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Sara Stevenson and Duncan Thomson, *John Michael Wright: The King's Painter*. Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 1982. 96 pp., 58 illus., 10 colour plates, £3.50

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complemented with variations of igloos, ice floes and dog sleds. Surrounding this, is a border of tropical flora and fauna. This dinner service, with its adherence to the picturesque and its quest for the exotic, is not unique in its odd juxtapositions, but instead is a product of the age.

This very incongruity helps to date the service as does the fact that the lion of the border is taken from an 1834 edition of *The Naturalist's Library*. The central motif scenes on the pottery are shown to be from an earlier source and are loosely based on prints made from the illustrated journals of Sir Edward Parry's search for the North-west Passage. Again, Elizabeth Collard extends a word of caution to collectors of Canadiana: scenes containing snow and sledges are often found to be drived from views of Siberia or Greenland and care must be taken until future studies provide us with accurate documentation.

Although not considered by the author to be a definitive work, with new discoveries regularly coming to light, it is the only book to deal with this subject and to be remarkably complete. The perspicuity the author brings to this field ensures that *The Potters' View of Canada* will have as wide an appeal as the wares it discusses.

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SARA STEVENSON and DUNCAN THOMSON *John Michael Wright: the King's Painter*. Edinburgh, National Galleries of Scotland, 1982. 96 pp., 58 illus., 10 colour plates, £3.50.

From July to September 1982 the Scottish National Portrait Gallery mounted an exhibition of nearly forty works by the painter John Michael Wright (1617-94). Wright cannot be called a 'discovery.' George Vertue, the 'English Vasari,' knew much about him and his work. Hence, Horace Walpole included him in his history of English painting. C.H. Collins Baker, writing in 1912, devoted a substantial chapter to Wright in his *Lely and the Stuart Portrait Painters*. He subtly analysed Wright's style and claimed that he was 'the most conspicuously independent painter of the Stuart period,' by which he meant that his particular qualities set him apart from the main Van Dyck-Lely-Kneller stream of seventeenth-century English portraiture. Wright has continued to occupy an important place in general histories of English painting, such as those by Professor Waterhouse and Sir Oliver Millar. In 1960 the latter catalogued the seventeen works by Wright in the great *Age of Charles II* exhibition at the Royal Academy.

But the Edinburgh exhibition is the largest showing of Wright's work to date and the catalogue is the most substantial publication on him to appear. It offers much new information, including his recently discovered will, a document which revises his date of death by six years.

The bulk of the catalogue is by Sara Stevenson and Duncan Thomson (the latter is known for his meticulous monograph on the Scottish painter George Jamesome, ca. 1590-1644, to whom Michael Wright was apprenticed). There is a chapter on the artist's life followed by one on the paintings. Then comes a note on Wright's technique, by John Dick. The final and largest section is the catalogue proper: entries for the thirty-six paintings and one engraving by Wright which were in the exhibition, and four entries on suits and pieces of armour, included because of their frequent appearances in Wright's portraiture. The most impressive suit was the so-called 'Lion' armour of the mid-sixteenth century, decorated with gold damascened foliage and embossed lions' masks. Lent by the Tower of London, it appears in Wright's portrait of General Monck, Duke of Albemarle, the hero of the Restoration, but may have belonged to the painter himself.

For Wright was a considerable collector as well as a painter. He spent over a decade in Rome, acquiring and studying books, gems and medals, and associating, as a contemporary tells us, 'with the most celebrated antiquaries of the place'; such was his reputation by 1653-54 that he gained a post as antiquarian to the Archduke Leopold, Governor of the Spanish Netherlands.

Wright was extraordinarily cosmopolitan. He was the only British painter to be a member of the Accademia di San Luca, Rome, in the seventeenth century, the society whose distinguished foreign members included Poussin and Velasquez. Though apparently born in England in 1617, he is known to have been apprenticed to George Jamesome in 1636. According to the contract, the apprenticeship was to last five years. In fact it probably ended sooner, for Jamesome was imprisoned in the second half of 1640, for religious reasons that were to lead to the Civil Wars in Scotland and England and to the Roman exile of the young Wright.

Hitherto, no painted work from Wright's Scottish or Roman periods was known. However, the exhibition presented a small portrait of Robert Bruce, 2nd Earl of Elgin, with a contemporary inscription claiming authorship by Wright at Rome. This modest picture is in its style a suggestion of the mature Wright. One only wishes that the Haddington *Earl of Haddington*, which the cataloguers illustrate and attribute to Wright, had also been in the exhibition.

The only other certain Roman work by Wright is an engraving. A new discovery about this (apparently) unique print is the mark of Sir Peter Lely. It is after Annibale Carracci, since it is inscribed *A.C. Invent.* 'The painting of which it is a copy is not known,' says the catalogue. However, the motif of the Madonna with the Child on her lap is close to Annibale's etching *Madonna and Child with an Angel* of ca. 1606 (see Posner, *Carracci*, n° 173). The hatched background in Wright's print is very reminiscent of those in etchings by Annibale. One wonders then, whether instead of recording an Annibale painting, Wright's engraving may be a copy of either a lost Annibale print or drawing. This idea is strengthened by the consideration that Wright had a large collection of Old Master drawings in Rome. Richard Symonds, an English amateur, made notes about some of them, including one by Annibale. (Incidentally, the 'C... who was Titian's scholar and did Paeses well in imitation of Titian' [p. 15] is presumably Domenico Campagnola.) Symonds described Wright as 'Scotus.' But it is worth noting that Wright signed himself, not once but twice, on his print as '*Anglus*.'

Wright's first signed and dated portrait of 1658 is the *Mrs. Claypole* (Oliver Cromwell's daughter) in the

National Portrait Gallery. Its extensive use of allegory is the first surviving example of what was to be a prominent feature in Wright's mature works. The allegory here is sensitively analysed and some interesting literary parallels are made. But the inscription, *Ab Iove Principium,* is neither translated, nor its source identified. It is a quotation (as Mary Stewart informs me) from Virgil's *Eclogue* 3, 60, part of the speech of the shepherd Damoetas, who is having an 'alternate' song contest with Menalcas. The full quotation is:

Ab Iove principium, Musae: Iovis omnia plena
ille colit terras, illi mea carmina curae.

E.V. Rieu translates this: Goddess of poetry, let us begin with Jove. All the world is full of Jove. Earth owes its fruits to him. My songs are dear to Jove.

The quotation is certainly apt for the relief above it, which shows Minerva issuing from the head of the seated Jupiter. This in turn can be related to the olive tree above, Mrs. Claypole's Minerva breastplate, and so on. But it is then odd to find the statement on page 38, clearly made in connexion with the *Mrs. Claypole*, that Wright acquired 'a tendency to allegorize' in Italy. This may go back, in part, to Professor Waterhouse's statement in his Pelican volume (p. 107), that the *Mrs. Claypole* is 'perhaps the most Italianate portrait painted in England in the seventeenth century.'

I am puzzled by this. Where, in the 1640s and 50s does one find Italian portraiture like the *Mrs. Claypole*? Surely the remarkable thing about Italian baroque portraiture is its general eschewal of symbolism and allegory, with some notable exceptions. But portraiture, from Domenichino through Reni, Sassoferrato to Bacciccio and Bombelli, is usually direct and simple.

Of course if one goes back to *sixteenth*-century Italian portraiture it is a very different matter. But in the early to mid-seventeenth century one finds the allegorical and emblematic portrait (and especially the device of the narrative relief) alive and well in England, in the works of William Dobson, for example, who had inherited the tradition from his Elizabethan predecessors. It is surely from this Dobson-Elizabethan tradition that Wright developed his own version of allegorical portraiture.

FIGURE 1. J. Michael Wright, *Lady Aston.* Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre (Photo: Photographic Records, London)

I would also suggest that the glorious full-length 'costume pieces' by Wright, e.g. *Sir Neil O'Neill, A Highland Chieftain,* and *An Unidentified Lady,* are also strongly indebted to the Elizabethan and Jacobean past. Baroque as they are in some respects, they are surely unthinkable without the precedents of Van Somer's hunting portrait of Anne of Denmark or some of the works of Marcus Gheeraerts the Younger, e.g. the Tate *Sir Thomas Lee* of 1594 (the latter is indeed mentioned in the catalogue, but apparently only in the iconographical context). Kneller's 1680 *Captain Thomas Lucy* (Charlcote) may be influenced by Wright's examples, and also his 1715 *Countess of Mar* (Kneller also seems to have admired Wright's *Lady Bagot and her Grand-daughter,* and used the design for his *Queen Anne and the Duke of Gloucester* [Althorp], ca. 1694).

The influence of van Dyck too could have been spelt out in more detail. The statement is made in connexion with Wright's *Unknown Man* from Mapledurham: 'The basic format derives from van Dyck's portrait of Nicholas Lanier (Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna).' I cannot see this particular connexion. However, there can be little doubt that van Dyck's lyricism, especially as seen in his female portraiture, had its influence on Wright, as did his designs. The basic idea of a figure moving lightly

across the canvas, seen from the side and turning her head towards the spectator, is seen in such van Dycks as the Althorp *Countess of Morton*, the Frick *Countess of Clanbrassil*, and the Knole *Countess of Dorset*. This design appears in Wright's *Mrs. George Vernon*. Also, his *Three Unidentified Women* (cat. 24) is surely influenced by the design of van Dyck's *Charles I in Three Positions*, now in the Royal Collection, but in Wright's time in Rome, and apparently copied by him.

Yet one has reservations about the attribution of the *Three Unidentified Women*, magnificent picture though it is. It, and cat. 23, although clearly 'Wrightian,' seem dour in mood, dark in tone and stiff in posture, compared to authentic late Wrights. Could they be by the painter's nephew, Michael Wright the Younger? (It would have been instructive to have had at least one of the latter's works in the exhibition, and also one by Edmund Ashfield, the elder Wright's only other known pupil. Ashfield was at least given an illustration, figure 12.)

One of the most enchanting Wright portraits is the Weston Park *Countess of Dysart*, with her beautiful pale pink and white dress, and her handsome almost Pre-Raphaelite good looks. Although much fine iconographical analysis is given for other pictures in the catalogue, there is none for this one. The stress on pearls in her dress, in her ears and round her neck strongly suggests the idea of 'The Pearls of Virtue' (see E. de Jongh, *Simiolus*, VIII [1975-76], 69 ff.), while the olive branch she holds is perhaps for Wisdom. In the background, a statue of Occasio-Fortuna, recognizable from her sail and long forelock, stands on one foot on a sphere. But beneath the sphere is a plinth suggesting that Occasio-Fortuna has been 'stabilized.'

Altogether, the symbolism in Wright's *Countess of Dysart* points to the Renaissance notion derived from antiquity that a reconciliation of Fortune – and its caprice – with Virtue is possible, as long as the former follows in the tracks of the latter. For example, Erasmus included this notion, as a quotation from Cicero's letters, in his *Adagia*: 'Duce virtue comite Fortuna' (With Virtue as my guide, Fortune is my companion) (cf. R. Wittkower, *Allegory and the Migration of Symbols*, p. 101). When spelt out like this, the ideal seems dry. But Wright had the grace and style to turn these abstract conceptions into flesh-and-blood figures on his canvases.

The Wright exhibition catalogue remains as a permanent record of an important event for British Studies. As a result, Wright is now known and appreciated more widely. (As far as I know, the only exemple of Wright's work in Canada is a very fine three-quarter length *Lady Aston* [Fig. 1], which I had been able to find before the exhibition and acquire for the Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Queen's University.) One hopes the cataloguers will go on to do a full *catalogue raisonné* of John Michael Wright. They have clearly demonstrated how richly he deserves it.

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SIR OLIVER MILLAR *Van Dyck in England*. London, National Portrait Gallery, 1982. 120 pp., 49 figs., 87 plates, £3.95.

Sir Oliver Millar, Surveyor of The Queen's Pictures, is the doyen of English authorities on van Dyck. For over thirty years, beginning at least with the catalogue entries for the monumental exhibition *Flemish Art, 1300-1700*, held at the Royal Academy, 1953-54, a stream of publications on van Dyck has poured from his pen. The volume under review, a catalogue of an exhibition of over sixty paintings and twenty drawings held at the National Portrait Gallery in London, is the latest work on the Flemish Baroque painter who continues to fascinate this art historian.

Here, as the title would suggest, Sir Oliver's concern is mostly with van Dyck's English period, i.e. from his arrival in London in 1632, until his death there, on the eve of the Civil Wars, in December 1641. What one might call van Dyck's First English Period (November 1620-March 1621) is included in the exhibition, as are a number of portraits of Englishmen and their wives which were painted by van Dyck abroad, in Italy or Flanders. Most of the works in the catalogue are portraits. (Even Sir Oliver's eagle eye has so far failed to spot any of the religious pictures which, according to Bellori, van Dyck painted for Charles I and other English patrons.)

To offset this, there are a number of landscape drawings, and also the splendid *Continence of Scipio* (Christ Church, Oxford) painted 1620-21, and once in the collection of the Duke of Buckingham. There is a long introduction which places van Dyck's English work within the context of his entire career, in words and illustrations. All the catalogue entries are illustrated (twelve in colour) and there are 49 additional figures of comparative works by van Dyck and others.

There is plenty of new material and fresh insights in this volume. For example, it comes as a surprise, even to a specialist, that *Henry Danvers, Earl of Danby* (cat. 20) (Leningrad, The Hermitage) is van Dyck's only known full-length of a Garter knight in robes. (One is so used to thinking of the many Garter full-lengths by Lely, Kneller and their successors.) But as Sir Oliver notes, there were very few precedents for van Dyck. They include Cornelius Johnson's *Earl of Mulgrave* (cat., fig. 40) of ca. 1620. Johnson's portrait is certainly more advanced in its feeling for volume and space than earlier Garter full-lengths such as the *4th Earl of Pembroke* (Audley End) and the *1st Duke of Buckingham* (National Portrait Gallery), both attributed to William Larkin. Yet the latter anticipate to a surprising degree the sprightliness of van Dyck's *Danby*, a quality noticeably lacking in Johnson's design.

Of the *Danby* Sir Oliver writes: 'With its rich atmosphere and dramatic tensions, and in the complete harmony between head and figure, it is one of van Dyck's greatest English portraits; the superbly posed figure is full of movement, principally in the pull of the left arm and hand against the direction of the gesture of the right hand, the extended right arm and the thrust of the right leg. The soft and shimmering quality in such passages as the whites and soft golds in the costume and the sword makes an interesting contrast with the hardness of such passages in, for instance, many of the portraits from Lord Wharton's gallery; and they are set off by the soft scarlet and blue of the Garter robes.'