

ful to Robert Schmitz for assembling still more references on the subject. About whether these references point to a fear of capacity, or incapacity, we may just have to agree to disagree. I am, of course, properly alarmed at Schmitz's taking Lovelace so fully at his word all along, and about the pregnancy issue. Schmitz quotes Lovelace as ready to be surprised if a pregnancy does not happen, but then Lovelace is no stranger to surprise, for most of the things he expects to happen do not happen. As for the witty conceit that opens the letter's final paragraph, though I am not surprised that Lovelace has confused himself with the Almighty, I am surprised that Schmitz seems to have done so. Wilt's hypothesis, qua hypothesis, lives.

JUDITH WILT
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Misrepresenting the Eighteenth Century

To the Editor:

After propounding the thesis that, "when Blake was a child" (presumably in the 1760s and 1770s), "the ideal of perfect order had dissolved into the asymmetry of the sublime," "mathematical order" was shifting "to the balance of unequal masses as determined by taste or inspiration," and "it was generally accepted that the arts were becoming more natural," Carl Woodring ("Nature and Art in the Nineteenth Century," *PMLA*, 92 [1977], 194) adds some puzzling remarks: "In the gardens at Versailles every alley hath a brother; it is not so in the Alps. To the rebellious children of the nineteenth century, it seemed just like Enlightened Pope to think that the essence of brotherhood was parallel lines destined never to coalesce."

What Pope complains of in his famous denunciation, in the *Epistle to Burlington*, of the mathematical order and unnatural symmetry of Timon's Villa is that

No pleasing Intricacies intervene,
No artful wildness to perplex the scene;
Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother,
And half the platform just reflects the other.
The suff'ring eye inverted Nature sees,
Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees.

(ll. 115–20)

The way to do it, Pope says, is rather,

Consult the Genius of the Place in all;
That tells the Waters or to rise or fall,

.

Spontaneous beauties all around advance,
Start ev'n from Difficulty, strike from Chance;
Nature shall join you, Time shall make it grow
A work to wonder at—perhaps a stow.
Without it, proud Versailles! thy glory falls;
And Nero's Terraces desert their walls.

(ll. 57–58, 67–72)

If one is a specialist in the "rebellious children of the nineteenth century," I suppose one has to see that they are provided with something to rebel against. And if this requires misrepresenting the fact that it was Pope and his contemporaries who initiated the English revolt against the symmetrical French and Dutch garden and led the way in "natural," asymmetrical landscape design, misrepresented they must be. Such are the exigencies of maintaining the "periodization" of literature. Though I don't quite know what Woodring's purpose was in changing Pope's colloquial, "natural" *hath* to the artificial, "Romantic" *hath*, as though he were Keats or Wordsworth.

When I and others have protested at the continuing currency of the bizarre legends about the eighteenth century propagated by nineteenth-century (and later) literary historians and textbooks, we have sometimes been charged with flogging a dead horse. Our thanks to Carl Woodring for demonstrating how full of life and vigor the poor beast still is.

DONALD GREENE
University of Southern California

Mr. Woodring replies:

I apologize to Donald Greene for inability to transmit his message to writers of the early nineteenth century or to the Wartons before them. As for our day, I would not wish to obstruct a spirited flogging of error, even when the horses are dead and the donkeys exist only in the eye of the flogger. But assuming a poet as imaginative as Pope who honored reason and order, would he need in 1777 a lingeringly romantic rescue from those who charged him with sanity? Surely Pope supplies the answer: "Let it be seldom, and compell'd by need."

CARL WOODRING
Columbia University

The Beckett Hero

To the Editor:

The argument of Laura Barge's "'Coloured Images' in the 'Black Dark': Samuel Beckett's Later