

Conclusion

CONCLUSION

As has been established in the former chapters, the term "Baroque" has been variously interpreted. I have also mentioned that the term is of uncertain linguistic origins. However, it has been specified that the term somewhat derives from the Portuguese "barroco" which means a rough or imperfectly shaped pearl.

Whatever connotations it may have had in the past, I have tried to establish this fact - that the Baroque does not merely designate an art that is extravagant, heavily ornate or bombastic. Nor, do I hold with the view that the Baroque should be used in a narrow stylistic sense to signify a particular artistic phenomenon-the style of the 1660s-in the realms of Literature and the Fine Arts.

The term as I have used it in this thesis, denotes, primarily the main artistic trends of the period that is roughly comprehended by the seventeenth century. The shift from the preceding age was not sudden or abrupt and hence there is a great deal of overlapping. The end of the Baroque is even less clear-cut than its beginnings. There are works belonging to the eighteenth century that can be truly called "Baroque". Yet there is no doubt, that in general, the impetus of the Baroque had slackened by the last quarter of the seventeenth century.

The period presents an array of works of literature, painting, sculpture and music of quite remarkable variety. It is astonishing that these were the products of different countries, different economic and political institutions and different forms of religious beliefs. If unity is to be discovered within this diversity, it is to be found not in any specifically worked out system of style, but in certain broadly held ideas, attitudes, assumptions and, above all, in the spirit of the age.

The seventeenth century was an age of great progress and expansion. The political institutions, political thinking, social relationships and rational

aspirations exerted a great influence on the life of man. While scientists, scholars and travellers were widening man's intellectual horizon, literary men, artists and musicians opened new vistas for expression and new ideals for civilized life. Just how remarkable the age was is evident from the wonderful creations which have commonly come to be known as "Baroque" - the magnificent paintings of Rubens, Rembrandt, Velásquez and Van Dyck the statuary of Bernini, the imposing castles of Continental capitals, and the royal porcelain manufacturers of Sevres, Royal Bavarian and Dresden, and the entertaining and awesome spectacle of Italian opera.

My objective in this thesis has been to see if a parallel can be found between literature and the fine arts. I have come to the conclusion that there is a profound identity between the plastic arts and music on the one hand and the verbal arts on the other. The dilemma of freedom and conformity, the intense practicality, the deep sensuousness, the accent on human individuality, the elevation of technique which characterize the other forms of expression are manifest as well in the internal structure of all Baroque literature. It is necessary to recognize the interdependence and the uniformity of the forms and modes of expression of which Dryden and Schütz, Racine and Bernini, Boileau and Wren, so nobly represent varied aspects and to give it a name that corresponds to its historic individuality. In this construction, the literature of the seventeenth century is Baroque. In England, however, in the realm of literature as in architecture, the response was partial and limited. Here the towering personality of Shakespeare, still dominated the first decade of the seventeenth century. He was followed by important, though less universally influential poets such as John Donne and Ben Jonson. While Donne's lyrics show great originality and warmth of feeling, Jonson's comedies exhibit less of the passion which marked the age of the High Renaissance, and display more of the moderate, rational and reflective style of the Baroque period.

The fantastic elements in Baroque art have prompted some critics to correlate Baroque music, painting and sculpture to Metaphysical imagery. The tendency to use the term Baroque instead of the older terms seicento and Marinismo, is found in Italy. In France Baroque is used to replace concettismo

and Góngorism. It is felt that the term Baroque can be used as a general term for practically all manifestations of seventeenth century European culture.

No leading authority on Metaphysical poetry in England seems to have been attracted by the Baroque. This is probably because the term "Metaphysical" is too well established to be substituted for another. However, some critics have used the term "Baroque" to describe the poetry of at least one Metaphysical poet - Richard Crashaw. As has been mentioned in the earlier chapters, Baroque art found in Catholicism a suitable climate for growth, and this is the reason why the Roman Catholic poet, Richard Crashaw has become the subject of several discussions of the Baroque in English poetry. The following writers have discussed Crashaw as a Baroque poet. T.O. Beechcroft in Criterion xiii (1934) 407-25; George Williamson in The Donne Tradition; Helen.C.White in The Metaphysical Poets and Austin Warren in Richard Crashaw.

According to these critics, Crashaw is representative of the "aesthetic of the Counter Reformation" in his descriptions of the ecstasies of saints and mystics like Teresa, the tears of Mary Magdalene, and the bleeding wounds of Christ on the Cross. In his art there is the fusion of Counter Reformation and Baroque expression.

Other poets besides Richard Crashaw of the Metaphysical school have also been shown to have certain Baroque qualities. The tendency of regarding a Metaphysical poem as coextensive with its imagery has further supported the view that Metaphysical poetry is related to Baroque art. E.P.Wilson in Elizabethan and Jacobean uses the term "Baroque" to characterize Jacobean as distinguishable from Elizabethan literature. The term, "Baroque", therefore, has served a useful purpose by establishing links between the arts of the seventeenth century Europe and also between different literatures of different countries.

Professor Mario Praz, in his early study of Crashaw, called the poet, "the greatest exponent of the Baroque style in any language". The Baroque was essentially a continental mode. This is why studies of his work so often end up

talking about his relationship to Italian poets. Crashaw was a Continental poet writing in English. This resulted in exaggerated and far-fetched images. In his poetry the treatment of the themes of the weeping Magdalene, the ecstatic Teresa, the crucified Christ with blood and water flowing from his wounds, reveal the European (rather than purely English) influence of the Baroque.

Crashaw, therefore, represents a later trend of more extravagant conceitism among the Metaphysicals. In his original as well as his translated work we may be more aware of the un-English elements in his sensibility and poetic manner.

John Dryden's status as the greatest literary figure of his day is well displayed in his relationship with the other arts and their practitioners at the Court and in the wider social and literary world of London. The examples and rules set by Ben Jonson and William Davenant made the Poet Laureate a collaborator in the production of court entertainments, but Dryden's involvement with music and painting went beyond anything that Jonson experienced in his collaborations on masques with Inigo Jones. In Restoration London, the Court circle tended to mix easily with the larger, though still genteel public which patronized the arts outside the Court. His friendship with painters and musicians continued, and in the last decades of his life, Dryden was a much sought after collaborator in many artistic ventures. His extensive involvement in the other arts, while he practised literature only, is quite unique in English history. It was also the occasion for some of his best dramatic poetry. Painting does play a part in his poetry. For him, a painting was often like a poem, and one can conclude that the art of painting was most useful to him as a source of metaphor and analogy when discussing poems or when writing them. His descriptions in his poems could easily be compared to what was done in painting. In his early poem Annus Mirabilis, Dryden describes the fire near the river :

“ A quay of fire ran along the shore,
And lightened all the river with the blaze;
The wakened tides began again to roar,
And wond'ring fish in shining waters gaze.

Old Father Thames raised up his reverend head,
 But feared the fate of Simoels would return;
 Deep in his ooze he sought his sedgy bed,
 And shrunk his waters back into his urn.

(Annus Mirabilis)

From this description it is quite easy to imagine a painting of the time including elements as the "wound'ring fish" and "Father Thames". The painting of the time was often extravagantly "poetic" in employing mythological figures and personifications.

Once again the relationship of poetry and painting is found in one of Dryden's greatest poems, - his ode To the Pious Memory of the Accomplished Young Lady Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the Two Sister Arts of Poesy and Painting (1686)

In stanza vi Dryden opens with an elaborate metaphor drawn from contemporary international politics :

" Born to the spacious empire of the Nine,
 One would have thought, she should have been content
 To manage well that mighty government :
 But what can young ambitious souls confine ?

To the next realm she stretcht her sway,
 For painture near adjoining lay,
 A plenteous province, and alluring prey.
 A Chamber of Dependence was framed,
 (As conquerors will never want pretence,
 When armed, to justify the offence)
 And the whole 'fief', in right of poetry she claimed".

(Ode to Mrs Anne Killigrew)

The rest of the stanza celebrates Anne Killigrew's abilities as a landscape painter, and reveals that Dryden was familiar with the schools of landscape in the French style that was popular in his day :

The syivan scenes of herds and flocks,
 The fruitful plains of barren rocks,
 of shallow brooks that flowed so clear
 The bottom did the top appear ..."

(Ode to Mrs Anne Killigrew)

Applying the analogy with painting to Dryden's poetry is important, because it draws attention to spatial structure and organization in the poems. Dryden is excellent at depicting action and movement across a wide landscape and some of his poems resemble the placing of figures on broad canvases.

Music, too, plays an important role in Dryden's works. The concept of music provided Dryden with a body of ideas of the greatest utility and variety. Music was a universal principle, since the invisible spheres of the Ptolemaic cosmos produced in ~~the~~ their movement the greatest of all harmonies—the music of the spheres. Music had mysterious powers over man and other living creatures, and classical mythology and biblical history supplied a fund of persons and incidents which would illustrate those powers: Orpheus, Amphion, Arion, Terpander, the Sirens, Jubal, Saul and David. Ideas drawn from music could be applied, especially in metaphor, to most aspects of life. Thus the king as the agent of political harmony within the state was depicted as David, the harpist.

During the Baroque period poets were accustomed to thinking of themselves as musicians. The poet as singer was such a stock analogy at the time.

Italian opera was introduced in England in the seventeenth century. Dryden had a great admiration for the Italian language as a poetic medium, and he said that he admired Italian opera. The circumstances of Dryden's career

often involved him with music. He was well acquainted with the musician Henry Purcell, and his career interlocks with Purcell's at several points. As a man of the theatre he could not avoid contact with the musicians. Most of his plays incorporate songs.

Dryden's Works include four so - called op^eras. There was an operatic version of the Davenant-Dryden Tempest. Dryden's adaptation of Paradise Lost called The State of Innocence, is an opera, though no music seems to have been written for it and no composer is mentioned, facts which illustrate something of Dryden's assumptions concerning the respective roles of author and composer. Albion and Albanus; is an opera performed in 1685, and King Arthur ; a dramatic opera in 1691.

Two theatrical traditions led Dryden towards opera. The masques which had been the great entertainments at the Courts of King James I and Charles I, and which were the principal responsibilities of the Poets Laureate, were less frequent after the Restoration. But they still occurred on some occasions, and the tradition of the royal entertainment centered on some regal or patriotic themes, with a slight text of poetry, supported by all the resources of scene painting, spectacular effects, music and dancing. Under the Commonwealth, private theatrical performances which included a large element of music had been less looked down upon than simple plays. It is from one such work, Davenant's The Siege of Rhodes (1656), " a representation by the art of perspective in scenes and the story sung in recitative music," that the new beginning of the English stage after the Civil War is dated. Dryden saw Davenant's work as the origin of the heroic play, with the music as an excuse to get it past the censorship, which may indeed have been the truth. Yet it was no accident that the heroic play should have had operatic beginnings, for the chief characteristic of such a work was thought to be "elevation". It dealt in a grand manner with great figures, torn by great conflicts and facing great issues. Dryden saw the heroic play as a sort of theatrical epic, and said that its convention gave the dramatist the freedom of drawing all things as far above the ordinary proportion of the stage as that is beyond the common words and actions of human life." In order to make the great still greater, the only further recourse was music.

Albion and Albanus shows clearly the influence of the masque and the heroic play. However its origin is French. The composer was Louis Grabu, a Frenchman who became Master of the Kings' Music, and it followed the French model in being a true opera: recitative, aria, or chorus throughout. It describes in a heavily allegorical manner the political events of the Exclusion Crisis.

In 1690 Henry Purcell first wrote music for Dryden. He contributed music for the comedy Amphitryon. Purcell went on to write music for several more of Dryden's plays, both new ones and revivals, but his major collaboration was King Arthur. By labelling this as a "dramatic opera" Dryden was pointing to a feature which differentiated it from Albion and Albanus, King Arthur is a spoken play, heavily embellished with music, now often called a "semi-opera". The music in King Arthur functions to emphasize emotions already conveyed in the spoken scenes or to create atmosphere. The significant words are kept separate from the music. King Arthur also reveals its literary and theatrical origins in other ways too. Its plot and characters are akin to those of the heroic play, and it contains a number of full-scale masques.

Dryden's two odes for the celebration of the feast of St. Cecilia, patroness of music were written in 1687 and 1697. Both are considered to be masterpieces. The former is the more interesting poem and is an embodiment of musical theory. It consists of seven stanzas and a "Grand Chorus". In the opening stanza and the final chorus, Dryden is clearly presenting a view of music which is traditional. It has been called "speculative music" and it presents music as the universal principle of harmony, and aural image of benevolent creativity and predestined destruction. The latter, paradoxically, is as "harmonious" since the end of the world is as much a part of God's plan as the beginning.

In Alexander's Feast the speculative music makes only a token appearance with St. Cecilia at the end. Timotheus displays music's effective power by moving Alexander's emotions whichever way he wishes by the sole means of his lyre. Each stanza which describes an emotion, is followed by a chorus, which functions like an aria to embody the emotional significance of the preceding 'scene'. In

this poem Dryden revels in the extremes of violent emotion, and his verse is very ambitious, and very successful in its daring rhythmical effects:

“ Revenge, revenge, Timotheus cries,
 See, the Furies arise :
 See the snakes that they rear,
 How they hiss in their hair,
 And the sparkles that flash from their eyes :
 Those are Grecian ghosts, that in battle were slain,

 And unburied remain
 Inglorious on the plain.
 Give the vengeance due
 To the valiant crew.”

(Alexander's Feast)

Here Dryden is virtually functioning as his own composer. This poem is the ultimate in verbal music, and has been called Dryden's greatest libretto.

After 1660, the efforts to reestablish a sense of stability and confidence entered a stage of even more intense striving, of epic enterprises. Again the most immediate evidence of this comes from painting, where the birth of the Baroque embodied the belief that grandeur and immensity could subdue uncertainty. Gone was the unsettling vision of Mannerism; in its place arose a direct, powerful and unabashed affirmation of emotion, often encouraged by Counter-Reformation Catholicism, that was the visual equivalent of religious and political authoritarianism. Not surprisingly, its greatest figures - Rubens, Velázquez, Bernini, Borromoni - served the monarchs and popes who claimed with fluctuating success, to be the all powerful authority. It was precisely because the assertion frequently sounded hollow that it was so grandiosely proclaimed. Rubens' elevated unsuitable subjects to heroic proportions, as is evident in his glorification of James I to a Zeus-like figure in the Banqueting House.

The gigantic scope, and the enormous canvas was part of an aesthetic

that overwhelmed its subject, by sheer magnificence and sweep. The awe-inspiring structures devised by Europe's greatest minds during this period have never been equalled. On an equally imposing scale are not only the paintings, sculptures and architecture of the period's towering artists, but also the personal searches of a Rembrandt, a Calderón, a Pascal and a Milton. Each was capable of intimate, tender emotion, but each was also driven to immense outpourings of deep emotions that were monumentally conceived. Everywhere there was the evidence of a profoundly felt desire to conquer truth, to defeat irresolution and to convince by sheer boldness and reach. When that kind of aspiration lost its centrality in European culture, as it did at the end of the Baroque Age, one could tell that the uncertainties had been left behind.

As mentioned earlier, my thesis also seeks to discover whether there is a marked difference between two generations of poets and artists in the Baroque period.

The final and the most decisive stage is clearly visible in the contrasts between early and late seventeenth century cultures. The titanic struggles of the generations from Shakespeare to Milton gave way almost suddenly to genteelness and calm. The confidence that the early Baroque exuded, was replaced by the much more convincing assurance of the last decades of the century, when artists felt less driven to show-off their abilities. The grandeur of literature, painting, and sculpture had been an attempt to belie the words of doubt and uncertainty that lay beneath. Now enormous canvases and heroic poetry became decreasingly necessary as the impulse to overwhelm doubt decreased. Searching, emotional questions began to lose their appeal as Europe began to 'calm' down.

In the fields of poetry and drama the divide is relatively sharp as the formless plots of Shakespeare or a Lope de Vega, give way to a more formal system. That the dominant form of the late seventeenth century and the early eighteenth century playwriting in England should have been the Restoration comedy surely establishes the point beyond doubt. Moreover, this change was confirmed by the requirements laid down by Boileau, whose Ars Poetica

was the chief guide to literary taste in the last years of the century. The most important virtue of poetry, in his view was its craftsmanship, not its appeal to the emotions. Hence there is a world of difference between the massive stateliness of Milton and the clever charm of Dryden. Nor was the change lost on the poets themselves. They considered it impossible to follow Milton's footsteps, not only because of his universal stature but also because the search he had been engaged in seemed to have, at this stage, lost its urgency.

In Spain, this intensity made its last appearance in the dramas of Calderón; in Germany in the generation of Opitz, Gryphius and Gerhardt. And in France, the new cultural center of Europe, the imposition of stable forms was the main theme of the history of taste. Appropriately, it was Racine, the exponent of the triumph of formality, who clarified the progression that had taken place when he delivered the eulogy on Corneille to the Académie Française :

“ You know in what a condition the stage was when he began to write... All the rules of art, and even those of decency and decorum, broken everywhere... Corneille after having for sometime sought the right path and struggled against the bad taste of his day, inspired by extraordinary genius and helped by the study of the ancients at last brought reason upon the stage.”

This was indeed a remarkable aesthetic code. The writers and artists became obsessed with forms and rules that animated the great academies, especially the Académie Française. They became engrossed in the questions of style rather than content; their main aim was to prevent and moderate lapses into vulgar excess. Thus the rise of classicism however much it may have inspired the works of Milton, Corneille and Racine, was in actual fact a means of formalizing expression and restraining literature's capacity for fervour.

Exactly the same succession emerges from painting, where the depth and exuberance of the Baroque gave way to the elegance and grace of Rococo. Between the power and brilliance of Rubens, Hals or Bernini, and the wistfulness of Watteau, there is another of these shifts in feeling and taste. The days were numbered when Bernini came to Paris in the 1660s to design a new wing for

the Louvre only to find that he had to simplify and tone down his designs, to meet the the different standards of taste. Perrault was commissioned to complete the project. The result was dramatic repudiation of the Baroque. This incident was symptomatic of a much larger change. The great themes, the swirling drama that energized the works of Rubens and his contemporaries, had changed by the end of the century into the sweet, genteel, and ornate world of aristocratic courts.

The boundaries are even less crisp in painting than they are in literature, because the first indications of the changed aesthetics are in the canvases of Claude Lorrain produced before the mid-century, yet the quintessential Baroque master, Bernini, survived almost to his eighty-second birthday in 1680. It is remarkable that Le Brun was still at work in the 1690s, a few years before Watteau emerged as the leading figure at Versailles. But these overlaps do not conceal the essential lessening of tension that took place. The canvases of the new generation of painters became increasingly smaller than the paintings produced in the Baroque period. The new paintings portrayed idyllic and relaxed scenes, occasionally melancholic but never agitated. An era more committed to weighty content would have found it incredible that Claude Lorrain could depict the scene of the angel appearing to Hagar when she was dying of thirst as taking place in a landscape dominated by a lake.

Earlier painters, most notably Rembrandt, had certainly been capable of portraying peaceful, tender subjects, but at the same time they had not been able to resist undertaking the most stirring themes. The withdrawal from the grandiose suffuses the paintings of those other mid-century masters, Claude Lorrain and Vermeer. The deaths of Rubens, Van Dyck, Velázquez, Poussin, Hals and Rembrandt, all within less than thirty years between 1640s and 1660s marks the passing, not merely of a style, but of an attitude towards the very purposes of art. Henceforth painting was to be pleasing rather than exciting, decorative rather than powerful.

What is obvious from the beginning is that the elite and its most creative minds were placing different demands on literary and artistic expression. No

longer torn by doubts and huge aspirations, they felt that the distressing problems of the previous century and a half had been resolved, that the disruptive forces launched around 1500 had at last been assimilated, and that now they could relax. The sense of settlement induced a preference for calm enjoyment and sunny pleasures that writers and painters catered to with gusto. Light humour and elaborate decoration suited the new mood perfectly, and it was appropriate that clothing too, became more ornate after the 1680s.

The end of the seventeenth century saw Italy and Spain in eclipse, and the foreshadowing of a new classical style in France based on a unity of construction, which had been violated by all the great writers of the first half of the century. This period also saw in England and Spain the end of all the schools of Baroque poets and dramatists who had put decoration and detail before directness of statement. Not only did the new classicism purify the language, insist on the unities and standardize the forms of literature; it also put an end to the romantic individualism of those stoical poets who had made poetry out of their doubts, their beliefs and their despairs. Henceforth the standard was that of social conformity rather than of belief. The enlightenment which had begun in the Florentine Academy had lost its virtue in extending its territory, and now the wisdom of the Ancients was presented as if it were no more than a recipe for national grandeur, worldly morals and an art which glorified both.