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Richard Crashaw represents an interesting intersection of several social and literary forces at work during his time. Crashaw was born in 1613; he began his life as the son of a Puritan and ended it as a Catholic priest (Greenblatt, 2012, pp. 1740-1741). He was educated in Cambridge, then served as an Anglican priest, published his poetry, carved wood, composed music, and painted. In 1644, Crashaw fled from Cromwell's advance to the mainland of Europe, where he converted entirely to Catholicism and obtained a post in Rome (Greenblatt, 2012, p. 1741). Crashaw's work lends itself well to a variety of labels, especially as part of the metaphysical literary movement and the continental baroque movement. With the central role religion played in his life, it is not surprising that Crashaw's most important and lasting works are the emblem poems and devotional lyrics published in *Steps to the Temple, The Delights of the Muses,* and *Carmen Deo Nostro*. These works made use of both imagery and words to drive home their religious meanings; the "multimedia" approach used by Crashaw represents the competing forces of iconoclast Protestantism and iconodule Catholicism at work during the age in which he lived as well as within his own mind and heart.

"The Flaming Heart," Crashaw's indictment of an unknown artist for his jejune portrayal of St. Teresa of Avila, is exemplary of emblem lyrics. In true metaphysical spirit, Crashaw (2012) rails against the unknown artist for portraying Teresa as passive and feminine, accusing the artist of misunderstanding Teresa's book and message. Even though the artist's representation is faithful to a vision described by Teresa, Crashaw (2012) contends that the image is misleading. According to Crashaw (2012), a better reading of the book would paint the image of Teresa as a dominant figure; the weapon, which pierces the hearts of those around her with a dart, would become representative of her message. Sexual imagery runs rampant in Crashaw's (2012) "The Flaming Heart"; there are descriptions of Teresa's readers as "well-pierced hearts" (p. 1754), death as "that final kiss" (p. 1755), a juxtaposition of the words "wounds and darts" (p. 1754), and the final word of the poem—"die!" (p. 1755)—would have brought to the minds of Crashaw's audience the idea of *lapetite morte*. Crashaw's poem is in accentual rhymed couplets; it employs tetrameter often, but not exclusively. The ornamental style used by Crashaw is true to his baroque influence and directly preoccupies itself with objects, an element of the style that seems to be in the spirit of Crashaw's favored religion, Catholicism. However, contradictory to what the surface interpretation of Crashaw's chosen style might suggest, deeper analysis shows that Crashaw is using the ornamental style to critique the use of objects to impart spiritual truth.

Crashaw's use of imagery is central to the poem. In fact, "The Flaming Heart" can be understood to have derived from a number of emblem poems (which featured a visual image, a Latin motto, and a poem illuminating the figurative meaning of the image) that were popular at the time. The specific image Crashaw refers to is unknown, but from his text it becomes clear that the image portrayed Teresa of Avila as a passive figure that received heaven's dart from a (dominant) seraphim. The entire poem dedicates itself to a discussion of the unknown image, an image that, as described by Matthew Horn (2008), acts as a unifying force for the verse. Horn (2008) states, "the pictorial device in the poem serves as a locus to which the subsequent verses could constantly refer" (p. 422). Horn's statement is reinforced by the constant return to different aspects of the same image within Crashaw's (2012) "The Flaming Heart," specifically in the following lines: "...whate'er this youth of fire wears fair, rosy fingers, radiant hair, glowing cheeks and glistering wings, all those fair and flagrant things…" (p. 1754). Crashaw also tells his audience how the image should be interpreted as a way of

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keeping tradition with the emblem poems. He says, "you must transpose the picture quite and spell it wrong to read it right" (Crashaw, 2012, p. 1753). The secret to the effectiveness of emblem poems like "The Flaming Heart" is that these poems give their readers something concrete and simple to visualize, a strategy that helps keep readers focused and engaged while the author lays out the spiritual truth.

In one sense, Crashaw's "Flaming Heart" can be labeled an anti-emblem poem because while Crashaw utilizes the benefits of imagery, he also denounces the power of images to relay religious truth. He claims that to understand the image properly, viewers must "transpose the picture quite and spell it wrong to read it right" (Crashaw, 2012, p. 1753). A few lines later, Crashaw (2012) asserts that reading Teresa's book could have brought the painter to a better understanding of her: "had thy pale-faced purple took fire from the burning cheeks of that bright book, thou wouldst on her have heaped up all that could be found seraphical" (p. 1753). He proceeds to explain how the truth is an inversion of what the painter portrayed, and in doing so, Crashaw (2012) is suggesting that words *do* have the power to impart religious truth: "In love's field was never found a nobler weapon than a wound. Love's passives are his activest part, the wounded is the wounding heart" (p. 1754). The argument presented by the quote above claims images cannot communicate seemingly contradictory aspects of the divine—but words can. However, it turns out that even words have their limitations, and Crashaw (2012) ultimately laments the fact that neither Teresa's words nor his own poetry have brought him to a union with God: "leave nothing of myself in me! Let me so read thy life that I unto all life of mine may die!" (p. 1755). This declaration can be read as an acknowledgement that even though words are superior, they are only a representation of the divine, and therefore can never replace actual divinity.

The conflict between words and images, and over which influenced audiences more effectively, was a reflection of the religious conflicts taking place during Crashaw's time. To Catholics, "books were esteemed less potent than images to impress the mind with divine truth" (Horn, 2008, p.414). Catholics supported visual pleasures that ranged from the architecture of their cathedrals (which drew the mind and the eye upwards), to the biblical paintings and mosaics that lined the walls of their churches and shrines, to pictures inscribed in Bibles in their day-to-day lives (Horn, 2008, p. 415). It was partially because of the Catholics' heavy use of icons that the Protestants rebelled. Martin Luther asserted the inability of anything besides the word of God to impart spiritual truth in his doctrine of *sola scriptura,* "through Scripture alone" (Horn, 2008, p. 415).

To acknowledge the spiritual truth through anything else besides scripture was considered idolatry by Protestants. Luther's revolt against the Catholic Church took place in the early sixteenth century, and its effects were still being felt a century later. Crashaw fled England precisely because of the advance of Cromwell's Puritan army:

> as Puritan armies moved through the country… they also undertook a crusade to stamp out idolatry in English churches, smashing religious images and stained-glass windows and lopping off the heads of statues as an earlier generation had done at the time of the English Reformation. (Greenblatt, 2012, p. 1362)

"The Flaming Heart" is expressive of Crashaw's struggle with being caught between two extremes. He had likely already converted to Catholicism, or was at least seriously considering it when he wrote the poem, as it was published after his death. One would assume that because of his close association with Catholicism, Crashaw would have been inclined to favor images but clearly he does not. Instead, in the poem, he seems to be paying homage to his Protestant roots by arguing for the supremacy of words over images. At the same time, Crashaw builds his poem entirely around an image, and the image of a Catholic doctor at that. Clearly Crashaw approached his religion partly with intellect, and was bereaved with questions of faith that neither side could totally satisfy.

Crashaw's method indicates a faith in reason that might further illuminate his preference of words. He can be categorized as one of the metaphysical poets, whose work was characterized by speculation and by abstract conceits such as the replacement image of Teresa. Crashaw (2012) offers: "give him the veil, give her the dart" (p. 1754). The new image repre-

sents a more sophisticated understanding of Teresa, and like other metaphysical conceits, to be understood, it requires abstract thought and careful consideration. This "concern with the role of reason in faith" characterizes Crashaw's personal practice of religion (Russell, 2009, p. 120). It is most likely for this reason that he takes words as the herald of divine truth; while images were used to instruct common people about the important stories and doctrines of Catholicism, it is only through words that the great minds of Christianity have been able to question and puzzle over the mysteries of God. Great triumphs of doctrine were not made with images of biblical scenes or churches—they were made through debates and arguments from many men and women over many years. Crashaw *proves* that words are superior to images. After he shows how flawed the artist's conception is, he uses words to re-interpret the image in a way that displays understanding of the power Teresa gained from being pierced by the seraphim:

> But if it be the frequent fate of worst faults to be fortunate; if all's prescription and proud wrong hearkens not to an humble song… Leave her alone the Flaming Heart. Leave her that, and thou shalt leave her not one loose shaft but love's whole quiver. (Crashaw, 2012, p. 1754)

Yet Crashaw also acknowledges the hard truth: all of the doctrinal advancement made in more than a thousand years has not brought anyone to a perfect understanding of God, and it has brought very few into a union with Him. While he derides the artist for his poor understanding of Teresa, Crashaw must also concede that the higher level of understanding Teresa's words have imparted to him has not delivered him to a union with God.

Crashaw struggles with questions that deal with achieving a union with God. By inclination he favors an intellectual approach, trying to apprehend God by understanding His mysteries. For this reason, he favors words over icons as a means to accessing divinity, which represents a reversal of his progress from Protestantism to Catholicism, even though he was in the process of converting or actually practicing Catholicism as a priest when he wrote it. He disparages others such as the artist in "The Flaming Heart" for not understanding holy mysteries at the level he does, while admitting that his higher level of intellectual understanding has not brought him to union with God either. However, Crashaw does not despair, and the reader is left with a sense that while it is impossible to truly capture the nature of God in words or images, "[striving and failing to] to sing the name which none can say sings succeeds in summoning the object of that name and earning His love" (Russell, 2009, p. 144).

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