

nity, knew that the opposite to love is not hate but power. Humility is endless.

## **Analyzing the Literary Image**

Aaron Urbanczyk

**Christ and Apollo**, by William Lynch, S.J., *Wilmington, Del.: ISI Books, 2004.* 275 pp.

*CHRIST AND APOLLO* IS A provocative theoretical treatise on literary criticism boldly enlisting perennial Catholic theology and philosophy. It first appeared in 1960, but literary scholars stand in far greater need of its argument now than at the time of its original publication.

A cursory reader may find the book a philosophical and theological treatise merely enlisting imaginative literature as a springboard for lofty speculation, as if literature was merely philosophy and theology for beginners. Presuming so would be to misunderstand Father William Lynch's enterprise, however. The book is first and foremost a work of literary theory and criticism; analyzing the literary image is *Christ and Apollo's* primary task. Literature is, above all, the making of images through language, and Father Lynch approaches the literary image from the perspective of a robustly theistic metaphysical realism.

The very fact that this book's theoretical groundings flatly contradict the predictable relativism and rhetoric of postmodernism makes its reappearance both timely and challenging. Indeed, *Christ and Apollo* rightly insists that the literary

image is born of finite, concrete, creaturely, and limited being, and any aesthetic theory attempting to bypass a firm metaphysical account of the real (as understood by metaphysics and theology) ultimately fails to account for what literature is.

Lynch evokes the figures of Christ and Apollo as representing two diametrically opposed poles of the human imagination *vis-à-vis* the terrain of the real. He argues that "literary insight comes from the penetration of the finite and the definite concrete in all its interior dimensions and according to all its real lines." Thus, Apollo represents "a sort of infinite dream...[and a] fantasy beauty," while Christ stands for "the completely definite...who, in taking on our human nature...took on every inch of it...in all its density." Literature is thus broadly divided into two categories: Apollonian poetics infused with romantic escapist dreams indicative of hatred for real being, and the "narrow way" of Christic poetics, imagining man in his finite, creaturely mortality where salvation lies within time (not beyond it).

*Christ and Apollo* begins with grounding its literary theory in the definite (over the ideal or romantic) and proceeds to a thematic discussion of literary representations of time, tragedy as genre, and comedy as genre. Father Lynch chastises Proust, Eugene O'Neill, Baudelaire, and Poe for indulging the Apollonian imagination while praising Sophocles, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, and Cervantes for their fidelity to the definite. Yet the theoretical center of *Christ and Apollo* comes in the text's second half (chapters 5-8), where Father Lynch enlists the metaphysical doctrine of analogy, the traditional four-fold method of biblical exegesis, and Christology (the theology of the person of Christ) as paradigms for exploring the ontological dimensions of the literary imagination.

Drawing heavily from Parmenides and Plato, Lynch introduces the reader to the

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metaphysical categories of the “univocal,” the “equivocal,” and the “analogical,” arguing that these metaphysical categories have analogues in the realm of the literary image. After critiquing the “univocal” and “equivocal” modes of literary imagination as insufficient for representing reality, Lynch discusses the importance and the veracity of the “analogical” imagination. Thus, the central dialectical paradigm of one of metaphysics’ thorniest problems (the one versus the many) becomes a template for analyzing literature.

The authentic literary image may be properly termed analogical when it mirrors and represents the complex tension in real being between the ideal and the finite. The analogical imagination images the world as an interpenetration between the finite particular and the ideal essence (Father Lynch’s analysis owes much to the Platonic notion of participation). Thus, the literary imagination’s highest achievements do not celebrate the finite at the expense of the ideal (as does the equivocal imagination), and neither do they leap straight to the ideal in a spirit of contempt for the finite (as does the univocal imagination). Lynch’s use of analogy *vis-à-vis* literature provides, in a sense, a philosophical basis to the theoretical paradox popularized by W. K. Wimsatt (1907-1975), which contends that literature is a sort of “concrete universal.”

Yet Father Lynch goes further than metaphysics, discovering in Christology the ultimate paradigm by which to analyze the analogical imagination. In Christ, true God and true man, the locus of the hypostases of divine and human natures, he finds the perfect metaphor for the analogical image. In Christ, the infinite God dwells with and penetrates the particular without destroying or diminishing it. *Christ and Apollo* is at its most provocative and daring when Father Lynch concludes that the very fact of Christ’s incarnation, the fusing of the di-

vine with the created, offers the only stable point from which to explicate the inherent tension within all literary images (the tension to be both immanently concrete and universally intelligible). The “Christic imagination” is not an imposition of Christian ideology upon poetic narrative; rather, it is an interior principle by which one can view the very *telos* of the created universe.

Father Lynch argues that the “Christic” perspective is already inherent in reality itself and naturally illuminates it from within: “I am not...arguing that Christic materials have to get into our arts in any formal way; but they are there for all that...they begin to push the details of creation even further into our faces.” Literature imitates real being, and thus Christ, author and redeemer of the real, stands as an ordering metaphorical principle for the imagination’s approximation of the world: “For Christ...is not another item of the first creation, to be used as any other item by the old imagination.... [H]e has subverted the whole order of the old imagination.... [H]e illuminates it, and is a new level, identical in structure with, but higher in energy than, every form or possibility of the old.”

If *Christ and Apollo* has any flaws, they are those of an innovative foray into new theoretical terrain. Father Lynch understood his book to be an “essay,” a beginning at a great and daunting intellectual task which others could carry on after him. In this spirit, he leaves many provocative openings underdeveloped. For example, as much as Father Lynch relies upon the “equivocal imagination” as one pole of his central dialectic, he devotes little attention to analyzing it substantively, preferring to emphasize the contrast between the “univocal” and “analogical” imaginations. Also, it is not clear why he fails to complement his excellent treatment of comedy and tragedy with a discussion of the epic or lyric genres. Further, it is odd that Lynch, who rightly

asserts that “*action* is the soul of literary imagination in all its scopes and forms,” would so largely neglect Aristotle’s *Poetics*, especially as Aristotle argues literary imitation (*mimesis*) is precisely and primarily ordered toward human action. Father Lynch’s assertion that the “Christic imagination” may be fruitfully explored through a renaissance of interest in the patristic and medieval *fourfold* method of biblical exegesis (literal, allegorical, tropological, anagogical) stands in great need of theoretical testing and development. *Christ and Apollo* prominently evokes such biblical exegetes as Augustine, John Cassian, Aquinas, and Hugh of St. Victor (especially in the text’s extensive appendices) while giving only a general outline of how they may be of service to literary criticism. Father Lynch’s insistent observation, however, that the literal level of reading scripture is irreplaceable as the foundation for spiritual readings holds much promise as a guide for humanist literary critics, especially those exploring the interpenetration between Christianity and literature.

In the last analysis, Father Lynch succeeds where it counts in a theoretical work. He opens new vistas for critical inquiry in poetics, especially in the intersection between philosophy, theology, and literature. Specifically, Father Lynch (a Jesuit priest) writes in the tradition of, and to a certain extent for, the Christian and Catholic intellectual. As Glenn C. Arbery points out in his introduction, Father Lynch’s “interest in literature... cannot be separated from...his hope for the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in American cultural life.” In an era when postmodernism has violently deleted the “narratives” of philosophy and theology from literary analysis, the author stands as a sign of contradiction, prophetically inviting us to step back into the stream of Christian thought that has inspired Western civilization’s greatest literary works of art. In this sense,

*Christ and Apollo* is nothing short of scandalous to the current critical orthodoxies. Yet Father Lynch is careful to nuance his theoretical intersection of philosophy and theology with poetics so that the properly literary is not eclipsed in favor of the purely rational or dogmatic.

For those wishing to take seriously the intersection of Christianity and literary criticism, *Christ and Apollo* is necessary reading. Father Lynch forcibly illustrates that such a critical project cannot be a naïve baptizing of the poetic; rather, Christianity offers the critic a privileged ontological window into the terrain of the real, the very terrain the literary work of art takes as its foundation.

## ***A Superfluous Woman***

*Daniel McCarthy*

**The Woman and the Dynamo: Isabel Paterson and the Idea of America,**  
by Stephen Cox, *New Brunswick:*  
*Transaction Publishers, 2004. x + 418*  
*pp.*

ISABEL PATERSON, the subject of this engaging new biography by Stephen Cox, is best known—to the extent she is known at all—for her 1943 book *The God of the Machine*. That same year famously saw the publication of other noteworthy additions to the literature of freedom as well, including Rose Wilder Lane’s *Discovery of Freedom* and Albert Jay Nock’s *Memoirs of a Superfluous Man*. Even amidst such distinguished company, Paterson’s volume stood out, albeit as much for its oddity as

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