‘WIT’S WILD DANCING LIGHT’

READING THE POEMS OF ALEXANDER POPE

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1. *Pastorals*

Examples: 'Spring', lines 69–76; 'Summer', lines 73–84;
'Autumn', lines 23–30; 'Winter', lines 45–52

The art of writing pastorals is precisely that: an art. Pastorals come with their baggage neatly packed, labelled, and secured. Sources go back to the third century BCE Sicilian poet Theocritus, whose idylls (that is, 'little pictures', from the Greek *eidullion*) were contrived to represent an urban myth of rural life by 'artful mannerism' (Bulloch, p. 573). For Virgil, and so for Pope who began by modelling himself on Virgil's poetic progress, essays in the pastoral mode were base camp on a climb to the summit of Mount Helicon. Paradigms were presented by Theocritus and taken up by Virgil. Pope then incorporated these in his *Pastorals* (1709): for example, singing contests between two shepherds (Virgil's third and seventh eclogues, Pope's 'Spring'), laments for lost or unrequited love (Virgil's second and tenth eclogues, Pope's 'Autumn'). Earlier English examples abound, notably Edmund Spenser's *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1579). The youthful Pope recognised that a reader's over-familiarity with the genre necessitated both economy and a striking demonstration of the arrival of a new and assured voice. Hence, he reduced Virgil's ten and Spenser's twelve (one per month) to just four (one per season), and—for all his confession of immaturity in his notes to the 1709 text—clearly honed his artistry until he felt fully ready to make an appearance. Indeed, manuscript versions circulated for some years prior to their publication. As we shall see, Pope was eager to seek advice from established writers as well as to demonstrate the qualities of his own work and his independence of judgment (see 'Summer', lines 73–84, below).

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His structural plan was relatively complex. The year's round is set alongside life from youth to age and day from morning to night. Keeping to four poems also allowed him to align each with one of the traditional four elements of, in order of appearance, air, fire, earth, and water—not too ostentatiously, but quietly. All this adds to the contrivance of the poems but also keeps readers on their toes in order to appreciate a satisfying arrangement of intersecting patterns. Further, as conventions become such because they do, after all, contain more than just seeds of truths underlying lived experience, so these poetic beginnings promise potential developments and, crucially, hint at a future where technical virtuosity can be relied on to run like a current through every line, every couplet, every paragraph.

'Spring', lines 69–76

We begin with a singing-contest:

> *Strephon*
> All nature mourns, the skies relent in showers,
> Hushed are the birds, and closed the drooping flowers;
> If Delia smile, the flowers begin to spring,
> The skies to brighten, and the birds to sing.
>
> *Daphnis*
> All nature laughs, the groves are fresh and fair,
> The sun's mild lustre warms the vital air;
> If Sylvia smiles, new glories gild the shore,
> And vanquished nature seems to charm no more.

The rules of the game are that Daphnis has to respond to Strephon by producing lines which are both the same as his and the opposite. So, 4 lines match 4 lines (the number 4 is a recurrent referent in these *Pastorals*); couplets maintain order through repetition ('All nature …'; 'If Delia … If Sylvia'), but, even there, difference crucially enters ('All nature mourns' / 'All nature laughs'; 'Delia / Sylvia'). Daphnis has to make quick decisions, too. Which element will he pick? Strephon offers him a choice between water ('showers') and air ('skies'). Daphnis is no fool. He recognizes he is in spring when days are lengthening and light increasing. The trajectory set by Strephon is upwards, so that 'drooping flowers' 'begin to spring'. Daphnis, then, has to rise to the challenge in order to match or better his

opponent with reference to another natural process. Strephon's skies 'begin ... to brighten'; Daphnis's 'glories gild': he adds polish to 'brighten'.

At the core of the structure lies a contest between human forces, not just the singers but also those of whom they sing. Strephon's lines are about how Delia, inspiring nature thus, becomes its equal: his complex phonic patterning of chiming short and long vowel sounds weaves together Delia, flowers and birds in the sky, aligning human and natural worlds and the environment they share: 'If ... smile ... begin ... spring ... skies ... brighten ... sing'. Daphnis's response is to demonstrate how Sylvia not merely inspires nature (already quite a claim), but actually outshines her, and so a line that looks as if it is simply following the chiming vowels ('If/Sylvia/smiles/gild') contains at its core a promise of something more: 'new glories'. It then gives way to its rhyming partner in which nature confesses defeat (or, at any rate, 'seems' to: perhaps it would be too disrespectful to be excessively triumphalist?) and the language enters new phonic territory.

Both speakers perform with admirable artistic verve, precision, and economy. Harmony is therefore appropriately restored when Damon, who is judging the contest, declares both to be winners: 'Cease to contend' (line 93). But there is a further sense in which the poem is a singing match. Pope is showing off his ability—as creator of both Strephon and Daphnis—to defeat all rivals. The *Pastorals* were first published in Jacob Tonson's *Miscellanies* before taking their place in Pope's 1717 *Works*. Tonson placed them at the end of the *Miscellanies*, perhaps implying their status as the climax of the volume. A rival set of pastorals by Ambrose Philips appeared earlier in the volume. Just in case readers missed the implicit contest between the two poets, Pope wrote an amusingly ironic *Guardian* paper (no. 40, 27 April 1713) ostensibly in praise of Philips's verses but actually choosing to quote lines whose attempts at rendering a contemporary and native British version of pastoral frequently collapse into the ridiculous:

> O woeful day! O day of woe, quoth he,
> And woeful I who live the day to see.

Pope calls this, with his tongue firmly in his cheek, an instance of Ambrose Philips's 'beautiful rusticity', and praises as 'extremely elegant' the 'simplicity of diction, the melancholy flowing of the numbers, the

solemnity of the sound, and the easy turn of the words' (Ault 1936, p. 103; Barnard 1973, pp. 67–68). A reader of Philips's couplet perhaps would have in mind a different meaning of 'simple'. Pope's willingness to enter into controversy in support of his own work does not bode well for a trouble-free literary career; but, for the moment, it is no contest.

'Summer', lines 73–84

It is summer time, and the loving is easy. In the heat of the noon-day—fire is the season's element—the shepherd Alexis sings of his unrequited love: 'The bleating sheep with my complaints agree, / They parched with heat, and I inflamed by thee' (lines 19–20). His paean to his beloved attains an ecstatic height in its penultimate paragraph, where Alexis calls on her to bless the scene with her presence as night falls:

> Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade,
> Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade:
> Where'er you tread, the blushing flowers shall rise,
> And all things flourish where you turn your eyes.
> Oh! how I long with you to pass my days,
> Invoke the Muses, and resound your praise!
> Your praise the birds shall chant in every grove,
> And winds shall waft it to the powers above.
> But would you sing, and rival Orpheus' strain,
> The wondering forests soon should dance again,
> The moving mountains hear the powerful call,
> And headlong streams hang listening in their fall.

The twelve lines are divided by the punctuation into three couplet quartets (groups of four lines). The first of these has become well-known through Handel's opera *Semele* (1744), where they are set to a deliciously mellifluous tune. Pope's lines invite such musical treatment because they themselves flow with the smoothness of honey, the root meaning of 'mellifluous'.

A surviving manuscript here allows us a rare glimpse into the process of Pope's artistic creation (Audra and Williams, eds *TE*, I, 1961, pp. 477–82). In a first version, Pope has lines 73 and 75 as: 'Winds, where you walk, shall gently fan the glade' and 'Flow'rs, where you tread, in painted pride shall rise', together with marginal alternatives as 'Where'er you walk, fresh gales shall fan the glade' and 'Where'er you tread, the purple flow'rs

shall rise'. Pope offered these alternatives to his early mentor, William Walsh (1663–1708), along with a different version of the entire passage. Walsh opted for the present lines, with the marginal alternatives. Pope rightly accepted the advice of his older fellow-writer, but not completely. The published text altered 'fresh gales' to 'cool gales', and 'purple flow'rs' to 'blushing flowers'. Maynard Mack comments approvingly on Pope's final choices. First, the 'insistent' alliteration of /f/ and /g/ ('fresh gales'/ 'fan the glade') is replaced by 'a subtler echo', and the juxtaposition of /k/ sounds in 'walk, cool' adds a slightly longer pause at the caesura, the mid-line break, to add to the musicality. Secondly, 'blushing flowers' assigns to the flowers 'a shy, deferential reticent responsiveness' (Mack 1985, p. 114). This is precise and perceptive commentary, and the analysis points to a mature, complementary set of qualities in the young Pope: deference to more experienced judgment, independence, and confidence which enable him to improve on the improver, and persistence in seeking better and better versions.

Later lines, in their turn, confirm Pope's sensitivity to euphony and understanding of semantic nuances, notably in the clause 'And winds shall waft it' (line 80). 'Waft', again, is a Handelian word: 'Waft her, angels, to the skies' runs a chorus at the emotional height of his last oratorio, *Jephtha* (1751), a work in which he also sets—much more grimly—Pope's aphoristic 'Whatever is, is right' from the closing line of *An Essay on Man*'s first epistle. 'Waft' in the context of the 'Summer' lines is particularly rich in meaning as well as sound. The *Oxford English Dictionary* cites the full couplet—'Your praise the birds shall chant in every grove, / And winds shall waft it to the powers above'—in illustration of 'waft' meaning to carry a sound or a scent through the air (*OED*, v. i, 5). Birds or other winged forms can themselves be wafted on the air, as Pope himself demonstrates in *The Rape of the Lock*, where he uses it to describe Belinda's guardians, the sylphs: 'Some to the sun their insect-wings unfold, / Waft on the breeze, or sink in clouds of gold' (canto 2, lines 59–60). Again, the *OED* compilers had Pope at their sides, citing the couplet to exemplify the intransitive use of the verb (6b). So, birds chanting the beloved's praise, which is then wafted by the winds, is doubly appropriate. Various forces of nature combine in an action of mellifluous sympathy. Pope will later inflict indignity on the word to convey the distinctly un-pastoral sounds of 'sonorous Blackmore's strain': 'Thames wafts it thence to Rufus' roaring

hall, / And Hungerford re-echoes bawl for bawl' (*The Dunciad*, book 2, lines 265–66). *The Dunciad* is, in many ways, Pope's anti-pastoral. And, yes, the *OED* cites the couplet (5c).

The 'Summer' passage employs other song-like devices, too, in the service of serene and limpid musicality. Euphony stretches to link assonance to alliteration in 'cool gales shall fan the glade' ('gales' here in the poetical sense of 'breezes'). The couplets of the second quartet are linked by repetition of 'your praise' at the end of the first and the beginning of the second. The climactic third quartet concludes with strong parallelism: 'The wondering forests ...', 'The moving mountains ...', 'And headlong streams'. 'Headlong' here acts as an Anglicization of the common Latin term for wildly impetuous movement, 'praeceps' (from 'prae-caput', 'head-first'). Horace, and others, use it with 'amnis' and similar nouns to signify rushing rivers, headlong streams. Compare Spenser in *The Faerie Queene* (1590): 'Nor bounds nor banks his headlong ruin may sustain' (book 2, canto 11, stanza 18).

Particularly characteristic of Pope's metrical diversity and energy are the virtuosic rhythmic variations of the first quartet, examined by Winifred Nowottny (1962, pp. 11–12), whose fine analysis I develop in the following paragraphs. In this appeal to Alexis's beloved, Pope demonstrates mastery of poetic technique, a command of the materials of poetic expression. Further, and to an impressive level, he shows how a combination of elements—diction, rhythm, metre, rhyme, phonetics, grammar, syntax, metaphor, personification, structure—results in an intensity of expression that characterizes poetic language at its most communicative.

Structurally, the four lines place in a 'frame' a taut but varied network of syntactic variations. The frame, as that metaphor proposes, is set up at the beginning and rounded off at the end, but it is also reiterated within the overall picture. It consists of a sequence of subordinate clauses of place:

> 'Where'er you walk ... where you sit ... Where'er you tread ... where you turn your eyes. '

Within this structure, the main clauses carry the principal meaning:

> 'cool gales shall fan the glade', 'Trees ... shall crowd into a shade', 'the blushing flowers shall rise', 'And all things flourish. '

These main clauses describe the effect the poet's beloved will have on the natural environment she will inhabit. The tense is future: 'shall' is explicit in the first three clauses and implicit in the fourth. They amount to a splendid, heart-felt (even if, from another point of view, we could say hyperbolic) compliment to the beloved from the poet or, rather, the speaker. The speaker, though, is called Alexis, a name both of pastoral lineage and also close to Pope's own. There is a sophisticated game going on here.

Each of the four lines is metrically divided so as to contain both one of the subordinate and one of the main clauses. The proportions, location and grammatical form of subordinate and main clauses are varied.

Line 1 is divided by the cæsura at its comma into four and six syllables. The preposition in the subordinate clause is 'where'er', an elision of 'wherever' that comes from the stable of 'poetic' vocabulary. The subordinate clause is intransitive. The main clause, which occupies six syllables, is transitive.

Line 2 immediately varies the pattern. A subordinate clause inserted between the subject and predicate of the main clause appropriately pauses the line where the beloved is invited to sit. The subordinate clause's preposition is simpler, more prosaic ('where'), and it is intransitive. The predicate of the main clause has an indirect object—'into a shade'—rather than a direct object as line 1's does. The first two lines, of course, form a couplet, and so are brought together in harmony by the rhyme, which resolves in a satisfying manner the rhythmic variations of the two lines.

Line 3 repeats the opening formula of line 1. The main clause, which, as in line 1, occupies the longer half of the four/six syllable division, differs by containing an intransitive verb, 'rise'. This makes it the only line of the three to end on a verb rather than a noun, which raises the reader's anticipation of a resolution to come.

Line 4 differs from all the others by being divided equally into two five-syllable halves. This Pope effects by ending the main clause with a descending rhythm: 'flóurish'. The absence of any punctuation within the line does actually invite the reader to glide over the change from main to subordinate clause, giving this line a special lyrical smoothness. The subordinate clause is, for the only time, placed after the main clause and—again for the only time—is transitive in form: 'where you turn

your eyes'. So, the couplet and the four lines as a whole conclude on a noun. The couplet begins and ends with balanced relative clauses ('Where'er you tread', 'where you turn your eyes'), with balanced main clauses ('the blushing flowers shall rise', 'all things flourish') nestling in between. The word-order resembles a comforting, harmonious embrace. The entire four lines also begin and end with relative clauses: 'Where'er you walk' 'where you turn your eyes'. The effect is doubly comforting and harmonious.

This amounts, certainly, to a bravura display of structural ingenuity, and we might imagine the youthful Pope's delight at demonstrating his technical prowess. 'You want proof that I'm a poet? Well, here you are!'. All right, Alexander, you've passed your apprenticeship. But it is much more than just a technical achievement. We may say that the plaintive lover is offering his beloved the gift of his high artistry. This is no slipshod or hesitant or merely prosaic statement of his love. It is a tribute to the power she holds over that love, even as it proposes the power she will have over nature. 'For, lady, you deserve this state, / Nor would I love at lower rate', as Andrew Marvell earlier addressed his 'coy mistress' ('To His Coy Mistress', 1681, lines 19–20). The artistry demonstrated in the quartet of lines represents a heightening of ordinary language and syntax to an expressive register fitting for the beloved, and forms a linguistic equivalent to her elevation over plain nature. 'Nature', usually the goddess, is now envisaged as bowing to the new goddess, the beloved. Such transference of value and power demands its equivalence from the speaker, and he rises—like the blushing flowers—to the occasion. Hyperbole it may all be, to return to an earlier point, but there are times when apparent hyperbole is really no more than the emotional truth. Pastoral invites this high level of sophistication because at its heart lies the paradox that a courtly description of 'simple' life is really a means of expressing complexity. To borrow from William Shakespeare, the truest love—like poetry—is the most feigning (*As You Like It*, III, iii). And, we might add, the most discreetly erotic.

Pope also ornamentally expands on mere praise in his individual and collective selection of vocabulary. 'Gales' in the sense of 'gentle breezes' is—like 'where'er' in the frame sections—conventionally 'poetic' diction. The following pastoral in his sequence, 'Autumn',

reiterates this by including the word in its refrain of 'Go, gentle gales'. These cooling breezes play off against the 'blushing flowers' of the third line, which, in their varied colouring and in their embarrassment, 'rise' to that incomplete, anticipatory ending to the third line. Within the first line itself, 'gales' glides euphonically into 'glade', which becomes the rhyme-word satisfied by 'shade'. Shade is the result of the action of the 'trees' that open the second line (and which are given unique stress by the special, most complex, metrical structure of that line).

These remarkable actions to be performed by adulatory nature are permitted by personification, the attribution to nature of human powers. Cool gales shall 'fan' the glade like ladies at a ball. Trees that might, in a natural woodland, be randomly scattered shall 'crowd into a shade', thereby creating an opening, a glade. From here, the language looks ahead to the final line. The third line's subject, its equivalent of the gales and trees of the first couplet, is the blushing flowers whose euphonic match is the verb 'flourish'. The etymological root of 'flourish' is Latin 'flos', meaning 'flower'. Thus, the flowers, as it were, constitute their own flourish. The last line itself, as we earlier observed, is metrically the most lyrical or fluid; a satisfying rhythmic expression of the organic wholeness implied in the simple, but euphonious, word 'all'. The whole of nature, its final flourish, is a testimony to the inspiriting power of the beloved's beauty as finally located in her look, her eyes. And all this is carried in the poetry by diction that is almost entirely monosyllabic. In the final line, indeed, 'flourish' is the only disyllable. Simplicity, again, lies at the heart of complex artifice. 'Simplex munditiis', as Horace memorably and famously described the 'simple elegance' with which Pyrrha tied back her blonde hair to receive her young lover (*Odes*, book 1, 5, line 5). Pope's lines have all the simplicity of great artifice.

The whole twelve lines are arranged in order to rise steadily—to be wafted—from graceful and gracious compliment to mythic near-apotheosis. The first quartet declares that, were the beloved present, all nature would in sympathy respond to her. Her beauty would animate Nature to address itself to her comfort. Her power is rendered through the repetition of 'you' at the beginning and end: 'Where'er you walk', 'where you turn your eyes'. Nature yields willingly to her control. The second quartet, fused into a whole by that 'your praise' repetition,

asserts that Alexis's verses would be matched by Nature's own. Alexis and Nature are at one in their elevation of 'her praise' to 'the powers above'. In the third quartet, both Nature and Alexis are outdone. Your own song, it declares, would elevate you to the power of Orpheus, the mythical archetype of the ultimate power of music. Orpheus, granted a lyre by the god Apollo himself and taught by the Muses, was able to charm all animals, trees, and rocks so that they followed the sound of his lyre. All nature would be animated and charmed by the beloved's song. Nature would dance to her tune, hear her voice, and suspend all movement to attend her in absolute stasis. She is the apogee of all lyricism. It does not get better than that.

'Autumn', lines 23–30

'Autumn', modelled on Virgil's eighth eclogue, is made up of two love plaints, from Hylas and Aegon, sung as the sun sets. Whereas the love song in 'Summer' rises to heights of expression, the melancholy of these monologues matches the falling year and the falling day.

> Go, gentle gales, and bear my sighs along!
> For her, the feathered choirs neglect their song;
> For her, the limes their pleasing shades deny;
> For her, the lilies hang their heads and die.
> Ye flowers that droop, forsaken by the spring,
> Ye birds that, left by summer, cease to sing,
> Ye trees that fade when autumn-heats remove,
> Say, is not absence death to those who love?

Structurally and stylistically, we are now in familiar territory. Our extract consists of two quartets, each strongly marked by anaphora (repetition of words in successive clauses) in the last three lines of the first set and the first three lines of the second ('For her ...'; 'Ye ...'). The specific content of each triad is varied in order but covers the same elements of the natural world: birds, trees, flowers in the first; then flowers, birds, trees in the second. However, by topping and tailing the triads with the imperative, direct utterances of lines 23 and 30 (the question mark carries the rhetorical force of an exclamation), Pope converts the entire passage into another distinct structural unit,

a chiasmus: imperative/anaphora/anaphora/ imperative. The middle lines are dense with vocabulary of departure, desertion, and decline. All Nature, that is (and with but sketchy acknowledgement of the variants in actual timings involved), conjoins in an act of ending. Meanwhile, the two imperative lines move the argument and mood along in a way that counters the tendency of chiasmus to represent stasis. Line 23 is 'pastoral' in language. 'Gales' is the Latinate word for soft 'breezes' (as in the 'cool gales' of 'Summer'), and 'sighs' is the conventional and sentimental language of love lyric. By contrast, the imperative of line 30 is blunter in conception. The thought is familiar enough, but the choice of language is more tragic, lacking the literary conventionality of line 23. The proposition—that absence of the beloved is as devastating as death to the lover—may be hyperbolic, but nevertheless contains some truth. If it is love that makes the lover's world go round, the round of the seasons has now brought him to the loss of that which moves and motivates him. Incidentally, this passage, like pastorals more generally, illustrates how the genre's perspective is universally male, with females as the object of lovers' declaration, desire (usually frustrated), and lament. When Pope moves on, as he soon will, to deepen—and sometimes darken—his 'pastoral' vision in *The Rape of the Lock* and *Windsor Forest*, female voices will become integral to, and often dominate, the language. Here, in 'Autumn', death is the universal to which all Nature yields and beneath which all Nature is subsumed. The first quartet begins in pastoral mode ('gentle gales') and ends in the death of flowers. The second quartet begins with flowers drooping, including the lilies that 'hang their heads' in line 26, and concludes with 'death' in the human world. There is no ultimate difference: the remorseless cycle of life, from morn to evening, bears all away.

'Winter', lines 45–52

In 'Autumn', death appeared in the human world in the form of absence. Now, in 'Winter', it is not hyperbole or metaphor; it is literal and brutal. The genre is elegy, as in Virgil's fifth eclogue, a lament for the dead Daphne:

No grateful dews descend from evening skies,
Nor morning odours from the flowers arise;
No rich perfumes refresh the fruitful field,
Nor fragrant herbs their native incense yield.
The balmy zephyrs, silent since her death,
Lament the ceasing of a sweeter breath.
The industrious bees neglect their golden store;
Fair Daphne's dead, and sweetness is no more!

These eight lines resound with negatives. 'No grateful dews ...Nor morning ...No rich ...Nor fragrant' open the first four lines in a pattern alternating the same blunt adjective and conjunction; then the remaining four lines enclose 'ceasing' and 'neglect' within the forthright repetition of 'death', 'dead' before the final plangency of 'no more'. The lines thus uncompromisingly depict a natural world in which all movement and vitality have been suspended. This is what the state of winter means—and the human world is included within Nature: we are not comfortably imaged by natural processes, but are Nature.

Water is the element of 'Winter'. Gone are the 'grateful dews' with which the human and animal worlds began their day in 'Spring': 'Soon as the flocks shook off the nightly dews, / Two swains, whom love kept wakeful, and the Muse, / Poured o'er the whitening vale their fleecy care, / Fresh as the morn, and as the season fair' ('Spring', lines17–20). In their place are rains of winter (line 15) and tears of grief (line 66). 'Winter' laments the loss of animated life, but as part of a cyclical process: those rains are 'kind' because they 'swell the future harvest of the field' (lines 15–16). Humanity and the natural world are inextricably entwined within that all-encompassing process. 'Balmy zephyrs'—west winds, that is—are 'silent since her death' and lament 'the ceasing of a sweeter breath': their 'breath' is suspended, anthropomorphically, as is that of Daphne, Pope's female equivalent of Virgil's Daphnis.

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Pope's *Pastorals* were published in the sixth part of Jacob Tonson's *Miscellanies* (1709) but had been circulating among celebrated elder statesmen of the arts since 1705. John Barnard's *Pope: The Critical Heritage* usefully brings together a set of extracts from private letters, which illustrate the enthusiasm with which the *Pastorals* were received

(Barnard 1973, pp. 59–61). George Granville (1667–1735), a Tory grandee, patron, and a respectable poet himself, hailed this first step onto the Virgilian pathway: 'If he goes on as he has begun, in the Pastoral way, as *Virgil,* first try'd his Strength, we may hope to see *English* Poetry vie with the Roman, and this Swan sing as sweetly as the *Mantuan*'. William Walsh, in a letter to the dramatist William Wycherley agreeing to meet Pope to offer advice, gave praise indeed: 'Tis no flattery at all to say, that Virgil had written nothing so good at his Age'. Walsh later wrote direct to Pope that he had 'read over your Pastorals again, with a great deal of pleasure'. Jacob Tonson, writing to Pope to offer publication in his *Miscellanies* series, described the poem as extremely fine, and noted that it was 'generally approv'd off [sic] by the best Judges in poetry'. Wycherley himself, after publication of the volume, wrote to Pope to assert that 'all the best Judges, of good Sense, or Poetry are Admirers of Yours', and that this 'first Success will make you, for all your Life a Poet'.

Much later in the century (1777–79), the ever-alert Samuel Johnson pointed out that the usually careful Pope had made his zephyrs somehow lament in silence. Well, one could argue in Pope's defence that his lines are intended to be an elliptical construction: The balmy zephyrs [which have been] silent since her death, / [Now] Lament the ceasing of a sweeter breath. The word order, that is, represents a time order. But it scarcely matters. Johnson authoritatively and correctly states that to 'charge these *Pastorals* with want of invention'—and so of the requirement to be scrupulously accurate in their descriptions—'is to require what was never intended' (Archer-Hind 1925, II, p. 215). Pope's aim, in his youthful first work, the same passage continues, is to show that he can 'copy the poems of antiquity with judicious selection' and that he has 'obtained sufficient power of language and skill in metre to exhibit a series of versification which had in English poetry no precedent, nor has since had an imitation'.

One further step we can take. 'Power of language' and 'skill in metre' result in art; but that art emerges, at the same time, as deeply expressive of feeling, in 'Winter' the emotion of grief. Repeated consonant motifs are woven through lines 45–52. /F/ sounds in the first quartet emphasize all that, in our winter landscape, is absent: 'flowers', 'fragrant herbs', and (lying between these intimations of sensory deprivation) the repression of natural reproduction concisely captured in 'fruitful field'. Instead,

the second quartet relocates the /f/ sounds to a 'zephyrs'/'Daphne'—an echo (half-hidden from the eye but open to the voice) that brings together agents and the object of grieving. Alongside, /z/-sounding consonants begin with the rhyme words in the opening couplet, where long vowels augment softness by harmoniously stretching the syllables: 'skies' / 'arise'. Conversely, the second quartet begins by modulating from the warm 'zephyrs' of sympathetic nature to the blunt reality of 'silent since her death', a phrase whose uncompromising quality is echoed in the last line: 'Daphne's dead'. A similar repetition accompanied by a switch in grammar connects 'sweeter' to 'sweetness' (lines 50, 52), while admitting a pre-Keatsian collocation of 'ceasing' and 'bees' ('to set budding more, / And still more, later flowers for the bees, / Until they think warm days will never cease': Keats, *To Autumn*, lines 8–10). Pope's long 'e' and 'o' vowels are strongly counterpointed by the hard consonants and short, sharp vowels in 'Daphne's dead', themselves linking back to the first line's 'dews descend' and thus identifying night with death. Such euphonious and versatile language interlaces beauty with grief, inextricably binding one into the other, while never shirking the brutal actuality of grief's cause. 'Et in Arcadia ego': 'I, death, am also in Arcady' (Panofsky 1970, pp. 340–67 for the history and development of the Latin phrase).

Through learning a poetic craft and, at the same time, displaying a finished poem, Pope grows into mature reflection on the matter of art. As in all the best pastorals, seriousness seeps mellifluously into the fabric of apparent artificiality. The much-discussed maxim at the close of Keats's *Ode on a Grecian Urn* (1819), 'Beauty is Truth, Truth Beauty', asserts a deep identity between aesthetic splendour and severe reality. In his *Pastorals*, Pope finally establishes that, far from feigning, true art is a fusion of truth with form. The rest of his writing career will confirm and strengthen that initial perception.