

The Metaphor of Perspective

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis interprets John Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) and Andrew Marvell's *The Last Instructions to a Painter* (1667) in light of recent scholarship drawing on English and Dutch visual culture traditions. These poems were written in close temporal proximity, and both provide a highly politicised account of the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1664-7). Marvell's poem is traditionally read as a satiric response to Edmund Waller's panegyric on the war in *Instructions to a Painter* (1665), thus providing the final word in the series of satiric *Advice-to-a-Painter* poems that Waller spawned. Dryden's, Marvell's and Waller's poems explicitly draw upon visual cultural traditions, and it is the purpose of this thesis to explore the political implications of those choices. In this thesis I am not making a claim for the indiscriminate, general reference to visual cultural or scientific material in Dryden's and Marvell's poem; I am arguing that the choices they make quite explicitly include certain things and exclude others, which suggests a knowing attitude.

Marvell employs Waller's motif of giving instructions to a portrait painter; his poem conforms to principles of decorum long associated with "good" painting, but satirically subverts them to create a series of grotesque images of courtiers and parliamentarians in keeping with his corrupt subject matter. Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* also draws upon visual cultural material to give a more favorable account of the war, but the poem is to one side of the "painter poem" tradition. Dryden's political argument is aligned with Waller's, but he works to praise the English without direct reference to the Waller panegyric.

Waller and Dryden both allude to perspective techniques used in Renaissance court portraiture and painting in order to celebrate Charles II and his generals and to

portray a sense of national unity. Marvell alludes to English Mannerist and Dutch art traditions to create a poetic State Portrait designed to challenge Waller's and Dryden's Royalist interpretations of events. Marvell uses Mannerist stylisation to critique the decadence of Charles II and his court, while referring to Dutch painting techniques, characterised by a high attention to detail, to draw attention to unflattering features traditionally "painted" out.

In *Annus Mirabilis* order is achieved by combining classical imagery with principles of Baconian science that sought to taxonomise nature, and to "reform" language, strengthening the relationship between signifier and signified, and imposing a sense of order and unity on the world. In *Last Instructions* the metaphor of the microscope functions as a framing device for reading Marvell's poem. This enables Marvell to distort his subject matter in the name of "scientific" truth, with the deliberate failure to provide a unified image leaving the reader to piece together the various episodes. As a result, Marvell demonstrates that any attempt to represent the war is going to be partial and subjective.

By studying the aesthetic and scientific techniques together, I argue that Dryden creates a poem in which the spatial design supports his praise for Charles II and the hierarchy in the state he wants to invoke. Conversely, Marvell creates a poetic State Portrait that alludes to Dutch painting techniques and the microscope to distort and fragment his subject matter, thereby challenging both Waller's and Dryden's imposition of order and unity on a war characterised by political corruption and strategic failure. Considering the aesthetic and scientific references concurrently draws attention to the use of perspectival cues that shape the political arguments of each poem. This method is important for drawing attention to Dryden's and Marvell's different approaches to engaging with key events of the Second Anglo-

Dutch war and the multi-disciplinary nature of these representations; an aspect that has, until now, been under examined in the critical tradition.

Chapter one, “Panegyric and Satire in Waller’s, Dryden’s and Marvell’s poems on the Second Anglo-Dutch War” sets the context for my analysis by focusing on Marvell’s satiric *Advice-to-a-Painter* poems to which *Last Instructions* provides the final word. I ask whether there is evidence of Marvell’s knowledge of Dutch and English Mannerist painting traditions, and conclude that Marvell alludes to these traditions explicitly and systematically. In chapter two, “The Ekphrastic portraits in Waller’s, Dryden, and Marvell’s Anglo-Dutch War poems” I focus on the portraits that appear throughout Dryden’s and Marvell’s poems, and examine these in light of English, Mannerist and Dutch portraiture traditions. Chapter three, “Poetry as History Painting: Renaissance and Mannerist perspectives in Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis* and Marvell’s *Last Instructions to a Painter*,” builds upon my analysis of Dryden’s and Marvell’s portraiture to consider the genre of the *istoria* or history painting for which Marvell’s poem purports to represent the “third sitting.” I argue that the composition of *Annus Mirabilis* adheres to principles of linear perspective, while Marvell’s *Last Instructions* is more usefully considered in terms of Mannerist and Dutch compositional techniques. Chapter four “Natural philosophy, optics and theatricality in Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis*” focuses on Dryden’s metaphoric staging of the action in terms of a Renaissance stage set. I use Dryden’s allusions to the physical space of the theatre, where audiences were seated in relation to the King at the centre, as a governing metaphor for the civil hierarchy and perspective established in the poem. In chapter five, “Marvell’s Metaphor of the Microscope and the Partial Perspective of Dutch Visual Culture,” I focus on Marvell’s reference to the microscope in *Last Instructions* as a metaphor for reading the poem. In contrast

to the aesthetically and politically unified structure of Dryden's poem, the pluralism of the microscopic perspective and the overlaps with Dutch aesthetic techniques implies that any account of events will always be partial and subjective.

Notes on Editions

All references to Waller's *Instructions to a Painter* are taken from George Gilfillan's 1873 edition.

All references to Dryden's poem are taken from the Paul Hammond and David Hopkins edition, which uses the 1667 third issue. The poem was reprinted in 1668 (probably pirated) and 1688, but there is no evidence Dryden oversaw these editions (Hammond and Hopkins 106). The 1668 edition makes some necessary corrections, but introduces new errors (106).

All references to Marvell's poems are taken from Nigel Smith's 2007 edition, which predominantly uses the 1681 copy text. Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. D. 49 (Bod 1), an annotated copy of 1681, has readings that have often been accepted by previous editors and is assumed to have belonged to Marvell's nephew William Popple. Bod. 1. also includes the Cromwell poems and the Restoration verse satires excluded from previous volumes over questions of authorship. Smith's edition is greatly indebted to H.M Margoliouth's extensive annotation of Marvell's works published in 1927. Smith also draws upon more recent contributions from Crooke, Thomson, Grosart, Legouis, Duncan-Jones, Donno and Wilcher (Smith *The Poems* xiv-xv). Smith modernises spelling, but mostly retains original punctuation.

I have provided links to all images referenced in my thesis in the footnotes; where images are taken from databases not freely accessible, I have provided an alternative link. Each of these images is also referenced in the general bibliography as per the MLA style. For citations and bibliography, I have used the MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers (7th edition), including formatting changes from the

newly released 8th edition that can be located on the OWL Perdu website.

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/747/22/>

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