ALBRECHT DÜRER'S

Renaissance
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AND

Donald Weinstein
If a gravitational center for the Dürer universe could still exist, it would remain, even after over a half-century, Erwin Panofsky. Scholarship on early modern European culture has become profoundly decentered, even to the point of questioning the usefulness of the term Renaissance, and it has produced amazingly diverse accomplishments and discoveries, all of which, taken together, has antiquated Panofsky’s classic study. Of course, a classic, by definition, must be antiquated. A classic is also compelling, when read on its own terms. This one has been so compelling that, in one way or another, many Dürer scholars still trace their work back to the big bang of Panofsky’s book, in particular for assessments of style, not to mention the fundamental interpretations of iconography. I stress this in part because a few of the following pages will suggest a view strongly critical of certain interpretations. Of course, understood in the appropriate sense, those pages will also attest the powerful sway his book still exerts. By saying that, I do not intend to dismiss the important contributions of the hundreds of post-Panofsky interpretations. The last decade has even seen the appearance of two valuable biographies of Dürer, Jane Campbell Hutchison’s and Ernst Rebel’s. Since the surge of social history in early modern European studies, the culturally conservative, formalist methodology of Panofsky has left many historians cold, even if no one could ever find one of Panofsky’s individual analyses boring.¹ Yes, he had biases, the most basic of
which was a strong valorization of classical ideals of art. This bias, though, is one he shared, fittingly enough, with his subject.

If there is, relatively speaking, a weakness even within the bounds of Panofsky’s formalist methodology, it is in the characterization of the complex history of religion in Dürer’s lifetime. Some of the least satisfying, but nonetheless most influential, pages are those that contrast Lutheran and humanist sensibilities, an issue I will address in detail in chapters 8 and 9. After all, Panofsky’s Dürer monograph first appeared in 1943 on the eve of a real golden age of Reformation studies. The scholars we now take for granted—Thomas Brady, Bernd Moeller, Heiko Oberman, Steven Ozment, Jaroslav Pelikan, Lewis Spitz, and Gerald Strauss, just to name a few—were unknown to him. On the whole, and despite the appearance of some basic works (such as Hans Rupprich’s Dürers Schriftlicher Nachlaß and Fedja Anzelewsky’s catalogue raisonné of Dürer’s paintings), historical research even more than art-historical research has made Panofsky obsolete. Yet, even when Panofsky was unable to probe the historical context of religion very deeply, he often produced stunningly accurate descriptions of visual innovations. The traditionalist, formalist, iconologist—however one wishes to label Panofsky—is perhaps the one most capable of observing such fine detail.

In the decades since Panofsky, scholars have become comfortable with characterizing the cultural ideals of Renaissance humanism as elitist, and for good reason—they were. The very term Renaissance, instead of early modern Europe, has become problematic because it signals an interest in only one segment of culture, however dominant it may have been. Still, the concept of the Renaissance is expressive and generally appropriate for characterizing Dürer’s outlook. At the root of the terminological dilemma of the cultural historian of this period lies a paradigm of high and low, elitist and popular. However salutary this terminological and conceptual circumspection may be, the paradigm underlying it can obscure an important element: humanists were concerned about popular culture, especially about the practice of religion among ordinary people.

This book, as the subtitle indicates, is about humanism, the Reformation, and the expression of religious faith in art. With the general title Albrecht Dürer’s Renaissance I intend to signal that the subtitle’s elements of “humanism” and “Reformation” were major components of his Renaissance aesthetic. I also intend the genitive Albrecht Dürer’s to have a restrictive rather than possessive sense. Dürer doesn’t own the northern Renaissance, and this is, self-consciously, an individual study of one Renaissance development, however larger its significance may be.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The ever-increasing duration of this project has been generating an ever-increasing list of people and institutions to thank for assistance. One of the many pleasures writing this book has been encountering so much generosity.

“Ein Buch wird erst ein Buch, wenn es ein Buch geworden ist,” besides seeming truer with every book I write, dictates acknowledgment of several people at the University of Michigan Press, especially Christopher Collins, Collin Ganio, Mary Hashman, and Sarah Mann. They stood by me with advice and encouragement, graciously guiding the manuscript through a surprisingly large number of stages. Marvin Becker also played a big role in publishing this book. When I wrote the word “generosity” in the first paragraph his name was the first association my mind made. It was he who, after taking the time to review an early version of the book, first recommended it to the University of Michigan Press. I am also deeply grateful for the editorial expertise of Christina Milton and Richard Isomaki.

The project got several boosts from invitations to speak at universities, including the University of Cincinnati, Cornell University, Harvard University, University of Massachusetts, Notre Dame University, Southern Methodist University, and Washington University. I’m grateful for all those opportunities and especially for the questions and discussions they occasioned, particularly for conversations with Glenn Ehrstine, Arthur Groos, Craig Harbison, Steven Ozment, Richard Schade, and George Schoolfield.
Acknowledgments

The University of Michigan invited me to give a lecture and a colloquium on this project in April 2002. This was my last public presentation of material from the book, a good chance to hear many reactions, with some especially pointed ones from Elizabeth Sears and Thomas Willette, to my treatment of anti-Semitism in Dürer’s Passion representations and to my analysis of his reception of the Reformation. I also made presentations at two meetings of the Renaissance Society of America and am grateful for the discussions generated there, in particular for those with Jeffrey Chipps Smith and Donald Weinstein. Georg Kauffmann offered considerable advice on two lectures I revised for publication as articles in Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte. In a similar way, Heiko Oberman gave some crucial assistance several years ago, as I turned a lecture on anti-Semitic Carnival plays into an article; that was a small project, but one that prepared me for chapter 6 in this book. Margaret Carrol and Donald Niewyk also made important suggestions for improving this chapter.

Quite a few people ended up reading the entire manuscript. Three anonymous readers commissioned by the Press offered pages of suggestions that ultimately spurred me on to modify several emphases. And, then, there were some faithful friends—Jeremy Adams, Kirsten Christensen, Jaroslav Pelikan, Charles Ryrie, Fred Sand, Decherd Turner, Donald Weinstein, Volkhard Wels, and, above all, my wife, Valerie Hotchkiss. This group gave me many new leads and many a suggestion about what might be done better, and, most of all, these friends, along with Thomas Nolden and Bonnie Wheeler, have sustained me over the long haul of bringing this book to completion.

One of the strangest things about this project is that it has occasioned vivid memories of being a young student. This is the first time, I believe, that the primary focus of my study has been familiar to me since I was a teenager. It is natural that one encounters Dürer at a young age and then repeatedly, if one studies art. In particular, it has reminded me of the great debt I owe Joseph Knab, my high school teacher for ancient history, introduction to philosophy, European history, and art history. It may seem strange for a college professor to think first of his high school history teacher. Yet, as most students of my vintage at Walnut Hills High School (Cincinnati) know, Knab was compelling, truly nonpareil. As a youngster in college, I specialized in ancient art; as a freshman and sophomore, I studied Greek vases with a kind of devotion that approached the religious. I think that the many pleasant hours spent studying and even tracing Greek vase decorations may have predisposed me to an ultimate love of graphic art. My pro-
fessors were Cedric Boulter and Donna Kurtz, both wonderful scholars of Greek vases and delightful teachers. With the financial support of the Louise Taft Semple Fund at the University of Cincinnati, I also had the privilege of studying the classics at the University of Munich as an undergraduate. In Munich, of course, it was hard to stay away from the Antiken-sammlung and the Alte Pinakothek for more than a few days. Those two places became the opposite poles in my academic life—should I continue with classics or Renaissance studies? At the time, I didn’t know how precious that period of study would be, occurring, as it did, prior to the vandalism of several paintings by Dürer in the Alte Pinakothek.

I have dedicated this book to the two professors who have taught me the most since my formal education ended. I really don’t think this book would exist were it not for the personal and intellectual support of Jaroslav Pelikan and Donald Weinstein. More than my previous books, this project has generated the kind of excitement I felt writing my dissertation, and, with that mind-set, I felt myself looking to them for the general (and magisterial) guidance one receives from a doctoral advisor. It was also very, very generous of both Pelikan and Weinstein to discuss the project with me so thoughtfully on several occasions and, then, to read the final manuscript in its entirety.

In the last stages of this project, I found a new academic home as Associate Professor of History and Associate Professor of Church History at Southern Methodist University (SMU). My new home has some delightful neighbors. The location of my office brings me into daily contact with some very challenging historians—John Chavez, Ed Countryman, Crista DeLuzio, James Hopkins, Thomas Knock, John Mears, Donald Niewyk, and Kathleen Wellman. Mears has repeatedly inspired me in long discussions of the Reformation. I am most grateful for their intellectual hospitality and also for the administrative hospitality, as it were, accorded me by Robin Lovin, and James Hopkins, who, among other things, kindly arranged for SMU to offset some of the costs of securing photos and permissions for reproducing works of art. I also received support from the University of Texas at Austin, mainly in the form of sabbatical research leaves.

Bridwell Library at Southern Methodist University has been an inspiration for all of my research. It has one of the finest, and perhaps one of the fastest-growing, collections for Renaissance and Reformation studies in the United States. It even has a useful collection of Renaissance prints, including over fifty by Dürer, along with the first editions of Dürer’s three theoretical works. Bridwell Library was kind enough to provide photos and
permissions for items from its collections without charge. Jon Speck photographed the images from Bridwell’s holdings. James McMillin, Jan Sobota, Page Thomas, and especially Eric White have repeatedly helped me with my research at Bridwell.

A number of institutions waived or greatly reduced permission fees for reproductions. In other cases, the fees ran either rather high or astronomically high. Jeffrey Smith once said to me that the more an academic art historian publishes, the poorer she or he can become. I’m beginning to understand what he meant. The Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Bridwell Library, Cincinnati Art Museum, Houghton Library, Octavo Corporation, the Vatican Museums, the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, and the Ian Woodner Collection were especially generous to me. I feel a special sense of gratitude to John Ford at the Houghton Library for his assistance with some twenty-seven items reproduced from Harvard’s collections.

Megan McLemore assisted with the arduous task of securing permissions to reproduce material and also with the final preparation of the manuscript.

One day in 1998, while I was at home in Austin working on an early version of this project, a big package arrived with the mail. Its contents didn’t disappoint my excitement. George Schoolfield had bundled up and sent me his copy of Hans Rupprich’s Dürers Schriftlicher Nachlaß. As the footnotes will attest, it’s a present I’ve had many occasions to appreciate.
CONTENTS

List of Illustrations xv
List of Abbreviations xxi
Introduction 1
1 Agnes’s Will 7
2 Mediating a Volatile Word 29
3 Christian Humanism and the Art of Imitation 66
4 Popular Devotions 97
5 Humanist Books of Faith 133
6 Anti-Semitism and the Passion 169
7 Representing Sacred Philology 194
8 Engraving a Portrait of Martin Luther 225
9 The Reformation and the Bible 249
10 A Concluding Perspective: Nuremberg and Dürer, 1526 276
Notes 285
Bibliography 313
Index 327
ILLUSTRATIONS

1.1. Attributed to Dürer, beginning of Theocritus, *Idylls* 15
1.2. Dürer, *Crucifixion* 21
1.3. Attributed to Dürer or Nuremberg School, *Barbara Holper Dürer* (A 4) 23
1.4. Dürer, *Albrecht Dürer the Elder with Rosary* (A 2) 24
1.5. Dürer, *Barbara Holper Dürer* (W 559) 25
2.1. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, *Rome* 31
2.2. Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder, attributed to MB master, *Destruction of Babylon* 32
2.3. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *The Harlot of Babylon* 33
2.4. Detail from Lucas Cranach the Elder, *The Harlot of Babylon* 34
2.5. Attributed to Hans Holbein the Younger, title page to *Coverdale Bible* 35
2.6. Dürer, *The Seven Candlesticks* (Strauss W 55; B 62) 36
2.7. Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Seven Candlesticks* 37
2.9. Dürer, *Martyrdom of John* (Strauss W 54; B 61) 43
2.10. Dürer, *The Four Horsemen* (Strauss W 50; B 64) 44
2.11. Dürer, *Breaking of the Fifth and Sixth Seals* (Strauss W 51; B 65) 45
2.12. Dürer, *Four Avenging Angels* (Strauss W 49; B 69) 46
2.13. Unknown artist, Koberger Bible (1483), fol. ccccclxxvii r 47
2.14. Unknown artist, Koberger Bible (1483), fol. ccccclxxix r 48
2.15. Unknown artist, Koberger Bible (1483), fol. cccclxxx r 49
2.16. Dürer, Beast with Two Horns Like a Lamb (Strauss W 46; B 74) 50
2.17. Dürer, Harlot of Babylon (Strauss W 45; B 73) 51
2.18. Attributed to Dürer, The Poet Addresses the Rulers of Europe 52
2.19. Workshop of Lucas Cranach the Elder, attributed to Meister der Zackenblätter, Opening of the Sixth Seal 54
2.20. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Measuring the Temple and Beast from the Bottomless Pit 55
2.21. Dürer, Four Angels Holding the Winds (Strauss W 52; B 66) 56
2.22. Dürer, New Jerusalem (Strauss W 44; B 75) 57
2.23. Dürer, John and the Twenty-four Elders (Strauss W 43; B 63) 58
2.24. Dürer, John Eating the Book (Strauss W 53; B 70) 59
2.25. Dürer, Adoration of the Lamb (Strauss W 42; B 67) 63
3.1. Dürer, Hercules Killing the Stymphalian Birds (A 67) 67
3.2. Dürer, Mary Enthroned (Strauss D 1485/1; W 4) 69
3.3. Dürer, Battle of the Sea-Centaurs (Strauss D 1494/13; W 60) 70
3.4. Andrea Mantegna, The Battle of the Sea-Centaurs 71
3.5. Dürer, Fall of Humanity (Strauss E 42; B 1) 76
3.6. Roman copy of Greek original, Apollo Belvedere 77
3.7. Dürer or Dürer Workshop (Hans von Kulmbach), Apollo and Daphne 79
3.8. Dürer, Philosophia (Strauss W 68; B 130) 81
3.9. Dürer, Melencolia I (Strauss E 79; B 74) 84
3.10. Dürer, Mass of St. Gregory (Strauss W 160; B 123) 87
3.11. Dürer, Self-Portrait (A 66) 90
3.12. Dürer, Self-Portrait as Man of Sorrows (Strauss D 1522/8) 91
4.1. Attributed to Dürer or Dürer School, Mary, John the Baptist, and St. Bruno with Carthusian Monks (Strauss W 177) 100
4.2. Dürer, Crucifixion (Strauss W 124; B 40) 101
4.3. Anonymous, Display of Relics at Nuremberg Heilutsfest 105
4.4. Attributed to Michael Wolgemut, Nuremberg 106
4.5. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut, Holy Lance 107
4.6. Dürer, Charlemagne (A 123) 108
4.7. Dürer, The Book Bakery (W 623) 113
4.8. Attributed to Hans Baldung Grien, with poetry by Dürer and Benedictus Chelidonius, I Greet Thee, Cross of Jesus 114

xvi
Illustrations

4.9. Attributed to Wolf Traut, with poetry by Sebastian Brant, Man of Sorrows and Mater Dolorosa 116
4.10. Attributed to Hans Baldung Grien, with poetry by Benedictus Chelidonius and Dürer, St. Catherine 118
4.11. Dürer, with poetry by Dürer, The Schoolmaster (Strauss W 144; B 133) 120
4.12. Dürer, with poetry by Dürer, Serve God (Strauss W 145; B 132) 122
4.13. Dürer, with poetry by Dürer, Seven Hours of Prayer (Strauss W 143; B 55) 124
4.14. Follower of Boucicaut Master, Crucifixion 128
5.1. Page layout from The Large Passion 136
5.2. Dürer, The Resurrection (Strauss W 151; B 15) 142
5.3. Hans Wechtlin, Christ's Appearance to Mary 144
5.4. Dürer, Christ’s Appearance to Mary (Strauss W 130; B 46) 145
5.5. Dürer, The Last Judgment (Strauss W 136; B 52) 146
5.6. Dürer, Perspective Machine (Draftsman Drawing a Reclining Nude; Strauss W 204; B 149) 148
5.7. Dürer, The Birth of the Virgin (Strauss W 78; B 80) 149
5.8. Dürer, detail of Christ Bidding Farewell to His Mother (Strauss W 93; B 92) 151
5.9. Dürer, The Presentation of Christ in the Temple (Strauss W 99; B 88) 152
5.10. Dürer, The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple (Strauss W 79; B 81) 153
5.11. Dürer, The Betrothal of the Virgin (Strauss W 97; B 82) 155
5.12. Dürer, detail of The Annunciation 156
5.13. Dürer, detail of The Circumcision (Strauss W 98; B 86) 157
5.14. Dürer, The Dormition of the Virgin (Strauss W 146; B 93) 160
5.15. Dürer, The Assumption and Coronation of the Virgin (Strauss W 147; B 94) 161
5.16. Dürer, Joachim and Anne at the Golden Gate (Strauss W 96; B 79) 163
5.17. Dürer, detail of Joachim and the Angel (Strauss W 95; B 78) 164
5.18. Dürer, The Annunciation (Strauss W 74; B 83) 166
5.19. Dürer, The Holy Family in Egypt (Strauss W 69; B 90) 167
5.20. Dürer, The Holy Trinity (Strauss W 164; B 122) 168
6.1. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, William of Norwich 173
Illustrations

6.2. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, *Jew Attacking a Crucifix*  174

6.3. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, *Simon of Trent*  175

6.4. Workshop of Michael Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff, *Pogrom of 1348*  176

6.5. Dürer, *Christ among the Doctors* (A 98)  177

6.6. Unknown artist, title page from Anthonius Margaritha, *Der gantz Jüdisch glaub* 179

6.7. Dürer, *Ecce Homo* (Strauss E 62; B 10)  180

6.8. Dürer, *Christ as Man of Sorrows* (Strauss W 155; B 16)  182

6.9. Dürer, *Christ Crowned with Thorns* (Strauss W 119; B 34)  183

6.10. Dürer, *The Resurrection* (Strauss W 129; B 45)  184

6.11. Dürer, *Christ and St. Thomas* (Strauss W 133; B 49)  185

6.12. Dürer, *Christ Scourged* (Strauss W 37; B 8)  187

6.13. Dürer, *Christ before Caiaphas* (Strauss W 114; B 29)  188

6.14. Dürer, *Christ before Pilate* (Strauss W 118; B 31)  189

7.1. Unknown artist, *St. Jerome*  200

7.2. Dürer, *St. Jerome* (Strauss W 10)  201

7.3. Attributed to Dürer, *Raising Children*  202

7.4. Dürer, *Bookplate for Willibald Pirckheimer* (Strauss W 71; B app. 52)  203

7.5. Dürer, *St. Jerome in the Wilderness* (Strauss W 167; B 113)  205

7.6. Dürer, *St. Jerome by the Pollard Willow* (Strauss E 56; B 59)  206

7.7. Anonymous, *St. Jerome in Wilderness and in His Study*  207


7.9. Dürer, *St. Jerome in His Study* (Strauss W 159; B 114)  210

7.10. Dürer, *St. Jerome in His Study* (Strauss D 151/15; W 590)  211

7.11. Dürer, detail showing Jerome from *Life of the Virgin* (Strauss W 70; B 95)  212

7.12. Dürer, *St. Jerome in His Study* (Strauss E 77; B 60)  213

7.13. Dürer, *St. Jerome in His Study* (Strauss D 1521/5; W 589)  215


7.15. Dürer, *Portrait of Man of 93 Years* (Strauss D 1521/3; W 788)  219

7.16. Dürer, *Erasmus* (Strauss E 105; B 107)  221


8.2. Dürer, *Albrecht of Brandenburg* (Strauss E 97; B 103)  239

8.3. Dürer, *Willibald Pirckheimer* (Strauss E 102; B 106)  240
Illustrations

8.4. Dürer, Friedrich the Wise, Elector of Saxony  
     (Strauss E 101; B 104)  241
8.5. Dürer, Philipp Melanchthon  (Strauss E 104; B 105)  242
8.6. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Martin Luther as Augustinian Monk  245
8.7. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Martin Luther as Doctor of Theology  246
8.8. Lucas Cranach the Elder, Martin Luther as Bridegroom  248
9.1. Dürer, The Last Supper  (Strauss W 199; B 53)  251
9.2. Dürer, The Last Supper  (Strauss D 1523/14; W 889)  252
9.3. Martin Luther, translator, Das Newe Testament Deützsch,  
     fol. 3r.  257
9.4. Dürer, The Four Apostles  (A 183–84)  259
9.5. Detail of right panel of The Four Apostles  260
9.6. Detail of left panel of The Four Apostles  261
9.7. Dürer, St. Philipp  (Strauss E 103; B 46)  263
9.8. Dürer, Lazarus Holzschuher  (A 179; 1526)  264
9.9. Dürer, Monument to the Peasants’ War  (Strauss W 205c)  268
9.10. Unknown artist, woodcut of Landsknecht with  
     “Ewangelium” banner  272
9.11. Dürer, Monument to the Gospel  274
ABBREVIATIONS


CWE  The Collected Works of Erasmus. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974–.


Abbreviations


WA Martin Luther. Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe. Weimar: Böhlau, 1883–

WA Br (Luthers Werke: Briefwechsel)

WA TR (Luthers Werke: Tischreden)