



Alois Riegl, The Origins of Baroque Art in Rome Helen Hills Rethinking the Baroque

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(pp. 146–7) without making the connection with this exotic instrumental ensemble or pointing out that Johnson can be connected with a number of its appearances during Queen Elizabeth's progresses, including at Kenilworth in 1575, Elvetham in 1591 and, probably, Norwich in 1578 – the last involving the city's waits. Delving a little deeper into repertoires of written music where the subject demands it would have paid rich dividends.

As we might expect, Marsh is at his best discussing popular music, such as ballads and country dances, though again he might have acknowledged that a number of them derive from composed music: his list of 'The top fifty ballad tunes' (p. 236) includes *Dulcina*, a Jacobean masque dance; 'If love's a sweet passion' from Purcell's *Fairy Queen*; 'Fond boy' and *The Languishing Swain*, derived from songs by Thomas Tollett and Robert King respectively; and Lord Willoughby's *Welcome Home*, which probably started life as a keyboard piece by William Byrd. Just as composers of the time often set ballad tunes so a portion of the popular repertory was derived from art music. Also, reading John Ward's articles would have alerted Marsh to the fact that tunes such as *Greensleeves*, *Rogero* and *Paul's Steeple* or 'I am Duke of Norfolk' are actually descants to Italian chord sequences. An awareness of the implied harmonies of these and other tunes would have made the discussion of ballad tunes in Chapter 6 rather more convincing.

Having said all this, there is much to entertain and instruct in Marsh's book so long as one recognises that it is only a partial account of a rich strand in our cultural history. It is elegantly written, and has the bonus of an entertaining CD specially recorded by a distinguished group of early music specialists under the banner of the Dufay Collective. I fear, however, that the book will do little to convince Marsh's fellow historians that seventeenth-century English music is worth taking seriously, particularly since its great composers only feature on the periphery: Orlando Gibbons gets in only because his father was a wait, and William Lawes only as a royalist martyr (he died at the Siege of Chester in 1645), while John Jenkins is mentioned mostly for one unimportant popular piece. It is rather as if, say, a history of English drama of the period were to be written hardly mentioning Shakespeare or Ben Jonson.

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The Origins of Baroque Art in Rome, by Alois Riegl, edited and translated by Andrew Hopkins and Arnold Witte, with essays by Alina Payne, Arnold Witte, and Andrew Hopkins, Los Angeles, The Getty Research Institute, 2010, x + 280 pp., £35.00/\$50.00 (paperback), ISBN 978-1-60606-041-4

Rethinking the Baroque, edited by Helen Hills, Farnham & Burlington, VT, Ashgate, 2011, xvii + 243 pp., £65.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-7546-6685-1

Alois Riegl's interpretation of the baroque, a version of his lecture-notes from the 1890s, was first published in 1908. The editors of this new English edition have provided a fluent and readable translation of a document which, they acknowledge, is not necessarily an easy text. Riegl's lectures, although interested in the baroque style, are more concerned with discussing actual baroque works, and this may have been why they were such a success

when first delivered, although reading (rather than listening to) them inevitably loses some of the clarity offered by his concise (if occasionally dense) comments on artistic or architectural examples. When Riegl was teaching in Vienna the baroque was commonly derided by contemporary scholars, and his lectures defend it against detractors. For Riegl, it needed to be taken seriously on its own terms, and not regarded as the final decline of Renaissance classicism. The three prefatory essays effectively explore the broader contexts of Riegl's thinking, particularly the influence of Jacob Burckhardt and Heinrich Wölfflin, and responses to Riegl himself. As the editors indicate, *The origins of the baroque in Rome* is not the complete version of his original lectures, nor are they the definitive statement of Riegl's art-historical thinking. His most influential idea was the *Kunstwollen*, a term which unhelpfully changed meaning throughout Riegl's career, and might be understood as recognising a 'metahistorical and supra-individual force behind the development of style' or as defining 'an immanent quality of a work of art that connected it to the cultural context from which it had sprung forth' (p. 34). Though not so prominent here, its use nevertheless reflects the nineteenth-century interest in big conceptual ideas, intended to systemise and explain the evolution of western art. Nevertheless, Riegl's interest in individual paintings, sculptures and buildings allowed him to put forward a case for a historicising contextualism. He insisted that art historians should abandon abstract discussions of style and instead consider historical objects and the reasons for their creation. He believed that 'the significance of archival sources lies in the fact that they reveal the intentions of art' (p. 103).

Given the complex debates now surrounding the very notion of the baroque, what did Riegl make of it? It was primarily an aesthetic of the seventeenth century, with its first phase occurring between 1550 and 1630, followed by the mature period of Bernini's pre-eminence. Its defining features were its depictions of 'momentary emotion' (p. 108) and 'the compositional unity of everything that comes into view' (p. 113). More vaguely it is 'peculiar, unfamiliar, extraordinary' (p. 94). For Riegl, the creators of the baroque were Correggio and the later Michelangelo; the latter emerges as an artist working on the 'threshold between styles' (p. 15). As for Wölfflin, Michelangelo was 'Vater des Barocks' and much of Riegl's lectures are pre-occupied with making this case. He locates key baroque emphases (notably, movement and transitory emotion), in sixteenth-century works and finds in them another baroque characteristic: the battle between will and sentiment. For Riegl, modern art is defined by the representation of sentiment defeating the will, and this psychological concept is represented within the nature of baroque composition, in a move towards subjective, rather than objective, depictions (pp. 130–1). As the editors indicate, Riegl's interest in psychology derived in part from his Hegelianism, but his thinking on the baroque was broader than this, for he located objects at the centre of culture, and the centre of that new culture was Rome, which superseded Florentine influence 'in correspondence with the overwhelming importance of the papacy' (p. 97). Riegl presciently identifies the direction in which historians' approaches towards the counter-reformation have since turned when commenting on the baroque's colonial and evangelistic impact: 'Italian art performed a global mission well into the second half of the seventeenth century and even well into the eighteenth century, especially for Catholic nations' (p. 95).

Recognising that the baroque existed beyond Europe and was a truly global phenomenon in the early modern period has been a central aspect of recent historical interest in the subject. Several contributors to Helen Hills's collection of essays, *Rethinking the baroque* explore those resonances: Howard Caygill asks if the architect Sinan's opulent Islamic buildings are baroque, and offers interesting thoughts on the nature of early modern cultural transmission; Claire Farago explores Spanish appropriations of Amerindian cultures, considering how the concept of idolatry was re-formed in the context of early colonialism and

the reformations, while the baroque spirit in England is contextualised through the very different works of Nicholas Hawksmoor, John Locke and William Shakespeare in essays by Anthony Geraghty and Andrew Benjamin. These ten essays reveal just how far engagement with the baroque has expanded since Riegl lectured in the 1890s. Alina Payne, who contributes to both volumes, offers a broader contextualisation to nineteenth-century debates about the early modern baroque following the discovery of the sculptural reliefs at Pergamon, which popularised the ‘ancient baroque’. This is a fascinating account of how art historians were forced to confront new material and even changed their minds about the nature of their own scholarship and the art-historical enterprise. Pergamon not only rehabilitated the early modern baroque, but also undermined the periodisation towards which much scholarship had been directed. It complicated attempts to create explanatory systems for all western art, and opened up the possibility of multiple baroques – in this case, ancient and modern – relevant to Riegl’s own intellectual development and crucial to the essays in Hills’s collection.

Hills’s own discussions of early scholarly interest in baroque periodisation and style demonstrate the current effort to de-emphasise historical chronology and stylistic essence as the major interests of study. Like Riegl, Hills is concerned to move away from negative understandings of the baroque, but unlike him she is preoccupied with ‘avoiding simple forms of periodization’ (p. 3). Here, Michelangelo does not lead organically into Bernini. Similarly, Rome is scarcely mentioned; this is a book which is committed to ‘de-territorializing’ the baroque. The phenomenon becomes global, placeless and timeless, something quite abstract (if a very different kind of abstraction to that favoured by Wölfflin). As Hills notes, her book puts forward a vision of the baroque which is ‘neither pejorative nor early modern’ (p. 11). But although Hills rejects simple periodization, the nature of time is a theme resonating strongly in several essays, and the book’s structure echoes the trajectory of Hills’s introduction and first chapter on definitions and influences. Not only do the essays’ subjects move more or less chronologically from the early modern towards the contemporary baroque, as they progress the nature of contributors’ indebtedness to scholars shifts notably. By the later essays, references to nineteenth-century art historians have almost disappeared, replaced by twentieth-century theorists, most notably Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze. Indeed, Benjamin and Deleuze feature prominently from the beginning, even in the earlier essays more pre-occupied with exploring early modern material artefacts and texts. As the tone of the essays becomes more abstract and less historical, their shadow grows longer and their influence more explicit.

Hills’s purpose in assembling such a vibrant and diffuse collection of essays on the baroque was to ‘trouble the smooth waters of a linear historicism’ (p. 91), and this collection certainly succeeds in doing that and building on Walter Benjamin’s complicating notions of historical time and the nature of fate, as well as expanding understandings of baroque culture and rejecting early modern pre-eminence. Mieke Bal’s penultimate chapter identifies movement and light as key baroque ideas in contemporary video art and installation pieces, as Riegl does in his discussion of early modern art, while her discussion of the porcelain, resin and feathers composition of Heringa/Van Kalsbeek of 2007 resonate with Claire Farago’s discussion of a Mexican feather mosaic depicting a Mass of St Gregory from the 1530s. The essays by Bal and Geraghty both share an interest in issues of objectivity and subjectivity. The latter notes that in Hawksmoor’s architectural drawings ‘objective reality begins to collapse in the face of subjective perception’ (p. 132), a sentiment akin to Riegl’s understandings of the early Roman baroque. Glenn Adamson’s exploration of three rococo case studies would no doubt also have found Riegl’s approval in his focus on objects, including a self-conscious painting of Madame de Pompadour, herself made-up or ‘painted’, and a

carved wooden cravat from the late seventeenth century, worn by Horace Walpole decades later. Together, the essays offer a stimulating demonstration of the breadth of approach currently being taken in relation to the baroque. But perhaps most striking is the continuing influence of Significant Thinkers, chiefly Benjamin and Deleuze, while Burckhardt and Wölfflin (less prominently Riegl too), remain prominent. The essays serve as a reminder that any attempt to rethink the baroque will always be guided by the rethinking that went before.

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Guercino's Paintings and His Patrons' Politics in Early Modern Italy, by Daniel M. Unger, *Visual Cultures in Early Modernity*, Farnham & Burlington VT, Ashgate, 2010, xii + 183 pp., £55.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-754-66909-8

The subject of David M. Unger's book is Giovanni Francesco Barbieri, better known as Il Guercino (1591–1666), the prolific Italian painter, whose patrons included members of the Catholic Church's hierarchy and the ruling elites of Catholic Europe. Guercino divided his working career between his home town of Cento, Rome, drawn to the papal capital for a short period by the Bolognese pope, Gregory XV Ludovisi (reigned 1621–23), and Bologna in the last period of his life. Unger's aim is to present a selection of Guercino's works squarely in a political context. Certainly, the politics of Guercino's age would have provided rich material. Europe, from 1618 until 1648, was engulfed by conflict, even if Rome itself was largely spared the miseries of war – only during the War of Castro (1641–44) did the papacy become directly embroiled in an international dispute, and Guercino was himself directly affected by the war, as Unger records.

This book in effect comprises nine discrete essays, the first being a biographical essay followed by eight focusing on single paintings by Guercino, though each set in wider art historical contexts. In the book's introduction, Unger argues that his selection broadly follows the narrative of the Thirty Years' War, as experienced by Catholic Europe, in two thematic sections. Thus, the first four substantive chapters deal in turn with the papacy's international role, its efforts to advance the Catholic cause against Protestantism, to present the case for a crusade, and France's responsibilities in European power politics. Then, so Unger contends, as the clear confessional nature of the war gave way to more ambiguous and blurred battlelines dividing Catholics, so Guercino's work explored more problematic issues. Any sense of confessional optimism that Catholics might have held in the 1620s was dissipated by infighting and particularist ambitions typified by the disputes within the French royal family during the 1630s over Richelieu's handling of foreign policy, resentment amongst officeholders in the Church, and Urban VIII Barberini's embroilment in the War of Castro, seemingly in the interests of his own family rather than the Church as a whole. Hope was replaced by disillusionment.

Unger has produced an interesting work that in its own terms makes a good case for Guercino as a 'political painter'. Nevertheless, the book is not without its difficulties. Some of the work's problems derive from the source material. While Guercino was productive as an artist, the sources for understanding his works seem more limited. Unger depends to a considerable degree on a few printed sources, in particular Guercino's financial accounts and