

A Poem is a Speaking Picture: Pope and Iconography

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That the device of personification is prevalent in much eighteenth-century poetry is well known. It is frequent in Gray, Johnson and Cowper, and abounds in James Thomson's *The Seasons*. In Thomson's "Summer", for example, the following description occurs:

O vale of bliss! O softly-swelling hills!
On which the Power of Cultivation lies,
And joys to see the wonders of his toil.
(ll. 1435-7)

Of this image, an eighteenth-century contributor to *The British Magazine* observed:

We cannot conceive a more beautiful image than that of the Genius of Agriculture, distinguished by the implements of his art, imbrowned with labour, glowing with health, crowned with a garland of foliage, flowers, and fruit, lying stretched at his ease on the brow of a gently swelling hill, and contemplating with pleasure the happy effects of his own industry.¹

As Donald Davie notes, the contributor probably added nothing "that was not in Thomson's intention. For Thomson could count on finding in his readers a ready allegorical imagination, such as seems lost to us today."

Davie is correct as far as he goes, but he does not take his observation far enough. The eighteenth-century commentator certainly sees more than is stated in Thomson's lines: he sees a vigorous, masculine figure decked out in a specific way ("crowned with a garland" etc.) and accompanied by the appropriate attributes that signify his calling ("distinguished by the implements of his art"). These perceptions do not proceed merely from "a ready allegorical imagination", however, but from a close acquaintanceship with the numerous dictionaries of iconography available to the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century poets and readers.

Such dictionaries, in which a formalized visual representation of a personified concept is accompanied by an interpretative, defining text, contain a vocabulary, both visual and verbal, which is a

1 Quoted in Donald Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse* (1952), p. 40. Cited in James Sambrook (ed.), *The Seasons and The Castle Of Indolence* (1972), p. xv.

vocabulary of discourse and argument, not merely of embellishment. Among the best known and most comprehensive of such dictionaries was Cesare Ripa's *Iconologia*; first published in Italy in the late sixteenth century, it went through many ensuing continental editions. The first English edition was that of Pierce Tempest in 1709 with, so the title-page states, an equal usefulness for poets, orators, painters and sculptors.²

Early in 1716 Alexander Pope was involving himself in the re-issue of Richard Graham's edition of Dryden's translation of Charles du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*.³ This re-issue, dedicated to the Earl of Burlington, also contained a contribution from Pope—his *Epistle to Mr. Jervas: with Dryden's Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting*. In this poem Pope first gives praise to the "instructive leaves" of Dryden's translation, and then goes on to consider the friendship between himself and Charles Jervas, the friendship of a poet and a painter:

Smit with the love of Sister-arts we came,
And met congenial, mingling flame with flame;
Like friendly colours found them both unite,
And each from each contract new strength and light.
How oft' in pleasing tasks we wear the day,
While summer suns roll unperceiv'd away?
How oft' our slowly-growing works impart,
While images reflect from art to art?

(ll. 13-20)

Allowing for the natural warmth and desire to praise which close friendship would produce, it is clear that here Pope is speaking of something more than a general kinship which he believes to exist between the arts of poetry and painting—that he is speaking not merely of a parallel but of an interchange and a borrowing of ideas, images and procedures. In the same period of early 1716 Pope was also engaged on his poem *Eloisa to Abelard*, a poem in which the central image of Black Melancholy (ll. 163-70) is a clear-cut "reflection" from the visual arts.

- 2 *Iconologia: or, Moral Emblems, by Caesar Ripa . . . Illustrated with Three Hundred and Twenty-Six Humane Figures, With their Explanations; By the Care and at the Charge of P[ierce] Tempest*. I have used this as my reference text throughout.
- 3 *The Art of Painting; by C. A. Du Fresnoy. With Remarks. Translated into English; with an Original Preface, containing a Parallel between Painting and Poetry, By Mr. Dryden. As also a Short Account of the Most Eminent Painters. . . By Another Hand [Richard Graham]* (London: 1695).

This image of Black Melancholy is one of the best known in iconographic art. It is found, as *Malinconia*, in all continental editions of Ripa's *Iconologia* (and, of course, in many other such works) and a more sophisticated rendering occurs in Albrecht Durer's woodcut *Melancholy I*. In these examples of the icon, the figure is a personified abstraction yet an active agent; though it is a figure in repose, it is related to its scenic surroundings, seeming to generate the barren, gloomy landscape with which it is encompassed. This method of depicting Melancholy as affecting Nature continued into the eighteenth century, and in Tempest's English edition of Ripa, for which, as the title-page also states, the illustrations were "newly design'd, and engraven on *Copper*, by I. Fuller, Painter, and other Masters", the figure is still drawn as seated in a barren landscape full of shadows. In Tempest's edition *Malinconia* (No. 217) is translated as *Pensiveness*, and the accompanying text, translated from Ripa, reads thus:

An old woman full of grief, in pitiful clothes, without ornament; sitting upon a stone; her elbows upon her knees, and both hands under her chin; a tree by her, without leaves.

Old, because Youth is jovial; she is poorly clad, which suits with the tree, without leaves. The stone shows that she is barren, in words and deeds . . .

It is this Melancholy (i.e. *Pensiveness*) which operates in *Eloisa to Abelard*.⁴ The dramatic monologue which makes up the poem is a product of Eloisa's "pensiveness", while she herself, as the poem demonstrates, is "barren, in words and deeds"; despite her verbal outbursts, her self-recriminations and arguments, Eloisa finds no satisfactory solution to her dilemma, the conflict between natural impulse and religious impulse, in which she is placed.⁵ At the natural level she is an "unfruitful urn" (l. 262) because of the frustration of her physical love for Abelard.

Ripa's *Malinconia* is a sedentary figure in a circumscribed landscape—one tree, one hill—yet even in this popularized image she is shown as "darkening" the natural surroundings: Pope elevates

4 The category of human temperament 'Melancholic' is not appropriate to Eloisa. Ripa (No. 60) gives the attributes of the melancholic temperament as: silent, cool of blood, studious, fond of solitude, and covetous.

5 See Brewster Rogerson, "The Art of Painting the Passions", in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XIV (1953), 92-4. Rogerson discusses the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theories of representing, in the visual arts, the passions by their outward signs. He suggests that Pope may be using these, in *Eloisa*, as they were held to apply to stage representation.

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the image to full Baroque status by making it an agent on a much larger moral scale, supplying a richer landscape, and by providing the figure with a more complex activity in the poem. Black Melancholy, as an active agent, occupies an almost central position in this poem of 366 lines:

But o'er the twilight groves, and dusky caves,
Long-sounding isles, and intermingled graves,
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dread repose:
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.
(ll. 163-70)

From this central position the image exercises a dominant role throughout the poem, and Pope uses scenic description to show that the influence is co-extensive with Eloisa's present dilemma, and that it will cease only with her death.

The poem opens in a setting of gloom:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells,
Where heav'nly-pensive, contemplation dwells,
And ever-musing melancholy reigns;
What means this tumult in a Vestal's veins?
(ll. 1-4)

This is a setting of the present, the "here-and-now", and it is a "given" of the poem that, as it opens, the setting and Eloisa herself should be already affected by the influence of "ever-musing melancholy", and that what follows is under the control of a pervasive force already in existence. Landscape is shown to us through Eloisa's eyes, eyes whose vision is affected by a "pensive" (in Ripa's terms) state of mind; and the scenic description is psychological rather than topographic. Eloisa's perception of the Paraclete monastery reflects this:

Relentless walls! whose darksome round contains
Repentant sighs, and voluntary pains;
Ye rugged rocks! which holy knees have worn;
Ye grotts and caverns shagg'd with horrid thorn!
(ll. 17-20)

And again:

In these lone walls (their day's eternal bound)
These moss-grown domes with spiry turrets crown'd,
Where awful arches make a noon-day night,
And the dim windows shed a solemn light;
(ll. 141-44)

In the poem's opening couplet previously quoted, the emphasis is on "solitudes". In lines 17-20 it is on "Relentless", while in lines 141-4 the emphasis is again on "lone", and the added details of "awful arches", "dim windows" etc. form part of a whole governed by this mood-word. In general, terms used to describe the scenery are almost all such as to suggest the mood of the beholder—"awful", "lone", "solemn", "dim", "darksom". Such words multiply close to the source of gloom, the Black Melancholy of line 165, and here one finds "twilight", "long-sounding", "gloomy", "shades", "darkens". Here the affective power embodied in the icon is most strongly felt.

There is, however, a more serene and harmonious landscape in *Eloisa to Abelard*, a landscape free of the influence of Melancholy:

The darksom pines that o'er yon' rocks reclin'd
Wave high, and murmur to the hollow wind,
The wandring streams that shine between the hills,
The grots that echo to the tinkling rills,
The dying gales that pant upon the trees,
The lakes that quiver to the curling breeze;
No more these scenes my meditation aid,
Or lull to rest the visionary maid.

(ll. 155-62)

This landscape has a light and vitality elsewhere lacking in the poem: "wandring streams" shine with sunlight, there is the sound of "tinkling rills", gales "pant" and lakes "quiver to the curling breeze". Sound and movement here contrast greatly to those of lines 163-70; there is little sound or movement in Nature influenced by Melancholy, only "a deathlike silence and a dread repose". In these lines Pope seems to be imitating the serene landscape of the paintings of Claude Lorrain, a type of landscape which for the eighteenth century had come to be imbued with a Virgilian moral tone, and which is often noticed as occurring in some of his other early poetry.⁶ Its function, most critics suggest, is to put forward a sense of pastoral serenity and moral or political well-being.

That this serene landscape contrasts so with the landscape of Melancholy that succeeds it, is, I suggest, because it is a landscape of recollection of a former, undistorted perception. Reversion and recoil are more than implied in the couplet (ll. 161-2) which effects

6 *Windsor Forest* (ll. 17-28); *The Temple of Fame* (ll. 15-20). See also Reuben F. Brower, *Alexander Pope: The Poetry of Allusion* (1959), p. 359, and Elizabeth Mainwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth-century England* (1925), *passim*.

the transition from one to the other. Eloisa's former serenity is conveyed in "lull to rest", but the emphasis of the lines is on "No more", a strong recognition that that time is past. The two landscapes present, in an iconic way, Eloisa's two states of mind. In a time of calm and placidity she sees images of life, movement and expansion; under the influence of Black Melancholy she sees in that same landscape images of constriction, stillness and death.

Landscape is also used, in the poem, to suggest a time when Black Melancholy will be no longer operative, as, looking to a future time, Eloisa speaks (l. 348) of "Paraclete's white walls and silver springs". Gone now is the "darksom round" (l. 17) of the monastery walls—they have become "white"—and the darkened "falling floods" (l. 169) are changed to "silver springs". Here Eloisa speaks of a cleansed landscape, for she is speaking of the landscape as it will be, after her death, when "this rebellious heart shall beat no more" (l. 346). As Black Melancholy is partly a projection of Eloisa's mind, so its influence will end with the forced resolution of her dilemma.

Pope could easily find approval, within the Baroque tradition, for his use of psychological landscape, in the writings of Roger de Piles, Dryden's source for his translation of Du Fresnoy. De Piles' work, *The Principles of Painting*, contains a section on the painting of landscape and the ways in which landscape may be used to complement or amplify the subject of a picture. De Piles distinguishes two styles of landscape, the heroic and the rural, and of the rural he writes:

The rural style is a representation of countries, rather abandoned to the caprice of nature than cultivated. . . . In this style, situations bear all sorts of varieties: sometimes they are very extensive and open, to contain the flocks of shepherds; *at others, very wild, for the retreat of solitary persons.*⁷

In making the Ripa icon *Malinconia* a central and influential agent in the poem Pope is also working in accord with several precepts from Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica*, precepts which, I have argued elsewhere,⁸ also bear on a similar centralized and all-pervasive agent, the goddess Dulness of *The Dunciad*. The agential influence of Black Melancholy, which extends out from a central position in lines 163-70 to the very opening line of the poem, and to the poem's conclusion (l. 348), not only conforms to Du Fresnoy's instructions for the disposition of figures (Precept XI), but also to his instructions on

7 Cited in Elizabeth Holt (ed.), *A Documentary History of Art*, I (1958), p. 178 (my italics).

8 See my "Some Baroque Influences in Pope's 'Dunciad'" in *British Journal of Aesthetics*, IX, 2 (1969), 186-94.

lighting (Precept XXXIII):

The greater light [of the picture] must strike forcibly on the middle; and there extend its greatest clearness on those places of the picture where the principal figures of it are, and where the strength of the action is performed; diminishing by degrees as it comes nearer and nearer the borders.

Exchanging “gloom” for Du Fresnoy’s “light”, and “obscurity” for his “clearness”, one sees that Black Melancholy (potent enough to generate her own “light”) conforms to the precept. “Those places of the picture” and “the principal figure” are, in Pope’s poem, the Paraclete monastery and Eloisa as they exist in time and space: the obscuring power of Melancholy is strong within the walls of the monastery, and its actions greatest on Eloisa herself. As her thoughts move backward in time to remembered serenity, and forward to blissful release, this influence, imaged in scenic description, may be said to diminish “nearer and nearer the borders”; those borders are the ‘before’ and ‘after’ that bound Eloisa’s present state and situation, the primary concern of the poem.

Pope needs this Baroque image of Melancholy, an abstraction embodied in form and endowed with agential powers, to generalize, to universalize, the moral argument of his poem. If he maintained “Pensiveness” as a subjective state of Eloisa’s mind alone, then all she says and feels would merely pertain to her individual situation. By objectifying the quality as Black Melancholy, Pope makes it, in a fashion similar to that which he manages with his objectifying of Belinda’s concepts in the Sylphs of *The Rape of the Lock*, to perform a dual function—attached to Eloisa it helps to display her state of mind; detached, and as an operator in its own right, it permits the poem to conduct a generalized moral argument, something otherwise difficult to do in a dramatic monologue whose utterance is so subjectively introspective.

Unlike the recently completed *Windsor Forest* with its Father Thames image of Nature’s foison, a poem which on a universal level celebrates the abundance of Nature, *Eloisa to Abelard* mourns a reduction and infertility of Nature mirrored in the castration of Abelard. “Nature stands check’d” (l. 259) since the natural impulses to fecundity and continued life have been truncated. Thus Melancholy acts on Nature not only out of immediate sympathy for the individual plight of Eloisa, whose own “nature” is checked, but as a result of the universal significance of the crime against the lovers as well. Eloisa is doomed to be an “unfruitful urn”, and it is thus fitting that Nature itself should be dominated by Melancholy. The darkness which

emanates from Black Melancholy seeps through the whole of Nature, as it seeps through the fabric of the poem, suffusing both with an air of darkness and blight.

That close relationship of the sister-arts of poetry and painting which Pope had praised in his *Epistle to Mr. Jervas* of 1716, is broadened to include the close relationship of poetry and sculpture in his *To Mr. Addison, Occasioned by His Dialogue on Medals*, written perhaps as early as 1713, but first published in a revised form in 1720, and having additional concluding lines added later still. In a study which examines the poem's iconography of circles (as symbolic of eternity) Howard Erskine-Hill⁹ notes the figure of personified Ambition (l. 19) as a type of Ripa's *Historia*, and places these and the poem's philosophic ideas concerning the value of medals in the context of the thought and learning of the day. But the poem goes further than this in developing its references to the visual arts (of which medal-making was an honoured segment). It becomes self-reflexive, a poem in which both poetry and the art of the medal-maker play an equal part in demonstrating the truth which the poem seeks to affirm. The praise given to Addison in lines 45-52 may be taken to refer as much to poetry as it does to numismatics alone, and the poem is commenting on itself:

Nor blush, these studies thy regard engage;
These pleas'd the Fathers of poetic rage;
The verse and sculpture bore an equal part,
And Art reflected images to Art.

(ll. 49-52)

Pope is here thinking very much of Homer, and his description of the Shield of Achilles in Book XVIII of the *Iliad*. Pope had already done his translation of the *Iliad*, and had written an elaborate accompanying essay to demonstrate that Homer's description of the shield was both a universal painting and a sculpture, and that Homer was a consummate visual artist. The glories of Rome, diminished by Time, require something other than epic style—perhaps that of the medallist, in which much may be said in little.

To those eighteenth-century critics and connoisseurs who followed the doctrines of Du Fresnoy and the late Baroque, the Gothic achievements of the Middle Ages were not congenial. It was to Rome and classical Greece that they looked back. Pope confidently dismisses the whole of the Middle Ages in his early *Essay on Criticism*:

9 "Pope's 'Medal Against Time'—a Study of his *Epistle to Mr. Addison*", in *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XXVIII (1965), 274-98.

Learning and Rome alike in Empire grew,
 And Arts still follow where her Eagles flew;
 From the same Foes, at last, both felt their Doom,
 And the same Age saw Learning fall, and Rome.
 With *Tyranny*, then *Superstition* join'd,
 As that the Body, this enslav'd the Mind;
 Much was believ'd, but little understood,
 And to be dull was constru'd to be good;
 A second Deluge Learning thus o'er-run,
 And the Monks finish'd what the Goths begun.

(ll. 683-92)

Pope goes on in the *Essay* to show that, culturally speaking, the Middle Ages was a period of dormancy for Art. "In Leo's Golden Days" (l. 697) the Genius of Rome revives, the Muses start from their trance, and the Renaissance occurs in Europe. It reaches England late, its ambassadors being Roscommon, Walsh, and (presumably, from line 734 to the end) Pope himself. In *To Mr. Addison*, the appeal back to classical Greece and Rome for support is thus not seen by Pope as an arbitrary one. There was, as it were, a continuing though sometimes submerged line which united Rome and Pope's contemporary world; and the moral judgements and virtues of that past, as well as its supposed poetic practices, could still be of practical use.

One way in which the contemporary world could have always with it a compendium of ancient learning and wisdom, for example, was through the use of sculpture and statuary. In the eighteenth-century landscape-garden, temples and statues derived from Roman originals and suggesting some moral or historical thought were often placed at view-points in the design, and Pope followed this practice in his own garden at Twickenham. In verse his *Temple of Fame*, published 1715, was an elaborate attempt to recreate the known cultural history of the world in terms of the Baroque sculpture of Bernini. It is in the context of all this that an approach can best be made to Pope's *To Mr. Addison*. Addison's book on numismatics had been written to refute a current idea that coin-collecting was an idle pastime, of no value to a cultivated man. *To Mr. Addison* presents a strong defence of such a study.

The poem opens by calling to mind a broad vista of Rome in its ruins, a vista seen through the long perspective of Time; the rhetoric of the poem is controlled and restrained, calling on its readers for temperate compassion and sympathy. This studied control and gentle melancholy, coupled with the classical image of *tempus edax rerum*, place Pope and the poem itself in a line which runs back through

Spenser (in the *Ruines of Rome*) to Ovid and to Rome itself. The lines carry a weight of poetic as well as historical tradition behind them, and Pope is able to span the separating centuries by his description and unite both the present and his poem with the past. Already the wish of Ambition, not made clear until later in the poem, is in operation, and the past is still operant in the present, both in literature and history.

Lines 5-10 modify the pity so far called forth. Rome is seen with a balanced vision, her evil as well as her good. "Imperial Wonders" contrast with "slaves" and "groaning Martyrs"; the grandeur of Rome, as well as her pride, is fully present:

Fanes, which admiring Gods with pride survey.

The fate of that pride (perhaps *hubris*) is shown with compassionate irony in the next line:

Statues of men, scarce less alive than they.

In the following lines (ll. 11-14) the excessive and destructive zeal of the succeeding Christian age is condemned. This was also a common Renaissance charge, and again links Pope to a tradition of the visual arts,¹⁰ and here the rhetorical patterns become progressively bolder. Apparent opposites are juxtaposed in such a way that we see them as really similar: "barbarian blindness" is linked with "Christian zeal", and the scorn in the condemnation reaches its peak in the tying together of "Papal piety" and "Gothic fire". The increased boldness of the lines never becomes uncontrolled however, and, unlike the indiscriminate destruction that the lines condemn, they themselves maintain a tempered rationality so that barbarian and Christian acts are not confused. "Papal piety" and "Gothic fire" may *conspire*, but in the poem's insightful judgement they remain separately responsible for their acts.

Lines 15-18 return to the 'mutability' of the opening, and re-emphasize the sadness and poignancy of all that is caught in "the wild Waste of all-devouring years". The complete negation of human individuality in "The very Tombs now vanish'd like their dead" reappears in "Some bury'd marble half-preserves a name" (l. 16). Time itself is the enemy of existence, and this negation is heightened,

10 See, e.g., Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, trans. George Bull (1965), pp. 36-7: "But what inflicted incomparably greater damage and loss on the arts than the things which we have mentioned was the fervent enthusiasm of the Christian religion . . . [It] ruined or demolished all the marvellous statues, the pictures, mosaics and ornaments."

says the poem, by the illiterate disputes and wrong attributions of untrained scholars. This introduces the problem which is central to the poem, and the argument for the value of Addison's book: how can the knowledge and spirit of an age be passed on, through the wastes of Time, to posterity? How can they be transmitted safely and without damage, to succeeding ages? A personified Ambition, in lines 19-30, takes up this problem.

All else destroyed, Ambition seeks to have the memory and spirit of Rome carried forward to be of use to posterity. Commemorative columns and the stone bust are equally liable, along with architectural and engineering achievements, to the ravages of time. Like the medal-maker, who compresses a great deal of significance and meaning into brief Latin inscriptions and iconic images, Pope begins to compress into individual words, many of them Latin-derived, much complexity of thought and imagery. Ambition is "convinc'd" (*vincere* to conquer) by Time, and her triumphs shrink to a "coin", here a doublet-pun on "coign" (a corner) and both derived from *cuneus* (a wedge). Again (l. 28) "prostrate" is from *prosternere* (to throw forward) echoing visually the faithless column now fallen to the ground. In such words, which carry with them in this poem so much of their Latin meaning, Ambition is conquering Time—she conquers with words, as the coin conquers with images.

It seems ironic that the "vast design" of the Roman Empire is now so slight that it can be "contracted" into a coin; but the ambiguity of the word "contract" enables Pope to say several things at once. Ambition "makes a contract" to preserve the Roman Empire by "contracting" (i.e. shrinking) it into a coin. "Contract" is echoed by "design" (in its sense of "intention") and gives a sense of powerful purpose, a great weight of deliberate intent, to the following action. One can sense the action taking place through the choice of the words—contract, design, shrink. Nor is there any sense of loss in the diminution. "All her Triumphs"—the processions, monuments, columns—are present, distilled in the coin. The coin itself is perfect and unbroken, "a narrow orb" (*orbis terrarum* the world) and is thus the synthesis of Roman achievement, and the substance of the spirit of the Roman world in quintessence. Each "crouded conquest" of Rome, the vast extent of the Roman Empire, are present in the modelled images: from "sad Judea" to the "prostrate Nile or Rhine" and on to the Euphrates, the mighty expanse of the Empire is celebrated. At this median point of the poem the essence of Rome is still vital, in "And little Eagles wave their wings in gold" (l. 30). Here is an icon of the power and grandeur of Rome, active and

agential, which irradiates the moral and intellectual concerns of the poem as a whole.

From this turning-point of the poem, the argument proceeds at a measured pace back to Pope's contemporary world. This progression starts immediately, as the faithful medal bears "its charge of fame" untouched through many ages. Here again we see the compression of thought Pope is capable of. The "charge" is firstly the device that the medal bears, the symbol or miniature sculpture which can carry a knowledge of the ancient world to succeeding generations. But the "charge" is also the *commission* with which Ambition has "charged" the medal. Both come from Latin *carricare* (to load). This phrase of Pope's, like a medal, is complex with meaning.

The varied fortunes of the medal in its journey through time are next imagined by the contemplative mind of the poet. What is the use, the real value, Pope asks, of coins tarnished and unreadable? Line 46 introduces Addison as the truly wise numismatist; through his perceptive commentaries of the *Dialogues* the medal, and Rome's glories, shine once more: it is cleaned and becomes "shined", and in the same process "Rome's Glories", obscured by Time, shine with new light. The value of Rome to Pope's contemporary world, the idea to which the poem has been working, appears in lines 53-62. Britain, the worthy successor to the spirit and values of Rome, should honour her great men, should immortalize her achievements for the good and instruction of succeeding generations. A criticism is implied in the question "When . . . ?" (l. 53), but this concluding passage is restrained in its censure, and moves the poem gracefully to a dignified personal tribute to Addison, the British equivalent of the Roman Virgil. The poem originally concluded at this point (l. 62) and one may look back and note the vital image of the power of Rome, her golden eagles, occupying, as did the Black Melancholy of *Eloisa to Abelard*, the dynamic centre of the poem. At a later date Pope extended the application of the poem into his contemporary political sphere, suggesting—even "casting"—one such medal and its inscription, in honour of one British statesman deserving of it.

The art which Pope put into the making of *To Mr. Addison* is analogous to the art of the maker of medals. Pope refrains from attempting any grandiose effects in the poem, modelling it delicately so that its turning-point comes near the centre, achieving a balanced symmetry. As with a medal, the images of the poem are complexly symbolic, and words like "convinc'd" are heavily charged with meaning. Within 72 lines Pope has himself managed to "contract" a long view of the progress of history and, while eschewing the heights of oratory, to state a profound moral.

The vision of a medal to commemorate Secretary Craggs which concludes *To Mr. Addison* is an example of another device from the visual arts often used by Pope—he frequently concludes his poems, and his argument, by creating tableaux, often proleptic in that a future reality is perceived as existing in the present in all but material embodiment. Such tableaux are carried out in highly visual terms and rely for their effectiveness on their visual iconography; the extended vision which concludes his early *Windsor Forest* (ll. 413-22) is a typical example, where icons in the Ripa manner (Envy, Faction, Rebellion) are presented with their attributes, as part of the statement function of that poem—the reign of Peace under Queen Anne. Even the later *Epistle to Augustus* (1737), where he also discusses (ll. 390-93) the relative merits of polished marble and “polish’d” verse as media for depicting “the forms august of King, or conqu’ring Chief”, concludes with a vision of this kind, albeit a negative one, since the “Augustus” of the poem provides nothing for the artist to depict.

A vision of a similar kind occurs at the end of *Epilogue to the Satires, I*, where Pope rises beyond a topical though elaborate reference to Walpole’s mistress, Molly Skerrett, to create a tableau of England degraded by Vice:

Chaste Matrons praise her, and grave Bishops bless:
 In golden Chains the willing World she draws,
 And hers the Gospel is, and hers the Laws:
 Mounts the Tribunal, lifts her scarlet head,
 And sees pale Virtue carted in her stead!
 Lo! at the Wheels of her Triumphal Car,
 Old *England’s* Genius, rough with many a scar,
 Dragg’d in the Dust! his Arms hang idly round,
 His flag inverted trails along the ground!
 Our Youth, all liv’ryed o’er with foreign Gold,
 Before her dance; behind her crawl the Old!

(ll. 146-56)

One may want to argue that Pope’s invocations, “Lo!” and “See” are traditional rhetorical devices, seeking assent to the general truth of what is said; but it is not possible to apprehend the truth behind “Old *England’s* Genius . . . / Dragg’d in the Dust! . . . / His Flag inverted” before first visualizing the image as an icon of the Ripa kind. An even grander satiric vision is that which concludes *Epilogue to the Satires, II* (ll. 228-47), where there is an effortless transition from the mundane and earthly to the divine.

The great tableau of this kind is that which concludes Pope’s last, and possibly greatest poem, *The Dunciad*. Here Pope is presenting,

in the strongest terms he is capable of, the total collapse of civilization as he conceives it:

She comes! she comes! the sable Throne behold
 Of *Night* Primaeval, and of *Chaos* old!
 Before her, *Fancy's* gilded clouds decay,
 And all its varying Rain-bows die away.
Wit shoots in vain its momentary fires,
 The meteor drops, and in a flash expires . . .
 Thus at her felt approach, and secret might,
Art after *Art* goes out, and all is Night.
 See skulking *Truth* to her old Cavern fled,
 Mountains of Casuistry heap'd o'er her head!
Philosophy, that lean'd on Heav'n before,
 Shrinks to her second cause, and is no more.
Physic of *Metaphysic* begs defence,
 And *Metaphysic* calls for aid on *Sense!*
 See *Mystery* to *Mathematics* fly!
 In vain! they gaze, turn giddy, rave, and die.
Religion blushing veils her sacred fires,
 And unawares *Morality* expires.

(ll. 629-34, 639-50)

Compositionally, and in both general and particular terms, this tableau has an analogue easily accessible to Pope in William Hogarth's engraving *The Lottery*, published in 1721.¹¹ In this pyramidal composition, a satire on public finances, Britannia has been dethroned, her place being taken by a new and false goddess, National Credit, who is supported by Apollo and Justice, icons of Literature and the Law. Beside her the Arts and Sciences—all distinguished by their attributes—are shown as sinking through the floor. Pope would almost certainly have seen this engraving, published not long before the composition of *Dunciad A* in which the vision also occurs. This must be conjectural, but both Hogarth and Pope are eighteenth-century moralists working well within the iconographic tradition; as new necessities arise each is artist enough to create new icons as well as draw upon the old.

The iconography of Pope's later, satiric poetry has to some extent undergone changes from the earlier simplicities. The Black Melancholy of *Eloisa to Abelard*, the Pan with flocks, the fruit-crowned Pomona of the opening of *Windsor Forest*, for example, are easily identifiable as figures in the Ripa manner—indeed can be referred immediately to their dictionary counterparts. "Fancy" with

11 For a full iconography of this plate see Joseph Burke and Colin Caldwell, *Hogarth: The Complete Engravings* (1968), plate no. 25.

her gilded clouds, "Wit" with its momentary fires, are less easy to visualize; active, specific verbs rather than attributes often imply the visual quality—shrinks, skulks, blushes (all from the final lines of *The Dunciad*). There can be little doubt, however, that the powerful conclusion of *The Dunciad* would be as strongly visualized by the contributor to *The British Magazine* quoted at the beginning of this article as any traditional icon from an earlier poem.

Baroque art had its origins in the Counter Reformation and the Council of Trent, its purpose being to make the truths of religion accessible to the simple as well as the learned by emotional as well as intellectual means. One of its vocabularies was that of the icon—abstraction personified and shown as being an active agent. Its religious manifestation can be found in a Baroque church, where the ceiling bursts open melodramatically to reveal God and the forces of Heaven and Hell immediately above one's head. A secular intellectual and moral manifestation is that of the ceiling of the Sheldonian Theatre in Oxford, where the ceiling shows Truth shunning Envy, Malice and others immediately above the heads of the assembled academics; in the political sphere a well known example is Rubens' *The Apotheosis of James I* on the ceiling of the Banqueting House in Whitehall.

If, as Donald Davie suggested, modern readers have to a great extent lost "a ready allegorical imagination", and if we have lost an awareness of iconography as a language of discourse and argument, then we miss much in our reading of Pope.¹² His poetry often has a dramatic animation and visual splendour which deepens as well as embellishing the meaning of his work.

12 It is worth noting that when such poems as Gray's *Elegy* or Johnson's *Vanity of Human Wishes* are read with an awareness of their iconographic vocabulary, they acquire a dramatic fire and colour their somewhat marmoreal language might otherwise belie.