutheran and Calvinist systems?

To take another instance, how do Peter Aertsen's Mary, said to be "serenely Protestant," and her sister Martha, "soiled and mussed with her labour" (p. 36), differ pictorially or iconographically from all those Catholic Marthas and Marys who represent the active and contemplative lives? Or, again, why does the doctrine of "grace alone" (grace, certainly; but irresistible or exclusive grace?) enable Rembrandt, in his Return of the Prodigal Son (Leningrad), to portray with such greatness and moving humanity the embodiment of "divine love and mercy" (p. 61)? There is, after all, an underlying difficulty with all these Protestant representations of the Prodigal Son. Since he must return home before his father can embrace him, Calvin himself, as Halewood admits, hedges his interpretation. "Indeed, repentance is itself a gift of God, which the parable, using a mortal father to represent the heavenly father, cannot successfully bring out. 'In short the question here is not whether a man is converted by himself and returns to him; but only under the figure of a man is commended the fatherly gentleness of God, and his readiness to grant forgiveness'" (pp. 52-53).

Some of the painters Halewood discusses are Catholics. In their case he resorts to the device, really neither provable nor disprovable, of suggesting that they were influenced or tainted by Protestantism. Michelangelo was associated with reformist circles in Italy, and therefore his Last Judgment illustrates an essentially Protestant vision of "the futility of human effort in the process of salvation." The enthroned Christ does it all; the resurrected dead, heavy-bodied and feeble, "manipulated only by divine strength," exert no effort of their own and are unaided by the saints who surround the throne. There is much to support such an interpretation; still, it is disturbing that contradictory evidence is unremarked. Halewood calls attention to an "assisting hand which reaches down" to hoist up one of the helpless redeemed (p. 15) but doesn't notice that this hand is attached to an assisting person—and therefore, as with the hands that hoist up another figure clutching a rosary, that Christ is not the only source of salvific action. The same may be said of some of the resurrections of Lazarus and conversions of Paul, which show supporting and comforting human hands and arms that supplement the central, divine miracle of grace. Followers of "Protestant poetics" may find it disturbing, too, that Halewood claims not only Michelangelo as an

exemplar of Protestant spirituality, but Caravaggio, and even the man whom English Protestants regarded as the lieutenant of Antichrist, Ignatius Loyola (p. 27).

So much from the devil's advocate. Though I cannot dismiss what seem to me fundamental problems of an exclusively Protestant iconology, still I heartily recommend Halewood's book for his clear and forceful argument, his highly readable style, and his many illuminating discussions of individual paintings and engravings and their places in the evolving representation of six key biblical "subjects." No reader could fail to learn from him.

William McClung, author of the best and fullest study of the English country-house poem, turns to broader literary-architectural themes in *The Architecture of Paradise*. Since he ranges far more widely in time and concept, from the biblical Temple to the Mormons and Le Corbusier, this second book is less directly pertinent to literature in the age of Donne. Still, there are useful remarks on *Paradise Lost* as well as on Dante's *Commedia* and *Pearl*. But the real meat of the book is a series of observations on the archetypal mingling, throughout history, of two visions of the ideal living place: urban and rural. Paradise is "a garden at one end of time and a city at the other." Nor are these paradises only abstractions: they "exist within the time of human history and the matrices of human societies, and they consist both of words and of stones; that is, both literature and architecture have maintained Paradise in our lives as a real presence" (p. 1).

These are familiar ideas, but McClung is especially expert at exploring the complex interrelationships between city and country, garden and building, flower and stone. There are, for example, two kinds of landscape that are distinct yet often confused: unenclosed countryside (as originally in Genesis) and enclosed garden (as in the Song of Solomon). There are gardens surrounded by walls (nature enclosed by architecture) and houses surrounded by gardens (architecture enclosed by nature). These permutations may have large consequences. For example: "Pastoral societies are conspicuously vulnerable; strangers penetrate the arcadia of Sidney's romance, and brigands ravage the arcadians of Book VI of *The Faerie Queene*. By contrast, utopian visions typically ensure security through elaborate fortifications or safe distancing. The presence of a wall of some kind, artificial or natural . . . is the primary architectural event that marks a synthesis between Eden and its rival archetype" (p. 7).

McClung states his themes so well that further quotation is irresistible: "[T]o the extent that Paradise is of the past, it is arcadian and open, the

epitome of that nature of which it is a small part; to the extent that it is imagined to survive into the present (but in some obscure or inaccessible or forbidden spot), it is a secret garden walled or otherwise barred against man; to the extent that Paradise signifies the Paradise to come, it is urban and conspicuously fortified. . . . The history of Paradise is thus the history of the loss of belief in the possibility of pastoral. . . . [T]he survival of Eden depends, therefore, upon whatever accomodation can be reached with the city. To survive, in fact, Eden must become a garden-city. . . . Eden gains admittance [to the New Jerusalem] in the shrunken and symbolical form of the water and the tree of life." So, in a significant inversion, "now garden is *enclosed* by city" (p. 19).

These traditions bear on such literary symbols as Vaughan's "shady city of palm trees" and the jeweled landscape of *Pearl* (pp. 31-34). Significantly, Dante's purgatory is a garden, his heaven a city, so that Beatrice can tell Dante: "Qui sarai tu poco tempo silvano; / e sarai meco senza fine cive / di quella Roma onde Cristo è romano"; "here for a while you will be a woodsman; and with me you will forever be a citizen of that Rome where Christ is a Roman" (see p. 38 and Singleton's Dante).

McClung has other riches to offer. For example, there is Solomon's Temple, which represents, in Ruskin's words, man's tribute to God "not only of the fruits of the earth and the tithe of time, but of all treasures of wisdom and beauty; of the thought that invents, and the hand that labours; of wealth of wood, and weight of stone; of the strength of iron, and the light of gold" (p. 68). As the ancients bequeathed to the Renaissance the various classical orders, the Temple bequeathed what was known as the Solomonic order and was variously imitated and reconstituted from period to period. The problem, of course, is that, though there were many traditions, no one really knew what the original temple looked like. "There is hardly a harder task in Study than to describe structures and places not seen, and at a distance, and the Scripture hath hardly a more obscure description of anything than this fabricke," wrote John Lightfoot in 1650 (p. 68). But the Temple was too important to ignore. McClung gives us a series of illustrations, one differing wildly from another, of what people thought it looked like. If for nothing else, McClung's book is eminently worth consulting for its illustrations. I think, though, that students of the seventeenth century will find much that is germinal in his discussion of the complex, often archetypal, interrelationships among architectural fabric, natural landscape, human culture and aspiration, and literature. My only complaint about this otherwise handsome piece of book-production concerns its inhumanly small type.

James Mirollo's *Mannerism and Renaissance Poetry* also has rather little to say directly, but much indirectly, about seventeenth-century English poetry. The book breaks naturally into three parts: a long, preliminary chapter on "Mannerism as Term, Concept, and Controversy," which is primarily concerned with Continental painting and art-historical definitions of mannerism; a chapter on Benvenuto Cellini as an exemplar of mannerism in life and art; and three short chapters on "Visage and Veil," "Hand and Glove," and the "Pastoral Invitation to Love," touching on imagery in Italian, French, and English poetry and painting. In these last chapters there are brief discussions, comparisons, and explications of Wyatt, Herbert of Cherbury, Townshend, Marlowe, Ralegh, Sidney, Spenser, Constable, Barnes, Donne, Lovelace, Carew, Randolph, and Cotton. But the chief attraction of the book is its masterly handling of the Italian painters and Petrarch.

Although little is said about English literature in the long first chapter, nevertheless this part of the book is likely to be most interesting and useful to readers of *John Donne Journal*. It thoroughly reviews everything that has been said about mannerism from the time of Vasari to the international conferences of the 1960s and '70s; at the same time it undertakes a fresh definition of what "mannerism" means. This guided tour through esthetic history is likely to exhilarate as well as bewilder the reader. Certain principles are clear: for example, that "mannerist" painting is consciously, but not *too* consciously, preoccupied by style; and that it accompanied rather than succeeded "Renaissance" painting, as art historians agree—though literary critics have thought otherwise. So there were not three stages of style—Renaissance, mannerist, and baroque—but a Renaissance period, accompanied by a mannerist substyle that was subversively dependent on the dominant culture, followed by a baroque style that may be considered a reaction to *both* earlier styles.

Persuasively, and with especially impressive use of Vasari as a guide, Mirollo arrives at this formula: "Mannerist theory is perhaps best explained as the product of a ripe Renaissance culture turning in on and exhaustively exploiting itself" (p. 25). It is also "art that comments upon art, that reveals rather than conceals art" (p. 68). These phrases, however, are neither italicized nor specially emphasized; and the stream flows on: to Nikolaus Pevsner, E. R. Curtius, Walter Friedlaender, Arnold Hauser, and Wylie Sypher (about whom Mirollo is surely too polite), well-known names of the 1940s and '50s. At this point, it can only be said that one becomes less, rather than more, certain just what "mannerism" means. Rudolph Stamm proposes (1956) that Shakespeare and

Donne are mannerists. "Most ominous of all, the German scholars and critics who had dominated the pursuit of visual and verbal mannerism were now being joined in considerable numbers by American as well as other . . . colleagues. . . . Although matters had not reached an utter impasse, it was evident that as the decade of the sixties began, art and literary history were in mannerism's favorite state of crisis" (p. 37).

I am unsure whether Mirollo is ironic or naive (or both) when he adds: "In part to ease this crisis, two international congresses were held" (p. 37). What could be less likely to resolve a scholarly muddle than an international congress? In any event, the 1960 Rome congress on "Manierismo, barocco, rococo: concetti e termini" and the Twentieth International Congress of the History of Art in New York (1961) appear, to an inexpert reader, to mark the end of any agreement or even intelligibility on the subject. The stream of dialogue and definition, which ran fairly clear from the sixteenth century up to about 1945, now branched out into what may best be described as a terminal swamp: into the Lewis-Carrollian world we know, in which any self-anointed expert can say: "Mannerism means what I say it means." To point this out is not to fault Mirollo, who, it seems to me, is superhumanly capable of responding sympathetically to the endlessly complex literature on the subject and of discriminating justly and minutely between one view and another, who gives us, moreover, as clear a definition of mannerism as may be possible at this time. (He has a saving sense of humor too, and is, as well and parenthetically, the only critic I know of in recent times who can employ an exclamation point to good effect!) No one, hopefully, will henceforth venture to apply the term "mannerist" to sixteenth- or seventeenth-century English literature without first consulting Mirollo: in the complex arena between art and literature, his book now represents the definitive statement, though, in the nature of the case, it can offer no simplistic formula.

Perhaps in the long run what we need (to use terms suggested by John Barth's *End of the Road*) is not a descriptive but a *prescriptive* definition of mannerism. We need a supremely authoritative cultural imperialist, an ideologue of the first order: someone who, like Dr. Johnson, Matthew Arnold, or T. S. Eliot, will simply *tell* us what mannerism is. Then, once more, we can all agree. Then again, maybe those days are gone for good. Maybe it's just as well.

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