Book Reviews/Comptes Rendus

The Paradise of Women: Writings by Englishwomen of the Renaissance, Contributions in Women's Studies, No. 22, compiled and edited by Betty Travitsky. Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1981. Pp. xiv, 283. \$29.95

The title of Betty Travitsky's anthology, taken from a contemporary proverb, is ironic; her presentation of the history and writing of Englishwomen of the Renaissance brings out rather the "ambiguity" of their situation in this period, which allowed them a measure of development as "individuals, wives, and especially as mothers," while their general legal and economic status declined. Travitsky believes that this "ambiguous development" is "the root of the ambivalence of Western women today"; and the texts in this work do indeed portray conflictual relationships between the sexes, and between women and the society at large, that still haunt the Western heritage under various forms.

The aim of the anthology, however, is not at all to "modernize" these writings. The texts are taken from first editions when available and printed with original spelling and language; and Travitsky's carefully developed introductions place the writings in their historical and cultural context, allowing the modern reader to "hear the voices" of these women as accurately as possible.

An opening Introduction traces developments in humanist and Protestant thought as they affected women's status and education in England; for example, the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers which encouraged literacy for women, as well as the enhanced status given to marriage by Protestantism and the new importance attributed to the role of the mother by both humanists and reformers. Travitsky's introductions to each section and biographical sketches of each author also provide very succinct and useful information for the understanding of the texts. She assesses both the historical and literary interest of the selections, giving her own evaluation of previous studies and provides complete bibliographical information for each author in the notes.

Part I of the anthology itself, "Writings Conforming to the Renaissance Standard," is arranged by theme—1) Religious Compositions, 2) Familial and Personal Writings, and 3) Secular Writings—which gives some order to the excerpts, although there is much overlap of topics. Some of the "Poetry of Mourning" of Chapter 1 has no specifically religious content; the "Letters and Diaries" of

Chapter 2 may deal with literary, religious or social issues, as well as "familial and personal" ones; and some of the "Imaginative Literature" and "Prefaces" of Chapter 3 contain religious as well as secular themes.

One can follow individual authors from section to section in Part I; such as Rachel Speght, whose classical and biblical erudition is evident in her imaginative poetry as well as in a prose tract answering an attack on women. Or one can compare writings on the same theme: the "Letters and Diaries" of Chapter 2, for example, reveal the complicated intertwining of relations between women at the Court, with letters from Elizabeth Tudor to Catherine Parr and to Mary Stuart, as well as from Catherine to Mary; and the "Prefaces" of Chapter 3 provide insight into the range of postures, from apologetic to justificatory, which women writers of the time adopted to present their work to patrons or to the public.

Part I includes writings by well-known women, such as Elizabeth Tudor or Mary (Sidney) Herbert, but also introduces texts by lesser-known figures, such as Isabella Whitney, "the type of Elizabethan woman of letters Virginia Woolf mistakenly thought to have no existence in Elizabethan days." Works of translation by many of these women are discussed, and bibliographical information given for them, though the editor has deliberately excluded excerpts from these works, judging them "essentially derivative," while acknowledging that the choice was "painful" in the case of Mary Herbert's Psalms.

Part II isolates three figures as "Exceptional Women" and devotes a chapter to each, allowing the reader to form a more complete picture of an individual author's life and work than in Part I. The three are Anne (Askew) Kyme, a Protestant martyr whose wit and courage are evident from the transcripts of her arrests and her writings in prison; Mary Stuart, whose work the editor feels has not been sufficiently recognized for its literary merits; Elizabeth (Tanfield) Cary, Lady Falkland, who maintained her Catholicism despite severe pressure and forced separation from her husband, and was an active translator and the author of "the first original drama in English by an Englishwoman."

The organization of the anthology seems at times to lack internal coherence: I am not sure why the latter three women were selected out as "exceptional," nor is the organization by "theme" of Part I wholly satisfying. This failure of the selections to fit into neat groupings, however, is probably a measure of the editor's fidelity to the "cornucopian" nature of Renaissance texts. In fact, the anthology could have borrowed its title from that of some of the texts it presents: "A Chaine of Pearls. . .," "A Sweet Nosegay. . ." or "A handfull of holesome (though homelie) hearbs" That neither one nor several themes emerge in these writings as central is a tribute to Travitsky's scrupulous scholarship—the abundance and variety of the Renaissance imagination makes itself felt through the selections, and the texts are not edited to correspond to the compiler's own ideas.

Travitsky herself acknowledges the limitations of her anthology in her Preface: that it is representative only of upper- or middle-class Englishwomen, that it does not include the voices of either "disreputable" or lower-class women of the time. One of the merits of the book in my view is that the literary quality of the selections is generally quite high, although there is some inevitable tediousness as certain themes are repeated. The editor is interested in encouraging reappraisal of the esthetic value of many of these writings, and the excerpts she chooses justify

this. At the same time, the anthology demonstrates the wit, courage and determination of these women, and provides valuable insights into our "foremothers'" thoughts and feelings. Its texts and historical summaries offer an extensive introduction to material not readily available, and its abundant bibliographical information makes it a useful research guide for anyone interested in pursuing further study on the subject.

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Carl C. Christensen. *Art and the Reformation in Germany*. Athens and Detroit: Ohio University Press and Wayne State University Press, 1979. Pp. 269. \$15.95

Christensen has written a careful study of a number of important topics related to the production, destruction and decline of art during the German Reformation. The book is not a technical study in art history but rather an application of theology and the social history of religion and art to the discrete subject of iconoclasm in the German Reformation, the uses of religious art in confessional Lutheranism, and the decline of the arts from the German Renaissance to the German Reformation. By "art" Christensen means painting and sculpture—and he is interested in sculpture primarily as an object of attack by iconoclasts. Religious music, religious literature and church architecture do not come up for discussion.

The book builds upon seven articles published by the author from 1967 to 1977, drawing verbally on four of them. It is deeply immersed in the previous scholarly literature of the topics it treats, to which the author gives generous credit. (Indeed, a concluding excursus on Durer's *Four Apostles* is in substance a careful critical discussion of the previous scholarly literature.) Mainly it draws upon published sources, together with some manuscript sources pertaining to Nuremberg. The subjects of Protestant iconoclasm and Lutheran affirmation of art are kept in a successful balance by devoting the first and third chapters to the former and the second and fourth chapters to the latter. After a brief discussion of imagery and the dangers of its superstitious abuse in the late medieval church, the first chapter deals with Andreas Carlstadt's iconoclastic theology, placed against its historical context in the radical reform measures in Wittenberg during the winter of 1521-22. The second chapter presents Luther's views on religious art, insofar as they can be gleaned from occasional writings, commentaries and sermons. In substance Luther is shown to have moved from a disparaging attitude toward the ceremonialism of the old church to a practical recognition of the value of visual illustration for Lutheran worship. Beyond the analysis of statements scattered in Luther's writings, Christensen undertakes to put Luther's views into the broader context of his theology.

The next two chapters develop the themes of the two earlier ones in a more substantial manner. The varying response of three cities to early Protestant iconoclasm is the topic of the third chapter. Lutheran Nuremberg held iconoclasm in check, preserving its treasures of late medieval religious art. Strassbourg