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Anachronic Renaissance. By Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood. 456 pp. incl. 124 b. & w. ills. (Zone Books, New York, 2010), £29.95. ISBN 978–1–935408–02–4.

Reviewed by KRISTEN LIPPINCOTT

AS ST AUGUSTINE warned, the subject of 'time' appears to be relatively straightforward, until one tries to tackle it oneself. The subject of how 'time' is depicted in painting seems to be more complicated still. In this series of essays, Alexander Nagel and Christopher S. Wood propose to offer art historians a new method for analysing 'the different models of the image's temporality' in Renaissance works of art.

For their discussion, the authors coin the phrase 'anachronic', in order to offer a non-judgmental alternative to the historicist's judgment of these works as having 'anachronistic' (or, by implication 'mistaken') temporal elements or qualities: early Christian saints in fifteenth-century dress and surroundings, *sacre conversazioni*; the optimistic misdating of early Christian edifices as 'antique'; imaginative re-figurations of the Temple of Solomon; the enshrinement of the Casa Santa in Loreto; and differing approaches to the fragmentary remains of the *Titulus Crucis* – all these betray anachronic elements. So too do questions surrounding the temporal implications of the copy, pastiche, homage and the forgery. The anachronic work of art is one in which answering the question 'what time is it?' or 'what is the temporal reality depicted by this image' becomes difficult to address, let alone answer.

Nagel and Wood argue that these 'anachronies' – or, more precisely, *anachronies*, since it is a term derived from the French philosopher Jacques Rancière (see p.370, note 18) – are reflections of 'the clash between two different versions of the time–artifact relation' (p.44) that plague Renaissance artists, one that they call the 'performative' and the other 'substitutional'. The 'performative' work draws attention to itself as an artefact created by a certain person at a certain time. It is the authorial product that has a time-sensitive quality. The 'substitutional' work is able, through a bewilderingly flexible set of criteria, to insert itself within a largely non-authored chain of images that claims atemporal and, often, divine authority. According to the authors' thesis, works of art that were created, broadly, between the time of Giotto and that of Raphael record a heightened tension between these two types of artistic motive on account of the growing value placed on the qualities of individual artistic styles, as well as due to an increasing interest and understanding of antique visual and pictorial models.

In some ways, these distinctions are not entirely new. Previous art historians, such as Hans Belting, Georges Didi-Huberman and Gerhard Wolf (to name only a few), have certainly laid the ground for this theoretical model and have proposed not entirely dissimilar dichotomies. One point that is slightly worrying, however, is the extent to which Nagel's and Wood's distinctions take no account of secular works of art produced during the period. From the hundreds of examples they discuss, less than a handful do not have an explicitly religious context. Is secular art – by definition – temporal and authored? And if so, is it – by Nagel's and Wood's definition – always doomed to be 'anachronistic' rather than 'anachronic'? And, if it were the case that all the examples in which these dynamisms between the performative and the substitutional play out are specifically religious in nature and intent, is it possible to speak of the making and reception of sacred images from a purely theoretical perspective without addressing the very nature of religious belief in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries? One does not have to be a reviled 'historicist' to argue that even though you can take the painting out of the church, is it certainly 'anachronistic' to take 'the Church' out of the painting.

One yearns for the discovery of a native Italian or Flemish spokesman, as eloquent as Symeon of Thessalonica, to argue the case for those contemporary local painters who believed that multiple temporality – in whatever guise – was a desired, useful and, possibly, even necessary element in religious painting.[1] But lacking that, Nagel and Wood often present their arguments as if they believed that Renaissance artists themselves were concerned with the issues of performative versus substitutional art. Even by suggesting that 'Carpaccio has imagined . . .' (p.39); 'Leonardo knew perfectly well . . .' (p.60); 'Alberti was attempting to imagine . . .' (p.168), they push their arguments beyond the realm of scholarly insight and into the arena of either 'anachronic' or, more likely, 'anachronistic' imagining – which, in itself, has a certain academic allure, but certainly should not be presented or understood as being the truth.[2]

[1] This suggestion has been made by Luke Syson in 'Representing Domestic Interiors', in M. Ajmar-Wollheim and F. Dennis, eds.: exh. cat. *At Home in Renaissance Italy*, London (Victoria and Albert Museum) 2006, pp.86–101.

[2] It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that some of the authors' arguments appeared as the inaugural essay of the 'Interventions' series of *The Art Bulletin* 75/3 (2005), pp.403–15. The replies of the respondents – Charles Dempsey, Clare Farago and Michael Cole – make for interesting reading, as does the spirited and lucid reply by Nagel and Wood in the same issue.

The Story of Irish Museums 1790–2000. Culture, Identity and Education. By. Marie Bourke. 562 pp. incl. 177 col. + 46 b. & w. ills. (Cork University Press, Cork, 2011), £45. ISBN 978–1–85918–475–2.

Reviewed by RÓISÍN KENNEDY

THE GREAT EXPANSION of publicly funded museums in Ireland took place during the nineteenth century at the same period as burgeoning Irish nationalism was gripping the public's imagination. At the centre of both developments was the Royal Irish Academy's (RIA) impressive and growing collection of Irish antiquities. This was eventually handed over to the state-controlled Dublin Museum of Science and Art (later National Museum of Ireland) in 1890, where it became a major public attraction. In the same period a complex of cultural institutions comprising the Natural History Museum, the Dublin Museum of Science and Art, the National Library, the Metropolitan School of Art and the National Gallery of Ireland was established in Dublin's city centre. Modelled on London's South Kensington, this museum quarter could be read as a classic example of cultural imperialism, as most of these institutions mirrored at some level those of London. In her new book, Marie Bourke suggests that Henry Cole saw the provision of these facilities as a form of political compensation for the negative effects of the Act of Union (p.429). They supplanted many of the functions of pre-Union eighteenth-century bodies such as the Dublin Society and the RIA as well as absorbing their collections. However, the new chain of command was constantly undermined by tension between London and Dublin. Attempts to obtain funding for acquisitions for the National Gallery of Ireland were systematically rejected by authorities in London who stated that 'museums comprising casts, prints and patterns' were adequate for Irish audiences. This was disputed by the NGI's board which wanted a 'real' national gallery (p.213). Subsequently the treasury refused to fund a separate portrait gallery for Ireland, a goal which was later achieved through the determination of private individuals. In 1898 pro-Home Rule Irish parliamentarians voted against the South Kensington Museum's 'extravagant expenditure on public building' because requests for 'equipment of the Dublin Science and Art Museum had been ignored' (p.202). Conflict reached a low point when the director of the National Museum (formerly the Dublin Museum), George Noble, Count Plunkett, retired from his post upon the execution of his son, a leader of the 1916 Rising. Perhaps to cleanse the Museum of any improper associations, Plunkett's successor mounted a series of suitably imperial exhibitions, including one of Greek vases and a special wartime display of explosives used in trench warfare.

Given the massive popularity and symbolic value of the National Museum's collection of Irish antiquities, the neglect of museums and the cultural sector by the new Irish state is all the more indefensible. Placed under the control of the Department of Education after independence in 1922, the National Museum suffered for decades from underfunding and bureaucratic control. Cataloguing of archaeological artefacts took precedence over access and education. The lack of government support is excused by the meagre resources of the new state, but the reasons for its abandonment of cultural institutions need further analysis. The National Gallery was similarly disregarded but was fortunate in being under the control of a board rather than a government department. Its low attendance figures, dating from the late nineteenth century, did not prevent it being