

## Alexander Pope – Artist

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It has become a commonplace of modern Pope criticism to note, in passing, that the poet Alexander Pope was interested in painting. Until recent times however little intensive consideration was given to this interest; and Norman Ault's perceptive study of Pope's colour-sense and the brief time he spent in the studio of the painter Charles Jervas in 1713 long remained the *locus citatus* for most commentators. More recently, in his survey of Pope's poetry and its relations with contemporary arts, Morris R. Brownell has considered to some extent Pope's personal interest in the visual arts of his day; while Christopher Hussey has looked extensively at Pope's involvement, with Lord Burlington's protégé William Kent, in the fashionable landscape gardening of the period.<sup>1</sup> It still remains to consider just how deeply and intensely Pope was involved in the visual arts, especially painting, of his day; and how that involvement may have borne on his career as a poet.

The period 1690-1720, which covers the early life of Alexander Pope, was for English art and English taste in art a period of growth and change. It was a period generally of transitions, though dominated throughout in native painting by the portrait-painters Kneller, Jervas and Richardson. In architecture, however, the Baroque style of Christopher Wren, the younger Vanbrugh, and to some extent James Gibbs, was sharply opposed by the revival of interest in the classical style and Palladianism after 1715, fostered by the school of which Lord Burlington was one of the prime movers. Native figure-sculpture went through a number of changes: from a provincialism which was early aware of Baroque handling of materials but had little understanding of the ideas of *contrapposto* and movement which are characteristic of Baroque design,

1 Norman Ault, *New Light on Pope; with Some Additions to His Poetry Hitherto Unknown* (1949); Morris R. Brownell, *Alexander Pope and the Arts of Georgian England* (1978), and Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes, 1700-1750* (1967).

through an increased interest in the stasis of the antique, to a point (c.1725) where an ambivalent attitude to sculpture prevailed, and Francis Bird, William Kent and James Gibbs displayed in their works a wide variety of styles, from the less exuberant Roman Baroque to the smoother, more static, classical manner.<sup>2</sup>

The pre-eminent painter in England during Pope's entire lifetime was without doubt Sir Godfrey Kneller, whose overruling influence as a stylist extended beyond his own death in 1723 well into the 1740s. Kneller studied first at Amsterdam and later in Rome, possibly coming in contact with the sculptor Bernini and probably working in the studio of the Roman Baroque painter Carlo Maratti. Settling in England in 1676 he made a rather timid beginning as a portraitist; after 1683 a new style, based on the style of Lely, became apparent in his work. In this style, writes Waterhouse, the poses of the sitters 'all have in common a Baroque element ... They tend to be restless, the figures are often in movement, and the hands are eloquent.' Similarly, Kneller 'uses, with very slight modification, many of Lely's poses, and he adopts the same unquiet gestures: but he stiffens up the backbone of the figures in his portraits.'

Charles Jervas, born in 1675, originally studied painting under Kneller for about a year and later, securing the patronage of the collector Dr George Clarke of All Souls College, studied in Rome for a number of years, returning to London not long before April 1709. He achieved a reputation almost immediately. Steele, in *The Tatler* of 4 April 1709, was already calling him 'the last great painter Italy has sent us, Mr. Jervase', and referring to his activities as a painter of female portraits, those 'Clarissas' and 'Chloes' of affected simplicity with which Jervas is for ever identified. Despite this reputation his ability was not high and, as Waterhouse succinctly remarks, 'His women all look astonishingly alike and resemble a robin or one of the birds of the finch tribe.' Jervas made a serious study of the Old

2 For the history of English art during Pope's lifetime, I am indebted to the following works: Ellis K. Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain: 1530-1790* (1969), pp.81-110; John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain: 1530-1830* (1963), pp.119-252; and Margaret Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain: 1530-1830* (1964), pp.67-131.

Masters, and in the sale of his collection of paintings and prints after his death, there were many full-size copies of the most famous Italian pictures.

Both Kneller and Jervas had studied in Italy, and looked to Italy, as did all their contemporaries, as the source of excellence in painting. Jonathan Richardson (1665-1745) had no Italian training (a thing he always regretted) but in his writings on painting theory and connoisseurship he too looked towards Italy as the standard to follow. He had little sense of colour, and his more ambitious canvases lack proportion, but he was at times capable of achieving a quiet and sober simplicity.

Kneller, Richardson and Jervas all espoused a modified form of the Baroque style in portraiture – a style of mass and animation, sometimes – especially with Jervas – a theatricality of ‘dressing-up’ the sitter in costume either very grand or affectedly simple, which is derived from the painting style of seventeenth-century Italy. In England, however, the most widespread and the strongest expression of Baroque style derived from the Italy of the seventeenth century came through the decorative painters from Rubens to William Kent, who covered the walls and ceilings of public and private buildings with myriads of flying figures, and architecture both real and simulated. Rubens’ early ceiling in the Banqueting House at Whitehall (c.1634) was a forerunner, as was Robert Streeter’s ceiling in the Sheldonian Theatre at Oxford (c.1668). However, decorative history on painted walls and ceilings expanded to a real importance in English art in the hands of the Italian, Antonio Verrio (?1639-1707), and the Frenchman, Louis Laguerre (1663-1721). After them came a younger generation of Venetian painters, Antonio Pellegrini and Sebastiano and Marco Ricci, who did work for, among others, Lord Burlington at Burlington House. Baroque decorative painting in England culminated in an Englishman, James Thornhill (1675-1734), whose decoration of the Painted Hall at Greenwich, *grisaille* paintings in the cupola of St Paul’s, and work at Blenheim attain heroic grandeur. William Kent (1685-1748) was the last Englishman to try his hand as a decorative wall and ceiling painter, with results, as Waterhouse notes, ‘which need not be taken seriously’. The period of this vogue for Baroque decorative painting corresponded very much

to Pope's lifetime. It gathered strength with the work of Verrio in the 1680s, reached its highest point with Thornhill's work at Greenwich (1708-1727) and finally disappeared in the late 1730s, when newer, lighter styles of interior decoration arose.

In the England of the 1690s and the early 1700s the vogue for art-collecting, particularly the collecting of paintings and prints, began to assume a rapidly increasing commercial and cultural importance. To assist the man of culture in acquiring a correct 'taste', there were numerous publications of a kind which had not existed before the Restoration – the manuals devoted to connoisseurship.<sup>3</sup> Of these one of the earliest was John Evelyn's *Sculptura* published as early as 1662, but the most influential in the period were Richard Graham's edition of Charles Du Fresnoy's *De Arte Graphica* in 1695, and Buckeridge's *The Art of Painting and the Lives of the Painters* in 1706.

Graham's edition of Du Fresnoy contained John Dryden's translation of Du Fresnoy's Latin poem, also Dryden's translation of Roger de Piles' extensive French commentary on the poem, and Dryden's own essay, 'Parallel betwixt Poetry and Painting'; and Graham's own account of about two hundred painters whom he thinks worthy of notice, almost all of them Italian. Buckeridge's work is largely a translation of portions of others of Roger de Piles' critical writings, together with an account of the more important painters working in England in the second half of the seventeenth century. In this work also the emphasis is strongly on the excellence of Italian painters. Numerous other books appeared in the period, often plagiarising one another, and in all of them the main emphasis is on the superiority of Italian painting, though some are prepared to concede points to artists of the Netherlands.

The increasing number of auction-sales of paintings and prints gives further evidence of the growth of English interest in art in the two decades of Pope's youth and young manhood. The Ogdens' exhaustive survey, covering mainly London sales, discloses rapid and almost continuous growth in the number of

3 These treatises and numerous others are fully discussed in H.V.S. Ogden and M.S. Ogden, *English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century* (1955), pp.80-82.

public auctions of pictures. In 1691, a year for which a great deal of information is available, at least 24,000 pictures were sent to auction. There is a falling-off of trade after this very high figure, but, from about 1700 to 1710, the last year to be included in the Ogden's survey, a steady increase. Moreover, many of the auction-catalogues after 1691 begin more to advertise copies as well as originals, a sign of a widening circle of interest – from the wealthy who could afford originals to the less wealthy who were content with copies.

To supply an expanding market, collections of pictures were even imported from overseas and in 1724 Daniel Defoe observed that 'all *Europe* has been rumag'd, as we may say, for Pictures to bring over hither, where, for twenty Years, they yielded the Purchasers, such as collected them for Sale, immense Profit.'<sup>4</sup> A typical advertisement illustrating at once this practice and the current taste of the time, appeared in *The Spectator* No.64, 14 May 1711, and was repeated substantially in Nos.65, 67 and 68:

A curious Collection of Italian Paintings (by Giacomo and Leandro Bassan, Schiavone, Tintoret, Spagnolet, Nicola, and Gaspar Poussin, Claude Lorain, Salvator Rosa, Fran. Bolognese, Mola, the Borgognon, Luca Jordan, Bourdon, and the Maltese; as also by Rubens and Vandyck, the Velvet Breughel, Holben, Brouwer, Berchem, Schalken, Teniers etc.) lately brought from beyond Sea: Will be sold by Auction on Friday the 18th Instant, at the three Chairs, the Corner House of the Little Piazza, Covent Garden ...

A knowledge of pictures was spread even further by a great increase in the publication of engravings of works of art, which had followed rapidly upon the invention of the mezzotint process in the early 1660s. John Evelyn in his *Sculptura* had stressed the use of engravings in the spread of knowledge and in assisting those who desired to widen their taste in art but lacked the necessary means to afford copies or originals.

Another significant indication of the growing interest in art during the period is the increasing number of practical manuals, designed to teach painting and drawing, published in the last

4 *A Tour thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724), ed. G.D.H. Cole, 2 vols (1927), I, 178.

years of the old century and the first years of the new. As the Ogdens note, at least fifteen were in print by 1701, many of them having gone through a number of reprintings. Many were technical treatises designed for the already practising painter, but at least two, Richard Blome's *The Gentleman's Recreation* (1686) and William Salmon's highly popular *Polygraphice* (first published 1672, and according to its title-page, in its eighth edition by 1701) were designed for the gentleman and amateur who wished to take up the art either as a diversion or as a more serious study.

Throughout the period 1701-1710, there was a growing awareness that painting as an art was in some way an index of national cultural excellence. This awareness was brought about partly by the essay on English painters which had appeared in Graham's 1695 edition of *De Arte Graphica* and a similar essay in Buckeridge's *The Art of Painting* (1706), and it led to a general enthusiasm to increase the standard of English painting. England did, however, excel in portrait-painting and, according to a letter in *The Spectator* (No. 555) this fact should be universally acknowledged:

The Honour of our Country is also concerned in the Matter I am going to lay before you; we (and perhaps other Nations as well as we) have a National false Humility as well as a National Vain-Glory; and tho' we boast our selves to excell all the world in things wherein we are out-done abroad; in other things we attribute to others a Superiority, which we ourselves possess. This is what is done, particularly in the Art of *Portrait or Face Painting* ....

This Honour is due to our own Country; and has been so far near an Age: So that instead of going to *Italy*, or elsewhere, one that designs for Portrait Painting ought to Study in *England*. Hither such should come from *Holland, France, Italy, Germany*, etc., as he that intends to Practise any other kinds of Painting, should go where 'tis in greatest Perfection.

It was felt that a lack of adequate academic training facilities hampered the expansion of English art. On the 18 October 1711, about sixty of the most prominent London painters and art-lovers met with the intention of founding an 'Academy of Painting and Drawing from Life'. Godfrey Kneller, Michael Dahl and Jonathan Richardson were among the electors; and Kneller, the

'face-painter' of absolute pre-eminence, was unanimously elected as the Academy's first Governor.<sup>5</sup> Five months before, on 15 May 1711, there was published *An Essay on Criticism*, the first mature work of the poet Alexander Pope.

Most of Pope's early biographers make some reference to his childhood interest in drawing. One of the first biographies to appear a few weeks after his death, an anonymous pamphlet published by Weaver Bickerton in 1744, reports of the schoolboy Pope at Thomas Deane's School,

that at the hours of recreation, whilst the rest of his school-fellows were diverting themselves at such games and sport as usual with boys of their age, Mr. Pope used to amuse himself with Drawing, and such like improving and rational accomplishments: which fine taste undoubtedly contributed not a little afterwards, to the establishing of that cordial friendship, which always subsisted between him and that excellent painter Mr. Jervas. (pp.13-14)

As Sherburn notes,<sup>6</sup> the information on Pope's childhood in this pamphlet is probably authentic. The unnamed informant from whom the information is derived claimed to have been a schoolfellow of Pope's, and certainly had some knowledge of Deane's School. William Ayre in his *Memoirs of ... Alexander Pope* the following year, gives much the same information, but generalizes it slightly:

So far from being fond of childish sports, he would not engage in any that were noisy; and the weakness and badness of his constitution would not permit him to use much exercise; so that, except a little drawing, he was almost continually studying or conversing. (p.1)

Ayre's immediate source for this information on Pope's childhood was probably the Bickerton pamphlet of the year before but, though the *Memoirs* is rambling and with little real biographical content, Ayre himself was, as Sherburn notes, an author of known interest in Pope, and probably repeated the information as being likely. Later biographers, using additional

5 See T. Whitley, *Artists and Their Friends in England 1700-1799*, 2 vols (1928), I, 7-19.

6 George Sherburn, *The Early Career of Alexander Pope* (1934), p.3.

information on Pope's life supplied by Spence and others, took it for granted that Pope as a boy was interested in drawing. Slight though the real evidence is, the existence of so minor a detail so soon after Pope's death is in its favour.

Evidence of an early interest in the pictures and drawings of others, notably the illustrations to Ogilby's translation of Homer, derives ultimately from Spence's *Anecdotes*.<sup>7</sup> In March 1743 Spence recorded:

Ogilby's translation of Homer was one of the first large poems that ever Mr. Pope read, and he still spoke of the pleasure it then gave him, with a sort of rapture only on reflecting on it.

"It was that great edition with pictures. I was then about eight years old. This led me to Sandys's Ovid, which I liked extremely, and so I did a translation of Statius by some bad hand."

It is fairly clear that some of the 'pleasure' and 'rapture' that Spence notes was given to Pope by the pictures as well as the text.

If we can trust Pope's editing of his own correspondence, he was actually engaged in painting as early as 1705, when he was about seventeen years of age, and in March that year he wrote to an anonymous young lady:

Madam – I send you the book of Rudiments of *Drawing*, which you were pleas'd to command ... You are but too good a Painter already; and no Picture of *Raphael's* was ever so beautiful ... But I must complain to you of my hand, which is an arrant traitor to my heart, for having been copying your picture from thence and from *Kneller* these three days, it has done all possible injury to the finest face that ever was made.<sup>8</sup>

The letter as a whole, as Sherburn points out in a footnote, resembles but does not plagiarise one of Voiture; and the statement in it that Pope is copying a Kneller portrait is consistent

7 Joseph Spence, *Observations, Anecdotes, and Characters of Books and Men*, ed. James M. Osborn, 2 vols. (1966), I, No. 30. This work will be cited hereafter as *Spence*, followed by the number of the anecdote.

8 *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn, 5 vols. (1956), I, 4. This work will be cited hereafter as *Corresp.*, followed by the appropriate volume and page numbers.

with his later known practice of copying portraits by other painters. Possible titles for 'the Book of Rudiments of *Drawing*', if it had a real existence, are legion.

Five or six years later Pope was still engaged in, or had renewed his interest in painting. Sometime before 25 January 1711, when he was not quite twenty-three, he presented Mrs John Caryll with one of his own works, a Madonna, of which Mrs Caryll was pleased to say somewhat ambiguously, 'that St. Luke himself never drew such a Madonna' (*Corresp.* I, 115). Moving, as he was at this time, in the literary and artistic circles of London, his interest must have been further excited late in the year with the foundation of Kneller's Academy of Drawing and Painting. Richard Steele, with whom Pope was corresponding in the autumn of 1711, and who, as a number of his essays in *The Spectator* show, had a more than passing interest in painting, was one of the lay-members who joined the Academy in the autumn of 1712. Steele later became one of the Directors.

It was perhaps this increased interest in painting in the London of 1711 and 1712 which inspired Pope, late in 1712 and early in 1713, to take a more serious attitude to his painting endeavours, and in February 1713 he wrote to John Caryll:

I have just sent the poem of *Windsor Forest* to the press ... Pardon my desultory manner of scribbling, for 'tis with difficulty I snatch half an hour to write in. I have ten different employments at once that distract me every hour: five or 6 authors have seized upon me, whose pieces ... I am obliged to consider ... and my own poem to correct too – besides an affair with Mr. Steele ..., and add to all these a law business, which my father uses me in. Guess if I have time on my hands ... Yet I must not forget to pay my most humble thanks for Lady Mary's obliging thought on my account as a lover of painting (the pursuit of which is another of my employs).

(*Corresp.* I, 174)

In the midst of such busy literary activities – finishing *Windsor Forest*, getting it off to the press and correcting the proofs, the family business, the 'affair with Mr. Steele' – it is significant that Pope indicates painting as another of his *major* activities, one important enough not to be laid aside easily, even for the requirements of literature.

This same intensity of interest continued into the year, and in April 1713, acting on John Caryll's advice, Pope was taking lessons daily from Charles Jervas; poetry had become of *secondary* importance:

I've been almost every day employed in following your advice in learning to paint, in which I am most particularly obliged to Mr. Gervase who gives me daily instructions and examples. As to poetical affairs I am content to be a bare looker on, and from a practic[i]oner turn an admirer, which is (as the world goes) not very usual.  
(*Corresp.* I, 174)

In June of the same year he was still 'in close pursuit' of Caryll's advice:

I shall stay in town yet this fortnight, or thereabouts, in which time if you come you'll find me in close pursuit of the advice you gave me three months since: painting at Mr. Gervase's in Cleveland Court by St. James's. I generally employ the mornings this way, and the evenings in the conversation of such as I think can most improve my mind ...  
(*Corresp.* I, 177)

It is this letter which caused Sherburn, setting aside Pope's interest in painting, to remark in his biography (p.102) that 'much of his [Pope's] painting seems to have been a matter of pastime for his mornings in 1713'. On the contrary. In dividing up his day this way, Pope is conforming to the instructions laid down in the treatises of Du Fresnoy and others for young painters who wish to approach the art seriously. Advising the young painter, Du Fresnoy in *De Arte Graphica* for example has this to say :

The morning is the best and most proper part of the day for your business; employ it therefore in the study and exercise of those things which require the greatest pains and applications.

Wine and good cheer are no great friends to painting; they serve only to recreate the mind, when it is oppressed and spent with labour; then indeed it is proper to renew your vigour by the conversation of your friends.  
(*Precepts* LXVI, LXIX)

Pope was certainly familiar with Du Fresnoy's treatise by this time, both through his reading of Dryden (who had translated it into English), and his friendship with the painter Jervas. In a

footnote to a fabricated version of this letter in his own edition of his correspondence (1735) Pope draws the reader's attention to his *Epistle to Mr. Jervas: with Dryden's Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting* as being 'writ about this time' (*Corresp.* I, 198n), and the poem was prefixed to Richard Graham's 1716 edition of *De Arte Graphica*, in which edition Jervas made some corrections to Dryden's original translation.

Late in August 1713 however, Pope was encountering difficulties and disappointments. Pope's standards of adequate achievement in painting, as in everything else connected with the creativity of the artist, were high; and two almost identical letters, one to John Gay on 23 August, and one to John Caryll on 31 August, appear to make some sport of his failure to achieve adequate standards as a portrait-painter. Part of his letter to Gay is as follows:

I have been near a week in London, where I am like to remain, till I come by Mr. J[ervas]'s help, *Elegans Formarum Spectator*. I begin to discover beauties that were till now imperceptible to me. Every corner of an eye, or turn of a nose or ear, the smallest degree of light or shade on an cheek, or in a dimple, have charms to distract me....You may guess in how uneasy a state I am, when every day the performances of others appear more beautiful and excellent, and my own more despicable. (*Corresp.* I, 187-8)

After enumerating a list of his painting failures in increasingly comic and grotesque terms the letter continues:

However, I comfort myself with a Christian reflection, that, I have not broken the commandments for my pictures are not the likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth below, or in the waters under the earth ...

I am very much recreated and refreshed with the News of the Advancement of the *Fan*, which I doubt not will delight the Eye and Sense of the Fair, as long as that agreeable Machine shall play in the Hands of Posterity. I am glad your *Fan* is mounted so soon, but I would have you varnish and glaze it at your leisure, and polish the sticks as much as you can.

As Norman Ault has observed of this letter: 'At this point we might remind ourselves that Pope's ludicrous or irresponsible treatment of a subject does not necessarily mean that he thought

little or lightly of it. Rather the contrary' (p.70). Underlying the wry humour of the detail there is a sense of frustration and bitterness – the frustration and bitterness of an *elegans formarum spectator* capable of discerning beauty in all things; the overtones of gallantry, appropriate as they are for Gay, do not undercut this, and yet Pope finds himself quite incapable of rendering that beauty on canvas. Pope is 'very much recreated and refreshed' when he turns from thoughts of his own failure to Gay's very likely success with his poem *The Fan*, and one thinks of Pope's own fan, which he had earlier (before 1709) painted, and presented to a young lady with some verses in imitation of Waller. Sir Joshua Reynolds, into whose possession the fan later passed, expressed the opinion that the standard of painting was 'no more than that of a child'.

This same underlying seriousness is continued in the almost identical letter Pope wrote to Caryll the following week. After solicitous enquiries after, and good wishes to, the Caryll family, and giving Caryll the latest news on Steele's election to parliament, Pope goes on:

Now sir, as 'tis usual in newspapers after the account of all material transactions, to descend to more trivial particulars (as for instance after the miseries of the Catalonians, to tell who and who are married) so I beg leave here to give you some notices of myself, who am so entirely immersed in the designing art, (the only sort of designing I shall ever be capable of) that I have not heard a rhyme of my own gingle this long time. My eyes have so far got the better of my ears, that I have at present no notion of any harmony besides that of Colours. But I have been hitherto as unsuccessful in uniting them, as the grand ministers have in uniting the kingdoms of England and Scotland: tho' I can indeed, like them, make a shift just to stick carnations and dirt together. (*Corresp.* I, 188)

The letter then enumerates the same list of failures as the letter to Gay – 'three Dr. Swifts, two Duchesses of Montague, one Virgin Mary, the Queen of England, besides half a score Earls and a Knight of the Garter' – and concludes with a further expression of good wishes to the Caryll family and friends.

As a correspondent (probably Pope), had noted in *The Spectator* (No. 452), it is an enduring characteristic of human

nature to be quite as interested in the immediate and what concerns ourselves as in the remote problems of other people – that is, to be quite as interested in ‘who and who are married’, as in ‘the miseries of the Catalonians’. Pope is no exception to this, and one need not take him literally when he contrasts the ‘material transactions’ of the external world with the ‘more trivial particulars’ of his own problems as a painter. It is evident from both this and the letter to Gay that Pope is striving for excellence as a painter. He is fully aware of his ability as a poet to achieve in verse the ‘harmony’ of ‘rhyme’, and also equally aware of his inability to achieve in painting the ideas and harmonies which he is capable of sensing aesthetically.

In September of 1713, he was still at Cleveland Court under the mastership of Jervas, but the tone of part of the letter – its style is somewhat consciously literary – is one of depression and disillusion:

The highest gratification we receive here below, is mirth, which at the best, is but a fluttering unquiet motion that beats about the breast for a few moments, and after leaves it void and empty. So little is there in the thing we so much talk of, and so much magnify. Keeping good company, even the best, is but a less shameful art of losing time.

What we call science here, and study, is little better: the greater number of arts to which we apply ourselves, are mere groping in the dark ...  
(*Corresp.* I, 190)

If this letter is in any way inspired by his attempts to become a painter, it goes far to explain why, sometime after October of 1713, when he was ‘still at Mr. Jervas’s’ (*Corresp.* I, 194), Pope appears to have abandoned his concentrated efforts to study as a painter. The necessity for devoting himself fulltime to the translation of the *Iliad*, which he had recently contracted for, would be sufficient explanation, yet in the letter to John Caryll of 25 February 1714 in which he mentions taking on the Homer translation, there is more than a hint of something valuable having been given up:

I shall now be very much taken up in this work which will keep me a poet (in spite of something I lately thought a resolution to the contrary) for some years longer.

(*Corresp.* I, 210)

Of this passage Norman Ault writes: 'Cannot one hear a faint note of regret hovering over the parenthesis, a half-conscious realisation that he was about to lay down his brushes for a long time, perhaps the last time?' (p.71). But if Pope's interest in the practice of painting was sufficiently strong for him to put aside all thought of poetry temporarily, and be 'content to be a bare looker on, and from practic[i]o]ner turn an admirer' (*Corresp.* I, 177), becoming so immersed in study that 'my eyes have so far got the better of my ears, that I have no notion of any harmony besides that of colors' (*Corresp.* I, 188); or if indeed it was strong enough to make him seriously contemplate a resolution to give up poetry (as here) altogether, then one may speculate that it was a great deal more than a 'faint note of regret' which Pope is here sounding. This letter is evidence of the high standard of performance to which Pope aspired in painting, if the claims of painting could prove a serious rival to the creativity displayed, and the fame enjoyed, by Pope as already the author of the *Pastorals*, *Essay on Criticism*, *Windsor Forest* and *The Rape of the Lock*.

Pope did not 'lay down his brushes', though it is evident that he did realise his limitations as a painter and that he continued to practice the art mainly in private. Indeed there is evidence, much of it resulting from Pope's intimacy with the Caryll family, to show that in the late 1720s and at least as late as 1734, ten years before his death, Pope was an active painter, and sketcher of romantic ruins.

In 1729 John Caryll had little doubt about Pope's ability as a painter. Caryll had evidently requested Pope to paint from memory a portrait of the late Henry Englefield, a neighbour, who had died in 1720, and Pope replied:

The request you bring into my mind of Mr. Englefield's picture, was what I found *utterly impossible*, and I dare engage would be so to the best painter in Europe after so many years.

(*Corresp.* III, 18)

The vehemence of '*utterly impossible*' suggests that the request was made to Pope personally, and it is worthy of note that the reason for his refusal is in terms of memory and *not* that he was out of practice, or did not paint any longer. It will be

remembered that it was John Caryll who, in 1713, had urged him to take lessons from Jervas, that it was Mrs Caryll who received one of his first efforts, and it is significant that almost the whole of his extant correspondence which deals with his practice as a painter is correspondence with the Caryll family. They knew his ability as an artist sufficiently well to have asked for a portrait of Henry Englefield, and late in 1733 the middle-aged Pope had apparently also been asked by Catherine Caryll to do a picture for her, a commission which, as he advised John Caryll, took him a little time to execute:

Many things have hindered you from hearing of me – among the rest a willingness I had to give Miss Cath: Caryll an account of her commission. I have got it done and desire to know by what method it may be conveyed safe to her hands.

(*Corresp.* III, 400)

The very way in which Pope seeks in a further letter to Caryll to deprecate and trivialize his gift adds further weight to the suggestion that it was one of his own works:

I am almost angry at your frequent mention of that trifling thing I meant to desire Mrs. Catherine's acceptance of. But 'tis so little that I never thought to pay for it yet. The painting cost me nothing, and you'll guess the frame could not be worth much.

(*Corresp.* III, 415)

Since Pope had previously been concerned about the picture's safe arrival, and had 'caused it to be carefully boxed up, and sent to Mr. Pigot's', one might assume in him a more personal involvement in the picture than that merely of purchaser or agent and that the 'trifling thing', the 'painting which cost me nothing' was almost certainly one of his own works.

From the time in 1714 when, at the age of twenty-six, he gave up serious thoughts of painting as a profession, Pope's devotion to painting (and the other visual arts) never diminished, and he seized every opportunity to involve himself in it as much, and in as many ways, as possible. He was already an intimate of Jervas's studio, and had acquired a taste for criticism probably through a thorough acquaintanceship with the large collection of prints and copies which Jervas had brought back from Italy in 1709. Late in 1716 he wrote to Jervas (*Corresp.* I, 376) that he

had inspected the collection of Jervas's benefactor, Dr George Clarke, at Oxford. After offering some unqualified praise of Jervas's own work, Pope went on to urge him to advance from portrait-painting to the highest form of the painter's art, history-painting, referring, as a spur, to the history-paintings of Titian, Raphael and Guido Reni (all probably copies) in the Jervas collection.

By the summer of 1717 Pope was on friendly terms with Sir Godfrey Kneller, making visits to Kneller's summer house at Twickenham, where Sir Godfrey 'made me a fine present of a picture' (*Corresp.* I, 417); and in the autumn of 1719 Kneller painted for him three *grisaille* pictures of statuary – the Farnese Hercules, the Diana and the Apollo Belvedere still to be seen at Cirencester. It also is evident from the remaining correspondence that, apart from his own sittings to Kneller for a number of portraits,<sup>9</sup> Pope was a frequenter of Kneller's studio on other occasions. Late in 1719 he was on sufficiently intimate terms to be invited by Sir Godfrey to watch the master at work:

I believe there will be Card plays enoug, and we may do how we please. If you Come about 4a:Clock, you may see me paint.  
(*Corresp.* II, 9)

There is an implication in this note that Pope and Kneller have a common interest in painting and consequently that (1) Kneller considers Pope's knowledge and appreciation of a high standard; and (2) that Pope has in fact a sufficiently intelligent interest in painting to be able to appreciate Kneller at work. This desire to associate himself with Kneller is extended into the world at large as Pope acts as intermediary for Sir Godfrey in arranging for the lease of a house to the Wortley Montagues (*Corresp.* II, 6), and involving himself as Kneller's agent in the business of arranging the sittings for Lady Mary's proposed portrait:

Upon conferring with him yesterday, I find he thinks it absolutely necessary to draw the Face first, which he says can never be set right on the figure if the Drapery and Posture be finished before. To give you as little trouble as possible, he proposes to draw your face with Crayons, and finish it up, at

<sup>9</sup> For an account of Kneller's (and others) many portraits of Pope see W.K. Wimsatt, *The Portraits of Alexander Pope* (1965).

your own house in the morning; from whence he will transfer it to the Canvas, so that you need not go to sit at his house.

(*Corresp.* II, 22)

Pope's intimacy with Kneller (a man, it must be emphasized, who was more than forty years older than Pope, who had no literary pretensions whatsoever and whose influence and social position were due entirely to his reputation as a painter) continued until the latter's death in 1723.

Meanwhile the thirty-three-year-old Pope had, sometime in 1721 or 1722, formed a lasting friendship with another established artist – the painter and theoretician, Jonathon Richardson, again a man considerably older (by twenty-three years) than Pope, but one with whom he was able to discuss theories of art and literature as well as the practice of painting. As he had done with Kneller, Pope became an intimate of Richardson's studio, having his portrait done by Richardson several times. But as a painter he may also have gained from Richardson's friendship, at least once asking for practical assistance and advice:

I have at last got my Mother so well, as to allow myself to be absent from her for three days. As Sunday is one of them, I do not know whether I may propose it to you to employ in the manner you mention'd to me once. Sir Godfrey call's employing the pencils, the prayer of a painter, and affirm'd it to be his proper way of serving God, by the talent he gave him. I am sure, in this instance, it is serving your friend; and you know we are allowed to do that, (may even to help a neighbour's ox or ass) on the sabbath; which tho' it may seem a general precept, yet in one sense particularly applies to you, who have help'd many a human ox, and many ass, to the likeness of man, not to say of God.

If you will let me dine with you I'll get to you by one or very soon after: otherwise if that hour be inconvenient let it be another day.

(*Corresp.* III, 160)

What is evident in this letter is that it is Pope who is making certain proposals to Richardson, that Pope is asking Richardson for a favour. Since Richardson had already done several portraits and sketches of Pope in previous years it is not likely that he

would request yet another portrait or sketch so deferentially, and as if it were an isolated favour on Richardson's part: 'I do not know whether I may propose it to you to employ in the manner you mention'd to me once'. Indeed Pope is so deferential that he is prepared to make a time to suit Richardson's convenience: 'If you will let me dine with you I'll get to you by one or very soon after: otherwise if that hour be inconvenient let it be another day.' In referring to 'the employment of the pencil' which 'Sir Godfrey call's ... the pray's of a painter' Pope is obviously using the word 'pencil' in its accepted early eighteenth-century sense of 'artist's paintbrush', so that it is Richardson *the painter* whom Pope is asking 'to serve your friend; and you know we are allowed to do that, (nay even to help a neighbour's ox or ass) on the sabbath'. In the light of this biblical allusion as a request for help, Pope's willingness to put himself at Richardson's convenience, his reference to painting, and the deferential attitude that he adopts in his request, it is fairly clear that he is not asking for a portrait, since he could commission of Richardson one in the normal way; it is also fairly clear that the employment of Sunday 'in the manner you mentioned to me once' must refer to some previous offer to give Pope some lessons in painting, or at least demonstrate some of the finer points.

Apart from his friendships with Jervas, Richardson, Kneller and William Kent, Pope took other opportunities for frequenting artists' studios, often by acting as agent or advisory expert on art matters for his many friends. As early as July 1717, he was visiting a picture-framer's to get some pictures 'fram'd and scour'd' for John Caryll, and was able to advise a few months later, either through his own connoisseurship or more expert advice, that 'your pictures are very pretty copies from Bassano' (*Corresp.* I, 443), a sixteenth-century Venetian painter of genre-scenes, whose work Pope was later certainly familiar with, since he used it as an analogy in a conversation on the uses of criticism with Bolingbroke and Spence sometime in 1728 (Spence No. 581).

In 1721 came a letter from Bishop Atterbury enquiring after some pictures that Pope was having framed for him (*Corresp.* II, 78); in December 1725 he was regretting his inability to supply

Caryll with art-information for 'I know nothing of the writer on the paintings etc., of Rome, whom you enquire of' (*Corresp.* II, 354). A year later he was visiting the studios of makers of garden statuary in search of garden-figures for Caryll, and offering some adverse criticism:

My mother's long indisposition has been the occasion that I writ to you no sooner, being unwilling to omit at the same time to give you an account of the statue you bid me enquire about. here is but one antique one of Diana, the rest are modern, and but ordinary. And indeed the ancient statue is not in a very graceful posture. You must have seen it, drawing an arrow out of a quiver over her shoulder, which renders the arm, in some views, so foreshortened as to appear a stump. It is also of a large size, perhaps too large for the area in which you design to place it. I ought to know exactly what the open space is, in which it must stand, for a proportion ought to be observed. Perhaps a Flora, or a Pan, or Fawn, might do, of which there are several sizes. (*Corresp.* II, 434)

A further opportunity to keep in contact with the practical aspects of the artist's studio was provided for Pope by the numerous portraits of his friends and acquaintances which he secured both for himself and for others. Enquiries and the procuring of these must have taken him often into copyists' studios, and the correspondence of the 1720s and 1730s is regularly sprinkled with requests and negotiations for portraits, or copies, of friends and prominent men of the time.

Other occasions for visiting the copyists' studios must have been frequent. The list of the contents of his house drawn up after his death discloses that, apart from portraits of himself and some 'heads' of Shakespeare etc., Pope owned at least thirty-four portraits of his friends and family.<sup>10</sup> Some may have been his own work, others might be originals, but the majority would probably have come from the copyist.

Pope's interest in mural-painting and wall-decoration appears to have begun early, and remained with him throughout much of his life. In his early *Windsor Forest*, part of his visual reference

10 See *N. & Q.* 6th series, v (1882) 363-5, for an inventory of the goods in Pope's house.

and material had been the Verrio wall-paintings at Windsor Castle (ll. 299-310), and he was to refer, somewhat more critically, to the work of Verrio and Laguerre in the *Moral Essay IV* of 1731 (ll. 145-8). In defending himself in 1732 against the charge that 'Timon' was intended as a portrait of the Duke of Chandos, Pope was sufficiently well-informed on currently-fashionable wall-painters to point out that at Canons 'the Paintings [are] not of Verrio or Laguerre, but Bellucci and Zaman ...'. The *grisaille* paintings he had obtained from Kneller in 1719 were intended as wall-decorations, and in June 1728 he was interested enough in Lord Bolingbroke's renovations at Dawley to inform Swift that 'now ... I have a moment left to my self to tell you, that I overheard him [Bolingbroke] yesterday agree with a Painter for £200 to paint his country-hall with Trophies of Rakes, spades, prongs, etc., and other ornaments'. These 'murals' were still of sufficient interest later in the year for him to mention them again in a letter to Lord Bathurst:

Lord Bolingbroke & I commemorated you in our Cups one day at Dawley – (Farm I should say, & accordingly there are all the Insignia and Instruments of Husbandry painted now in the Hall, that one could wish to see in the fields of the most industrious Farmer in Christendome). (*Corresp.* II, 525)

Some years later, in 1734, John Caryll, apparently the most constant believer in Pope's ability as an artist, again asked for help and advice, this time about wall-decorations for his stairwell, and Pope replied not only with advice, but also with an offer to supply a design:

Your staircase I think as you do, must be in *claro oscuro* with pillars and niches only painted. in order to which, if you'll send me a drawing of the feet and inches of each side with the outline and shape to be filled up I will make you a draught.  
(*Corresp.* III, 402)

Ralph Allen's desire in 1736 for a more ambitious scheme of wall-decoration sent the almost fifty-year-old Pope on an enthusiastic search among the London print-shops and connoisseurs' collections:

I have enquired for the best Originals of those two Subjects

which I found were Favorite with you, & well deserve to be so, the Discovery of Joseph to his Brethren, and the Resignation of the Captive by Scipio. Of the latter my Lord Burlington has a fine one done by Ricci, & I am promised ye other in a Good Print from One of the chief Italian Painters. That of Scipio is of the exact Size one would wish for a Basso Relievo, in which manner in my opinion you would best ornament your Hall, done in Chiaro oscuro.

(*Corresp.* IV, 13)

A month later he was still searching:

Since I wrote last, I have found on further enquiry that there is another fine Picture on the Subject of Scipio & the Captive by Pietro da Cortona ...; & I believe it is more expressive than that of Ricci, as Pietro is famous for Expression: I have also met with a fine Print of the Discovery of Joseph to his Brethren a design which I fancy is of La Sueur, a noble painter....And I could wish you pitch'd on that admirable piece for Expression, the Death of Germanicus by Poussin.

(*Corresp.* IV, 20)

The pleasure which Pope gained from Allen's request for advice and the opportunities for delving into studios and print-shops is evident.

Pope also entered painters' and sculptors' studios a number of times, to sit for his own portraits. Pope's portraits have been the subject of exhaustive study by William Wimsatt, and one can do no better than summarize his findings.

Apart from the almost numberless pencil-sketches done by Richardson and other friends, and the many caricatures by enemies, Pope sat for portraits or portrait-busts at least twenty times, and always to the most fashionable artist of the moment. Early in life he was painted three times by Jervas, three times by Kneller, and at least twice by Jonathan Richardson. Some years later (c.1727) came a sitting to Michael Dahl, a sitting to the sculptor Michael Rysbrack (c.1730), and a portrait by William Kent. From 1730 on there were at least five full-scale portraits by Richardson, a bust by Roubiliac, and a possible sitting to William Hoare (c.1740). Sometime in 1740-42, in spite of his badly-failing health, Pope sat for the last time for a portrait, one

by London's latest fashionable painter, Jean Baptiste Van Loo, who had arrived in England late in 1737, and had an immediate success. It may have been partly personal vanity for Pope to sit to Van Loo, but as he had always enjoyed the friendship or at least the acquaintance of most of the leading London artists, this, as much as a desire for yet another portrait, may have led him to sit.

Apart from his interest in garden-statuary, and his own sittings for portrait-busts, Pope found at least one other opportunity to visit sculptors' studios, for he seems to have had an active interest in monumental sculpture, and was concerned, albeit somewhat peripherally, with a number of important early eighteenth-century examples of this.<sup>11</sup> It is possibly as early as 1720 that Pope, having designed the monument commemorating his parents (and subsequently himself) which is erected in St Mary's Church, Twickenham, requested the sculptor, Francis Bird, to execute it. Bird, at this time, was still the most eminent and fashionable sculptor of his day, though his position was soon to be undermined by the impact of the foreigners, Guelphi, Rysbrack and Scheemakers, with whom Pope was also to become connected. Bird was yet another of the founding Directors of Kneller's Academy, and his background and style were thoroughly Roman pictorial Baroque.

Certainly in August and September of 1720, Pope was interested in monumental sculpture, and was involved in discussions with Bishop Atterbury and the Duke of Buckingham about a monument to Dryden that the Duke proposed erecting in Westminster Abbey. Pope was evidently intimately concerned with the *design* of the monument, for in a letter written sometime in August, Atterbury, after detailing some difficulties raised by the Church authorities, went on to say:

All Doubts being remov'd (I know not how any came to be entertain'd) I wish you would now hasten *the Execution of the Design*, for some reasons which did not occur to me when I saw you last. (Corresp. II, 51)

11 Ault notes that the backs of the Homer MSS. in the British Museum display 'careful working drawings of wall monuments and similar semi-architectural designs' (p.74).

The implications of the last part of this sentence seem to have alarmed Pope, and in September Atterbury wrote placatingly:

What I said to you in mine about the Monument, was intended onely to quicken, not alarm you. It is not worth your while to know, what I meant by it, but when I see you, you shall ...

(*Corresp.* II, 55)

Atterbury then went on to proffer a possible Latin inscription for the monument, and some lines of his own composition. Atterbury makes it clear that the design is to be Pope's, at least in conception if not in execution:

To shew you, that I am as much in earnest in the affair, as you your self something I will send you too of this kind in English; but not to be imparted to any Creature living beyond your Self, If your design holds of fixing Dryden's Name only below, and his Busts above – may not these be graved just under the Name.

Early in 1722, Pope appears to have been assisting the Duchess of Buckingham with the late Duke's monument, and visited the studio of Belluci in company with Mr Jervas to obtain information and presumably form an opinion of the work. A few years later he was more intimately concerned with the monument to 'Mr. Secretary' Craggs. Craggs had been a great friend of Pope's, and it was probably through Pope that the Italian sculptor Giovanni Guelfi, a recently imported protégé of Lord Burlington, received this important commission. The monument was however designed by James Gibbs and Guelfi did the sculpting, on which Pope kept a close watch:

I would not say this before Mr. Elliot, who has bought (at my instigation) the marble for the Statue, upon which the Italian is now at work. I will not forget those cautions about the forehead, hair, etc. which we observed when we met on that occasion.

(*Corresp.* II, 266)

Pope had already approved of the model, and hence of the design, which Whinney has characterized as both new to England and striking in design.

Years later, towards the close of the 1730s, Pope was associated with another Westminster Abbey monument, its design influenced by the monument to Craggs. He was one of

the Committee formed to devise and erect the present monument to William Shakespeare in the Abbey. The pose of the monument, a cross-legged Shakespeare leaning at ease on one elbow on a pile of books, is reminiscent of that of the earlier statue of Craggs, though this time the thoroughly Baroque in treatment, was done by Peter Scheemakers.

Pope's deep interest in landscape-gardening has become one of the commonplaces of English cultural history, and has already been sufficiently recounted in detail in Christopher Hussey's intensive study of early eighteenth-century English gardens, more generally in Sherburn's biography, and to some extent in James Lees-Milne's studies of Pope's noble friends, Burlington, Bathurst and Oxford; while his connection with William Kent has been studied by Margaret Jourdain in her definitive work on Kent.<sup>12</sup> It is generally agreed that Pope was one of the earliest movers towards the shaping of 'natural' gardens in contradistinction to the formal Dutch gardens favoured by the previous generation, best exemplified by the gardens laid out for William III at Hampton Court, and the rigidly formal French *tapisserie* effects of Le Notre at Versailles. The idea of the 'natural' garden was not unique to Pope, but he was certainly one of the first to promulgate the new theory with his well known *Guardian* essay (No. 173), and to put it into practice a few years later; in 1719 or in 1720, at the age of about thirty, when he began what was to become his lifelong interest, the garden behind his house at Twickenham; as Hussey notes: 'if it was not the earliest landscape-garden (parts of Castle Howard and Stowe have priority) he was the first of the theorists, with the possible exception of Addison at Bilton, to put these ideas into practice' (p.41).

That Pope's *Guardian* essay 'On Gardens', followed – with an almost fully-formed theory of garden aesthetics – so closely (September 1713) on his apparent recognition of his inability to become a serious painter has apparently gone unremarked. It is now another commonplace of cultural history that many English

12 Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes 1700-1750* pp.40-49 and *passim*; Margaret Jourdain, *The Work of William Kent* (1948); James Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation* (1962).

landscape gardens in the 1730s and 1740s strove to imitate the 'amphitheatrical' effects of Claude Lorrain paintings and that the ideas of Pope and William Kent were greatly responsible for this. But it is probably that for Pope at least there was not only a desire to imitate Claudian effects but also to find in landscape-gardening an outlet for his thwarted desires as a painter.

'All gardening is landscape-painting' observed Pope to Spence in 1734, while looking at the background of a portrait of Inigo Jones, 'just like a landscape hung up' (No. 606). Discussing his own Twickenham garden with Spence in the summer of 1739, Pope remarked that 'those clumps of trees are like the groups in pictures', and, of garden-layouts: 'you may distance things by darkening them and by narrowing the plantation more and more towards the end, in the same manner as they do in painting' (*Spence* No. 610). Possibly in the same summer of 1739 Pope put to Spence the fanciful idea of turning a hill into a statue:

The figure must be in a reclining posture because of the hollowing between the legs that would otherwise be necessary, and for the city's being in one hand. It should be a rude unequal hill, and might be helped with groves and trees for the eyebrows and a wood for the hair. The natural green turf should be left wherever it would be necessary to represent the ground he reclines ... It would be best if there was a river, or rather a lake, at the bottom of it, for the rivulet that came through his other hand to tumble down and discharge itself into it.  
(No. 618)

If one regards these reports of Spence as representing the correct gist of Pope's remarks, then it is clear that, however much he was interested in it for itself, Pope found landscape-gardening to some extent an outlet for his interest in the visual arts of painting and sculpture for which he lacked the requisite skill.

In each of these remarks the thought moves not only *from* Nature to *Art*, but also from art of one kind to art of another, as Pope observes the natural world and sees its pictorial possibilities. A garden is 'just like a picture hung up', and his own, and others he helped to design, were sometimes the canvases he lacked the technical ability to paint: Nature is

manipulated in accordance with a rule from painting, to achieve a sense of depth; painting no longer imitates Nature, nature imitates painting: a wooded hill is modelled into a Baroque Berniniesque river-fountain. Nature becomes so contrived and manipulated that it ceases to be itself, becoming another medium, like paint and stone, to be used in the visual arts of painting and sculpture. Pope did not always look at a Claude and see a representation of ideal Nature; he sometimes wanted to look at Nature and see an ideal Claude (painted by Pope)!

Nor did this pursuit with Kent of the Claudian ideal, through the landscape-gardens of the 1730s, prevent Pope, late in life, viewing with the highly appreciative eye of the painter, the wild Salvator Rosa landscape of the Avon Gorge near Bristol. It was a scene, he told Martha Blount, which nothing could convey accurately, but a picture:

a vast Rock of 100 foot high, of red, white, green, blue and yellowish marbles, all blotch'd and variegated strikes you quite in the face, & turning on the left, there opens the River at a vast depth below, winding in & out, & accompanied on both sides with a continued Range of Rocks up to the Clouds, of a hundred Colours, one behind another, & so to the end of the Prospect quite to the sea. But the sea nor the Severn you do not see, the Rocks and Rivers fill the Eye, and terminate the View, much like the broken Scenes behind one another in a Playhouse.

On the sides of these rocks were

Buildings some white, some red ... mud with Trees & shrubs, but much wilder, and huge Shaggy Marbles, some in Points, some in Caverns, hanging all over and under them in a thousand shapes. *(Corresp. iv, 201)*

The sharp visual perception of geological forms which the description also displays, is closely related to Pope's active improvements, in the 1740s, to his famous grottoes, which, as Marjorie Nicholson has observed 'have been discussed so frequently and competently that it would be a work of supererogation to attempt to repeat much of which has been said.'

Pope may have enlarged the villa he leased at Twickenham in

1719 in the Italian Palladian style favoured by Lord Burlington, with 'Colonades' and a portico designed by Kent and approved by Burlington, but it was the Baroque architect, James Gibbs, whom he had originally asked, in 1718 or 1719, to supply designs for projected alterations, either to the Twickenham villa or a house Pope had proposed buying in London.

Pope's strictures on the excessiveness of Vanbrugh's Blenheim Palace are well known, as is his quoting the Duke of Shrewsbury that Blenheim was 'a great Quarry of Stones above ground.' Much of his animus in the letter however appears to be directed not so much towards the architecture itself as to the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, as Pope had been a very minor member of the anti-Marlborough party at the time of the Peace of Utrecht, and, in summarizing his impressions of Blenheim he wrote:

I never saw so great a thing with so much littleness in it: I think the Architect built it entirely in compliance to the taste of its owners: for it is the most inhospitable things imaginable, and the most selfish: it has, like their own hearts, no room for strangers, and no reception for any person of superior quality to themselves. (Corresp. I, 431)

These remarks are directed not so much at the Baroque exuberance of Vanbrugh's design, as at the characters of the Duke and Duchess themselves. Pope obviously knew, from engravings, the Baroque architecture of St Peter's in Rome, and he used it, in the *Essay on Criticism*, as an example of harmony and excellence:

Thus when we view some well-proportion'd Dome,  
(The *World's* just Wonder, and ev'n *thine* O Rome!)  
No single Parts unequally surprize;  
All comes *united* to th' admiring Eyes;  
No monstrous Height, or Breadth, or Length appear;  
The *Whole* at once is *Bold* and *Regular*. (ll. 247-52)

His censures on Blenheim as a house of 'entries and passages', 'inferior' apartments, and 'common staircases' is in direct contrast to his enthusiasm for the 'Gothick' atmosphere of nearby Stanton Harcourt where he stayed, translating Homer, in 1718. His letters to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and others

show a delight in the mediaeval architecture, the jumble of rooms and passages:

You must excuse me if I say nothing of the Front, indeed I don't know which it is. A stranger would be grievously disappointed who endeavour'd to get into this house the right way: One would reasonably expect, after the entry through the Porch, to be let into the Hall; alas nothing less! You find yourself in the house of office. From the parlour you think to step into the drawing-room, but upon opening the iron-nail'd door, you are convinc'd by a flight of birds about your ears and a cloud of dust in your eyes, that it is the Pigeon-house.

(*Corresp.* I, 505-11)

After exclaiming over the baronial Hall, 'a true image of ancient hospitality', the stained glass of one 'one vast window beautifully darken'd with divers scutcheons of painted glass', the many sets of stairs in unexpected places, and the upstairs rooms 'very long and low, of the exact proportion of a Band-box', the letter to Buckingham continues:

I must needs have tired you by this long description; but what engaged me in it was a generous principle, to preserve the memory of that, which it self must soon fall into dust, nay perhaps part of it before this letter reaches your hands.

The liking for the architecture of the past which he displayed at Stanton Harcourt, was still with him in the mid-1720s when he visited Lord Digby's family seat at Sherborne. This Jacobean mansion, Pope told Martha Blount, was 'one of those fine old Seats of which there are Numbers scattered over England.' After looking at the wings of the Garden-front which were 'of a newer kind of Architecture with beautiful Italian Window-frames', Pope turned architect and contemplated linking them with a portico:

The design of such an one I have been amusing myself with drawing, but tis a question whether my Lord Digby will not be better amus'd than to execute it. (*Corresp.* II, 236)

Moving from the house into the grounds, Pope praised the 'venerable Ruins' of old Sherborne Castle, demolished in the Civil War, not only as being picturesque but as having a moral significance:

What should induce my Lord D. the rather to cultivate these ruins and do honour to them, is that they do no small honour to his Family; that Castle, which was very ancient, being demolished in the Civil wars after it was nobly defended by one of his Ancestors in the cause of the King. I would sett up at the Entrance of 'em an Obelisk, with an inscription of the Fact: which would be a Monument erected to the very Ruins.

This perhaps somewhat romantic reverence for the past was still present in 1739 when he visited the City of Bristol, an 'unpleasant' commercial port, but one in which he found 'a very fine Old Cross of Gothic curious work ... but spoild with the folly of new gilding it, that takes away the Venerably Antiquity'.

However much Pope might approve the rules of Palladianism and an ordered diversity in garden layout in his *Moral Essay IV: To Burlington*, it is quite clear that Pope felt himself perfectly free at all times in his life to admire the different architecture of a 'gothick' ruin, or the wildness of a picturesque landscape.

Pope's correspondence and general conversation contain many direct references to painters, his poetry contains relatively few. In his poetry Pope mentions only sixteen painters and architects of artistic significance of historical importance. Of these, two painters (Verrio, La Guerre) and four architects (Le Notre, Palladio, Vitruvius, Inigo Jones) are named in *Moral Essay IV*; six painters (Annibale Carracci, Guido Reni, Correggio, Paulo Veronese, Raphael and Titian) are named in *Epistle to Mr. Jervas*; two painters (Lely and Kneller) and one architect-sculptor (Bernini) are named in *Imitation of Horace - Ep. II: To Augustus*. The architect, Christopher Wren, is named once in *The Dunciad*, as is Inigo Jones; Kneller is named again in the minor *Epitaph on Sir Godfrey Kneller*; Raphael in *Essay on Criticism*, and Verrio in *Windsor Forest*.

The use made of these names in Pope's verse varies. One expects to find the names of Jones, Vitruvius, Palladio, those cornerstones of Palladianism, in *Moral Essay IV*, but it is at first odd to find that of Le Notre (l. 45) apparently used as a standard of excellence; 'the designer of the best Gardens of France' Pope called him, in a footnote to this line. Le Notre's garden-style,

according to Christopher Hussey, was the fullest and grandest expression of Baroque style, a 'magnificent unified scene extending as far as the eye could see ... stylised ... its parts clearly defined (p.22).' Coloured earths and bedded flowers were worked into *parterres de broderie*, large reflecting pools and *jets d'eau* were conceived architecturally, while the parts of the garden 'must be massively geometrical; the trees of avenues and alleys pleached to appear green walls, the groves of bosquets similarly trimmed, hedged or trellised to be outwardly architectural forms.' The rules for gardening put forward in this description are in direct opposition to those which Pope puts forward as the 'correct' rules for gardening (ll. 57-70) and Hussey's description approximates very closely to the relevant parts of the lines on 'Timon's Villa' (ll. 99-126). Grand though they might be, Le Notre's gardens lack 'sense, of ev'ry Art the Soul', and 'Without it, proud Versailles! thy glory falls' (ll. 65, 71). It is clear that Pope had a more than passing knowledge and understanding of Le Notre's theories and practice, and that in *Moral Essay IV* the name 'Le Notre' carries every bit as much (though contrary) significance as those of Jones, Palladio and Vitruvius.

The use which Pope makes of Bernini and Kneller in *To Augustus* (ll. 351-2) is slighter than that he makes of Le Notre, but they are there used as standards of real excellence, as the greatest possible contrast to Blackmore and Quarles. Pope must have had some acquaintance with the work of Bernini, quite possibly through prints of Bernini's sculptures and Roman fountains, though it is scarcely possible that he ever saw Bernini's bust of Charles I (destroyed in the Whitehall Palace fire of 1698). He would however have been familiar with its high reputation, and with the famous triple portrait of Charles I done by Van Dyck in 1637, from which the bust was sculpted. The headpiece to *The Temple of Fame* in the *Works* of 1717 (a volume over whose production Pope took great care), designed by the Frenchman, Simon Gribelin, displays Fame beneath a canopy supported on serpentine columns, suggestive of the columns that support Bernini's *baldachino* in St Peter's. Bernini's excellence was apparently sufficiently high in Pope's estimation for him to make 'a bust of *Homer* by Bernini' one of

the few named bequests of special significance in his will. Pope would have been familiar with the equestrian portrait of William III by Kneller (now at Hampton Court) painted in 1701, and in *To Augustus* he specifically mentions the Baroque quality of movement with which Kneller endowed the painting and the king 'graceful on the bounding steed' (l. 383).

This Baroque quality of life and movement in sculpture and painting Pope also discerned in the numerous portraits of the Restoration court done by Sir Peter Lely, and perhaps particularly Lely's series of 'Windsor Beauties':

Then Marble soften'd into life grew warm,  
And yielding metal flow'd to human form:  
Lely on animated Canvas stole  
The sleepy Eye, that spoke the melting soul.  
(ll.147-50)

Lely's portraits done after the Restoration have in common a Baroque element of restlessness and movement. The hands are often eloquent, the postures languid though plastic, the gestures inviting. As Waterhouse writes, Lely's portraits of Court ladies, especially the Court ladies of the series of 'Windsor Beauties', show 'the extreme limits of his [Lely's] powers in voluptuousness'. These qualities of animation and voluptuousness form the material for comment in Pope's lines.

Lely did not need Pope to immortalize him, but two otherwise minor painters have been immortalized by two couplets in *Moral Essay IV*:

On painted Ceilings you devoutly stare,  
Where sprawl the Saints of Verrio or Laguerre,  
On gilded clouds in fair expansion lie,  
And bring all Paradise before your eye.  
(ll. 145-8)

Neither Verrio nor Laguerre produced work of high artistic merit but to the extent that the 'Timon's Villa' episode of *Moral Essay IV* is a condemnation of contemporary (i.e. 1731) taste, the names have little specific significance. Louis Laguerre, it is true, had died only ten years before, having done considerable work at Blenheim and, despite Pope's denial, at Canons; but Verrio had died as long ago as 1707, and, confining his work to Windsor

and Hampton Court, had done no private work since 1697, almost thirty-five years before. What Pope is attacking in these couplets is not so much the lack of skill in Verrio or Laguerre, as a lack of taste in Timon. In decorating his chapel with Baroque, voluptuous paintings in the style of Verrio or Laguerre, Timon is guilty of a solecism not so much against artistic taste as against moral propriety.

The only other poem in which Pope mentions specific painters at any length is his *Epistle to Mr. Jervas: With Dryden's Translation of Fresnoy's Art of Painting*. Imagining that he and Jervas are in Italy looking at paintings, Pope writes:

Each heav'nly piece unwear'd we compare,  
Match Raphael's grace, with thy lov'd *Guido's* air,  
*Caracci's* strength, *Correggio's* softer line,  
*Paulo's* free stroke, and *Titian's* warmth divine  
(ll. 35-8)

To the extent that this is an informed choice of painters, it shows Pope striking a balance between painters noted for their formal design and painters noted, even renowned, for their colouring. To some extent, however, Pope is re-expressing opinions ready-made in Du Fresnoy's 'Judgement ... on the Works of the Principal and Best Painters of the Last Two Ages', which is attached to his poem *De Arte Graphica*, and forms part of Dryden's translation. Du Fresnoy's 'Judgement ...' devotes itself entirely to the Italian school of painting from Michelangelo on, though it is prepared to concede that Albert Durer and Hans Holbein *would* have been 'of the first form of painters, had they travelled into Italy'; of the Flemings only Rubens is allowed to approach the Italians in excellence, though even he falls short because 'he staid not long at Rome'. For Du Fresnoy, Raphael 'surpassed all modern painters ... because he had a better disposition in his pieces, without comparison, than . . . all the rest of the succeeding painters to our days'; Guido Reni's 'heads' 'yield no manner of precedence to those of Raphael'; Annibale Carracci was 'of an universal genius'; Correggio 'painted with great sweetness, and liveliness of colours, in which none surpassed him'; Paulo Veronese 'was wonderfully graceful in his airs of woman, with great variety of shining draperies, and

incredible vivacity and ease'; Titian was 'one of the greatest colourists ever known ... His painting is wonderfully glowing, sweet and delicate'. The only entirely private reference in Pope's couplets is to Jervas's particular preference for the work of Guido Reni, a painter whose sentimental heads, according to Geroge Vertue, Jervas was fond of copying. In choosing these particular painters for note, Pope reflects very much conventional opinion, an opinion ready to approve both the 'painterly' qualities of Correggio and Titian, and the 'sculptural' formal qualities of Raphael and Carracci – ready to approve both colour and form.

This survey of Pope's life shows that much of it was spent both in the pursuit and practice of the visual arts, especially that of painting, and in the company of men who were practitioners. Two of his most intimate friends for almost the whole of his adult life, Richardson and Jervas, were the leading artists of their day; Godfrey Kneller was his friend, or at least intimate acquaintance. All were men considerably older than Pope, already eminent in their professions; and, with the exception of Richardson, they had little or no pretension in the field of literature. All were men with strong views about the excellence of Italian painting and all had large collections of engravings and copies after the 'Old Masters' available for study. There can be no doubt that Pope, making these friendships between the ages of twenty and thirty, was strongly influenced by his own attraction to the visual arts, and the general ferment of interest in art in his early adult years. Richard Steele, another early friend, had also a more than passing interest in painting, and even Pope's friend, the surgeon William Cheselden, was an active member of Vanderbank's Academy of Painting, when Pope first met him about 1722.

Pope's interest in the visual arts broadened into the areas of architecture and landscape-gardening, partly through friendships with Burlington and his protégé William Kent; but the influence on Pope of Burlington, whose own influence on English architecture did not reach maturity until the late 1720s, should not be exaggerated.

The age difference between Pope and Burlington could have

been of considerable importance when they first met in 1715-6, and by then Pope was already the author of such assured poems as the *Essay on Criticism* and *The Rape of the Lock*. A confluence of ideas in later years, between two friends who admired each other's ability, seems more likely.

Pope's own taste in the visual arts was fairly eclectic. He admired not only the classical landscape of Wootton, but the naturalistic landscape of Tillemans, 'the two best landscape-painters in England' (*Spence* No.109); the Claude-like repose of the landscape gardens of Kent at Stowe, Rousham and Chiswick, and the wild irregularity of the Avon gorge near Bristol. His taste in architecture could encompass both the Palladian regularity of Chiswick Villa and Marble Hill, and the older, more 'gothick' style of Sherborne and the rambling Stanton Harcourt; while approving Burlington and Inigo Jones, he could also appreciate Wren. In painting he approved both colour and design; the formal qualities of Raphael and the freedom of Pietro da Cortona.

His own essays in the practice of the visual arts covered a wide field – his grotto, his garden, the gardens of friends: but it is also in the practice of the visual arts of painting and sculpture that Pope, as displayed by his conversation and his remaining correspondence, was active throughout his life. He painted portraits, designed, or took part in the design of, funeral monuments, designed wall-paintings for a friend, and even sketched romantic ruins. No possibility for coming in contact with the visual arts was left untouched – from sittings for his own portraits to visits to the picture-cleaners for friends.

In the light of all this one can only take at its face-value the conversation recorded by Spence in May, 1730:

"Which, Sir, gives you the most pleasure, poetry or painting?" asked Spence.

"I really can't well say, both of them are so extremely pleasing".