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Musées Imaginaires:

“Ut Pictura Poesis” as Critical Agent in the Realization of the Gallery Space in
Seventeenth and Eighteenth-century English Pictorial Poetry

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Introduction

“The noblest Poets and best Oratours when they desired to celebrate any extraordinary Beauty, are forc’d to have recourse to Statues and Pictures” – John Dryden

This essay focuses on the phenomenon of the poetic art gallery, or *musée imaginaire*, as produced in seventeenth and eighteenth-century English literature, fostered by a culture that entertained a revival of classical rhetoric on the parallel of the “sister arts”—painting and poetry. Horace’s influential dictum “*Ut pictura poesis*,” (“as a picture, so poetry,”) was adopted as near-obligation for the literary artist, specifically in light of a rapidly developing visual culture in England that corresponded with a rise in art collection on the Continent and a burgeoning proliferation of prints and reproductions. The ancient genre of “ekphrasis” traditionally describes a work of art, drawing on the idea that images allowed vast amounts of information to be stored in the mind. Verbal artists of the neoclassical persuasion drew on this tradition, responding to critical demands for visual stimulus by providing vivid poetic descriptions, “word-paintings” or mental pictures composed of traditional art historical emblems and motifs. A particular format developed through the practice of structuring a poem with a string of such images, which evoked for the reader an experience of being led through a picture gallery. In the following pages I examine the pictorial works of three prominent poets spanning the crossover of these two centuries: Andrew Marvell, John Dryden and Alexander Pope. Working in a similar tradition, each poet demonstrates a unique style of incorporating the visual arts in poetry—representing a spectrum between the use of highly descriptive visual language to conjure image

and the incorporation of the Horatian dictum as mere metaphorical footwork. The visual art object appealed to poets for its fundamental characteristic of fixedness, in which earthly time freezes and yields to the eternal world of art. The works we are to discuss embody the belief of this achieved divinity through the union of the unique qualities of both sister arts, though are underscored by reminders of human limitations.

Our modern interpretation of the “gallery” does not provide an adequate understanding of how such a space was conceptualized prior to the time of these artists. The cultural significance of the gallery space was informed by implications of great luxury and status; to have possession of one was a privilege reserved for only the very elite. The art collection was a tangible expression of wealth at a time before the invention of the modern bank. Carole Paul describes the nature of these early princely art collections: “Elites throughout Europe amassed great collections of work that not only served their personal pleasure and edification but also proclaimed their status, wealth and cultivation to privileged guests and visitors.”¹ This was a system by which the great masterpieces of art were available for direct viewing only to those of a certain status or means. The English Isle was slow to catch on to the continental trend of art collecting until the collection of Charles I in the mid seventeenth-century stimulated a rise in princely collections. Aspiring artists of the requisite means, graphic and literary alike were heavily encouraged to undertake the “Grand Tour” through which to familiarize themselves with the masterpieces of European art.

This familiarization with the greatest works of the past centuries and those that survived of the classical era was absolutely essential to the artistic development of a well-bred young man. Paula Findlen writes a chapter in Carole Paul’s book on the Uffizi Gallery in Florence,

¹ Carole Paul, ed., *The First Modern Museums of Art: The Birth of an Institution in 18th and early 19th-century Europe* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2012), 1.

contesting that it created a “legendary space where possibilities would fuel the imagination of artists, poets and travelers for many generations to come.”² Here emerges the importance of seeing the image for the artistic imagination. We have evidence that Marvell, Dryden and Pope all traveled abroad and were thus able to partake in this cultural exchange of visual iconography. Italy, and especially Rome, came to represent a common cultural heritage for its connection to the classical world as evidenced through its vast collection of surviving fragments of antiquity. These pictorial poets can largely be ascribed to the “Neoclassical” tradition that held the artistic styles of antiquity as an ideal towards which all artists should strive and were measured against. The sense of privilege in viewing the art object is especially potent for these fragments of antiquity, stimulating for many viewers a truly emotional and reverential engagement with the object. The capacity to see with one’s own eyes a true masterpiece of art was an opportunity limited to few, and was naught but a legendary activity in the imaginations of many.

However, as Jean H. Hagstrum says of the era ushered in by this increase in foreign art collection and international travel, “in no previous period in English literature could a poet assume knowledge of great painting and statuary in the audience he was addressing.”³ How did the world of art transform from an inherently class-based privilege to a more widely consumed exchange of images, icons and symbols? As interest in the arts rose, so did a cultural demand for images, which stimulated the spread of various mediators between the works of art and middle-class people without access to the collections. Perhaps most influential was the intense proliferation of a developing print culture, in which engravings and illustrations of famous works could be easily mass-produced and distributed. Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini write that

² Paula Findlen, “Uffizi Gallery, Florence: The Rebirth of a Museum in the Eighteenth Century,” in *The First Modern Museums of Art*, 73.

³ Jean H. Hagstrum, *The Sister Arts: The Tradition of Literary Pictorialism and English Poetry from Dryden to Gray* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 130.

through these prints, “fixed monuments that had to be visited to be seen could become known (in their portable printed form) to a much broader public.”⁴ This is crucial for the pictorial poet as it meant he was able to rely on an embedded visual vocabulary in the minds of many of his readers. The ability to duplicate an exact image brought about the development of a much more concrete communal image repertoire. Elizabeth Eisenstein cites William Ivins, former curator of prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, who coins the phrase ‘the exactly repeatable pictorial statement’ and elaborates that “identical images could be viewed simultaneously by scattered readers,” a true revolution in communication.⁵ The emblem was a recognizable image, often reproduced in mass amounts and variations and would have held for the viewer an immediately associable abstract concept or moral.

The collection of print images was able in a slightly muted fashion to reproduce the mythical status of the fine art collector. Zorach and Rodini explain that through these “paper museums,” purchasers could also feel a sense of ownership and even develop their own “connoisseurial eye”—which before had not been possible for any except the very wealthy (vii). They even go so far as to suggest that “prints made the renaissance,” not an entirely unbelievable claim, as this was the primary fashion in which the masses were able to access great cultural works and ideas. The print revolution also allowed for the wider distribution of guidebooks to the great art collections of Europe, intended to aid the visits of potential travellers as well as to provide documentation for those back at home of the style and appearance of the great visual works. These guides and handbooks are intriguing to view as an expression of the artistic parallel in their own right, insomuch as they attempt to recreate with words the nature of a visual

⁴ Rebecca Zorach and Elizabeth Rodini, *Paper Museums: The Reproductive Print in Europe, 1500-1800* (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 2005), vii.

⁵ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and cultural transformations in early-modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 53.

image. The writer who could paint a picture for his readers with words was of immense value to the literate public who wished to have some small share in the luxury of art viewing.

It is understandable that within this context many poets were interested in engaging with the graphic art form and drawing upon its particular expressive qualities. Critics and writers alike were drawn to the idea that the poet should seek to resemble the painter. The most often cited summation of the concept was of course, the aforementioned classical dictum of Horace: “Ut Pictura Poesis,” or “as painting is, so should poetry be.” As with any translation of an ancient text, the meaning of line has been heavily debated and widely interpreted. Hagstrum argues that a proper reading of the line stresses in relation to the context of the work indicates that there is no warrant for the popular interpretation, and that the line truly reads more like: “as sometimes in painting, so occasionally in poetry,” a much more underwhelming reading of the manifesto adopted by the eighteenth-century imagination. Whether or not this is true, it must be noted that the cultural adoption of the phrase expanded far beyond the author’s original intentions.

C.O. Brink tells us that instead of a serious likening of the arts, the phrase merely posits as mutual criteria for painting and poetry the ability to bear “repeated close scrutiny.”⁶ However, he asserts that the phrase was “sufficiently memorable to serve as a base for far reaching assertions on the relation of the arts,” and that gradually “the distance from the original Horation context increased.” “Ut pictura poesis” became a rallying-ground for classical revivalists who wished to honor the dictations of their ancient predecessors who embodied the artistic ideal. Thus, in striving for the ideal, the poet was inspired to combine into his craft the unique qualities of the visual arts. Cicely Davies elaborates on the remarkable extent to which critics of the

⁶ C.O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The Ars Poetica* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971), 370-371.

eighteenth-century relied on the phrase in evaluating the merits of the verbal art form. She describes the “frequent and mechanical” association with painting that resulted in a conceptual merging of their principles, to the extent that the most obvious characteristics of visual art were expected in the work of the poet.⁷ Descriptions were criticized “as if the poet ought to make a conscious effort to dispose his materials pictorially” (Davies 165). Rendering the visual was thus not a suggestion but a requirement for the neoclassical poet.

A key component to understanding this demand for the features of visual art stems from the concept of sight as understood at the time. This was a culture that had developed over time an intense preoccupation with the processes of seeing. The Renaissance in particular fostered a significant interest in optic systems and structures of the human eye, which led to a proliferation of optical inventions and gadgets used to deceive and draw illusions before the eye. A Lockean position adopted by many further critics argued that sight was the highest of all senses, and more than that, the source of all ideas. Davies cites Joseph Addison, who believed in the existence of two levels to the imagination. The first, “primary pleasures of the imagination,” arrive from objects that are actually before one’s eyes, while the secondary pleasures “flow from the ideas of visual objects, when the objects are not actually before our eyes, but are called up into our memories, or formed into agreeable visions of things that are either absent or fictitious” (Davies 160, citing Addison, *The Spectator*). The imagination was therefore inextricably linked to the visual. Zorach and Rodini tell us that the imagination was often conceived of as a site for “impressions” or “literal imprinting of sense perceptions” (3). The image was heralded as the originator of all forms of artistic expression.

⁷ Cicely Davis, “Ut Pictura Poesis,” *The Modern Language Review* 30.2 (1935), 160, doi: 10.2307/3716094

An important element of this analogy between the two arts is the conception of the creative spirit as it exists in the imagination before being disseminated into a particular medium. Davies cites Mark Akenside who believed that “all the ideas that rise in the artists mind are visual and he has to then translate them into words, sounds or line” (161). The challenge undertaken by these poets was that of transforming an inherently non-visual material into something physical, something that materialized in the imagination. The success of pictorial poetry was fostered by not only the poet’s own knowledge of great paintings from which the verses often drew their inspiration, but also through a broadening cultural awareness of the art world as spread through the popularity of prints and the gradual adoption of a continental style of art collecting in England. The classical analogy stimulates an entire spectrum of pictorial poetic responses; this essay is interested in particular in those poems that explore the trope through an explicit likeness with an art object. The next thing to consider is what it is exactly that constitutes a “picture.” To begin I turn to Andrew Marvell, a metaphysical poet born a half-generation before Dryden and about sixty years before Pope, to examine his use of the poetic picture.

Chapter 1: The Picture Galleries of Andrew Marvell

Art as Unattainable Paradise in “The Picture of Little T.C.”

The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists one definition of “picture” as “a tableau in a play, ballet, etc.; a person or group set in a (static) position so as to symbolically represent an idea.”⁸ The text of Marvell’s poem is set as five stanzas, framed by roman numerals, each of which contains a static image, a visual symbol. The motionlessness of painting is a crucial element of the pictorial tradition, as one of the fundamental differences between the two arts. While a poem relies on a successive narrative in which one event informs and leads to another, a painting must express all it wants to in just one, skillfully planned moment of time. The seventeenth-century painter Sir Joshua Reynolds once declared that the painter “has but one sentence to utter, but one moment to exhibit” (Hagstrum 159, citing Reynolds, *Discourse IV*). Thus, in order to fully embody the effects of the visual art, the poet must likewise figure out how to condense his material into a moment in time. In conjuring a scene conceivable as a static painting, the poet drew upon well-established images, symbols and objects of the collective artistic imagination. He carried with him a mental inventory of leading masterpieces, which the twentieth-century art theorist André Malraux called a *musée imaginaire* (Hagstrum 162). The museum of the imagination is an equally fitting term for the pictorial spaces created in these poems strung together by images. The pictorial poet drew not only from European masterpieces, but from the growth of art production at home as well. Marvell’s “gallery” is heavily influenced by the dominance of portraiture among contemporary British artists, notably Sir Godfrey Kneller, pre-eminent portraitist of the time.

⁸ "picture, n.". OED Online. March 2014. Oxford University Press.

Andrew Marvell's "Picture of Little T.C." is demonstrative of what Hagstrum coins as the "gallery-style manner of proceeding" in a poem, in which the reader is led from one image or scene to the next as though moving through a physical gallery space (117). This particular gallery comprises a string of portraits, in which a young girl is painted in a variety of garden scenes. They share qualities with what Charles Hinnant calls the "subject or mythological portrait, a hybrid genre bridging the individual likeness and the work devoted to religious, mythological, or allegorical subjects."⁹ This was a style of portraiture that allowed for the likeness of an actual person to be merged with the idealized characteristics of a well-established icon. Marvell's poem is likely written with a specific girl in mind (Theophila Cornwall), and he adopts this method of praising the individual through a likening to an allegorical or iconic virtue. Kneller and his peers often dressed their high-class subjects in classicizing dress, depicting real people as the well-known saints and characters that peopled the history of art. Douglas Stewart highlights and provides historical lineage for the "standard Arcadian portrait-type."¹⁰ In an era of renewed classicism, it was highly fashionable to be painted in the utopian setting of Arcadia, and scores of wealthy women had their portraits done in this manner, whether expressly likened to a mythical figure or not. See Kneller's pictures of real courtly women sheathed in the elegant imagined robes of cascading folds, seated in the foreground of some classical or pastoral setting. [figs.1,2].

This Arcadian portrait type is exactly what we find in "Little T.C.," although the genre is specified even further to the popular style of Arcadian child portraiture of the 1650s, coincidentally (or not), the same decade in which this poem was produced. Rosalie Colie argues

⁹ Charles H. Hinnant, "Marvell's Gallery of Art," *Renaissance Quarterly* 24.1 (1971), 28, doi: 10.2307/2859338

¹⁰ J. Douglas Stewart, *Sir Godfrey Kneller and The English Baroque Portrait* (Clarendon Press, 1983).

that the poem is “an exact poetic parallel to pictures of children ringed with emblematic flowers indicating the transience both of childhood and beauty.”¹¹ The image of the child would have connoted something more fleeting than it does today, as child and infant mortality were much greater threats in the seventeenth-century. Portraits of rosy-cheeked girls and boys surrounded by flowers, symbols of ephemerality, suggested a kind of innocence that by its very nature would not stay. The pastoral setting further supports this vision of unattainable utopian innocence. [figs. 3,4]. Marvell will paint such visual images of Theophila, seating her within the setting of the garden, which was an emblem of an idealized nature, artistically arranged and thus elevated by the hand of man and the eye of the artist.

“See,” Marvell begins his poem with an imperative fitting for a culture of the eye, “with what simplicity this nymph begins her golden days!” “Golden” is a visual stimulant as a color but also, as Nigel Smith notes, carries a reference to the classical golden age (114). As has been discussed, the classical past was held in the highest regard in terms of its artistic production. A.E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock argue that the term “golden” here references the world of art in opposition to nature.¹² This is a lingering debate in the pictorial tradition and opens up the essential paradox: an artist is to study Nature above all else and yet produce work that exceeds nature in its image of perfection. In discussing the genre of the Ideal landscape as T.C. occupies, Jeffrey B. Spenser ties in the idea of the *ferme ornée* (ornamental farm), a place where external nature submits to idealization by way of man’s “quest for an earthly paradise.”¹³ The scene is infused with color, though it is not merely ornamental but symbolic – “golden days,”

¹¹ Nigel Smith, ed., “The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers,” in *The Poems of Andrew Marvell: Revised Edition* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 2003), 114.

¹² A.E. Dyson and Julian Lovelock, “Serpent in Eden: Marvell’s ‘The Picture of Little T.C. in a Prospect of Flowers’” in *Critical Survey* 5.4. (1972), 261.

¹³ Jeffrey B. Spenser, *Heroic Nature: Ideal Landscape in English Poetry from Marvell to Thompson* (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1972), 3.

highlighting man's yearning to achieve paradise on earth and return the golden age; "green grass," emphasizing the setting of the garden and the earthly, living beauties of God's creation. The first stanza's luscious descriptions of green grass and wild flowers call into an art-literate mind (from painting, print and literature) popular visual representations of the Garden of Eden. See Nicolas Poussin's painting of Spring, or "The Earthly Paradise." [fig. 5]. Marvell alludes to the *ferme ornée* in response to the human desire towards achieving a natural paradise, evidence of the divine in the earthly realm.

The garden setting is an image of paradise and exemplifies the value of the static and eternal nature of the visual art form. Paradise has no concept of time nor is it specified as a concrete past, and thus is suited to an art form that chooses one instance in time to eternalize. Spenser writes of such settings: "Time can be abolished in a linear, historical sense, and replaced in art with a 'time that is cosmic, cyclical and infinite,' one permitting man to indulge in his nostalgic dreams of an eternal return to a paradisaical golden age" (18). This timelessness presents itself in contrast to the realities of the known natural world in which flowers wilt and young girls get old and die. The poetic pictures capture a still image of a girl in her youth, and becomes something immortal that is beyond the capacity of the human herself. Flowers are popular emblems in the tradition of *vanitas* painting, which sets forth as its primary message the transience of all human endeavors – beauty, success, fame. The short life span of a blooming flower is a simple allegory through which to experience the passage of time and its eventual claim over all youth and beauty. The static nature of Eden in art thus denies time these destructive powers. Kathleen Raine concludes that Eden is the environment of the imagination (Spenser 49, citing Raine, *Defending Ancient Springs*). Eden does not pertain to human time—it

is a state of mind, and it can only be represented through art as a product of the imagination. Art is Paradise; it stops time.

The imagery of the poem does not rise from one painting in particular, but rather draws its sensory detail from a liberally mingled recollection of image sources. The first stanza perhaps calls to mind the tradition of iconic paintings of Madonna in a flower garden. The theme was explored by Peter Rubens and Jan Brueghel, prominent contemporary Flemish painters [fig.6] as well as Giovanni Battista Salvi [fig.7]. The Madonna as a symbol of virginity complements the innocence inferred by the image of the young girl. They are the unattainable ideal. Jeffrey Spenser discusses the emblematic tradition of Mary, in which the *hortus conclusus* or enclosed garden “provided both the setting for the virgin-Mother Mary and a symbolic equivalence for her” (4). The “ideal woman” and the garden setting are both examples of perfected natural forms. They will contribute to Marvell’s exploration of the disjuncture caused by the confluence of nature or reality with the ideal. T.C. is described as giving the flowers names, which is a biblical activity from the Garden, though it is Adam who performs the task (Smith 114). (This is our first hint that T.C. will hold some unwelcome power over her male companions.) She is an object of the artist’s invention, and because she is shown naming flowers and instructing nature itself she embodies the idea that the artist could surpass nature. She is a “conscious artist” herself, as Dyson and Lovelock say, as she “strives to bring order out of chaos, overriding the original designs of Nature with designs of her own” (262).

Joseph Addison believed that nature was a “series of potential pictures” that the artist combines to make a “beautiful whole” (Davies 161). Marvell’s nature presents itself as such a series of pictures, and as though the reader has stepped further into a gallery space, the second stanza leads to another image. This one looks ahead and “foretells” of the future life of little

T.C. who “wanton Love shall one day fear” (12). Like the foreboding undertones of *vanitas* painting, the poem apprehends a future in which T.C. steps out of this image of innocent perfection. Spenser notes the pun on the word “prospect” in the title, which most obviously refers to the view of the scene yet also references this act of looking forward into the later years of her the young girl’s life (66). This stanza relates T.C. to “she [with] chaster laws,” which certainly refers to Diana, the goddess of chastity. This is a good example of how a strong image can be captured not through the use of descriptive visual language, but through cues that would have been associated with visual items. Hagstrum discusses the eighteenth-century inheritance of a “pantheon of visually expressed moral abstractions” or moral concepts that had long been paired with an accompanying visualized figure. For example, Minerva embodies wisdom, and so when one thought of wisdom, there was a goddess to imagine alongside it (Hagstrum 148). In this way Marvell is able to call to mind the picture of Diana through simply mentioning the virtue of chastity. As a direct result of her chastity, or denial of carnal love, “wanton Love,” does not fare well in his pursuit of T.C., though she is perfect and pure.

Under her command, Love, instantly imagined in the form of the winged Cupid, *sees* his “bow broke” and his “ensigns torn.” Any man foolish to fall in love with a woman who preserves her chastity will find his hopes dashed. The artistic tradition of “Venus Disarming Cupid” can be seen in such works as a painting by Paolo Veronese and a print made after a painting then attributed to Corregio. [figs. 8,9]. The goddess of Love is teasing Cupid, symbolically halting the advances of the male lover. The broken bow and “ensigns” also suggest the image of a ship that has been through a terrible fight and emerged from it for the worse. In any event, the ideal beauty of the innocent maiden of the first stanza has begun to transform into something significantly *less* ideal, which suggests that there is no room in the real world for such

a chaste woman. Eve has met Adam and confounds the natural order of life by refusing to surrender her innocence. The ideals of chaste perfection as exemplified through the world of art simply do not apply to reality, an imperfect and un-idealized world. Spenser talks about how sixteenth-century love emblems were conflated with religious agendas, and I think this is a useful way to think about the dilemma inherent in the ideal woman of the art world (5). If the woman is expressed as the height of female perfection, then she becomes an object of sacred or divine love and as a direct result can no longer be an object of carnal love. Is she then still perfect? Is there a space for her in the world beyond the canvas? One cannot be both ideal and of the flesh. She becomes the “virtuous enemy of man,” as Marvell poignantly puts it.

The reader is led to the third stanza or picture, in which our speaker is forced to approach T.C. now as the enemy of his heart. He attempts to “parley with those conq’ring eyes” an action that harks back to the idea of the sight as most powerful of the senses. There is nothing to be gained from this parley, as she “[triumphs] over hearts that strive” (31). Alastair Fowler sees in this a reference to the tradition of the “allegorical triumph” in both art and literature (Smith 115, citing Fowler). The “Triumph of Venus” is a trope that occurs throughout graphic tradition with the goddess of Love depicted in full glory atop the waves, seated on the shoulders of men, in concert with the earlier metaphor of the sunken ship. [See fig. 10]. A parallel allusion is the triumph of Death, as in the final lines of the stanza our poor character has asked to be released from his painful earthly entanglements in order to “*see thy glories from some shade.*” The sunken ship has descended into the timeless underworld. Marvell’s imagery draws on a world of heavy “shading,” using darkness and its adjoining negative space to add charge to the emotionality.

In the next stanza, the picture of T.C., Marvell's created art object, has once again proven superior to nature itself. "Every verdant thing/Itself does at thy beauty charm," the opening lines read. These verdant things are the plants and fruits of the natural world, which themselves are under the spell of T.C.'s "beauty," equated with her image or her "picture." Thus, Marvell has clearly provided a case in which art surpasses and even enchants nature. Smith tells us that the word "charm" would have also had the connotation of "bewitch," which of course brings to mind a long tradition of visual depictions of the female sorceress or enchantress. Look, for example, to Dosso Dossi's rendition of Circe, in which the goddess sits central, all "verdant things" presumably at her command, including the tiny figures of men in the top left hand corner, bound and tied to trees, their shed armor resting at the feet of the female conqueror. [fig. 11]. Most notably, as Smith points out, she can procure for the violets a "longer age," violets being flowers that were particularly well known for their short life span. The ideal woman of the canvas, the painted object, stands in direct opposition to the natural progression of time. The pictorial poet desires to halt the imperfect tendencies of time to diminish and decay, a reality that does not occur in the everlasting timelessness of painting.

The final stanza directly references Flora, the goddess of flowers. However, this time T.C. is not likened to the image of the goddess as we have been led to expect, but held in opposition to her and warned to beware. T.C. may have embodied the floral goddess throughout the previous stanzas, but it is finally revealed that she is not truly a goddess. Flora heralds the coming of the springtime floral scene that T.C. feigns to master. Flora is the divine force that actually controls nature, and can punish those who presume to possess her capabilities. The Triumph of Venus and the Triumph of Death are surpassed now for the "Triumph of Flora," a theme rendered in a painting by Nicolas Poussin, as well as the works of many others. [fig.12].

T.C. does not get to instruct nature after all, and can be quite simply “[nipped] in the blossom,” (Marvell 40). Just like the short-lived flowers whose colors reflect in the rosy cheeks of the painted Arcadian child, some little girls will not live for as long as others. The poem is clever in how it presents the reader with a string of successive portraits that we have entertained as supposedly even better than nature, until finally these built-up expectations are tossed back, as though the reader was being foolish all along to imagine the girl a goddess.

Spenser describes the “deliberate attempt on the part of poet or painter to exclude the temporal and transient from landscapes,” and says that the knowledge of its inevitability fosters a “melancholy, even tragic, dimension to contrast with this world of eternal springtime” (20). The desire to recreate the stasis inherent in painting resonates in Marvell’s poem. Through emblematic images that freeze a moment in time, Marvell can preserve the youth of the innocent child, an act that is impossible in reality and only achievable through the artistic imagination. The fusion of poetry with the eternal timelessness of the art object takes the artist as close as he can get to the divine. Through the device of Little T.C. as an art object, Marvell uses her manipulation of the natural garden to allude to the artist who plays at God. However, the incongruity of this perfected art form with the earthly love of man hints strongly towards the folly in this act. Says Spenser: “Arcadia itself may be eternal but man is not, and the poet or painter deals with this hard fact moralistically, poignantly, stoically or ironically...” (20).

“The Gallery” and Images of the Soul

The mere idea of a physical space in which one had the luxury of simply walking from one great work of art to another was the stuff of myth for many in Marvell’s time. The ability to view art like this is something that we take for granted in modern times, but it was absolutely

revolutionary in the seventeenth century. England is largely introduced to the trend by the “Whitehall group,” a small group of aristocratic connoisseurs including Charles I that devoted themselves towards amassing a great collection of the finest artworks. Those wealthy enough to undertake the Grand Tour may have experienced the European collections but we cannot assume that the entire scope of Marvell’s readers had the connections to view such a gallery space. The popular fame accorded to the emergence of them, however, was certainly enough to make such the concept imaginable and moreover, one of great intrigue. Along with the aforementioned circulation of art prints, there grew out of the rise in art collecting a specific genre of handbooks or guides detailing the great European collections. Jonathon Richardson the Elder publishes a notable example: “Account of Some of the Statues, Bas-Reliefs, Drawings and Pictures in Italy and with Remarks” (Carole Paul 76). Even those without the time and wealth to tour the continent presumably had such an avenue through which to conceive of the great gallery spaces. It is perhaps with similar hopes as Richardson that pictorial poets like Marvell structure their works in the “gallery-style” manner, evoking this privileged experience. Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlof tells us that the term “gallery” could also be used to evoke “a collection of images, rendered as literature, as descriptive, rhetorical or poetic creations, in the mode of a paragone – a competition of skills between art forms.”¹⁴ This engages the preoccupation of Marvel and his pictorial peers in the fusion of painting and poetry.

Not one to leave a metaphysical leaf unturned, Marvell writes a poem that he aptly titles “The Gallery.” The metaphor cannot be denied or even missed by the unlearned eye because the scheme is explicitly laid out at first glance. The poem in its totality is a collection of descriptions of paintings, or “word-paintings.” Curiously, we find that as in “Little T.C.,” the gallery is

¹⁴ Margaretha Rossholm Lagerlof, *Fate, Glory, and Love in Early Modern Gallery Decoration* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2013), 4.

composed entirely of portraits of women. To help illuminate the context of this trend, I look to scholarly research on the tradition of female portraiture. Susan E. James speculates on the significance of female portraiture in early modern English culture and suggests that for a woman of this time who spent her life “covered” and subjected to parental or marital control, “the act of posing for a portrait was an act of revelation, an uncovering of self even if that self must be projected through specific societal roles.”¹⁵ Once again, the woman is painted into the recognizable form of a mythical or iconographical figure with its own host of abstract connotations that surely overshadow the individuality of the lady in question. It is interesting to keep in mind to what extent the female portrait presents an expression of a true inner state and to what extent the individuality of the female figure is undercut by the overlaying of a pre-established and in many ways generic character.

To possess a fine art gallery would have meant to have been exceedingly wealthy and probably a member of the royal family. For Marvell to say that his speaker is blessed with such a space implies that he enjoys a certain amount of symbolic richness. Moreover, a princely gallery was thought to express something deeply personal about the collector. The choices that lay behind amassing and organizing a collection were an expression of a certain artistic faculty in their own right. Lagerlof gives us the example of Francois Ier of the late fifteenth and sixteenth century who kept the only key to his gallery and used it “explicitly as a unique and closed space, to be opened on his own decision and in the company of his choice” (5). This anecdote informs the opening scene of the poem in which Marvell’s speaker addresses a figure called Clora, inviting her alone to “view his soul.” As readers we are implicitly invited as well, and the effect is one of being granted entrance into a spectacular and private world. Lagerlof says, “the

¹⁵ Susan E. James, *The Feminine Dynamic in English Art, 1485-1603* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009), 79.

character of intricate visual compounds stresses an underlying function of the galleries as “reflection chambers” – as an intellectual space designating the identity, interests and missions of the patron. The role of *collector* was therefore one of extreme privilege and admiration, and is one that Marvell constructs for his speaker as well as for himself.

Smith points to the common poetic notion of the time that a lover had the image of his beloved engraved in his soul (92). Marvell’s poem is a clever and quite literal illustration of this conceit. Rather than build a gallery in his soul filled with a collection of different women, he displays one that is compiled of the multiple and opposing images of just one woman. This decision is illustrated in historical shift happening in the nature of art collections as popular taste shifted away from the medieval tapestry, or “arras-hanging.” The old tradition of tapestry wall hangings usually depicted a great number of characters and faces, whom we see the speaker ridding himself of in preference of the solitary female portrait. The faces on the old arras-hangings are symbols of previous lovers, pushed off and into the medieval past in the light of a new fashion of art. “For all furniture,” he reassures Clora, “you’ll find/ only your picture in my mind” (7-8). In this gallery one individual woman is represented many times in different mythological roles. A. R. Sharrock says poignantly, “in a thought system where sight plays an important role in the provocation of love, it is not surprising that the image of the loved one should have a significance which gains it almost independent status.”¹⁶

The ancient term ‘*energeia*’ originated in rhetoric “to describe the power that verbal visual imagery possessed in setting before the hearer the very object or scene being described” (Hagstrum 11). The impact of the *energeia* in this poem is amplified by placing not only the likeness of a masterpiece of ideal beauty before the eyes of the reader, but moreover the very

¹⁶ A.R. Sharrock, “Womanaufacture” in *The Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991), 46.

picture of one's most beloved. The image of Love is used to evoke the reverence afforded at this time to a true masterpiece of art; conversely perhaps it is the awe inspired by the art object that is used to evoke his love for the woman. As Hagstrum says, the particular intrigue of artistic symbols to poets was the relationship between the "inarticulate but expressive object and the responsive beholder" (130). Marvell has no doubt experienced for himself the otherworldly sense of adoration for a true artistic masterpiece, and expresses it symbolically through the metaphor of physical love. Christian art of earlier centuries often evoked a desire "to speak to the object, to implore it, and to induce it to respond (Hagstrum 49). As we will see appear in the work of Dryden, Marvell's speaker confuses his love for painting with his love for the physical woman. Marvell's poem will ultimately reinforce that the mortal human has not the ideal nature of the art object.

The first word painting of Marvell's "Gallery" is one that induces great psychological oppression, in which his love is likened to an "inhuman murderess," the very features of her face described as "tormenting engines." Hinnant provides a number of art historical examples supporting the association of a woman's physical features with instruments of torture (30). The woman as murderess is a visual theme explored heavily in the tradition of depicting the character of Judith, who cut off the head of Holofernes. [fig.13]. One painter in particular who adopted the theme was Cristofano Allori who combined the mythical story with portraiture, placing his mistress in the role of Judith, making his own self-portrait the severed Head of Holofernes, to physically illustrate the suffering he had endured at her hands [fig. 14] (Hinnant 28-29). By "examining" the heart of the man, on which we remember is engraved the image of his beloved, this woman is actually inspecting her own reflection. Nanette Salomon explores the relation of

the female form in art to the vice of *vanitas*, or vanity.¹⁷ Woman has traditionally been rendered as this particular vice for her supposed preoccupation with physical appearances. The theme is rendered in any number of art historical examples – see Giovanni Bellini’s “Woman with a Mirror” [fig.15] as well as Titian’s aptly titled “Vanity.” [fig.16]. This peeks into a discussion on woman as inherently and unforgivably superficial that will feature prominently in Pope’s poetic paintings.

Interesting to inspect as a possible source of inspiration for Marvell’s gallery is the development of the Farnese Gallery in Rome. This was a gallery that through decoration and design presented in its entirety a celebration of love, providing an example of how a collection of art could be guided and threaded together through a particular theme (Lagerlof 115). Marvell’s poem embodies the Farnese Gallery space in that it also is guided and held together by the multi-faceted and often conflicting themes of love. One of the scenes on the great vault ceiling at Farnese depicts the mortal Anchises making love to Venus, the relationship inharmonious and degrading to the goddess, and it is the last of such affairs in the heroic age [figs. 17,18] (Lagerlof 117). Similarly to Anchises, Marvell’s speaker attempts to engage in a union of love with a woman that has become something more than human – an art object, an expression of the divine—it is unbalanced. He places himself in the position of the “tyrant” (a powerful monarch who alone would have the rare privilege of amassing such a collection of art, renderings of ideal beauty, fragments of the divine.) The “cabinet,” as Smith cites from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, could be used to refer to a private room, as well as a picture gallery and even “a

¹⁷ Nanette Salomon, “Positioning Women in Visual Convention: The Case of Elizabeth I,” in *Attending to Women in Early Modern England*, ed. Travitsky and Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994),

figure for secret or hidden intentions, such as a tyrant might have” (94). Again this emphasizes the gallery as a space expressive of one’s inner being or soul.

The second picture is drawn “on the other side,” which one could interpret to mean simply on the other side of the gallery, though Hinnant makes a compelling suggestion that this in fact refers to a double-sided portrait (93). This is certainly quite a useful metaphorical device in examining the multiple and perhaps contradictory facets of an individual persona. Each successive painting is a new psychological revelation. It also glances at a discussion of imitation or duplicitousness as it applied to visual art. In various historical belief-systems preceding this time, the image is a counterfeit, because it presents a false image of reality. Through this logic, the image of woman, concerned primarily with appearances, is a perfect visual companion for such an idea. Nannette Salomon cites Elizabeth Honig who discusses the effects of *vanitas* on the early modern construction of women, pointing out that “the very word “painting” as a means of artificial beautification and vanity could refer as much to the cosmetic adornment of a real woman as to her portrayal in oils” (71). This does much to reveal the use of woman as idea, which is why she is so often transformed into the art object and engaged in such discourse. A poem evoking the cultural implications of women in portraiture at this time will certainly have recourse to such themes of duplicity and visual deception.

This next image reveals the woman now under the guise of “Aurora,” the goddess of the dawn, although curiously she does not wake, as several scholars notice. Perhaps this has to do with the necessary stagnancy of painting – and Marvell has chosen to render in his brief still the very moment before Aurora has risen to herald the dawn. In any case it is clear that Marvell does not adhere wholly to any one painting narrative, and we can see how he aligns his verse to popular painting but also how he combines and reshapes these contrived images into imaginative

creations purely his own. Though called Aurora, the woman brings to mind the image of the Sleeping Venus, and the conflation of these two characters can actually be seen, as Hinnant suggests, as a co-mingling of the themes of love and awakening. Most importantly is the way in which the forces of nature lie at her feet, the implication being that she, like T.C., is able to control them. The lines end on a note of “harmless love” which again stands in direct contrast to any hope of earthly or carnal love. If the girl is a goddess, then she is off-limits to mortals through any means but sacred or divine love, as expressed through the episode of Anchises and Venus. Perhaps the allusions to Venus for some contemporary readers included the memory of this particular story.

In the next work she is an enchantress, illuminated by an evocative “light obscure.” This phrase directly references the style of painting known as chiaroscuro in which the effects of obscurity were explored through the use of light and shade as opposed to color in rendering dramatic effect (Smith 94). As with the device of the double-sided portrait, Marvell here evokes a specific painting style to further allude to the concealed nature of the psyche, perhaps the clouding of judgment regarding the character of one’s beloved. Hinnant likens the scene to a popular baroque emblem subject exhibiting the “cruelty of love” through the image of woman testing her beauty by torturing her lover (30). For modern eyes the image of a woman “raving over entrails” seems too grotesque for the picturesque. However, the inspection of entrails after a sacrifice was a standard method of ancient divination, reference to which served to assert the association of women with madness. The woman as “seer” no doubt signified terrible potential for a culture both fixated on the process of seeing and constructed completely around the assertion of male power. The *Oxford English Dictionary* lists a common religious function of the term “entrails” to mean “the inward parts regarded as the seat of emotions, thoughts, etc.”

The woman becomes *vanitas* again, viewing her own image (stamped on his soul) in order to “divine” how long she shall “continue fair.” The male lover is sacrificed on the altar of her beauty.

“Against that,” however, she is again the figure of Venus. Directly after being shown as a vision of beauty rendering devastation, she is painted as the opposite. Hinnant references the sea-born Venus as “the creative power of Nature,” providing a potential pictorial ancestor to this image as Raphael’s “Triumph of Galatea” at the Farnese in Rome [fig. 19] (33). Again the woman/goddess commands the very forces of nature, providing further recourse to the debate between art and nature. The second to last stanza re-establishes the overall analogy of the gallery for anyone who has forgotten, boasting possession of an art space finer than even the King’s – “a collection choicer far/ Than or Whitehall’s or Mantua’s were” (47-48). Smith explores the poem as a depiction of the “transition in artistic taste from the pictorial narratives of arras-hangings popular in Tudor and Jacobean England to the cosmopolitan fashions of Mannerism painting embraced by the Caroline court” (93). This gallery is unique in that it depicts the history of the gallery itself as developed over time. Smith argues that it is also “an account of an artistic fashion and the dependence of that fashion upon a political regime and its vision of civilization” (93). If the prevailing styles of art depend so drastically on the specific contextual beliefs of a culture, then it stands to reason that the gilded world of art is in fact much less stable than the eternal forces of nature.

By the final stanza our speaker admits, “But, of these pictures and the rest, / that at the entrance likes me best.” Ironically the last image of the poem is the first one in the gallery, suggesting that one’s lasting impression of a person is the first sight of them. He describes “a tender shepherdess,” who is shown “transplanting flow’rs from the green hill, / To crown her

head and bosom fill.” See Botticelli’s rendition of Flora, a female image of pastoral perfection who is one with nature, her arms filled with tumbling wildflowers that likewise crown her head and decorate her dress. [fig. 20]. After wrestling for the previous stanzas with alternating depictions of his love, ultimately he finds comfort in the most naturalistic image of them all – that of the pastoral shepherdess, which as we have seen is part of a highly valued pictorial tradition. As in “The Picture of Little T.C.,” it is Nature who has the final word. This is not an image like those prior of the woman who seems to be able to conquer nature, but of one who becomes one with nature itself. It is a celebration of the natural world, and an impetus towards the expression of that natural harmony. The implication of “Mother Nature” also fosters the expectation that womanhood may eventually merge with motherhood. It is the natural progression in a system through which a woman is defined first by her father and then by her sons, never by herself.

From the Italian poet Marino, author of the original “Galleria” Marvell is able to consider, as Hinnant writes, “the possibility of the poem as a gallery [and] also of the word-painting as an imaginative creation, the product of inspiration as well as of description” (29). As we have discussed, the art gallery was a space that for many people only existed in the imagination – and pictorial poems such as Marvell creates are physical embodiments of the near-divine creation achieved through the fusion of poetry with the work of visual art. It is a purely imaginative space, fueled by the best qualities of both art forms, and seems to serve the same function as the genre of paintings that began to form depicting interior gallery spaces combining elements both real and imagined. [fig. 21]. The poet and speaker are awarded the status of art collector, a truly legendary and privileged position that would have truly solidified in a material way the position of one’s self amidst a cultural elite. Through a beautifully illustrated string of

portraits, “The Gallery” presents the art object as cherished and revered as approaching the divine. It explores the concept of ideal beauty, along with “The Picture of T.C.,” both of which end with the suggestion that art should not strive to overcome nature but to form a unified stance alongside it, and moreover that the human should not attempt to achieve the Ideal. In Plato’s classical system of aesthetics, ideal beauty is given an “independent metaphysical status; it is ontologically real” (Hagstrum 13). Likewise in Marvell’s paintings of women, this abstract character of “ideal beauty” is given a physical form and engaged in a discussion.

Chapter 2: Alexander Pope and Exposing the False Icon through Female Portraiture

Before turning to Dryden, a closer contemporary of Marvell, I choose first to look at the pictorial tendencies of a slightly later poet, Alexander Pope, specifically in his “Epistle to a Lady.”¹⁸ Pope is known to have been extremely art literate, having seen many great European masterpieces firsthand and even studied the visual arts himself. He was friends with many artists and Hagstrum tells us that he may have for a time considered becoming a painter instead of a poet (211). We can see that many of his poetic works are directly engaged in conversation with his knowledge of the art world and infused with his extensive vocabulary of visual imagery, as he attests to in his “Epistle to Mr. Jervas,” in which he writes, echoing an Aristotelian idea - “images reflect from art to art.”¹⁹ This is a poem written for a close painter friend, and deliberates on our very topic of discussion, iconic verse. The poem both discusses and embodies this synthesis of the sister arts. In it Pope reveals his admiration for the visual effects of painting and provides us with evidence of his inclination towards experimenting with its effects in verse. “The kindred arts shall in their praise conspire, / One dip the pencil, and one string the lyre...and breath an air divine on ev’ry face” (69-70,72). It is clear that for Pope, the conspiring of the kindred arts brought the artist as close as he could come to the unattainable divine. In “Epistle to a Lady” Pope will structure the work through an overarching trope of portraiture.

As we have now seen Marvell do, Pope in “Epistle to a Lady,” chooses to represent his art objects in the form of a lady, prompting further intrigue into the background of the tradition of female portraiture. Hagstrum tells us that in actual fact it would not have been uncommon in

¹⁸ Alexander Pope, “Moral Essays: Epistle to a Lady,” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope: A Reduced Version of the Twickenham Text*, ed. John Butt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), 559-569.

¹⁹ Alexander Pope, “Epistle to Mr. Jervas,” in *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, ed. John Butt, 249-251.

the eighteenth century for a gallery to have been devoted exclusively to portraits of women (238). Clearly this genre of art was a locus for important discussions regarding art, the role of women in society, and the crossover of the two. Constructed female figures with symbolic interpretations as represented by the poet that mimics the painter attest to the use of woman as idea. Susan James tell us that in early modern England, “woman’s portraits introduced a visual language for conversations about identity, its commerce and values, its material culture, social order, mandated roles and dynastic alignments” (79). Through the metaphor of portraiture, Pope is able to capitalize largely on the aspect of material culture, though he integrates these other themes of identity, character and societal roles. The inherent nature of the woman as deceitful performed a metaphorical function for the falsity of the over-achieving art object. The created “gallery” is much different from those of Marvell’s in that it is largely satirical, offering rather scathing reviews or verbal “portraits” of these women.

Ellen Pollack writes that it was not unusual in the genre of the literary “Character” at this time for the writer to employ the figure of the “sister arts.”²⁰ The comparison to painting was a particularly useful illustrative technique in setting forth the essential “idea” or character of an individual. A popular belief held that painting was able to portray psychological reality in addition to the visual (Hagstrum 121). Paradoxically, Pope uses this established method of characterization in order to give his satirical portraits a defining characteristic of characterlessness. He states in the second line, “Most women have no Characters at all.” (2). Thus the poem itself somewhat internalizes the contradiction that is the female sex. “How many pictures of one Nymph we view,” he writes, “All how unlike each other, all how true!” (5-6).

²⁰ Ellen M. Pollack, “Pope and Sexual Difference: Woman as Part and Counterpart in the “Epistle to a Lady,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900* 24.3 (1984): 463.

Pope employs the same genre of portrait painting as Marvell—that is, the “hybrid” subject/mythological portrait—painting his lady as all different characters but in this case it is not to celebrate her relation to any of those but instead to reflect on her inherent changeability and ultimately to critique her distance from any of the goddesses or virtues portrayed. Hagstrum writes, “the immediate function is to illustrate the variability of sex, apparent in their desire to be painted in different historical and mythological roles – roles that express with brilliant irony profound inconsistencies of moral character and social position” (236). For examples of real portraits that elevated the high-class woman through the superimposition of mythological roles, see again works by such artists as Sir Godfrey Kneller, that likely formed some the repertoire of artistic recollections informing Pope’s metaphor. [figs. 22,23].

The first portrait, of “Arcadia’s Countess” explores a thematic oxymoron, as the pastoral land of Arcadia is supposed to be peopled by simple peasants or shepherds – a far cry from the patrons who had themselves inserted into the scenery in classicizing dress. It is a dig at the excessively wealthy women who considered it fashionable to be painted in this role in contradiction to their lavish lifestyles. Another contradiction follows: “Here Fannia, leering on her own good man, / Is there, naked Leda with a Swan.” (9-10). One woman attempting to fit into both portrait styles – that of a modest matron, followed by the more sexually charged image of a naked lover. John Butts suggests a now-lost painting by Leonardo as one such predecessor to Pope’s image of Leda, who in classical myth is raped by Zeus in the form of a Swan (560). [fig. 24]. The scene veils its own sexual explicitness with the metaphor of the swan, a false modesty. The essential inconsistency of the “nymph” is her tendency to change her personality (or the *appearance* of her personality) so erratically that she may be painted into such an array of opposing frameworks. A contradiction arises between previously discussed static nature of the

painted image and the supposedly never constant nature of the female temperament. Any attempt to capture the true nature of a woman would immediately create the need for another portrait, and then another, as the flight of her fancies changed with the styles of the times or merely on a whim.

“Bred to disguise,” he addresses the female sex at large, “in Public ‘tis you hide” (203). The essential flaw of femininity was understood to be a love of appearances, of artificial fashions. Fittingly, the women whom Pope “paints” are concerned only with surfaces, shown to burst into “storm” at the sight of a mere pimple, and even “when she sees her Friend in deep despair / Observes how much a Chintz exceeds Mohair” (169-170). Pope goes to great lengths to show us that appearance is not always truth for the woman conceals her lack of character with an excess of ornament and cosmetics. A good visual example of this perceived inherent duality is an engraving by Conrad Goltzius, *Allegory of the Vanity of Courtly Life*, which exposes the true nature of a woman that lies beneath her beautiful cover, by presenting her from two possible viewpoints, changed by actually lifting the flap of her skirt [fig.25] (Salomon 79). The following line from Pope is almost imaginable as an epigraph to this visual work: “That Robe of Quality so struts and swells, / None see what Parts of Nature it conceals” (189-190). This also engages the dialogue we have previously seen presenting art in contest with nature, and through this example Pope seems to be stressing that one should not attempt to further their beauty above what nature intended. He expresses his disapproval of the woman’s over-obsession with fashionable surfaces through some quite unforgiving imagery: “So mourning Insects that in muck begun, / Shine, buzz and fly-blow in the setting-sun” (27-28).

It was a common rhetorical strategy for poets of the time to assume a presumptuous attitude in reference to the artist, and instruct them on how to perform their own art. “Come

then,” Pope demands, “the coulours and the ground prepare! / Dip in the Rainbow, trick her off in Air, / Chuse a firm Cloud, before it fall, and in it / Catch, ere she change, *the Cynthia of this minute*” (17-20). The character of this insubstantial woman is rendered as physically elusive, requiring a looser and more experimental hand than the long and measured study of a proper portrait. The poem references a number of technical painting terms, as Butt notes: “dip” meaning to immerse in a colored dye and “trick” meaning to sketch in outline (560). This reinforces to the reader that the poem is being sketched or “painted” before his or her very eyes. “Pictures like these,” Pope writes, “to design, / Asks no firm hand, and no unerring line/ Some wandr’ing touch, or some reflected light, /Some flying stroke alone can hit ‘em right” (152-154). A woman with no depth of inward character requires little artistic talent to depict. There is a complex dialogue at work between design, content and appearance, which do not align in artwork that is unfaithful to nature. “Woman and Fool are two hard things to hit, / For true No-meaning puzzles more than Wit” (113-114).

Pope’s earlier reference to the rainbow is an explicit reference to the use of color in painting, which in artistic debate of the time carried its own connotations of cheapness or even vulgarity. He writes in the “Essay on Criticism:” “the slightest Sketch, if justly trac’d/ Is by ill colouring but the more disgrac’d” (23-24). The artist shows his true talent in the design of his work, and devalues his own work through the addition of flashy colors. Pope will come back to this idea several times in the “Essay:”

So when the faithful Pencil has design’d /
 Some bright Idea of the Masters Mind/
 Where a new world leaps out at his command /
 And ready Nature waits upon his hand
 ...
 The treach’rous Colours the fair Art betray
 And all the bright Creation fades away!

Pope's painted ladies are shown as "variegated Tulips" in order to physically embody this idea of gaudiness. The evocation of female beauty through the emblem of the flower connotes again the sentiments of fleetingness and transience. Hagstrum argues that according to this poem, women must be painted in blended colors not because they are beautiful but because they are "evanescent, superficial and ephemeral" (240). Thus woman denies the painted image its power to immortalize a moment and access the eternal.

Many believed that good portrait painting was a means through which ideal forms of beauty could be achieved by improving upon nature without destroying all resemblance to it. Pope wishes to expose those portraits that are most inharmonious with nature, by means of their excessive use of ornament. Interestingly, in spite of the subject's love for fashion, these "portraits" are often less pictorial than perhaps would be expected. This is consistent with Pope's theories on excessively coloring one's verse with mere descriptive detail. He chooses instead to focus on skillfully planned visual cues that would stimulate a chain of mental imagery. Hagstrum argues that his portraits are "rhetorical analyses – concise summaries of the intellectual and moral qualities of the victim" (235). In other words, his portraits are more concerned with the "sketching" of true design and the psychological self than with obscuring the real with color and false ornamentation.

These ideas serve to strengthen the analogy of the sister arts – as Pope, following others of his time, adopts the metaphor of color in painting for "expression" in verse. That is, the overuse of flowery language carried the same connotations of falseness as the blending of vivid colors. He clarifies this in the "Essay": "*False Eloquence, like the Prismatic Glass, / Is gaudy Colours spreads on ev'ry place*" (311-312). In fact, this idea seems to have been so influential to him that he repeats nearly the same basic thought in both the "Epistle to a Lady": "Poets heap

virtues, Painters Gems at will / And show their zeal, and hide their want of skill” (185-6) and the “Essay”:

Poets like painters, thus, unskill'd to trace
 The naked Nature and the living Grace,
 With Gold and Jewels Cover ev'ry Part,
 And hide with Ornaments their Want of Art (293-96).

The unskilled artist, like the inconstant woman of fashion obscures his own lack of skill or internal virtue with a lavish overreliance on visual ornament. Ellen M. Pollack argues that in this poem Pope “[exposes] the vanity of women who hide behind flattering forms of art, who make themselves into objects of vision.” (463).

As discussed with regard to Marvell’s poems, the verse draws upon the well-established artistic tradition of woman as *vanitas*, in which she is depicted gazing at her own reflection in a mirror [see again, figs.15,16]. For further indication of Pope’s attitudes towards the vice, we can look again to his “Essay” in which he writes: “soon the Short lived Vanity is lost / Like some *Flow'r* the early *Spring* supplies, / That gaily Blooms, but ev'n in blooming *Dies*” (497-99). These flowers function, like the variegated tulips present a microcosmic visual expression that all beauty fades. Pope looks ahead to the future of these vain ladies to show that: “Beauties, like Tyrants, old and friendless [grow]” (567). For a truly fitting example of this concept, see the print “*Vanitas Vanitatum*” by Jacques de Gheyn II, which, as Salomon describes, shows an “extravagantly clad woman admiring herself in the mirror while indications of the ravages of time remind the viewer that such indulgences are transitory” (71) [fig. 26]. The background of the engraving features an jar of burning incense or perfumes whose plumes of smoke evaporate into the air of the open window. Foolish women, therefore, seek to reverse these ravages of time by “painting” themselves as though they themselves occupy the privileged status of the art

object, as beauty that never dies.²¹ The individual is mortal must not be confused with the work of art. He offers a particularly scathing portrait of Queen Caroline, “Which Heav’n has varnish’d out...The same for ever!” (182-83). His use of the word varnish would have indicated a foolish human attempt to halt the aging effects of time.

Salomon explains how the proliferation of female portraiture in early modern England coincided with the construction of femininity. “The self-conscious enumeration of “women” both pro and con,” she writes, “functioned to objectify the subject and reduce all women to a monolithic, abstract site of good and evil” (71). Through a historically developing network of visual cues, women’s portraiture was rendered in ways that would be immediately associable with certain vices or virtues. The final portrait of Pope’s poem is one of Martha Blount, the woman to whom the entire poem has been addressed, the “abstract site of good” if you will, set in opposition to all the pictures that have come before. A good example of this contrived duality as rendered artistically is Isaac Oliver’s painting of around 1592, “An Allegory of Virtuous and Vicious Love,” where a group of women is split into decent women in modest, dark attire who are set in contrast to the flirtatious and brightly colored women in extravagant dress and jewels [fig. 27] (Salomon 73). Pope explains to Martha the circumstances of her birth, “Ascendant Phoebus watch’d that hour with care...And gave you Beauty, but deny’d the Pelf / Which buys your sex a Tyrant o’er itself” (285, 287-88). Martha Blount merges with the *ideal*, a symbolic illustration of Plato’s earlier discussed conception of ideal beauty as having an “independent metaphysical status.” However, this classification of Blount as the ideal complicates her existence in the real.

²¹ See again Elizabeth Honig’s conception of “painting” which as a term could refer both to the cosmetic adornment of a woman in the flesh as well as her rendition on canvas, page 23

Even the ideal woman has her drawbacks. The lunar imagery that associates her with Diana, the goddess of chastity, is an illustration of a shortcoming as well as an ideal, as Molly Smith explains. The allusion to Diana represents the “illogical juxtaposition of true beauty and unapproachability.”²² [fig. 28]. The ideal woman as she exists in the art world is not ideal for the real world. Smith suggests a reading of Pope’s vision of Martha as “self-destructive,” likening it to the classical myth of Actaeon’s vision of Diana naked that results in his transformation into a stag (431). The posture of overwhelming reverence and sacrament one takes before a great work of art is not the posture one should have in addressing a real-life person. Smith also gives us background on Pope’s relationship to Martha, which was never able to be fulfilled due to his own physical shortcomings and her “chastity,” which clearly when transposed from its highest form in the art world into reality is not such a virtue after all. Smith has us question: “Does Martha’s rejection of the physical make her a saint or a ruthlessly irrational figure not to be emulated? In raising her to the stature of a goddess is Pope implicitly drawing attention to her failure as a woman?” (432).

Smith engages the Freudian conception of the work of art as personal fantasy to suggest that the entire poem is a “dream fulfillment seeking to rectify an unsatisfactory reality” (433). Tortured by his inability to engage in physical relationships with women, Pope utilizes the metaphor of art collecting in order to fragment the power of the inexplicable sex and package it into comprehensible (if pessimistic) pieces. Zorach discusses the literary genre of the printed “catalogue,” the “fulfillment of the collection” by which means “men and women who might not be able to afford such art themselves nevertheless established that they had the taste of a duke” (110). Similarly, Pope who does not have the luxury of collecting physical women, imagines

²² Molly Smith, “The Mythical Implications in Pope’s ‘Epistle to a Lady,’” *Studies in English Literature: 1500-1900* 27.3 (1987), 432.

himself in this mythical role of the art collector/gallery-owner in order to exert his control. This desire to reverse a perceived lack of physical control can be supported by the use of miniaturization and collection as tropes throughout much of his poetry. A central tenant of museum scholarship holds that the human desire to collect stems from something deeply traumatic or an aspect within the person that evokes an immense sense of loss, which prompts the obsessive collection of objects in attempt to overcome this lack. Charles I himself is known to have suffered from physical ailments and a heavy stutter through his adolescence. Pope's physical inadequacy is well attested to, and Kneller in his portrait of Pope makes little attempt to exaggerate his physical appeal. [fig.29]. It is interesting to consider the subconscious implications of Pope who aligned himself with the role of the "gallery owner," and furthermore by choosing to collect only pictures of women. "No doubt," Lagerlof argues, "the crisis of the culture was sexual" (141).

One popular story from the annals of art history recalls St. Peter the Martyr exposing the False Madonna. [fig. 30]. In a way, "Epistle to a Lady" is imaginable as such an image—Pope himself in the role of the martyr who reveals the art object as a false icon, horns of the devil appearing on her forehead under his illuminating light of his judgment. Despite the overwhelmingly pessimistic tone of the work, Pope never deserted his belief in the divinity of true art. He writes in a verse dedicated to Kneller himself, "What God, what Genius did the Pencil move / When Kneller painted These? / 'Twas Friendship." (Butts, 466). For him the unity of the sister-arts brings art in closest contact with the divine. However, there is a fine line between striving for greatness and over-stepping one's bounds. "Be sure your self and your own Reach to know," reads the "Essay on Criticism," "Nature to all things fix'd the Limits fit" (48, 52). The poet, painter, the fashionable woman and even the *ideal* woman, are all grievously

mistaken in thinking that they as humans can overstep nature and access the divine. Earthly transience as explored through the wilting of the flower and the fading of female beauty is also reflected on a larger scale in a discussion on the passing of artistic fashions. Just as Marvell documents the shifting of artistic fashions with the changing of religious and political contexts, Pope extends the transitory nature of human life to trends in the art world. “Short is the date, alas, of Modern Rhymes,” he writes in the Essay, “and ‘tis but just to let ‘em live betimes” (159-60). In this way he responds to the popular contest of art and nature with a similar goal as Marvell, arguing on behalf of nature. In the next chapter we shall see how Dryden further adapts this central theme of art seeking to overcome nature. To close I include one last verse from Pope’s “Essay on Criticism,” which anticipates the focus on classical revival in the works of Dryden to be discussed in the following chapter:

Rome’s ancient Genius, o’er it’s Ruins spread,
Shakes off the Dust, and rears his rev’rend Head!
Then Sculpture ad her Sister-Arts revive;
Stones leap’d to Form, and Rocks begain to live. (699-702)

Chapter 3: The Animation of the Art Object in Dryden's Revival of Classical Sources

John Dryden provides further exploration into the theme of ideal beauty as expressed pictorially in his poem "Pygmalion and the Statue," adapted from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* X. A longtime student of the classics, Dryden was truly a poet of the Neo-classical persuasion.

Lagerlof analyses the weight of the ancient world on the artistic imagination of the period:

Antiquity was thematized as pagan (the fallen and destroyed idols) and as fragmentary miracles of art suggesting ideality, fulfillment and projection. Classical art implied perfection and corruption simultaneously. Classical art was a protected area, relevant for refined reflection. Painting could capture the feeling of impressions, sculpture the sense of physical presence (129).

By composing this piece on the ancient story of the artist who falls in love with his own sculpted creation, Dryden responds to the growing fervor of antiquarianism and the artist's desire to sculpt the "sense of physical presence." The work draws on the status of ancient sculpture in the minds of the eighteenth-century English artistic mind as representative of the ideal human form, as well as an example of the divinity of art. The piece on a whole presents a compelling allegory of iconic poetry, that is, an art form able to perform the impossible—the transformation of cold marble into a responsive form. Like Pope, Dryden expresses a belief that a union of the sister-arts will bring the art object closest to the divine. In a paradox we have previously come across, the poem offers a familiar moralistic warning against the worship of the art image or the false idol.

Dryden will write an essay entitled "A Parallel betwixt Painting & Poetry" in which he explores the likeness of the two art forms, though it is important to remember that the analogy does not apply singularly to painting and poetry but extends to a multitude of visual and literary art forms. In his "Parallel" Dryden speaks to the common creative ancestor of artistic forms, the "Idea," before it is withdrawn from the mind of the artist and fashioned into one medium or

another. For him, the Idea, “measured by the Compass of the Intellect, [is] itself the Measure of the Performing Hand; and being animated by the Imagination, infuses life into the Image.”²³

This impulse to see the Image come alive factors heavily into “Pygmalion.” This is a method of looking and responding to art that is often difficult for us to understand today, particularly the unique cultural significance that was afforded to sculpture. Marjorie Trusted addresses this in her discussion of the rise in neoclassical sculpture in Britain: “Today’s gallery spaces are generally far removed from the original environments which hosted sculptures in the past, and the way we experience them in modern art galleries may be misleading,” going on to express how in the eighteenth-century European art world, sculptures would have been placed in environments that encouraged “intimate, even passionate emotional involvement.”²⁴

The revival of classical sculpture in eighteenth-century Britain prompted a deep emotional response for viewers of such objects. Certainly a large contributing factor to the excitement surrounding the art form were the excavations and discoveries of classical statuary that were actually occurring at the time period. This is something we are completely unable to understand today – the unearthing of ancient masterpieces on a consistent basis must have been an experience truly miraculous and undoubtedly lent the culture its deep preoccupation with the dazzling remnants of an ideal and irretrievable past. Says Hagstrum of the statuary in the Christian iconic tradition: “[it] had become a kind of intermediary between the divine and the human. Spoken to, entreated, implored, it speaks in return” (50). Through this historical lens the sentiment of Dryden’s “Pygmalion” becomes infinitely clearer. The poem participates and responds to this cultural inclination to physically see the great ancient masterpieces of art come

²³ John Dryden, “A Parallel betwixt Painting and Poetry,” in *The Works of John Dryden Volume XX: Prose 1691-1698* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989), 41.

²⁴ Marjorie Trusted, *The Return of the Gods: Neoclassical Sculpture in Britain* (London, Tate Publishing, 2008), 4.

to life, by means of reviving the slumbering classical style of statuary. Guilhem Scherf cites influential twentieth-century art historian Jean Seznec: “Such is the deep sense of Neoclassicism. It is not mere vogue, a transformation of taste under the effect of *anticomania*, it is an attempt to regenerate.”²⁵

Dryden presents an introduction to his poem that provides a brief background on the “Propaetides” who were turned into stone by Venus for denying her divinity and becoming the first prostitutes. It is an interesting lead in to the poem for it provides a counter-story of immoral women turning to stone in contrast to the preceding tale of precious stone that is turned into the flesh of a virtuous woman. Pygmalion is prompted by the story of the Propaetides to turn against the entire female sex, “loathing their lascivious life,” resolving never to marry. By doing so he also denies the divinity of Venus in rejecting any and all earthly love. Nonetheless, “fearing idleness,” Pygmalion sets about creating a substitute in the form of a sculpted maiden. She is described as “carved in ivory,” a small detail easily overlooked but a telling one. Sculptures of the time period were generally carved in marble or bronze, as ivory was an expensive luxury reserved for the finest of sculpted ornament. It was used famously for ancient Grecian cult statues, such as the “Athena Parthenos,” a massive gilded representation of the goddess, no longer surviving but that was certainly well-documented for Dryden’s audience and whose influence we can glimpse through a modern reconstruction that stands in Nashville Tennessee. [fig. 31]. It is telling that Pygmalion’s sculpture is rendered from the same material used for such objects of extreme religious reverence, which hints at the sacrilegious worship that the ivory woman will inspire in her creator.

²⁵ Guilhem Scherf, “Discussions and Experiments,” in *Antiquity Revived: Neoclassical Art in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Guillaume Faroult et al. (Museum of Fine Arts Houston, Gallimard and Musée de Louvre, 2011), 50.

Our first clue is the description of the sculpture as “so fair, / As Nature could not with his art compare” (8). We know from our discussion of Marvell and Pope that it is not wise for the artist to believe that he can overcome the beauty of Nature itself. Again explored is this essential conundrum of the artist striving to present an idealized vision of the natural world without surpassing it. Pygmalion as artist plays at God and presents a strong parallel between divine creation and artistic creation. Dryden not only grants the reader with a poetic description of the artwork, but also sculpts it in front of him and infuses life into its very being. The process of the artist is thus highlighted. “Art hid with art so well performed the cheat,” writes Dryden, “It caught the carver with his own deceit” (17-18). Hagstrum tells us that in the Greek Anthology painters and sculptors are actually praised for producing a deception so convincing that the reality of their work becomes confused with nature itself (24). Pygmalion’s sculpture stands in the tradition of the “*trompe l’oeil*,” or an art that is so magnificent it can fool the eye, which as we know is the most powerful of all the senses. Dryden’s poem latches on to a cultural preoccupation with the idea that sculpted material in the hands of the right artist can be made to look as if it is real. Hagstrum provides an example of a certain unspecified woman who is cited around this time as stating, “it’s a sure thing that in time men will end up by making stone itself live” (24).

Pygmalion becomes so consumed with love for his constructed image of ideal beauty that he engages physically with it – touching it, embracing it and even kissing it. Towards the later half of the eighteenth century, Leopold Cicognara will praise the statue of Paris as rendered by Canova in a manner that fits well this imagery, “if statues could be made by stroking marble rather than by roughly cutting and chipping, I would say that this one had been formed by wearing down the surrounding marble by dint of kisses and caresses” (Trusted 5). Pygmalion’s

interactions with the sculpture border on a narrative of assault - “‘Tis true, the hardened breast resists the gripe, / And the cold lips return a kiss unripe” (25-26). He is violating the sanctity of this work of art, and the sculpture very much resists the rape. The theme of rape had actually been explored in several famous statues – for example, Bernini’s 1622 “Rape of Prosperina” in which the hands of Pluto can be seen pressing forcefully into the soft and responsive flesh of his victim [figs. 32-33]. Victor M. Schmidt argues that Bernini gathers inspiration from Giambologna’s “The Rape of the Sabine Women” from 750 B.C. in the way that the roman similarly presses his hand into the Sabine woman’s upper thigh [fig. 34].²⁶ Pygmalion explores his precious lady “limb by limb,” fearing that “so rude a grip had left a vivid mark behind” (33-34). All of these connotations to sculptural representations of rape implicate the crime involved in violating the art object as Pygmalion does here.

Unable to entice his stony maiden to respond to his advances, the artist then turns to bribery, in the form of lavish gifts. Interestingly he gifts to her “parrots, imitating human tongue,” subtly referencing his own desire to see this imitation of human speech transferred to the sculpture. There is a strong connection to Pope’s “Epistle to a Lady” in this scene, as we see the unresponsive stone heaped with an elaborate excess of ornament and fancy dress. Again there is a dramatic juxtaposition of appearance and content, as the magnificently jeweled maiden remains vacant as ever. Dryden writes in his “Parallel”: “Nature is superfluous in nothing – a painter must reject all trifling Ornaments, so must a poet refuse all tedious, and unnecessary Descriptions. A robe which is too heavy, is less an Ornament than a Burden” (63). Thus we can see that the “rich, fashionable robes” that deck the statue are a symbol of this unnecessary lavishness, of gaudy excess. He also delves poetically into the connotations surrounding “color,”

²⁶ Victor M. Schmidt, “Marble Flesh: An addition to ‘Bernini and Ovid,’” *Notes in the History of Art* 18.1 (1998), 25.

as the segment of the poem devoted to his character's misguided fashioning is riddled with references to colors across the spectrum: "sparkling stones of various hue," "silver cages," "odorous green," "lumps of amber," and "Sidonian purple." The Sidonian purple and orient pearls, in all their connotations of foreign exoticism are particularly blatant clues to the reader that our artist has become deluded in his efforts. We can look back to our gilded Ivory goddess, Athena, who has been adorned as a symbol of her terrible majesty and religious significance, and see the contrast to Pygmalion's sad attempt to exalt his work above its place as he conflates religious and carnal love.

The poem takes on a notable shift with the occurrence of a religious festival in celebration of the previously mentioned goddess of Love, Venus. The colors continue but now instead of detracting from the visual richness of the scene, they add to it, taking on more significance in their religious connotation. It is an impressive poetic procession of images, conjuring stark, carnal scenes: "with gilded horns the milk-white heifers led, / Slaughtered before the sacred altars, bled" (60). Pygmalion approaches the shrine and prays at the altar of the "golden" goddess of love, whom we will remember he has previously rejected in refusing all earthly love. Venus is the goddess who transformed real women into stone for denying her divinity, and it is thus quite a poignant poetic invention that she is the one who is ultimately able to transform Pygmalion's stone into a woman, in response to his embrace of her divinity. As ice turns to liquid and back again with the raising or lowering of heat, the reality of the woman shifts from unlive to live with the addition or subtraction of internal religious fervor or flame. The painterly overuse of color stops after her lips redden from his kiss and she takes her first mortal breath. "Hard as it was, beginning to relent, / It seemed the breast beneath his fingers bent" (80-81). The reader here is presented with a visual actualization of the sculpture coming into being

through kisses and caresses, in the words of Cicognara. This draws upon a cultural fascination with the sculptural process as well as reinforces the parallel between artistic creation and divine creation. Marjorie Trusted tells us that it was not uncommon for collectors to visit the artists in their studio to watch them work as they contemplated what they would want to purchase (7). Here Dryden gives the reading public a chance to view not only the process of sculpting a work of art, but also the mythical desire of seeing a statue of such life-like beauty come into being.

Interesting to view alongside the piece is Etienne-Maurice Falconet's 1761 statue of "Pygmalion and Galatea," which comes several decades after Dryden's poem but stands in the same tradition. [fig.35]. Guilhem Scherf gives us Diderot's description:

She has her first thought; her heart begins to warm, but soon it will beat. What hands! What supple skin! No it is not marble; feel it under your finger and how easy it gives way to pressure.... How beautiful her face is! O Falconet, how did you manage to place surprise into a piece of white stone, with joy and love melted into one? (60).

He also points out the shift from static form in the statue, as registered in the partial movement of her lower legs while her thighs remain locked, the delicacy in her skin rendered in decided contrast to the painter's own robes (60). Both Falconet and Dryden are responding to the neo-classical impulse to revive the very spirit of antiquity as physically embodied in its sculpture. Another sculpture that participates in a similar tradition is Antonio Canova's "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss," a separate mythical instance of a woman being animated through the forces of love [fig.36]. The artist plays with the interaction of light on the experience of viewing the work, using patterns of illumination in highly skilled ways in order to produce a more lifelike appearance [fig.37]. Indeed, Cupid's wings are "incredibly thick and physical, yet when backlit by the sun they become translucent, with a splendid golden hue" [fig.38].²⁷ The artist's

²⁷ Musée du Louvre, "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss," last modified December 2010, http://musee.louvre.fr/oal/psyche/psyche_acc_en.html

preoccupation with making the surface of the stone look like real flesh is shown in close up views of the faces, where the teeth marks of the sculptor's tools are purposely left in order to better approach the true texture of skin [fig. 39].

Finally “the wakened image oped her eyes, / And viewed at once the light and lover with surprise” (94-95). This is a line that expresses particularly well this deep-seated cultural desire for the “Image” to come to life, and is quite similar to the descriptions of illuminated surprise on the faces of Falconet's sculpted picture of artist and creation. Interestingly, though the ancient art artifact takes on a highly revered status, it is not the art object that provides for the happy ending. Hagstrum's discussion on the conclusion of Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* is highly relevant here, as the other characters discover that Hermione is not a statue after all and may be restored to her husband: “It is nature and reality that finally satisfy. The joy of the final restoration comes from the fact that the Ideal creature is not a woman of living flesh and blood, restored to her natural position as wife and mother” (88). In the ages-old debate between nature and art, nature has triumphed – the comfort of living, breathing nature as opposed to the cold, gilded surface of art. Although the artist can approach the perfection of natural forms, his work will at best be a false imitation of nature's divine creations, unless otherwise animated through the hand of a higher power. The poem thus reinforces that we are not to confuse art with reality.

Marcantonio Raimondi was a sixteenth-century engraver who among others attempted to make statuary come to life by taking on the challenge of rendering three-dimensional works on paper, as Dryden has also in a sense done. He animates the famous Roman statue of Sleeping Ariadne [fig. 40] in his design that takes the classical pose and adapts the shape for a real woman [fig. 41]. Zorach and Rodini note how the artist “softens the geometric rigidity of the pose to allow the figure to relax into a more lifelike position” (77). Only in artistic imagination can

statue come to life. It is not hard to imagine that perhaps all artistic mediums have some common ancestor, some larger creative enthusiasm that precedes dissemination into one form or another. Creativity that modern audiences interpret as the complex result of the firing of neurons through electrical networks, an earlier audience saw as a direct gift from above, some small share in a greater divinity. Hagstrum tells us that in medieval thought, exemplary form existed in the mind of the artist as opposed to the natural world, and had been planted there by God (46).

Trusted cites Sir Joshua Reynolds who wrote about a surviving fragment of a classical sculpture: “what artist ever looked at the Torso without feeling a warmth of enthusiasm, as from the highest efforts of poetry?” Dryden’s “Pygmalion and the Statue” embodies the appeal of the sister-arts metaphor as it was adopted in pictorial poetry. The impulse to see the art object come to life directly influences the adoption of “ut pictura poesis,” and the development of the poetic picture. “In Iconic form the silent form will speak and in the combination there will be united the peculiar excellencies of each medium,” writes Hagstrum (50). Dryden achieves what Pygmalion the sculptor alone cannot, by uniting the visual art form with the literary and thus enticing the stone to come alive. He writes elsewhere,

“Let it always be acknowledg’d, that painting and statuary can express both our actions and passions: that if they neither speake nor move, they seem to do both: and if they impose on the eye, yet they deceive nobly: when they make shadows pass for substance, and even animate the brass and marble” (Hagstrum 177).

The poem as a whole represents the near divinity achieved through the fusion of the sister-arts, as the combined force of the mediums produce what one alone cannot. Dryden, along with Marvell and Pope, proves that the repetition of artistic image is more than mere “imitation.”

Conclusion

A while back I discovered an I-Phone application titled “Art Authority.” “Over a thousand of the world’s greatest artists,” the description boasts—“In your pocket!” Within three or four taps of the finger the user is transported from 130 B.C. to the high Renaissance, from Jan Van Eyck to Caravaggio to Roy Lichtenstein. Modern viewing privilege highlights a crucial cultural dissonance that in many ways keeps the modern audience from being able to grasp the full significance of the art gallery in the seventeenth and eighteenth-century imagination. This was a time when the viewing of great art was an luxury reserved for those of a certain means, which explains the demand for mediators—prints, guidebooks, and as we have seen, poetry, through which a larger audience would have been able to imaginatively recreate the revered experience. The pictorial works of Marvell, Pope and Dryden that we have discussed are true embodiments of the “*musée imaginaire*.” Each of these poets is skillfully able to reconstruct for the reader the feeling of entering the mythical gallery space, while offering unique interpretations of how the qualities and ideals of painting were translated and complicated as devices in poetry.

Pope writes in the “*Essay on Criticism*”: “In wit, as in nature, what affects our hearts is not exactness of peculiar parts / tis not a lip or eye we beauty call, but the joint and full result of all (245). All three poets seem to elevate the visual art object for its quality of stasis, and its subsequent achievement of eternal timelessness. Marvell expresses the transience of youth through the attempted preservation of T.C.’s childhood pictures. This reading is further informed by the knowledge that Theophilia, the girl who is thought to be the model for the work, had an elder sister by the same name who died in infancy. People, like the traditional floral emblems of the *vanitas* genre, are susceptible to the ravages of time and all too often are “nipped in the bud.” The artist represents the human desire to escape the constraints of earthly time

through the creation of a golden world of art. A culture fascinated with the masterpieces and rhetoric of Antiquity, the seventeenth and eighteenth-century English literary sphere saw an absolute revival of classic culture and thought, now known as “neo-classicism.” The contemporary excavation and discovery of ancient fragments lent the era a feeling of magical awakening, as embodied through Pygmalion’s statue. While poetry borrowed the quality of stasis from painting and statuary, the combination of visual art with the more fluid form of poetry allowed for the previously static image to come alive.

The pictorial poet places himself in the mythological role of the “collector” to materially express his mastery of the arts, and inserts the artist as idea into the role of the creator. However, such works are coupled with the warning against presuming that the human can achieve the ideal. Pope’s painted ladies douse themselves in jewels in a vain attempt to exalt themselves to the status of goddesses. Martha Blount as a rendition of the Ideal does not fit in the earthly sphere, recalling the defeat of Cupid. Thus it is only in the sacred space of the imagination that the human is able to achieve the divine act of creation; the intermingling of the stasis and movement of painting and poetry results in the animation of the art object. Dryden cites Guido Reni in his “Parallel Betwixt Painting and Poetry”: “I wish I had the wings of an Angel, to have ascended into Paradise, and there to have beheld the Forms of those beautify’d Spirits...But not being able to mount so high...I was forc’d to make an Introspection, into my own mind” (43). For the seventeenth and eighteenth-century pictorial poet, the united greatness of the visual and verbal arts produced an imaginative sphere where the artist approaches the divine act of creation.

Gallery of Images

Figure 1. *Frances Whitmore (1666-1694), Lady Myddelton*, studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller, oil on canvas, c.1686



Figure 2. *Miss Cotton of Madingley*, circle of Godfrey Kneller, oil on canvas, c.1700



Figure 3. *Child with a Lamb*, style of Godfrey Kneller, oil on canvas, c.1740



Figure 4. *Lionel Sackville (1688-1765), 1st Duke of Dorset, and His Sister Lady Mary Sackville (1687-1705), Later Duchess of Beaufort, as Children*, Godfrey Kneller, oil on Canvas, c.1690s



Figure 5. *Spring (The Earthly Paradise)*, Nicolas Poussin, oil on canvas, 1664



Figure 6. *Madonna in a Flower Garland*, Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Elder, c. 1616-18



Figure 7. *Our lady in a garland of roses*, Giovanni Battista Salvi, circa 1600-1650



Figure 8. *Venus Disarming Cupid*, Paolo Veronese, oil on canvas, c.1555



Figure 9. *Venus Disarming Cupid*, print, after a painting then attributed to Correggio, circa 1780.



Figure 10. *Le Triomphe de Venus*, engraved circa 1700



Figure 11. Dosso Dossi, *The Enchantress Circe*, circa 1507.



Figure 12. *Le Triomphe de Flore*, Nicolas Poussin, c.1627



Figure 13. *Judith*, Giorgione, 1504.



Figure 14. *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, Cristofano Allori, 1613.



Figure 15. Giovanni Bellini, *Woman with a Mirror*, 1515



Figure 16. *Vanity*, Titian



Figure 17. Annibale Carracci, *Venus and Anchises*, 1597

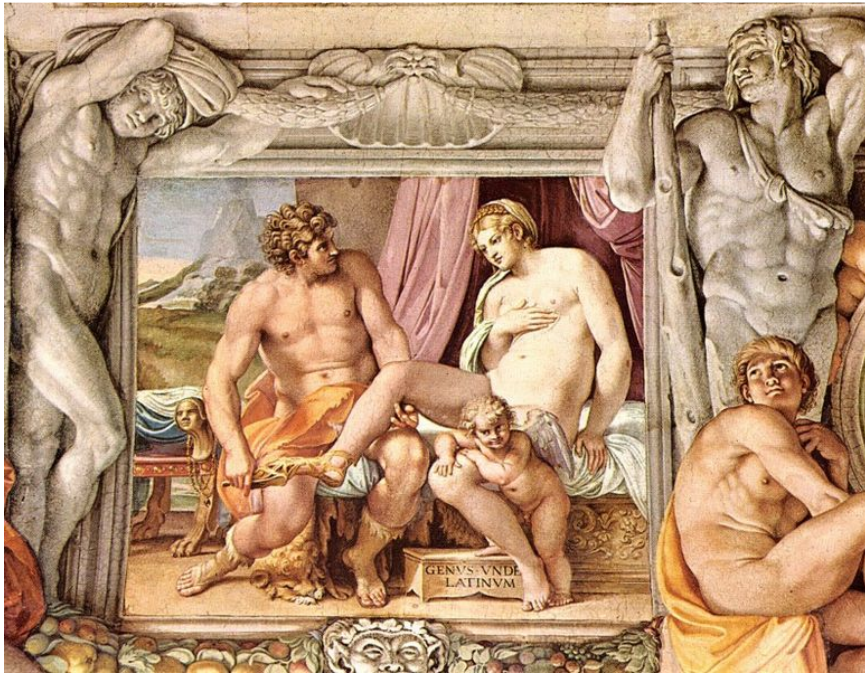


Fig. 18. Carlo Cesio after Annibale Carracci, *The Lovers Venus and Anchises*, c 1657



Figure 19. Raphael, "Triumph of Galatea" 1514



Figure 20. *Primavera*, Detail of Flora as the Hour of Spring, Sandro Botticelli, c. 1482



Figure 21. Giovanni Paolo Panini, *Interior of a Picture Gallery with the Collection of Cardinal Silvio Valenti Gonzaga*, 1749.



Figure 22. Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Portrait of a Woman as St. Agnes*, oil on canvas, c. 1705-1710.



Figure 23. Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Lady Elizabeth Cromwell as Saint Cecilia*, 1703.



Figure 24. Cesare da Sesto after Leonardo da Vinci, *Leda and the Swan*, c.1505



Figure 25. Conrad Goltzius, *Allegory of the Vanity of Courty Life*



Figure 26. Jacques de Gheyn II, "Vanitas Vanitatum," c.1595



Figure 27. Isaac Oliver, “An Allegory of Virtuous and Vicious Love,” c.1592



Figure 28. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Portrait of Lady Anne Dawson as Diana*, 1753-4.



Figure 29. Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Portrait of Alexander Pope*, detail, oil on canvas, 1722.



Figure 30. Vincenzo Foppa, *Miracle of the False Madonna*, 1468.



Figure 31. Alan LeQuire, 1990, Reconstruction after “Athena Parthenon,” Phidias, c.447 B.C.

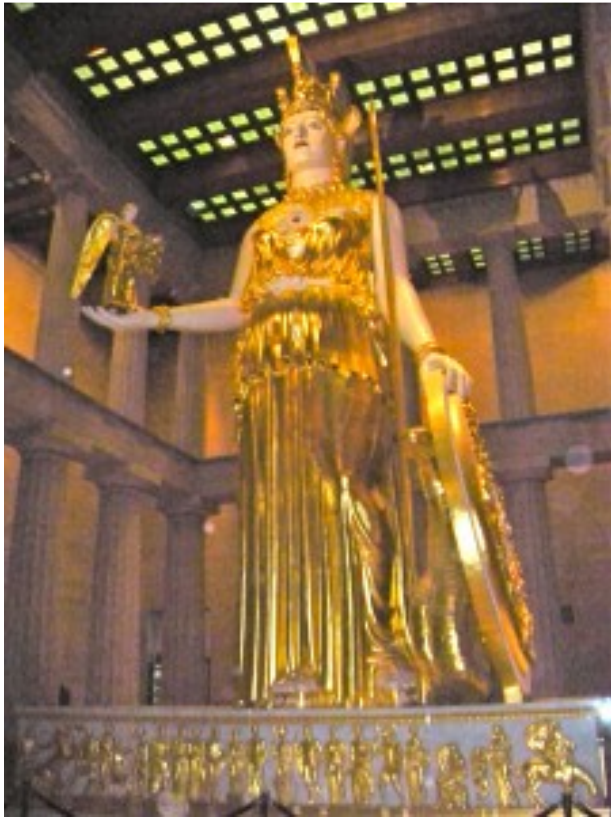


Figure 32-33. Bernini, “Rape of Prosperina,” 1622 and detail



Figures 34. Giambologna, The Rape of the Sabine Women, detail. c. 750 B.C.



Figure 35. Etienne-Maurice Falconet, “Pygmalion at the Foot of his Statue at the Moment She Springs to Life,” 1761



Figure 36. Antonio Canova, "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss," c.1787



Figure 37-39. "Psyche Revived by Cupid's Kiss," details.

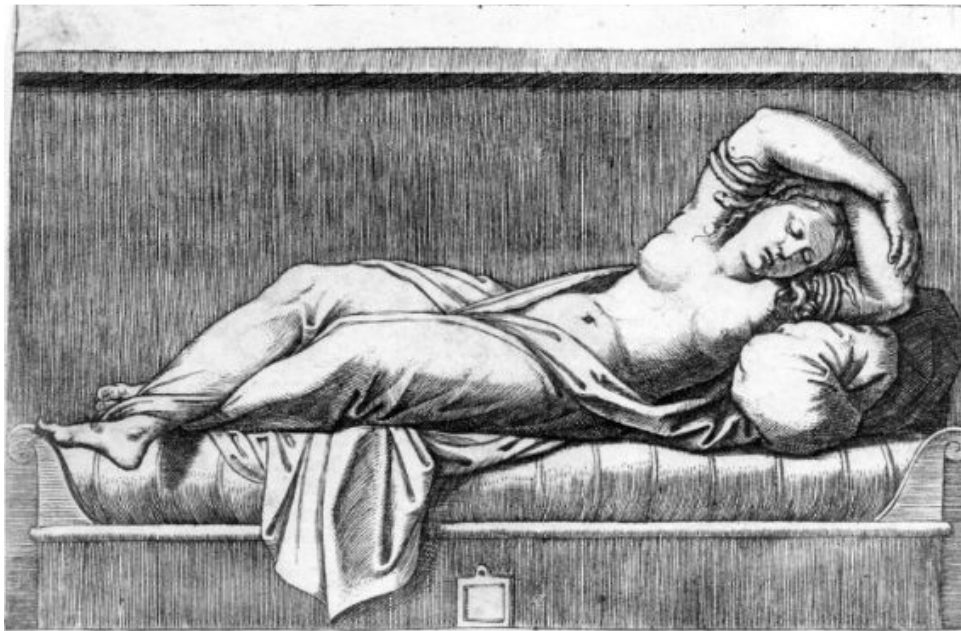




Figure 40. Statue of Sleeping Ariadne, Roman Hadrian copy after 2nd century BCE original



Figure 41. Marcantonio, Raimondi, Ariadne [Cleopatra], engraving



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